

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
December 5, 2007**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Hemant Marathe at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at Dutch Neck Elementary School. The following Board members were present:

Mr. Hemant Marathe
Mr. Robert Johnson
Ms. Patricia Bocarsly

Mr. Anthony Fleres
Ms. Anjani Gharpure
Mr. Stan Katz

Mr. Richard Kaye
Mr. Randall Tucker
Ms. Ellen Walsh

Present also were: Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Dr. Thomas Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services/Planning, and Mr. Steven Mayer, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

CONVENE

In accordance with the State's Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE TRENTONIAN, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro's and West Windsor's township clerks and in each of the district schools.

No members of the public were present.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the retreat and noted the three topics selected with input from the board committees. Dr. Victoria Kniewel noted that her superintendency was now three months old and thanked the two longer serving assistant superintendents Mr. Shanok and Dr. Smith for their assistance as well as the entire Central Office Team and the Board of Education. Dr. Kniewel introduced the agenda for the retreat and the parameters for the discussions.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Kniewel introduced the evening of discussion with the topic of legacies. What might both individual and board legacies be? Several topics had the interest of board members. Several felt strongly about the efforts to improve the facilities of the district and both the annual efforts and the Referendum efforts figure strongly in that legacy view. Several focused on the concepts of "do no harm" as well as leaving the district stronger than when they started on the board. There was also strong interest in the improvement of the curriculum, implementation of the strategic plan, and the strong financial rating of the district (currently tops among New Jersey public school districts).

The Superintendent noted that all of these legacy interests make an excellent district even better and that such progress is very much in tune with our history as a district. Dr. Smith presented a history of the district; a history of both facility milestones and people. Clearly the district has had many productive years, board after board, and administrative team after administrative team. Such continuous improvement is a strong group legacy through the decades. From four schools in 1890 to regionalization in 1969, to the ten schools of today, our history is rich in achievement.

Dr. Smith introduced the facilities topic with some handouts highlighting a few key facts. Expenditures normally funded from referendum dollars but supported to date from the annual budget total nearly a half million dollars. It was noted that spending and commitments to date top \$27.5 million, leaving a current availability of funds at most of the million dollars authorized by voters last April to be shifted from capital reserve to the referendum. A number of elements originally envisioned within the referendum have been put aside or deleted to date.

There was then a wide ranging discussion relating to the possibility of adding the four closed classrooms to the current referendum effort. The discussion noted the inevitability of change orders as renovations begin in June but strongly concluded that the four closed classrooms are of very great interest to the board. The matter was referred back to the Administration & Facilities Committee to work on actualizing this intent.

The next topic of discussion was enrollment. It was noted that the district has had a remarkably good record in demographic analysis. Some current differences to expectations presently lie in slightly higher enrollment at Maurice Hawk (named for a great figure in the history of the district) and lower enrollment at Dutch Neck. The discussion that ensued dealt both with whether this was something to act upon and whether that action, if taken, should be administration driven or board driven.

The recent history of the district includes a small shift in enrollment that was handled by the administration. There was a consensus that the current issue of Hawk and Dutch Neck could be handled in a similar fashion. This would mean that should the administration develop a plan of action it would be discussed at a board committee and not by a discussion with the entire board.

The final discussion topic of interest to the board of education was the supervisory structure of the district. The superintendent described the nature and strength of the current structure. The desirability of more efforts in areas such as the arts, physical education and health were noted. Future needs and availability of specific personnel make for interesting and varied possibilities for the future. Many important elements figure into the issue including the Strategic Plan, budget constraints and tenure rules.

The Superintendent and Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Tucker, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and by unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary