

LIBERTY TOWNSHIP MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING ON MAY 18, 2010

Let the record reflect that this was a special joint meeting conducted with the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education on this date. This meeting was held at the Middle School, Great Meadows, New Jersey.

Meeting called to order by Mayor Fisher at 7:32.

Sunshine Law Compliance was read by Mayor Fisher.

Roll Call for Liberty Township – Mr. Petersen, Mr. Grover, Mr. Inscho, Mr. Fisher and Ms. Reilly. Mr. Tibak absent due to prior appointment.

Mr. Grover asked that all cell phones be turned off during this meeting. He noted that since the school budget was defeated in Liberty Township the Township Committee is now the face, eyes and ears of Liberty Township. He noted that it difficult for us as well. The residents of Liberty Township told us (the committee) to revisit this issue. He noted that the Committee has identified a number of items. He noted that they all deal with budgets on a full time basis and we understand how budgets work.

Mr. Fisher then noted that this meeting is being recorded and if anyone wants a copy of this meeting they should call Liberty Township.

Mr. Fisher then stated that at the last meeting he heard that they wanted to ask Allamuchy to join Great Meadows Regional. Ms. Mumaw stated that they exploring this possibility and the vote were six in favor and two not in favor. Mr. Grover noted that this must be done by referendum.

Mr. Grover then went thru the list of line items Liberty suggested for cuts. Great Meadows Regional personnel and board members responded to each line item suggestion but felt no cuts could be made.

A five minute recess was called for by Great Meadows Regional.

Back into regular session at 9:15.

Mr. Grover thanked everyone for their explanations. He noted that Liberty Township was not asking for cuts in teachers or salaries with the exception of half time custodian and guidance counselors. They were asking for no program cuts at all. He noted at this time that the Liberty Township Committee was not unanimous in their thinking.

Let the record reflect that Committeeman Mark Tibak arrived at the meeting but did not sit with the Committee due to fact he was not present during these discussions.

Dr. Frederiks noted that the school budget was cut 1.5 million before the actual vote. They lost this in state aid. Mr. Grover noted that 70% of the Liberty Township tax bill is for school. This creates a significant amount for Liberty Township residents.

OPEN FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Sue Egan – Liberty Township – She noted that the shared superintendent line item needs to stay as well as money for teachers continued education. She wants what is best for our children and she is proud of our teachers.

Margo Bartiromo – Liberty Township – She noted that education is the most important thing we can give our children. She said if her tax bill goes up for services needed at the school for her children, she is ready for it.

Mr. Tebo – Liberty Township – He noted that the Committee spent a lot of money on the De-Regionalization Study.

Mr. Fisher responded by stating that Liberty Township employees have not had a pay raise in two years. This year we will give them a raise.

Mr. Inscho stated that he has been on the Township Committee since 1997 and at that time they were a million in debt – today he is proud to say Liberty does not owe a dime.

Mr. Fisher stated that our municipal aid has been cut 15% in the past five years as well.

Tom Schafer – Independence Township feels that a \$900,000 plus cut is almost punitive.

Linda McCloon – Liberty – She is worried about value of homes in Liberty. Her main concern is value of education. She is afraid the cuts will rape our system.

Dave Heard – Independence Township – He noted that the four Liberty Township Committee gentlemen are trying to work this out. He noted he was upset that the Independence Township Committee did not come.

Richard Wall – Independence Township Committeeman – He noted that this meeting was scheduled at the last minute and other township members could not attend. He asked Liberty Township Committee members to come down to \$250,000 so we can end this meeting and all can go home.

John Skodachek – Teacher at Great Meadows Regional – He noted that a lot of staff was lost before cuts. All teachers received notice of non-renewal. He asked that an agreement be made before it goes to Trenton.

Greg Vender – Independence Township – He wants the children now to have the same education as his children had when they attended Great Meadows Regional.

Mr. Frederiks noted that there is no fat in this budget.

Dr. Brennan thanked all for their efforts. He noted that this is a very frustrating process. He thanked Liberty Township for coming. He noted that if this budget goes to Trenton it will be done mathematically. He said there will be some input from the County as well. It will be out of our hands.

Laurie Washburn – Independence Township – She noted that she has been employed by the school district for twenty years. She said Great Meadows Regional is a great school. She stated that she has eighteen students and an aide. She said we need to pass this budget.

Bonnie Kelsey – Independence Township – She brought up the issue about the tuition paid to Hackettstown.

Mr. Grover stated that this consists of a 17% increase in tuition. He noted that Liberty Township Committee asked why? He was told that the school board was given that number by Hackettstown. Now we have a \$900,000 mistake we have no control over

Mr. Inscho stated that we have the best teachers at Great Meadows Regional!

Great Meadows Regional Board President said that they were not happy with the suggested cut from Independence of \$250,000 but it is better than it going to Trenton. It will hurt less.

Closed for public discussion.

Motion made by Mr. Fisher to cut the budget in the amount of \$684,000. No second. Motion died.

Motion made by Mr. Fisher to keep the original cut of \$945,250 as passed in Resolution 10-25, seconded by Inscho with roll call unanimous.

Ms. Cassini urged Liberty to cut \$250,000 and not send it to Trenton.

Motion made by Mr. Fisher, seconded by Mr. Inscho with roll call unanimous to adjourn said meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Willa L. Reilly, RMC
Municipal Clerk/Administrator