

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - TOWNSHIP OF EDISON
MAY 15, 2013**

A Special Meeting of the Municipal Council was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Complex on Wednesday, May 15, 2013. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Council Vice President Lombardi, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were Councilmembers Gomez, Karabinchak, Lankey, Mascola, Prasad and Council Vice President Lombardi.

Council President Diehl was absent.

Also present were Acting Township Clerk Russomanno, Deputy Township Clerk Kenny, Township Attorney Raj Goomer and Cameraman Cologna.

The Township Clerk advised that adequate Notice of this meeting as required by the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975, has been provided by a Special Notice sent to The Home News Tribune, The Star Ledger and the Sentinel on April 29, 2013, and posted in the Main Lobby of the Municipal Complex on the same date.

The Board of Education opened their meeting.

Present were Board members Anes, Bonderowitz, Fong, Harris, Heelan, Iyer and Ward.

Board member Shah entered at 7:16 p.m.

Also present were Superintendent O'Malley and Business Administrator Michaud.

COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT REMARKS

Council Vice President Lombardi explained that a subcommittee comprised of Councilmembers Karabinchak, Lombardi and Mascola was put together to look at the school budget. Dr. Marlow was hired to review the budget and submit his recommendations to the Council. Council Vice President Lombardi read an opening statement.

Councilmember Karabinchak thanked the Board Of Education for all their work and cooperation.

ORAL PETITION AND REMARKS

Council Vice President Lombardi opened the meeting for public comment.

Jeff Bowden, 2 Ethel Road, President Edison Township Education Association, said he has been an educator in Edison since 1984. He felt it will be hard to grasp what the impact of the cuts will be. He said on paper it looks good but \$900,000 is a lot of money. He said the effects in the classroom are still being felt from the \$6 million cut several years ago. He said currently the Board of Education has not moved their election to November and they are one of only three districts in the State that did not pass their budget.

Bill Donner, 124 Highland Avenue, said he has two children in the school system. One received full day kindergarten and the other received half day kindergarten due to the 2010 budget cuts.

Matt Hrevnak, 2 Ethel Road, said he hoped the Council received the letter he sent and he said Edison is one of the top fifteen districts in the state.

Elizabeth Conway, Netherwood Circle, said she sent an email to the Council as a resident and an employee of the Board of Education. She said every time the budget gets cut it decreases the value of the homes. She felt we need to keep the district at the high level that it is.

Maria, 83 Orchid Avenue, said she has a special education child in the third grade. She asked that we think about the children's future.

Bill Brunner, 215 Loring Avenue, said the Board of Education seems to think the taxpayers can keep paying no matter what. He felt just because they have a cap doesn't mean they have to use it. They are hiring eight new employees, not laying off. He said some were given a ten percent salary increases which is inexcusable. He felt there should be no salary increases. He also said they have \$3.3 million just sitting waiting for the Kilmer school which Mr. Kemm has said still has I's to dot and T's to cross before it is turned over.

Fred Wolke, 10 Peake Road, felt this Resolution is a sham and disregards the will of the people. He said the teacher's union is again the winner with a 2.5 percent increase in their contract.

Lois Hurley, 56 Chatsworth, thanked the Council and the Board Of Education for working together. She said she is a retired teacher and wants the children to have every opportunity. She felt when the teacher's win we all win.

Eleanor Both, 61 Franklin Avenue, said she has been a resident for over forty years. She said there are 13,000 seniors in Edison that cannot afford the Board of Education. She felt they want a Cadillac Board of Education and all we can afford is a Ford. She said three years ago, the Council cut the budget by \$6 million and they survived. She said this budget has fat in it and we should tell the Board of Education to do more with less. She felt the Board of Education is greedy and offers no tax relief to the residents.

Lourdes Roy, Michelle Circle, asked where she can get a breakdown as to where her taxes are spent.

Councilmember Karabinchak said she can get that information by obtaining a copy of the municipal budget.

Emil Ferlicchi, Larchmont Road, said the Board of Education could have raised the budget by the full two percent but they did not. He felt a small group of people vote no on the budget year after year.

Lois Wolke, 10 Peake Road, felt that having this meeting was a waste of time. She said the people of Edison have been wronged and she is very disappointed.

Irene Wall, 205 Fleet Avenue, felt there should be a freeze on all salaries until the Township can afford it. She said the schools should be air conditioned and the students should attend year round.

Hearing no further comments from the public Councilmember Lankey made a motion to close the public hearing, which was seconded by Councilmember Karabinchak and duly carried.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Council Vice President Lombardi opened the meeting to the public for comments on Proposed Resolution R.261-052013.

Fred Wolke, 10 Peake Road, said the Council is reducing the budget by \$900,000. He felt a lot of programs can be cut such as Camp Bernie and some foreign languages but the Board of Education ignores what is suggested. He felt they do need the capital program and that should not be cut because that is for the children.

Maryann Hennessey, 20 Carmello Drive, said in the forty four years that she has lived here things have changed. She asked how much has been lost in tax appeals.

Councilmember Karabinchak said it was \$9.5 million last year and \$5 million the year before. He said this year it will be \$12 million.

There were no other comments from the public regarding Proposed Resolution. On a motion made by Councilmember Lankey, seconded by Councilmember Karabinchak and duly carried, the public hearing was closed.

RESOLUTION R.261-052012

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF EDISON, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, CERTIFYING THE TAX LEVY FOR THE EDISON SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR THE 2013-2014 SCHOOL YEAR

WHEREAS, on April 20, 2013, the amount to be raised by general taxation for the 2013-2014 Edison Board of Education's budget of \$189,518,861.00 was rejected at the polls; and

WHEREAS, in such instance State Law (N.J.S.A. 18A:22-37) requires that the municipality determine the amount that is necessary to be appropriated for each item appearing in the budget, and to certify to the County Board of Taxation the totals of the amount so determined; and

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2013 the Township Council of the Township of Edison held a joint public meeting with the Board of Education to consult on the Board's budget; and

WHEREAS, at the joint public meeting, the Superintendent of Schools presented the Board's budget, School District staff answered questions about the budget from members of the Township Council, and members of the public voiced their opinions about whether the budget should be maintained or reduced; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council hired a consultant, Dr. Frank M. Marlow, to assist the Council in its review of the School Board budget; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council of the Township of Edison agrees that the School Board budget can be reduced without adversely affecting the stability of the District or the District's ability to offer a thorough and efficient education to its students and maintain stability given the need for long term planning and budgeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Council of the Township of Edison, as follows:

1. The original general fund tax levy on the ballot was \$189,518,861.00 0 for the Edison School District budget for the 2013-2014 school year.
2. The amount of reduction by the Township Council to the general fund tax levy for the base budget is \$900,000.00.
3. The amount of the general fund tax levy being certified by the municipal government for the base budget is \$188,618,861.00.
4. The specific line item reductions in budgeted expenditures are:

Capital Building Improvements- \$500,000
Account #12-000-400-722

Capital Instructional Equipment- \$100,000
Account #12-000-100-730

Additional salary reductions for additional retirements- \$100,000
Account #11-120-100-101

Energy \$200,000.00
Account #11-000-262-621

TOTAL REDUCTIONS IN BUDGETED EXPENDITURES: \$900,000.00

5. The budget as revised by the Township Council is not below the District's adequacy budget or the minimum tax levy of \$167,798,954.00 and therefore a specific written explanation as to why each reduction will not adversely affect the Edison School District's ability to provide a thorough and efficient education to the students of the Edison School District and maintain stability given the need for long term planning and budgeting is not needed.
6. The revised budget is sufficient to provide a thorough and efficient education to the students of the Edison School District and maintain stability given the need for long term planning and budgeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Middlesex County Board of Taxation, the Middlesex County Superintendent of Schools, and the Edison Township Board of Education.

Councilmember Mascola said in the past six years this is the fourth time the budget has failed. He said the taxpayers can only afford so much. He said Edison is underfunded by the State and the problem lies in Trenton. He said he will support this Resolution.

Councilmember Karabinchak said he agrees with Councilmember Mascola. We need to go to Trenton and fight for our fair share. He will be supporting this Resolution.

Councilmember Gomez thanked the Council subcommittee and the Board of Education for all the time they put in. He said this is the best we have for now and he will be supporting it.

Councilmember Lankey said they are all in agreement that the system is broken. This will not solve the problem but he will be supporting it.

Councilmember Dr. Prasad thanked everyone on both sides for all their hard work. He said good education translates into many things and we need a happy medium. He will be supporting this Resolution.

Council Vice President Lombardi thanked everyone involved for their cooperation and hard work in trying to strike a balance. He said he will be supporting this.

A motion was made by Councilmember Karabinchak, seconded by Councilmember Mascola, to adopt this Resolution.

AYES – Councilmembers Gomez, Karabinchak, Lankey, Mascola, Prasad and Council Vice President Lombardi

NAYS – None
Council President Diehl was absent

On a motion made by Councilmember Lankey, seconded by Councilmember Mascola, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Michael Lombardi
Council Vice President

Cheryl Russomanno
Acting Municipal Clerk