

**PORT JERVIS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MEETING MINUTES**

**February 24, 2015**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on February 24, 2015 in the High School Cafeteria.

Members Present: Judith Amato  
Michael Bello  
Noeleen Casey-Tomasi  
Tammy Myers  
William Onofry  
Florence Santini  
Reyes Torres Jr.  
William Smith

Members Absent: Robert Witherow

Others Present: Thomas Bongiovi, Superintendent  
Cynthia Benedict, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction  
Lorelei Case, Assistant Superintendent for Business  
Dawn Lasch, Clerk of the Board

**Others Absent:** Student Representatives – Alison Buzzelli and Timothy Shearer

**Call to Order – Agenda Item 1**

The meeting was called to order by President William Onofry.

**Motion to Enter into Executive Session – Agenda Item 2**

Flo Santini moved, seconded by Noeleen Casey-Tomasi to enter into executive session at 6:30 p.m.  
Motion carried with a 8-0-1 (Witherow) vote.

**Motion to Enter into Regular Session – Agenda Item 3**

Flo Santini moved, seconded by Rey Torres to return to regular session at 7:35 p.m. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 (Witherow) vote. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Flo Santini followed by a Moment of Silence.

**Presentation – Agenda Item 4**

**Capital Project Referendum by Lorelei Case and Don Preiss** – Ms. Case said the Buildings and Grounds Committee has met several times over the last couple months and drafted a list of possible Capital Project Referendums items. We never thought we would get to a point where we had to do \$15 million worth of work at a time just to do renovations. With that in mind, we drafted a list, we shared it with the Board members, we got feedback and we will now talk about everything that was on the list and what we feel as a committee and as the Director of Buildings and Grounds what we really should consider doing as we move forward in the 2015-16 school year. Some of the projects under consideration are as follows:

## **Health and Safety Areas**

- a. Rubber Room Gym Roof & Auditorium Rigging in the HS
- b. Playground Equipment/Resurfacing at ASK/HBE
- c. Cafetorium Automatic Door Replacement at HBE
- d. Armour Coating on Vestibule Glass - District Wide
- e. Garage Demo & Pole Barn Replacement at MS

## **Maintenance Area**

- a. Ceiling Replacement at HBE
- b. Kitchen Refrigeration/Equipment – district wide
- c. Chase Field Track Refinishing at HS
- d. Electronic Signs – ASK/HBE

## **Instructional Area**

- a. Art Room, Band/Chorus & FACS Rooms at HS

This referendum is being presented to the taxpayers for \$3.7 million.

There is a Smart Bond that is available to us that the state is going to disperse to us for about \$3.1 million. When those funds become available, we would like to apply the funds to the following projects:

- a. Wireless Access- District Wide
- b. Auditorium Projection & Sound Systems at ASK/HBE
- c. Library Upgrade at ASK/HBE

## **Projects on Hold**

- a. Fencing at ASK/HBE
- b. Paving at 209 Complex
- c. Tennis Courts at HS
- d. Cafeteria Floor at HBE

Mr. Preiss and Ms. Case went through each project on the list in detail. At the end of the presentation Ms. Case said she would take questions and concerns from the Board and would like some type of consensus when they get done so she knows whether or not to move forward with the referendums.

Ms. Casey-Tomasi asked about the floor problem at the MS. Ms. Case said she had that information as part of her report but she would be happy to do it now. Ms. Case reported that on February 11<sup>th</sup> a concern about the MS floor was reported. The concern was that the tile floor had developed additional cracks. This concern had been addressed and cleared structurally by engineers in the past. To reaffirm that the additional visual cracking was only cosmetic, an engineer examined it and confirmed that there is no structural concerns. A report will be issued in the upcoming weeks.

After the question and answer period Ms. Case said she needs an answer from the Board tonight because we need to adopt the resolution by March 10<sup>th</sup> in order for us to meet all the time lines to get the public notified of what the project looks like. Mr. Torres said he would like the projects to move forward but he wants it to be a zero impact to the taxpayers of this community. President Onofry asked the remainder of the Board to respond to Ms. Case by looking at the project to see if there were any areas that they thought could be reduced to cut the project down a little bit. This would give Ms. Case some room to adjust the project so we can get to that zero balance. A video of the presentation can be found on the school website and a copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.

## Public Comment – Agenda Item 5

**Valerie Maginsky** – the Chairman of Operation PJ Pride said it's a coalition of volunteers designed to reduce substance abuse in the community and in particular within our youth. The Drug Free Communities Grant is a Federal Grant and it would provide up to \$125,000 a year for each year for a total of 5 years. Once we reach the end of those 5 years we have the option of reapplying for an additional 5 years. If awarded, that would bring us to a full 10 year mark and over \$1,250,000.00, all of which would be focused on the reduction of substance abuse in our community and in our youth. This is a youth driven grant application. We are not here looking for your money, we are looking for your support. These monies would be used to hire a full time coordinator where right now we are all volunteers. Operation PJ Pride began in 2012 with an invitation from PJ Police Chief William Worden. At that time we had just experienced the unexpected deaths of a number of 20 year olds. It was said they died of opiates and heroin overdoses. If you do prevention right by the time you're done you don't have a problem anymore. We have an established relationship with the school system. In fact our name Operation PJ Pride was voted on by the students in the HS. Coming up in March we will be attending our third Health and Wellness fair where we give out information to the kids.

**Ms. Maginsky** said we are here to provide a little more information to the School Board. I have some handouts of general information along with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU is necessary because it is made up of sectors in the community. Right now we have 11 sectors filled in with an MOU and I'm coming to you with the request that you consider becoming our last MOU partner. We would like you to review this MOU and please understand it is here to be used until either partner decides that it is unworkable or unattainable any longer. It's a commitment of the work we have already been doing between Operation P. J. Pride and the school system.

**Gary Butler** – a HS parent said he has an issue with School Tool. If a student fails a test, they don't find out about it for 6 to 14 days. Mr. Butler used getting your car repaired as an example of how the system is broken and needs to get fixed. "We have broken kids we need to get fixed". This is a parallel with a math issue we have. The school average for math is 40. In my son's class, the whole class is failing. We have no math books, we have no set curriculum. This is pretty sad and has been going on since October. We are worried about grounds and painting stuff but we need either more teachers or more books. This needs to be straightened out. You have a major math issue going on in this school and nobody is looking at it, people just turn their heads. We have a problem here and you need to spend some money in this direction. Mr. Butler suggested that the district hire some tutors and get these kids back on the right track.

**Tacia Johnson** – Montague School Board President said she would like to give an update on what we have been doing over there. With the new Board, we kept in place the ad hoc committee which is the Transition Committee with Port Jervis. I've taken the place of Beverly Borrego who was the past years president. We are in the process of finalizing an RFP to be posted for special counsel to work with Port Jervis, which would work with the ad hoc board rather than the attorney that was in place before. We felt there was a conflict of interest between Port Jervis, Montague and High Point because there was dual representation on that. Mrs. Johnson said we would like to meet with your Board and not go back and forth between the attorneys. It would be more of a personal level to take corrective action on the plans they attempted to put in place previously and revisit maybe the long term plans on how the relationship with PJ could be continued as much as possible given the hasty actions the Board has taken in the past.

President Onofry suggested she contact Mr. Bongiovi and set up a meeting with the three of us to get the preliminaries of what to do and then we'll take it from that point.

## Administrative Reports – Agenda Item 6

**Ms. Case** - At the last meeting the Board agreed to a vote on the Veteran's Exemption. The resolution is not on tonight's agenda because of the mandated public hearings. A timeline to examine the impact of the exemption and to allow for public input has been established. The hearings will be advertised as required by law. On March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm I will present on the exemption and its projected impact to

other taxpayers. The presentation will be followed by two public hearings. The first hearing will be open for comment on the Veterans' Exemption itself. The second hearing will allow discussion on the exemption amounts. The hearings will allow public comment.

Tentatively, at the April 7<sup>th</sup> or later meeting the Board will vote on the issue. Exemptions, if approved, would be applied to the 2016-17 tax levy.

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, the district's last DOT 19-A record review was conducted. The district is taking its only school bus off line and will not have a school bus driver roster. The review was clean.

On February 13, 2015, the State Food Service Program audit was conducted at ASK elementary. The initial findings were shared with the Board in an informational memo. The food preparation and program is in compliance. The auditor has concerns that the breakfast program is not being supported properly or sufficiently. Written comments will be forthcoming and an action plan will be developed and implemented to address the concerns.

I attended the Annual State Aid Planning Workshop today. The state budget is still under debate and an adopted budget is not anticipated before April 1<sup>st</sup>. The governor is demanding reform in education – specifically teacher preparation/evaluation and strengthening accountability for failing schools and educators as well as changes in STAR – cap at 0% and make an income tax credit for new home owners. These are just two of the Governor's demands. If the governor's demands are not met, he has declared that education aid will remain at the 2014-15 levels for 2015-16.

I want to thank the Board and the community for listening to our Capital Project Referendum and I look forward to your comments and concerns so we can move forward over the project. At the end of tonight's meeting, the building administrators will share their additional budget request with the Board. I look forward to guidance from the Board in developing the 2015-16 budget.

**Mrs. Benedict** - This is an important announcement for parents of children, who will be 5 years old on/before December 1, 2015. Our first Kindergarten registration for the 2015-2016 school year will be held tomorrow at ASK from 3:30-5 pm. Please check our website or call our registration office for upcoming dates/times and required documents.

March 15<sup>th</sup> is the day that 5 students from our MS, HBE and ASK will be competing in the Tri-State Spelling Bee against students from Eldred, Montague and the two DV middle schools. Our students qualified as a result of our district spelling bee and will be competing to win a spot to compete in the National Spelling Bee in Washington DC. This year the Tri-State Spelling Bee will be hosted by PJ right here in our HS cafeteria. It is truly a great spectator event and I encourage all to attend to support our students.

Odyssey of the Mind Region 5 competition will be held this Saturday at OUBOCES in Goshen. PJ will be represented by 2 teams from the HS and a team from each elementary school. Our teams will be competing at various times during the day and the awards ceremony will be held at 4pm for our elementary teams and 5pm for our HS teams. If you would like to check out the times of the competitions you can go to the schedule of events posted on our website.

Fair Funding for our schools rally is scheduled for March 26<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 @ MWHS. Renowned author, blogger, NYU professor and education authority, Diane Ravitch will inspire you as the keynote speaker for this event. Everyone is encouraged to mark their calendar for this event.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Faggione, our district public relations specialist, for initiating a new feature this week. He sent out a SNN with a reminder of events for the week. He plans to follow up with reminders each week.

**Mr. Bongiovi** – said at the last Board meeting all Board members received a white folder with PJ School District on the front. Inside that folder is what I call the District Report. On the left side are the elementary schools and the right side are the secondary schools. It starts out listing some of the highlights from the 2014-15 school year. It then lists for each school every single teacher and every single section size for each building so the Board can get an idea of every single subject taught in each of the buildings. In addition, for each of the buildings, is the Strategic Plan Scorecard. This is an easy accessible reference so the Board can get all the class sizes but also as we go into the budget season you will have an idea of what we have and what we need moving forward. If you didn't have time to look at this, please refer to this and if you have any questions feel free to call or e-mail me, you don't have to wait until the next Board meeting.

### **Consent Agenda Items – Agenda Item 7**

Bill Smith moved, seconded by Rey Torres to approve the following items:

**a. Minutes from the February 3, 2015 Meeting of the Board of Education (Section I)**

**b. CSE/CPSE Minutes (enclosure no. 1)**

CSE Minutes: 01-15-15; 01-16-15; 01-20-15; 01-21-15; 01-22-15; 01-23-15; 01-29-15;  
01-30-15; 02-03-15; 02-04-15; 02-05-15; 02-10-15; 02-11-15

CPSE Minutes: 01-21-15; 01-23-15; 01-28-15; 02-04-15; 02-05-15; 02-11-15; 02-18-15

**c. FMLA, Intermittent and Leave of Absences per Enclosures (Section III Personnel)**

Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote. After the motion, Mrs. Casey-Tomasi said that she does not accept the minutes from the last meeting. She would like the minutes to reflect the comments and exchanges made by the Board on the Veterans Exemption that wasn't reflected. For me it's important on subjects like this. Mr. Onofry agreed to have them amended. Bill Smith moved, seconded by Mike Bello to rescind the motion on the consent agenda items. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote. Bill Smith moved, seconded by Noeleen Casey-Tomasi to sever item a from the consent agenda items. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote. Flo Santini moved, seconded by Rey Torres to approve items b and c of the consent agenda items. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote.

### **Appointment (s) – Agenda Item 8**

Bill Smith moved, seconded by Tammy Myers to approve the following appointments:

**A. Instructional Staff**

**Name:** Victoria Guaragno (extension of previous appointment)  
**Position:** English Teacher  
**Assignment:** High School  
**Reason:** Vacancy No. 1819 (Leave replacement)  
**Effective:** January 26, 2015 – May 8, 2015  
(Previously approved 1/26/15 with no end date at the 12/18/14 BOE meeting)  
**Salary:** \$52,871 – Step 1 (Pro-rated)

**Name:** Kimberly Coniglio  
**Position:** Guidance Counselor  
**Assignment:** High School  
**Reason:** Vacancy No. 1823 (Leave replacement)  
**Effective:** March 3, 2015 – April 19, 2015  
**Salary:** \$56,869 – Step 1 (Pro-rated)  
1,500 - Masters  
2,346 - Credits (51)  
\$60,715

**Name:** Catherine Lane  
**Position:** Guidance Counselor  
**Assignment:** High School  
**Reason:** Vacancy No. 1824 (Leave replacement)  
**Effective:** April 6, 2015 – June 30, 2015  
**Salary:** \$56,869 – Step 1 (Pro-rated)  
                   1,500 - Masters  
                   2,208 - Credits (48)  
                   \$60,577

**B. Substitute Teachers/RNS                   \*Denotes College Students                   Bold=Home Tutor**

<b><u>A = Certified</u></b>	<b><u>B=Bachelor’s Degree</u></b>
Teena Spano	Alaina Berger
Michael Shuster	Katrina DeLeon
Ryan Cunningham	

**C. Athletic Coaching Positions for the 2014-2015 School Year – Vacancy No. 1784**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Salary</u></b>
Rhea Luhrs	Softball Coach	Volunteer/Non paid
Ryan Cunningham	Assistant Baseball Coach	Volunteer/Non-paid

**D. AIS Instructional Staff Substitute for the 2014-2015 School Year – Vacancy No. 1812  
\$40.03 per hour**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>School</u></b>
Jennifer Elston	MS

**E. ARCH Instructional Staff for the 2014-2015 School Year - Vacancy No. 1788  
\$49.96 per hour**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Subject</u></b>
Adam Kean	Special Education
Nancy Caporusso	Special Education

**F. ARCH Instructional Staff Substitute for the 2014-2015 School Year – Vacancy No. 1788  
Ron Semerano**

No discussion. Motion carried with 8-0-1 vote.

**Approval of Corrected Tax Rolls for the 2014-2015 School Year – Agenda Item 9**

Rey Torres moved, seconded by Bill Smith to approve the aforementioned corrected tax rolls. No discussion. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote.

**Approval of Resolution to Appoint Special Counsel - Agenda Item 10**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education of the Port Jervis City School District hereby appoints Erin M. O’Grady-Parent, Esq. of Guercio & Guercio LLP, to provide advice and counsel regarding a complaint letter submitted by certain staff members at an hourly rate of \$240.

Flo Santini moved, seconded by Noeleen Casey-Tomasi to approve the aforementioned resolution. No discussion. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote.

## **Approval of Health Insurance Agreement between Port Jervis City School District and CSEA Employee – Agenda Item 11**

Mike Bello moved, seconded by Rey Torres to approve the aforementioned agreement. No discussion. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote.

## **Approval of Trip to Spain for PJHS Students March 27, 2015 – April 4, 2015 – Agenda Item 12**

Mike Bello moved, seconded by Bill Smith to approve the aforementioned trip. No discussion. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote.

## **Board Member Comments – Agenda Item 13**

**Mrs. Casey-Tomasi** – asked Ms. Case regarding the changes we made with the Veteran's Exemption, when we get to March does that allow time and discussion for a straw poll or is that something we should be discussing tonight? Ms. Case replied that she did talk to the attorney to see if we could do a non-binding resolution just to get a sense on how the community feels and she said no you cannot do that. Mrs. Casey-Tomasi asked why we can't do it when other districts have done it since it's non-binding a just a straw poll? Which is asking the public to vote, it's a nonbinding vote to let the Board know in May what the public's feeling would be on the exemptions. If other districts have done it I'm not understanding why we cannot. Ms. Case said she will get a legal opinion for Mrs. Casey-Tomasi but at this point we can't do anything for the 2015-16 school year. It can't be done until 2015-16. We will go ahead with the Public Hearing so we can hear from the public at the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. The presentation that I will share with the Board will also be placed on line so the public can view it before that meeting. We can have the Public Hearing but you would not be able to vote that day. It would take place sometime in the future so I would have time to get that information for you while still maintain the Public Hearing date of March 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Mrs. Casey-Tomasi** asked Mr. Bongiovi to talk about the district and Sullivan West being cited in the probe. Mr. Bongiovi explained that the Attorney General's office had cited several school districts throughout the state for some of their forms that they use for registration. We have been working in cooperation with the Attorney General's office. We made those corrections in our forms, so that was step one. The next step is a training to take place and our Attorney Mr. Scapoli will be doing that training. From there our agreement requires us to send periodic reports of any students that have been denied registration to the Attorney General's office. This is a three year agreement.

**Mrs. Casey-Tomasi** said the MS has a play coming up, they are taking us to Baltimore in their production of *Hairspray Jr.* I know Mrs. Cross and all the kids are working very hard on this. I encourage everyone, as I always do, to come and see our plays. It's going to be high energy and a lot of fun

**Mrs. Casey-Tomasi** asked Mr. Smith if that at the next policy meeting we could look further into Sex Offenders on School Property as mentioned in the legal agenda in the On Board paper. This article seems to give us a lot more options to put information on line and get information out to people. I understand that we would have to speak to legal on that too but certainly if it's in the paper it's an option to us as far as people coming on the property and who shouldn't be on property. I know that's a concern for people and wonder if it's something we could look at. Mr. Smith said I have no problem with that. I know all our policies are in order and we would have to put together a special meeting to discuss that issue.

**Mrs. Casey-Tomasi** asked why HBE has a reading night once a month called the *Bag of Books Program* and it's not being offered at ASK. How is it that it is offered at one elementary school and not at the other? I think it's a great idea. Mr. Bongiovi said I know it is something that we can look at. I know it's a goal of the Board to get the two elementary schools to do the same things but they are not going to be able to do exactly everything the same. That requires someone who is willing to do it and put the time in. Mrs. Casey-Tomasi said that because it is a reading program she would like to have the district look into it further and Mr. Bongiovi said he is certain that they can investigate that.

**President Onofry** read a letter he received from Orange-Ulster BOCES regarding the Annual BOCES Administrative Budget vote and Cooperative Board election. The Component Boards dinner and budget presentation will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2015 in the multipurpose room at the Career and Technical Education Center. The Cooperative Board elections will be held on Thursday, April 23, 2015. The terms of two members of the OU Cooperative Board expire June 30, 2015. The Board members whose terms expire this year are: Michael Bello from Port Jervis and Eugenia Pavek from Minisink Valley. Both will be running for re-election. The length of the term is three (3) years. Anyone interested in running for these seats must reside within the boundaries of one of OU-BOCES component school districts and should apply to the District's Superintendents office.

**Mr. Bello** said he will be sending a letter to all the component Boards of Education very shortly requesting nomination. Candidates only need one nomination from a component Board to be on the ballot.

#### **Informational Items – Agenda Item 14**

All informational items were acknowledged and received.

#### **Dates to Remember – Agenda Item 15**

President Onofry read the Dates to Remember.

#### **Adjournment – Agenda Item 16**

President Onofry requested that the next schedule BOE meeting schedule for March 10<sup>th</sup> be moved to Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> as he will be out of town and Mr. Bello will be also..

Flo Santini moved to change the meeting date to March 11, 2015, seconded by Tammy Myers. No discussion. Motion carried with a 8-0-1 vote.

Flo Santini moved, seconded by Bill Smith to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 pm with a 5-0-4 vote.

**Budget Presentation/Workshop to follow:** Each of the principals and administrators will be presenting their additional budget requests, like staffing and other items, that they will be asking the board to consider. There will be no decisions made today but the Board will review the lists between now and March 11<sup>th</sup> so some decisions can be made in preparing the budget for next year.

A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes and will also be posted on the district website to view.

The next regular meeting/Public Hearing will be held on **Wednesday, March 11, 2015** at 6:30 p.m. (executive session), 7:00 p.m. (Public Hearing) and 7:30 p.m. (open business meeting) in the High School Cafeteria.

Transcribed by *Dawn R. Lasch*  
Dawn R. Lasch, Clerk of the Board  
Port Jervis Board of Education