

**LINWOOD, NEW JERSEY**  
**BOARD OF SCHOOL ESTIMATES**  
March 16, 2016

In compliance with the "Open Public Meetings Act" of the State of New Jersey adequate notice of this **special** meeting has been provided. On **October 25, 2015**, written notice of this **special** meeting was posted in two schools, City Hall, and the Linwood City Library. On that same date written notice was faxed and mailed to The Press and The Current.

The meeting of the Linwood Board of Education was called to order by Mayor DePamphilis in the Schiavo Cafetorium, Belhaven Middle School, Linwood, New Jersey, **Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 7:06 PM.**

Mayor DePamphilis led all present in a flag salute.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor DePamphilis, B. Heun, D. Matick, Mr. McLaughlin, and Mr. Sless

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** M. Cappelluti, Interim Superintendent, T. Weeks, Business Administrator, C. Meade, L. Lhulier, Sr., M. Demorat, T. Pizagno, P. Vaccaro, S. Coyle, J. Cunniff, D. Lamkin, K. Savino, J. Dix, L. Hindman, D. Hieb, J. Goldstein, T. Parente, M. Hieb, M. Tighe, T. Lhulier, C. Swan, F. Pileiro, H. Derbyshire, J. Candeloro, M. Schnepf, D. McCabe, K. Prendergast, C. Silverberg, T. Meister.

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING** - Motion made by Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by **February 23, 2016** Mr. Matik, to approve the minutes of the Special meeting, held February 23, 2016.

Motion carried by roll call vote with all members present voting yes.

*Motion approved.*

**BUDGET PRESENTATION** - The 2016-2017 tentative budget was presented. This budget calls for no tax rate increase despite the declining ratables, the elimination of the pay to participate revenue source, and the use of \$350,000 additional fund balance over the required excess fund balance. To achieve this 0 cent tax rate increase, reduction across all programs were made along with staff reductions. The staffing reductions are also due to the declining enrollment. The projection for 2017-2018 which includes the need to continue reducing the budget was also reviewed. March 22, 2016 is the public hearing.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC** - P. Vaccarro inquired if this was the same budget. She stated she sent emails on class size. She inquired about capital reserve. She inquired if the staffing cuts were due to decreased enrollment. She inquired again about legal reserves as they relate to attorney costs. She inquired about the procedure for responding to emails. She stated that fourth grade is above the national average in class size.

A Stromfeld questioned why the staff cuts and stated that average does not make sense in Linwood. He stated we are watching property devalue and stated he feels it will only get worse as schools go down in standards.

D. McCabe stated there are 25 students in a reading group for her students. She also stated that the fourth grade math classes are also high. She inquired about highly qualified staff.

Mayor DePamphilis stated the quality is in the teachers, administration, and the board members, not class size.

J. Kaplan read a statement not to support the budget impacts. He read a ranking of schools stating that both Belhaven and Seaview have reduced in the standings. He stated that the school budget is a mission statement and requested that the Board does not lose sight of excellence. He stated this budget seems like a short term fix with a long term impact.

C. Swan stated the Board and community are at an awful stalemate and expressed concerns over the quality of education.

C. Meade inquired about the fund balance use.

K. Savino inquired about the fund balance and what would it look like if we changed the use.

E. Ryan inquired why are we at a 0 tax increase. She understands that city council has requested the district to be at a zero, however, she disagrees with the philosophy.

M. Dias inquired about the impact from Mainland Regional. She supported an increase in taxes and the continuation of Pay to Play.

J. Goldstein stated she never received a community survey regarding pay to play. She stated she does not mind paying the fee.

A. Gebhardt stated she is moving to the district and has concerns of the budget impact to the education she was expecting her children to receive.

B. Heun stated that a third of the population have students and two thirds do not send children to the Linwood schools. This budget considers all the taxpayers of Linwood.

D. Matik stated that how districts are funded by the state is the problem.

A. Kaplan spoke about school rating and is disappointed to see the declines in the rankings since she moved here for the schools.

C. Meade spoke about moving back to Linwood with his family. Class size is concerning moving forward. He also expressed concerns on the reduction of extracurricular programs and the reduction of students who will be eligible to participate.

D. Matik stated the City is looking at additional shared services to continue city wide savings.

S. Coyle thanked the Board and the Administration. She stated that class size matters when you are in the trenches. She thanked all for the continuing dialogue.

J. Dix stated she has been a resident for 23 years. She requested that the Board does not raise her taxes. The declining enrollment has to be considered.

L. Lhulier stated it is a slippery slope when education goes down and house values go down. He stated he regards taxes as paying his obligation for his grandkids. He referenced Councilman Palone's detailed report on the housing market and believes we are better standing than the surrounding communities.

H. Dileo stated they are moving to Linwood and that she teaches in a district with higher class sizes. Her family was motivated to move here for the smaller class sizes for their children.

R. Sless spoke about his teaching experience with 34 students in his sixth grade science who are exceling in the state test scores.

D. Matik stated the district is downsizing due to the declining enrollments. He expressed his concerns over the aggressive use of fund balance and the impact of the future budgets as projected. He stated the city is looking for commercial ratables and that there is a continuing concern if North Jersey casinos are approved.

J. McLaughlin stated that he Board has heard what everyone has to say. The Board will do the best they can to address all of the concerns brought forward.

**COMMUNICATIONS** – None

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS – None

**ADJOURNMENT** - Motion made by Mr. Sless, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin to adjourn (8:40 PM). Motion carried by roll call vote, all members present voted yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri J. Weeks, Business Administrator,  
Board Secretary