

MINUTES
RYE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT / CITY OF RYE
BOARD OF EDUCATION / RYE CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers, City Hall
April 18, 2009

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Deputy Mayor Pratt called the meeting to order and invited the Council and Board Members to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Deputy Mayor Pratt asked the City Clerk to call the roll for both Boards.

Present, Board of Education

Mr. Joshua Nathan, *President*
Ms. Laura Slack, *Vice President*
Mr. George Cady
Ms. Kendall Egan
Mr. Edward Fox
Ms. Young Kim
Mr. Robert Zahm

Present, Rye City Council

Mr. Andrew Ball
Mr. Mack Cunningham
Ms. Catherine Parker
Mr. George Pratt
Mr. Joseph Sack

And:

Dr. Edward Shine, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Frank J. Culross, Acting City Manager
Mr. Scott Pickup, Assistant City Manager
Mr. Kevin J. Plunkett, Corporation Counsel
Ms. Noreen Whitty, City Assessor
Mr. Brian Dempsey, Chair of Traffic and Transportation Committee

Absent: The Honorable Steven Otis, Mayor

Ms. Paula J. Gamache, Councilmember

3. Review of Pedestrian safety modifications at the Rye High School/Middle School Campus

Traffic and Transportation Committee Chair Brian Dempsey discussed results that have been achieved from safety modifications made at the High School and Middle School since the last joint meeting and raised the following points:

- It appears that more children are walking to school than in the last few years.
- Since the Post Road diet was implemented approximately 20 to 30 children are crossing at the new Boston Post Road crosswalk.

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- The gates to the football field in the stadium are now open in the morning and children are crossing the field and entering by the Middle School bike racks.
- The new sidewalks and crosswalk by the Presbyterian Church are being used.
- The bollard system appears to be well received and is useful for traffic control, although there is higher compliance near the High School than the Middle School.
- Fewer people are making left turns from Apawamis onto Milton but more people are making illegal left turns from the High School onto Milton.
- Consideration is being given to removing one or two parking spaces on Apawamis Avenue nearest the intersection at Milton Road.
- Some children still get out of the left side of cars on Milton Road and run across the street.
- The drop off on Parsons Street is working better and children are being let out closer to the path.
- Many cars are still cutting through the Presbyterian Church property.
- Students start parking earlier in the drop off zone than is allowed.

Mr. Dempsey briefly discussed issues at the Elementary Schools:

- There are neighborhood issues about parking near Midland School due to people parking in front of driveways on side streets.
- The reversal of the one-way system at Milton School appears to be working well.
- Although more people are walking to Osborn, there are still too many cars and the traffic still backs up onto the Post Road in the afternoon.
- Some people still cross the Post Road to Osborn School at Sonn Drive instead of walking to the cross walk.
- The City is working with the County to get the bridge over Old Post Road fixed and sidewalk improvements made.

Comments and questions from City Council and School Board Members included:

- In the areas where the Boston Post Road Diet has been implemented did it constrict traffic? (No. Feedback to the diet has been positive.)
- Has the portion of the Diet near the High School decreased traffic speed? (There is some decrease in the mornings near the crosswalk. The diet has not really had an effect on the intersection of Parsons Street and the Post Road because it was already one lane at that location. The intersection would work better if people arrived a few minutes earlier in the morning.)
- More signage is needed for the section of the Diet just past Osborn School going South towards Mamaroneck. (Arrows similar to those used where the diet begins at the Mamaroneck line coming North could be considered.)

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- The crossing guard at the Milton and Apawamis intersection stops traffic too frequently, which causes more traffic back up. The crossing guard at Parsons Street waits until there is a group of children to cross them; this should be considered for the Milton intersection.
- Enforcement of illegal left turns at the Milton and Apawamis intersection is needed. Write tickets one day a week.
- The striping on the High School property exiting onto Milton Road still indicates left and right turn arrows and should be changed.
- Has any consideration been given to widening Osborn Road to create a parking lane? (It has been investigated, but it would cause loss of trees, field space and some walls, plus the School District does not own the property all the way down to Theall Road.).
- More students will be arriving at the High School/Middle School campus next year, parking needs to be addressed.
- If parking spaces are removed from Apawamis Avenue they should not be replaced. Make the high school seniors walk to school. (Students want cars at school and limiting spaces does not limit the number of students driving, it just pushes them elsewhere.)
- More children walking to school means the Safe Routes to School Committee is working in the right direction.

Assistant City Manager Pickup gave an overview of projects that were being considered that could qualify for Federal Stimulus money. He said stimulus money is available for projects that are listed on the Municipal Planning Document of the State Department of Transportation and the City has applied for \$700,000 in funding by picking projects that can be completed by the Fall. The projects would involve work on:

- A sidewalk at Johnson Place, which was recommended by the Safe Routes Committee.
- Pedestrian improvements at the intersection of Playland Parkway and Forest Avenue.
- Intersection improvements and pedestrian signals at Library Lane and Boston Post Road.
- Osborn Road and Oakland Beach Avenue sidewalks.
- Midland Avenue and Palisade Road improvements.

There was a brief discussion about speeding by faculty members along Midland Avenue in response to comments by *Jim Amico, 350 Midland Avenue*. Suggestions included:

- Send a letter to faculty members. (This has been done but teachers must be treated like all citizens.)
- Speed clocks cause people to reduce their speed. Permanent speed clocks should be put in all school zones.
- Enforcement of speeding should be increased.

4. Discussion of Tax Certiorari process by City of Rye Assessor Noreen Whitty and Rye City Counsel Kevin Plunkett

City Assessor Noreen Whitty said that last year's increase in the assessment roll was one of the largest, due primarily to the reassessment of "knock downs" of residential properties. The 2008 assessment roll is what the school board will use for their budget this year, but these

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numbers will be offset by any tax certiorari reductions. Ms. Whitty also indicated that there had been an increase in small claims filings last year, which would be going to trial in May but those losses would not be as great as tax certiorari losses. She acknowledged that since the number of filings from single-family homeowners challenging their assessment is up, it now takes longer to get through the courts and this could affect the School District budget process.

Ms. Whitty was asked to explain what would be involved in doing a tax revaluation similar to what was done in the Town of Rye. She said that (1) it was very expensive, a minimum of \$500,000 or \$100 per parcel; (2) the City was willing to participate in a County-wide revaluation a few years back and signed on to such an initiative; however, not enough municipalities agreed to participate. Unless a majority of the county participates, there would be inequities in the apportionment of County taxes; and (3) due to current economic conditions there are not enough sales to do an accurate reassessment. The last time a revaluation was done in the City was 1972. The optimum time to do a revaluation is when the market stabilizes.

Finally, Ms. Whitty said that the recent local law passed by the City Council changed the valuation date, which is currently May 1st of the year the tentative assessment roll is filed, back to July 1st of the prior year in order to coincide with the State date for establishing equalization rates. This will allow the City to be in sync with the State and will be more equitable for use in small claims or tax certioraris when assessments are challenged.

Councilman Ball made a motion, seconded by Councilman Cunningham and unanimously carried, to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss specific tax certiorari cases at 10:30 a.m. No decisions were made or votes taken. Board President Nathan made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Parker to adjourn the Executive Session at 11:08 a.m. The regular meeting reconvened at 11:09 a.m.

5. Miscellaneous communications and reports

Councilman Cunningham suggested a review of the Shared Services Agreement between the two Boards. He also suggested a review of the mechanism for funding the maintenance and capital needs of shared facilities of the City and School District.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Board Member Slack made a motion, seconded by Board President Nathan and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Edward J. Shine
Superintendent of Schools