

APPROVED MINUTES of the Joint Meeting of the City Council of the City of Rye and the Rye City School Board held in City Hall on April 11, 2015 at 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT:

JOSEPH A. SACK Mayor
LAURA BRETT
KIRSTIN BUCCI
JULIE KILLIAN
TERRENCE McCARTNEY
RICHARD MECCA
RICHARD SLACK
Councilmembers

LAURA SLACK, President
KAREN BELANGER
KATY KEOHANE GLASSBERG
BLAKE JINES-STOREY
NANCY PASQUALE
CHRIS REPETTO
NICOLE WEBER (Arrived at 9:45 a.m.)
School Board Members

FRANK CULROSS, City Manager
FRANK ALVAREZ, Superintendant of Schools
ELEANOR MILITANA, Assistant City Manager
GABRIELLA O'CONNOR, Assistant Superintendent for Business
BRIAN DEMPSEY, Chair of Traffic & Transportation Committee

ABSENT: None

The City Council and the School Board convened at 9:00 a.m. Councilman McCartney made a motion, seconded by Councilman Mecca and unanimously carried, to immediately adjourn into executive session to discuss attorney/client matters. Councilman Mecca made a motion, seconded by Councilman McCartney and unanimously carried, to adjourn the executive session at 9:33 a.m. The joint meeting convened at 9:45 a.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Board President Slack called the meeting to order and invited the Council to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Board President Slack asked the City Clerk to call the roll; a quorum of both boards was present to conduct official business.

3. Progress of 2014 Joint Meeting

Board President Slack reported on the opening of the new addition of science classrooms at the High School and thanked the, City, the Mayor and City Council for their help during the construction and for the use of the City snowfield. She also reported on safety drills by the Police Department that are ongoing in all five schools on an annual basis.

Mayor Sack reported on the increased cooperation and communication between the two boards, who now meet twice a year, and the formation of a Joint Task Force regarding the location of the Cable TV Studio.

4. State of the School's Report

Dr. Alvarez reported on various topics including: the new science wing and the district's focus on science and technology including programs that have been introduced in the High School and Middle School; literacy programs in the elementary schools; summer institutes for teachers; a mentoring program for new teachers; the focus on Common Core; goals for community service participation by High School Seniors; updating technology infrastructure; new security measures in the schools; and, issues related to the proposed budget, which was presented with the desire to continue the programs in effect; support new initiatives; and to address enrollment issues. There was also a brief discussion regarding the need for Assistant Principals in the schools. Assistant Superintendent O'Connor reported on the financial aspects of the budget, including how it would be funded, and what the average taxpayer could expect as an increase in their property taxes.

5. State of the City of Rye Report

Mayor Sack outlined what he believes are four main issues facing the City:

- The search for a new City Manager, who the Council hopes to hire by June.
- The search for a new Police Commissioner, which will be started after the new City Manager is in place.
- Golf Club issues including the open insurance claim for employee theft and a Class Action suit under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) filed by former workers regarding withholding of tips.
- Fire Department issues related to a hybrid department which is made up of paid staff and volunteers including the need to recruit more volunteers and settlement of outstanding labor contracts.

The Mayor added that the present Council has focused on restoring civility but needs to transition from “putting out fires” to long-range planning. Members of the Council added that the Council was also focused on quality of life issues in the community; pointed out that the future of the Golf Club is looking positive; and, that there are special requirements for those volunteering in the Fire Department.

6. Discussion of Pedestrian Safety Initiative: Safe Routes to School Projects

Brian Dempsey, the Chair of the Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee (TPS), reported on the Safe Routes to School Projects. The City has resubmitted the study back to the State and approval is being held up due to State and Federal review of endangered species. Hopefully the projects can go out to bid and be completed before school starts in the fall. The projects are: (1) Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) which will be installed near unmanned crosswalks at Forest and Apawamis Avenues, Hewlett and Forest Avenues, and near the High School at Old Post Road; (2) Improvement of the drop off zone at Milton School; and (3) Reducing the crossing distance at Theall Road and Osborn Road and upgrading the curbs and ramps. Additionally, Mr. Dempsey reported that he and City Engineer Ryan Coyne have been meeting with the Principal of Midland School regarding moving a crosswalk and that TPS has been approached regarding a crossing at Sonn Drive. There was a discussion of traffic issues around Osborn School.

7. Discussion of RCDS Student Enrollment

Board President Slack reported that enrollment in the City of Rye has grown 18% in the School District in the last 10 years with the High School growing 35% in nine years and that the district has grown 27% since 2002/2003, while the average growth in enrollment in schools in Westchester has been 2%. She said that there are two main issues for the schools: (1) there is no more space in the schools and no more room to build; and (2) increased building in the City has an effect on enrollment and the taxes received from these homes who now have children living in them does not offset the cost per pupil to the school district to educate the additional children in the district. Board Member Belanger said the only choice for the School District was to increase class sizes. Mayor Sack suggested that the increase in building may not be the only reason for the increase in enrollment and said the School District may be a victim of its own success. He said that new children are coming into the system because older families that no longer have children in the system are moving out and new families are moving in. He added that the City is sensitive to quality of life issues relative to size of homes and will be discussing this issue as part of reevaluating the Master Plan.

8. Discussion of Revaluation

Board President Slack said that the School has been asked to bring the issue of doing a revaluation to the City and added that if the City does a revaluation it could help the School District in Tax Certiorari cases. Mayor Sack said there were three areas to look at in connection with revaluation: (1) Unintended consequences such as more families with children moving in

because people without children move out as a result of increased taxes; (2) Equity - people are angry because they pay more taxes than their neighbors; and (3) Dollars and cents - the cost of doing a revaluation, which will be \$800,000 to \$1 million against what it will accomplish for the City. Councilman Slack pointed out that a revaluation would not increase the tax base but may bring an element of fairness. The Mayor added that the City must understand what is involved and what the consequences will be before it moves forward with a revaluation. Councilwoman Brett added that the strongest driver for a revaluation was the difference between residential property values and commercial property values.

9. Resolution on Exemptions

Board President Slack referred to a Resolution proposed by the School District and suggested that the governing bodies could work on proposals for exemptions to the Tax Cap legislation. It was the consensus that the governing bodies would work on a Resolution, limiting the focus to about four areas. Mayor Sack said he and Board President Slack would work on something to be presented to the governing bodies at their respective meetings.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business for the two boards to discuss Board Member Repetto made a motion, seconded by Board Member Pasquale and unanimously carried, to adjourn the joint meeting at 11:15 a.m. Councilwoman Brett made a motion, seconded by Councilman Mecca and unanimously carried, for the City Council to immediately adjourn into executive session to discuss issues related to the City Manager search and not return to regular session.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn F. Nodarse
City Clerk