

10/8/2008 Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Berlin Central School District, held at the Berlin Elementary School

Present: Frank Zwack, Julie Darling, Donald French, Elizabeth Miller, Thomas Morelli, Jeffrey Paine, Beverly Stewart
Absent: No one
Also Present: Charlotte Gregory, Cathie Allain, Michelle Colvin, Cyril Grant, Dennis Healy, Scott Hunter, Eileen Leffler, Jennifer Morris, Sandra Owens
Guests included: Diane Paine, Tammy Osterhout, Madonna Roy

President Zwack convened the meeting at 7:30 PM with all seven board members present. President Zwack also reminded the board members to respect each other and keep the meeting productive to do justice to the district.

The meeting was then turned over to Interim Business Administrator, Scott Hunter, for a report out on the projected cost savings of closing Stephentown Elementary in 2009 and Grafton Elementary in 2010.

Projected Savings 2009-2010 – Closure of Stephentown Elementary School

Staff Reductions	\$258,970
Calculated on 2008-09 salary/wage rates plus 3%	
Supplies & Services	\$19,344
Calculated on 50% of 2008-09 budgeted expense plus 4%	
Utilities	\$24,133
Benefits	<u>\$126,20</u>
Total	\$428,653

Projected Savings 2010-2011 – Closure of Grafton Elementary School

Staff Reductions	\$192,184
Calculated on 2008-09 salary/wage rates plus 6%	
Supplies & Services	\$23,678
Calculated on 50% of 2008-09 budgeted expense plus 8%	
Utilities	\$30,239
Benefits	\$60,151
Total	<u>\$306,252</u>

Grand Total Projected Savings \$734,906

Other 2007-2010 Cost Savings:

2007-08 Teacher Retirement “Breakage”	\$100,000
2008-09 Teacher Retirement “Breakage”	20,000
2009-10 Teacher Retirement “Breakage”	20,000
2008-09 Administrative “Breakage” Business Administrator	76,268
2008-09 Administrative” Breakage” Grafton Principal	<u>39,703</u>
Total 2007-10 “Breakage” Savings	\$255,971

10/8/2008 Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Berlin Central School District, held at the Berlin Elementary School

Mr. Hunter explained that breakage is the difference between the salary of a teacher retiring and a new teacher being hired.

Intern Business Administrator, Sandy Owens, then presented data on Teacher/Student ratios from 1998 – 2008. This information showed a decline in the number of teachers and students over the last 10 years. However, the total district student/and total district teacher ratios have remained stable with a 5:1 ratio in 1998 and a 4:1 ratio in 2008; due to state mandates.

Data for the same time period on total employees for the district was also provided; showing a decline from 241 employees in 1998 to 215 employees in 2008.

Interim Superintendent, Charlotte Gregory, presented a list of items that had been cut from the budgets from 1998-2008 that included:

- **Foreign Language reduced to one language**
- **Electives in English, Social Studies, Math & Science reduced**
- **Elimination of elementary school psychology & social worker program**
- **Elementary Certified Library Media Specialist eliminated; replaced by Teaching Assistants**
- **Elimination of two reading teacher positions at the secondary and junior high levels**
- **Elimination of reading teacher at elementary level**
- **Elimination of Foreign Language program at elementary and junior high levels**
- **Elimination of remedial math teacher at high school**
- **Reduction or elimination of custodial positions**
- **Elimination of monitor positions at the High School**
- **Weight room/training room and equipment not funded**
- **Science equipment allowed to deteriorate due to lack of funding**
- **Drama/theatre budgets not funded**
- **Significant reduction in Library funds**
- **Teacher classroom supply budgets held at status quo**
- **Elimination of district-wide technology program at the end of a grant period**

A comparison on state aid, property taxes, other revenues, total revenues, total expenses, final budget and total enrollment was given for 1998-2008.

<u>9-Year Average Growth</u>	
State-Aid	2.53%
Property Taxes	6.27%
Other Revenue	2.78%
Total Revenue	3.92%

10/8/2008 Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Berlin Central School District, held at the Berlin Elementary School

Total Expenses 3.51%
Total Budget 3.80%
Enrollment -2.71%

Graphs on the Revenue vs. Expense and Property Tax vs. State Aid were also reviewed.

Data of the Approved Operating Expenses per Pupil (AOE/Pupil) from 1998-2008 was distributed. This data shows that Berlin has been uniformly below the state average, but parallel to it. The information also included three local districts that are comparable to Berlin.

State Aid Year	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09
Expense Year	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
State Avg	6050	6250	6600	6900	7400	7650	8050	8500	9250	9900	10650
Berlin	5902	5861	6315	6995	7322	7641	7980	8633	9179	9535	10221
District #1	6239	6866	6933	7602	8132	8844	8690	9402	10300	11383	11430
District #2	4792	5093	5551	5678	5968	6686	6565	6758	7402	8300	8564
District #3	5963	5819	6409	6333	6452	6316	7479	7492	7750	7662	8737

The final document that was presented included information on the equalization/proportion/rates/true value for each of the towns from 2003-04 – 2008-09. This information shows that although the total tax levy has increased from 6,631,096 in 2003-04 to 8,317,221 in 2008-09 the tax on true value has decreased from 19.12 in 2003-04 to 14.40 in 2008-09.

Discussion on all of these documents included:

- **Staff reductions with closure of SES and GES**
- **Decline in student enrollment vs. level of teaching staff**
- **\$500,000 legislative aid item; impact on revenue stream**
- **Fund balance; state requires no more than 4% of the previous year’s budget be held over for fund balance**
- **Equalization rates for each of the towns**
- **Proportion on true value**
- **Decline in true value tax rates**

Discussion then turned to the building project. Questions were raised regarding an email last week from the architects. Clarification on that email was asked for. Mr. Hunter clarified that the 1.8 million that was “promised” from State Ed for the building project was an increase to the ceiling aid; roughly 61%.

10/8/2008 Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Berlin Central School District, held at the Berlin Elementary School

A “pulse on where each board member is” was then taken:

Beverly Stewart

- **Concerned with the cost of the entire project**
- **Could see decrease in state aid**
- **Difficult economic times**

Frank Zwack

- **Staff employment area shows that our infrastructure has remained the same while student enrollment has declined**
- **Someone said the building isn't pretty, but it is sound - Greylock is not pretty, but it is clean and has sound programs**
- **Has seen the district go through a period where board members want to take on the state - Berlin is not big enough to do that**
- **These are real issues and it is not wise to risk the district's future**
- **Not going to be easy – have to think about bringing students to this site**

Donald French

- **Concerned with current economic situation**
- **Scope of the project is too big**
- **Not comfortable with full consolidation - would look at partial consolidation**

Jeffrey Paine

- **Have to go forward with consolidation at BES or there will be no savings**
- **Bare minimum work at the High School is code and safety, makes sense to do the roof**
- **Not sure on the Transportation project**

Liz Miller

- **Need to seriously look at the construction project**
- **Have to do something**
- **Put up to vote so public can vote - voters are intelligent, they will come out and tell us**
- **Could par back in places - make more economically attractive**
- **Want to see us move ahead**

10/8/2008 Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Berlin Central School District, held at the Berlin Elementary School

Julie Darling

- Board has been working hard to find balance
- Look more carefully at the fiscal impact
- Not neglect ADA/safety any longer
- Information given has brought clarity
- Agree time to bring to people
- Look to par back

Tom Morelli

- Process has not been easy - fun and disappointing
- Where we have been - where we are going
- Can we support long term educational programs
- Concerned compromising affordability by spending too much on restoration
- Disappointed that we don't have tech platform and didn't push the envelope to bring alternate energy programs and cost savings to the district
- Have significant reservations
- Would support moving SES to BES
- Ask for focus on cost savings, how well the educational programs are going and learn from it
- Validate the finances – tough economic times – not sure get bonds
- Burned mortgage of 18 years - allowed reallocation of that money to finance educational programs - like to reproduce in the future

Calendar of Meetings

- Special Workshop Mtg – Wednesday, October 15,2008 – 7:30 PM – BES
- Regular Mtg – Tuesday, October 21, 2008 – 7:00 PM – Berlin Jr/Sr High School

The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 PM on motion of Jeffrey Paine, second by Liz Miller.

Mary M. Grant, District Clerk