

MINUTES
RYE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
Rye Middle School Multipurpose Room
March 4, 2014

Present:

Ms. Laura Slack, President

Ms. Katy Keohane Glassberg, Vice President

Ms. Karen Belanger

**Mr. Edward Fox – Arrived at 7:16 p.m.

Ms. Nancy Pasquale

Mr. Christopher Repetto

Ms. Nicole Weber

And

Dr. Frank Alvarez, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Betty Ann Wyks, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

**Ms. Gabriella O'Connor, Assistant Superintendent for Business – Arrived at 7:24 p.m.

Ms. Elaine Cuglietto, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Mr. Gus Mountanos, Legal Counsel

The meeting was called to order by Laura Slack at 7:07 p.m. on Tuesday March 4, 2014 at Rye Middle School.

On a motion by Mr. Repetto, seconded by Ms. Pasquale and carried unanimously (6 -0) it was voted to move immediately into executive session to review the employment history of current and prospective employees.

On a motion by Ms. Glassberg, seconded by Ms. Belanger and carried unanimously (7 -0) it was voted at 8:25 p.m. to reconvene in public. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Presentation/Discussion

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank Alvarez and Assistant Superintendent for Business Gabriela O'Connor presented the 2014-15 Superintendents' Recommended Budget. This was the first of several budget conversations that will take place over the next few months.

The following budget topics were discussed in detail:

- District's Financial Activities
- Prior Cost Saving Measures
- Budget Drivers Beyond Local Control
- State Aid
- Enrollment and Budget Elements

Ms. O'Connor reviewed the District's financial activities and described the tax cap calculation, which fluctuates by municipality and government entity. She noted that the 2014-15 tax cap for the Rye City School District is 1.64%.

The Recommended Budget

The Superintendent's recommended 2014-15 budget is \$79,470,000, leaving the District with a shortfall of \$3,842,507 million. The budget-to-budget increase would be 3.53% with a 1.64% tax levy.

Below are four options for the 2014-15 budget that were presented and discussed in detail.

1) Tax Cap Compliant

Tax Cap permits increase from 2013/14 of \$1.13M (1.64%)

Plus use of Reserves or Reserves & Utility Tax of \$3.84M*

*The Board is considering implementing a utility tax, which would enable the District to bill the community's utility companies that provide services such as phone, internet, electric, and gas.

This would help to raise the District's revenues.

2) 100% Tax Revenue (Override Required)

Tax Cap permits increase from 2013/14 of \$1.13M (1.64%)

Plus override for additional \$3.84M (5.58%)

Total Tax Levy Increase of \$4.97M (7.22%)

3) Tax Revenue w/Override & Use of Reserves

Tax Cap permits increase from 2013/14 of \$1.13M (1.64%)

Plus override for additional \$1.54M (2.24%)

Total Tax Levy Increase of \$2.67M (3.88%)

Plus use of Reserves Consistent with current 2013/14 of \$2.3M

4) Use of Reserves & Budget Cuts (NOT RECOMMENDED)

Tax Cap permits increase from 2013/14 of \$1.13M (1.64%)

Plus use of Reserves, TBD

Budget Cuts up to \$ 1.7M

Tax Levy & Tax Rate

The estimated tax levy could range from \$69,989,093 (under a tax cap compliant budget) to \$73,831,600 (100% tax revenue). The estimated taxable assessments for July 1, 2014 are currently \$124,835,270, although this is subject to change. More information will be provided on the resulting tax rate per thousand of assessment as the process continues.

Mary Emery, Co-Chair of Friends of Rye addressed the Board asked for an explanation of the Utility Tax. Ms. O'Connor explained the Board is considering implementing this tax which would enable the District to bill the community's utility companies that provide services such as phone, internet, electric, and gas. This would help to raise the District's revenues. The Board engaged in a detailed conversation regarding the idea of imposing a possible utility tax.

Community Member Joan Sullivan addressed the Board regarding our cost expenditure per student and its comparative data to other school districts in Westchester County as well as the ratio of population of individuals that use the schools. Ms. Slack advised that we are below what some of our peer districts spend per student. This comparative data is available from the Westchester Putnam School Boards Association.

Members of the Board of Education commented on the proposed budget by the administration regarding the limitations of the tax cap, tax cap override, increase of retirement costs of both the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), the Employees' Retirement System (ERS), utility tax, state aid, anticipated staffing, class size guidelines, The Writing Mentor Program, enrollment growth, Growth Elimination Adjustment (GEA), use of cash reserves, program modifications and the four budget options provided to the Board for consideration. Mr. Fox asked the administration what the cost per average homeowner might be for the 2014-15 school year.

Mr. Jim Culyer addressed the Board inquiring about the support from the community for the district's recent advocacy campaign, the continued to use of the district's cash reserves, the Tax Cap Task Force, utility tax, possible use of lecture halls for instruction, bring your own technology device to school concept and the district's facilities needs and ways to raise that revenue.

Jamie Jensen Middle School PTO commended the Board and administration on their efforts but suggested that the message be communicated to the public that we have a need to increase revenue and we need to fight unfunded mandates. Ms. Jensen recommended that the Board communicate this to the community clearly and precisely.

Mary Emery, Co-Chair of Friends of Rye addressed the Board regarding tax certiorari and property reassessment options.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Mr. Repetto seconded by Ms. Pasquale and carried unanimously (7-0) it was voted at 10:40 p.m. to adjourn into Executive Session to continue to review the employment history of current and prospective employees.

On a motion by Mr. Repetto seconded by Ms. Pasquale and carried unanimously (7-0) it was voted at 11:10 p.m. to adjourn the meeting.

Elaine Cuglietto
District Clerk

Video of this meeting can be found on the District's website (www.ryeschools.org). Click on District and on Board of Education.