

**TOWNSHIP OF MANSFIELD  
BURLINGTON COUNTY  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 1, 2018  
Work Session – 6:00PM**

The Special Meeting of the Mansfield Township Committee was held on the aforementioned date with the following in attendance: **Mayor Robert Higgins, Deputy Mayor Janice DiGiuseppe, Committeeman Sean Gable, Committeeman Michael Magee, and Committeeman Frederick Cain.** Also in attendance were **Municipal Clerk Linda Semus and Deputy Clerk Caitlin Midgette.**

**Mayor Higgins** called the meeting to order, followed by the following opening statement read by **Municipal Clerk Semus:**

Public notice of this meeting pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act NJSA 10:4-6 to 10:4-21 has been satisfied. Notice of this meeting was properly given in the annual notice, which was adopted by the Mansfield Township Committee on January 3, 2018. Said Resolution was transmitted to the Burlington County Times and the Trenton Times, filed with the Clerk of the Township of Mansfield, posted on the official bulletin board at the Municipal Complex, filed with the members of this body and mailed to each person who has prepaid any charge fixed for such service. All of the mailing, posting, and filing having been accomplished as of January 7, 2018.

The above statement was followed by the Flag Salute and a moment of silence.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Mayor Higgins** opened the floor to public comments. There being no comments, this portion of the meeting was closed.

**PRESENTATION**

***Northern Burlington County Regional School***

Dr. James Sarruda, Superintendent, Mr. Richard Kaz, Administrator, and additional school representatives were present to discuss with Township Committee and the attending public the upcoming school referendum to be voted on at the Special Election of March 13, 2018. Mr. Sarruda explained that the purpose of the referendum is to provide for necessary capital improvements to the High School that will increase the efficiency of the facility, security, and student academics. Such enhancements include a new heating and air conditioning system, increased security measures and emergency communications, additional classrooms, and the construction of a connection between the east and west wings of the campus. Dr. Sarruda explained that the referendum for capital improvements brought before the public in 2015 was defeated, and upon data gathering, decided to present a new proposal at a reduced cost with the intent of being more amenable to the public. The new referendum will ask for the approval of a \$39,760,000 bond, the life of which will be 30 years. Overall, the tax impact of the same is 4%.

**Mayor Higgins** opened the floor for questions or comments relating to the above presentation.

Colleen Herbert, 2 Millennium Drive, inquired if the purchase of furniture and equipment will be included in the bond, or if the same will be a separate purchase. Mr. Sarruda replied that the purchase of furniture/equipment are included within the bond.

Jean Daly, 15 Candlelight Circle, expressed her support of the referendum as the safety of the student body is a priority. Ms. Daly sought suggestions on how to convince opposing residents to look beyond the tax increase and vote in support of the referendum. In summary, Mr. Sarruda explained that the convincing message behind the referendum is that the improvements will cost more money if the aforementioned renovations are completed without approval of the same, and will have to be paid for over a shorter period of time than the 30 year life of the proposed bond. Additionally, referendums are also eligible for state aid. Moreover, Mr. Kaz stated that residents experienced a tax decrease due to the maturity of a bond in 2017, so the tax increase for the new bond will not be significantly noticeable. Ms. Daley concurred that the additional tax money can

be saved by residents by simply avoiding frivolous spending. She stressed her belief that updating the school facility is of high importance.

Darla Bretz, 29 Candlelight Circle, expressed that she is in favor of the referendum due to security reasons. Ms. Bretz continued by stating that there is a considerable amount of misinformation published in the newspapers and on social media regarding the referendum. Mr. Sarruda acknowledged this issue, and stated that the School District has been proactive in communicating the correct details to the public through various mediums.

Fred Wainwright, former resident, inquired if reducing the life of the bond in half would accrue less interest to be paid off by taxpayers. Mr. Sarruda responded that though that may be true, the purpose of a 30 year bond is to create less of an impact on taxes, and to give more flexibility in paying off the same within a shorter period of time if revenues prove it possible. Mr. Wainwright asked if previous projects conducted by the School District have gone over budget, and if the same would be possible with the referendum. Mr. Sarruda explained that if the referendum is approved, additional funds outside of the bond cannot be spent on the project. Moreover, each professional contract formulated under the referendum will provide a contingency for change orders to prevent the over expenditure of funds. Mr. Wainwright expressed that his priority is the safety of students. Mr. Sarruda agreed, and stated that the School District takes incremental steps to improve security every year, including the hiring of full-time School Resource Officers. On a separate topic, Mr. Wainwright stated that the FAA curriculum has proved to be a positive influence and hopes the same can continue.

**Mayor Higgins** stated that Township Committee felt very strongly about providing School Resource Officers, and the safety of students is of utmost importance.

**Deputy Mayor DiGiuseppe**, reflecting on the upcoming resurfacing of Mansfield Road East, expressed concern that should the referendum be passed, construction vehicles will damage the new asphalt. If damages do materialize from the same, Ms. DiGiuseppe inquired if the School District would put forth funds for repair. Mr. Sarruda stated that he would take these concerns to the contractors, and that coordination between the projects should be feasible.

**Committeeman Cain** inquired about state ADA requirements, most specifically relating to bathrooms. Mr. Sarruda explained that there is currently only one ADA compliant bathroom in the school's complex, which often requires handicapped individuals to move from one building to the other to access. However, Mr. Sarruda confirmed that the construction plans stipulated in the referendum will rectify both issues. **Committeeman Cain** then inquired about how long the renovations are projected to extend the life of the building, and whether it would be more feasible to construct a new school. Mr. Sarruda replied that the bond would not be enough to finance a new school that would accommodate the capacity of children, and that the need to construct a new building is not anticipated in the near future. Moreover, Mr. Sarruda added that the aesthetics of the campus would be difficult to replicate.

**Committeeman Magee** expressed the sentiment that the requested improvements are necessary to ensure the safety of students, especially in the light of recent tragic events.

**Jean Daly**, 15 Candlelight Circle, stressed the significant importance of school security, as the children are the future. Ms. Daly then inquired about the public response from the Homestead Community. Mr. Kaz stated that the conversations with residents on the matter were productive.

**Committeeman Gable** thanked those involved in the project, and acknowledged that though taxes will be raised if the referendum is passed, the safety of children is the priority.

**Mayor Higgins** thanked the school representatives for their presentation. Mr. Higgins expressed his concerns over the safety of students, stating that it is imperative to protect Northern Burlington from the possibility of a school violence as seen in recent times throughout the country. Personally, Mr. Higgins declared that he is going to vote in favor of the referendum.

### **ENGINEERS REPORT**

In the absence of **Township Engineer Briglia**, **Municipal Clerk Semus** noted that the topographical survey for the former municipal complex is complete. **Mayor Higgins** stated that contract for the sale of the same will be prepared in the coming weeks.

A motion was offered by **Committeeman Magee** and seconded by **Committeeman Gable** to accept the Engineer's Report. Motion carried.

**DISCUSSION**

Liaison Position – Administrator/Committee – Amending Ordinance

A motion was offered by **Deputy Mayor DiGiuseppe** and seconded by **Committeeman Gable** to table the aforementioned discussion. Motion carried.

**MAYOR AND COMMITTEE COMMENT**

**Committeeman Cain** inquired if an agreement has been reached to provide sewage to the Margolis project. **Mayor Higgins** responded that Florence Township has filed a motion to suspend the same. Currently, the matter is before the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for approval.

Township Committee thanked the public for attending.

**MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was offered by **Deputy Mayor DiGiuseppe** and seconded by **Committeeman Cain** to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:16PM.

**PREPARED BY:**

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Caitlin Midgette**  
**Deputy Clerk**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Linda Semus, RMC, CMR**  
**Municipal Clerk**

**Approved: April 5, 2018**