



**MINUTES
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF PERTH AMBOY
SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING
MAY 17, 2010
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

NOTICE OF MEETING

Special Public Meeting of the Council of the City of Perth Amboy was held on Monday May 17, 2010, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Perth Amboy, New Jersey at 5:30 p.m.

Presiding Officer of the Council, Peter J. Jimenez, advised the audience that a Special Public Meeting was being held on Monday, May 17, 2010 at 5:30 P.M., in the Council Chambers, City Hall. The notice of this meeting has been filed with the Home News Tribune, The Star Ledger, The Amboy Beacon and posted on the bulletin board in the City Clerk's office.

Council President Peter J. Jimenez: At this time, as a courtesy to the Governing Body, I would ask all individuals present, including members of the audience, to please turn off all cell phones, pagers and electronic devices. Should you need to make a telephone call, please go out into the hallway and speak in a low voice so as not to disturb the ongoing meeting.

The sole purpose of this meeting was to discuss the FY11 School Budget with members of the Board of Education.

Meeting was called to order by Council President Peter J. Jimenez with the following Council Members present: Kenneth Balut, Geraldine M. Bolanowski and Fernando Gonzalez.

Council Member Robert R. Sottilaro was on vacation and not at this meeting.

Also present at this meeting were: Jane Feigenbaum, Business Administrator and Elaine M. Jasko, City Clerk.

Absent was Mark Blunda, Esq., and Jill A. Goldy, CFO/Comptroller.

Council President Jimenez: The budget was defeated by the voters. Trenton advised us that cuts could be made to the budget as long as it doesn't hurt the children.

Jack Rodecker, Supt. of Schools: Perth Amboy was advised that it was not going to get the full amount of state aid. We lost \$15m. We have had to freeze our spending. We will have difficulties. We were to get an additional \$9m to bolster per pupil spending. That did not occur. The Board of Education is not in favor of these increases. We have made line item reductions by 25%. We have already cut and made reductions. We have approached our unions asking them about wage freezes. The central administration as well as the principals and supervisors units are willing to accept the freeze. No positions of retirements will be filled. Certain positions will not be renewed and certain employees will not be renewed due to their work product.

Council President Jimenez: Is this a result of the elimination of the Abbott District?

Jack Rodecker: That was eliminated last year.

Council President Jimenez: How much will the freeze by the unions save?

Jack Rodecker: \$2m.

Council Member Bolanowski: How much was last year's budget?

Jack Rodecker: About \$182m. This year it is about \$183m. Our aid for preschool went up \$2m. \$1m is our contribution to the charter school. The minimum tax levy was established for us because we were an Abbott District. That has been carried over and still exists today. We have received a schedule for several years.

Council Member Gonzalez to Jack Rodecker: Please provide us with a copy of the schedule.

Council Member Jimenez: Why do you have a surplus?

Jack Rodecker: We received the monies and didn't spend everything.

Council Member Balut to Jack Rodecker: You are making more money than the governor. You get a car and you get overtime. I also have a concern about insurance costs. The numbers can be cut. The City and Bd. of Education should try to get together to save costs. I question the costs for copiers, security, mail truck for the high school, gasoline, book purchases, and athletic equipment. I understand that there were books at Shull School that were never used. You should have a better oversight on costs.

Jack Rodecker: We are willing to meet and discuss cooperative purchasing with the City. We currently do that with other school districts. Textbooks get outdated and we have to bid for new ones. There were books at Shull School that were awaiting disposal.

Council President Jimenez: The Commissioner of Education doesn't want us to reduce the budget to affect the children. There are administrative position salaries that should be reduced.

Jack Rodecker: We have reduced it by the elimination of 5 positions.

Council Member Balut: Why do we need curriculum writing in the summer?

Rozalia Czaban: That's when the teachers come in during the summer to write the curriculum.

Council Member Bolanowski: What is a teacher's school year?

Jack Rodecker: Sept.1 – June 30.

Donna Chiera, President Federation AFT: Perth Amboy has always been in the middle of the teacher salary range. We lose a lot of teachers in math, science and special education. I am not sure we do the best to recruit the best for those fields. 71 staff members have retired from September to today. The majority of people retiring are teachers. We need to keep the teaching profession intact.

Council President Jimenez: The people that are being shortchanged are the teachers.

Donna Chiera: We could have negotiated higher contracts. We always took less money and concentrated on health benefits. We gave our employees a good health plan. 600-700 staff members are Perth Amboy residents.

Council Member Balut: I am sure that you can find \$1m in cuts in this budget. I would ask that the State study the City and the School Board.

Ken Puccio, Board of Education Member: This City gets \$145m in state aid. The taxpayers have to kick in their fair share. The problem is with Trenton. It's not with this Board of Education. The State still wants its \$21m. It doesn't matter how much we cut. The City still has to pay.

Council President Jimenez: We should fight Trenton. We don't have to do anything.

Council Member Gonzalez: I have been advised to limit my comments because my wife is on the Board of Education. It gives the appearance of a conflict. I will limit my remarks. We need to address the quality of education. Are we at the bottom of Middlesex County on test scores?

Donna Chiera: Our elementary schools are at the top. We are starting to see our middle school rise in scores. Those children will be in high school and they will rise.

Rozalia Czaban, President, Principal & Supervisors Association: Our scores are the lowest in the County at the high school.

Council Member Gonzalez: We need to concentrate on improving test scores in the city.

Jack Rodecker: Our elementary schools have made adequate yearly progress over the past several years. We are trying to improve student achievement at the high school.

Rozalia Czaban, President, Principal & Supervisors Association: We have 43 members in our unit. We work with our students and we are making gains in the high school.

Israel Varela, Board Member: I have advised this Council over the years that all this new housing would bring in additional children into our schools. Many of the children in our system are low class. They have special needs. There are cuts that can be made. We need to take responsibility.

Mark Carvajal, 30 Market St: We inherited this, and we have to deal with it.

Council Member Balut: Is there a cost for the use of the YMCA facility?

Jack Rodecker: No.

Business Administrator Jane Feigenbaum left at this point 7:15 pm

Victor Medina, Esq.: Since the meeting between the Council and the Board of Education is done, the members will be leaving. The Board Members will be leaving and any questions can be addressed to the Members at the next Board Meeting.

(Mr. Medina, Mr. Rodecker and various board members stayed for the remainder of the meeting.)

**PUBLIC PORTION
(5 MINUTES MAXIMUM PER SPEAKER)**

Alan Silber, 244 Rector St.: What is the status of the forensic audit of the school board? School teachers don't work a full year. They work 180 days, but they get a full year's salary.

Council authorized extra time for Mr. Silber (unanimous)

Alan Silber: How many people make over \$90,000? What about the costs of soil removal? The board has to provide the best education in the most efficient manner.

Mrs. Durso: I work for the Bd. of Education as Supervisor of Special Services. We have children with a lot of problems. A \$15m surplus means the district was fiscally responsible. We should work together.

Council Member Balut: Are you in favor of a forensic audit?

Mrs. Durso: We are always audited by the State. I don't know if we need a forensic audit. We have been under the microscope for a long time. We should look into spending our monies properly.

Richard Piatkowski, 142 Gordon St.: We have not made any recommendations for cuts this evening. If everyone took a freeze we would save \$3m. No matter what is done here there will still be an increase in the tax levy.

Business Administrator Jane Feigenbaum returned to the meeting at 7:40 pm.

Reinaldo Aviles, 496 McKeon St.: Where are the city's attorney and the city's financial people tonight? We need new blood in the Board of Education's bureaucracy. Will the federation take a freeze in salaries?

Donna Chiera: The federation would not consider anything until central administration and PSA does their thing. We did internal polls and there was no formal presentation made to the membership.

Council President Jimenez: Are there any recommendations from the Council?

Council Member Balut: We should ask for an extension of the May 19 deadline.

Council Member Bolanowski: We know we can't cut anything from the fairshare.

Council Member Balut: Cuts should be made. 1% of the budget should be the cut.

Council Member Bolanowski: The only 2 options are to certify or not to certify.

Motion was made by Council Member Bolanowski to certify the tax levy.

There was no second to the motion.

Motion was made by Council Member Balut, seconded by Council Member Jimenez to not certify the tax levy and was **defeated** by the following vote: Yea—Council Members Balut and Jimenez. Nay—Council Member Bolanowski. Abstain—Council Member Gonzalez. Absent—Council Member Sottilaro.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council motion was made by Council Member Jimenez, seconded by Council Member Gonzalez to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm, and was carried by the following vote: Yea—Council Members Balut, Bolanowski, Gonzalez, and Jimenez. Nay—none. Absent—Council Member Sottilaro.

Elaine M. Jasko
City Clerk