

**TOWNSHIP OF COLTS NECK  
SPECIAL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 19, 2010  
7:30 P.M. AT COURT HOUSE**

---

The meeting of the Colts Neck Township Committee was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Florek followed by a salute to the flag. The following statement was read by Township Clerk Bowden: "The notice requirements of the New Jersey Public Meetings Law has been satisfied by forwarding a "News Release" to the Asbury Park Press on May 15, 2010 stating that a special meeting of the Colts Neck Township Committee would be held on May 19, 2010 at 7:30 p.m., Colts Neck Court House, 124 Cedar Drive, Colts Neck. The notice requirements have been posted on the Township Bulletin Board and a copy is on file in the office of the Township Clerk."

Roll call by Mr. Bowden indicated the following:

Present: Mayor Florek, Committeemen Engel, Eastman and Fitzgerald

Also Present: Administrator/Municipal Clerk, Robert Bowden; and Deputy Municipal Clerk, Beth Kara

Absent: Deputy Mayor Schatzle

---

Mr. Bowden announced Deputy Mayor Schatzle is out of State this evening.

1. **RESOLUTION 2010-77**: RESOLUTION CERTIFYING AMOUNT RAISED BY TAXATION FOR THE FREEHOLD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION was read by title by Mayor Florek. Mayor Florek made the following comments: The Freehold Regional High School District (FRHSD) sub-committee consisted of Mayor Florek, Deputy Mayor Schatzle, Committeeman Fitzgerald and former Mayor Benjamin Forester. Having former Mayor Forester on the FRHSD sub-committee was very helpful in the review process. Mayor Florek stated he personally spoke with the FRHSD Superintendent several times. Prior to tonight's meeting, representatives from the eight towns met on May 5, 2010 and participated in two teleconferences to discuss the issues. Of the eight bargaining units involved, seven made concessions agreeing to either no raise or to paying 1.5% of base salary toward health care costs. The teachers' union made no concessions and went forward with the contractual \$3.6 million in salary increases. The FRHSD Board must honor its contractual obligations, and the FRHSD must now live with the budget cuts. Six of the eight towns adopted resolutions for a \$4.5 million cut, which was pegged to the teachers' contractual salary raises, while the FRHSD Superintendent recommended a cut of \$2.65 million. The \$2.65 million reduction would result in a Regional School Tax increase of \$0 for Colts Neck this year.

Mr. Fitzgerald made the following comments: After the last meeting of the Township's FRHSD sub-committee, the sub-committee was inclined to agree with the Superintendent and recommend a \$2.65 million reduction. The Colts Neck position was recently misquoted in the Asbury Park Press, and Colts Neck does not support the \$4.5 million reduction. Mr. Fitzgerald thanked former Mayor Forester for sharing his time and expertise. Mr. Fitzgerald stated he concurs with Mayor Florek's recommendation for a \$2.65 million reduction in the amount raised by taxation for the FRHSD Board of Education, and made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Eastman and unanimously carried. Mr. Bowden stated Mr. Schatzle's position was provided in writing and appended as part of the record stating had he been here, he would vote in favor of the \$2.65 million reduction.

RECORD OF VOTE					
Committeeman	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Florek		X			
Schatzle					X
Engel		X			
Eastman	S	X			
Fitzgerald	M	X			
X - indicates vote NV - Not Voting Ab - Absent M - Moved S - Seconded					

2. **RESOLUTION 2010-78:** RESOLUTION CERTIFYING AMOUNT RAISED BY TAXATION FOR THE LOCAL COLTS NECK BOARD OF EDUCATION was read by title at second reading by Mayor Florek. Mayor Florek provided the following comments: The local sub-committee consisted of Committeemen Engel and Eastman, Administrator Robert Bowden, and former School Board President David Kostka. Four meetings were held with local Board members and their professional staff. The Board provided the Township's sub-committee with a wealth of documentation including meeting minutes, projections, lists of teaching and administrative staff, four years of budgets and audits, summer staffing, a comparative spending guide to other like school districts in New Jersey, the New Jersey Education report card, as well as a detailed local Board of Education budget book.

Mr. Eastman stated the sub-committee reviewed the number of teachers in each building for each grade and recommended reducing one teacher in each building; two teachers in Grades 1-5 and one teacher in the Middle School. Also recommended is the elimination of one Assistant Principal and the administrative staff person assigned to this position. Total recommended cuts are \$352,906.00, to which the local School Board reluctantly agreed.

Mr. Engel thanked all who sent e-mails and shared their concerns. He stated the goal was not to determine a number for reduction, but to make the educational system more efficient. Mr. Engel thanked the local Board of Education members, Mr. Kasun and others who helped with the process including Committeeman Eastman and Mr. Kostka.

Mr. Eastman made a motion to approve a total reduction of \$352,906.00 to the amount raised by taxation for the local Colts Neck Board of Education, seconded by Mr. Engel and unanimously carried. Mr. Bowden noted per the aforementioned letter, Deputy Mayor Schatzle states he would have voted for the \$352,906.00 reduction if he were here.

RECORD OF VOTE					
Committeeman	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Florek		X			
Schatzle					X
Engel	S	X			
Eastman	M	X			
Fitzgerald		X			
X - indicates vote NV - Not Voting Ab - Absent M - Moved S - Seconded					

3. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:**

With no further comments, Mayor Florek opened the meeting to public comment.

Ms. Elaine Mann, a resident, questioned if the teachers made any concessions. Mr. Eastman stated at the local level, the teachers did not give concessions. Mr. Eastman stated the Administrators gave concessions in the area of professional development and there would be less reliance on consultants and increased use of in-house staff. Ms. Mann questioned the cost of the roof leak in the Primary School. Mr. Eastman responded noting an application for

reimbursement has been made to the State for \$400,000.00 to offset the cost of repairs, and the contractor has been sued. In addition, all impact aid has not been received.

Mr. Rick Orriss, a resident, questioned the cost of health care premiums, noting Mr. Paredes stated two bids were received; one below current cost and one above. Mr. Eastman responded noting one bid was 25% higher than current cost and the other bid was 15% higher than current cost. The local Board of Education chose the lesser cost provider. Mayor Florek suggested Mr. Orriss speak with the Board of Education for more detailed information.

Mr. Vince Domidion, a resident, stated he was pleased with the extremely broad and in-depth review conducted by the sub-committees. Mr. Domidion stated he voted against the local and in favor of the regional school budgets. Mr. Domidion stated he recommends closing one school building within the local school system, which would deliver larger cost savings and have no impact on programs. Mr. Domidion stated the Primary School is just above 60% operating capacity, with lower occupancy projected next year. Mr. Domidion stated the review was extensive, but it should have gone further. Mr. Domidion stated the low level of utilization does not justify the existence of three school buildings. Mr. Eastman stated the sub-committee reviewed the internal plan and the outside consultant's report, and the Township has had experience of students housed in trailers. Mr. Eastman stated that while that type of decision is logical with decreased enrollment, the sub-committee determined enrollment is not at a level to warrant a school building closure at this point.

Mr. Robert Sayko, a resident, stated the review process was detailed; however, the one-month time limitation restricted the review process. Mr. Sayko commended all who participated, noting something substantial has been achieved. Mr. Sayko stated this process opens the door for future cooperation between community parents and non-parents and the local Board. Mr. Sayko regrets the termination of three teachers. Mr. Sayko stated the 4-5% salary increases are outrageous given the 0% increases in the private sector. Mr. Sayko stated future contracts with teachers and administrators must reflect the current economy. Mayor Florek stated the Township Committee has public budget workshops, and the public is encouraged to attend. Mayor Florek suggested the public attend Board of Education budget workshop sessions.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated the Township Committee does not have control over the School Boards' budgets and vice versa. He stated when the budgets are defeated, the Township Committee is given the responsibility to review the budget(s) and come up with recommendations within a very short timeframe. The Township Committee relies on School Board members to provide information for decision-making; however, the Board of Education is not obligated to provide recommendations for reduction. Mr. Fitzgerald urged all residents to become involved in the process, noting the School Boards are our elected officials.

Mr. Chris Placitella, Colts Neck's representative to the Freehold Regional High School District School Board, stated he was proud to know the Township Committee did not approve a \$4.5 million reduction for the FRHSD Schools. Mr. Placitella suggested the FRHSD Board come up with a counter-proposal of a \$0 cut. Mr. Placitella spoke of the impact further budget cuts would make to teaching staff, programs and students. Mr. Placitella stated the FRHSD is the most efficient school system in the State, and it is now being penalized for "doing it right". Mr. Placitella stated your voice has to be heard and urged all to call the County to express their thoughts. Mr. Placitella stated he applauds the courage of Colts Neck and Freehold Borough for advocating the \$2.65 million budget reduction. Mr. Placitella stated he knows why Colts Neck was voted the No. 1 place to live in Monmouth County.

Ms. Rose Ann Scotti, a resident and former Mayor, stated the Colts Neck School System provides a fine education. Ms. Scotti was disappointed the local school system reductions involved three teachers being cut. She stated the local school system is very top heavy with eight administrators and seven support staff, and stated there were a lot of areas within the administration budget that could have been cut. Ms. Scotti stated, why expect the teachers to take a salary freeze when the administration staff did not?

Mr. Eric Goldring, a resident and local School Board member, stated the community became divided over the school budget issue, and the vast majority of residents supported the budget as it existed. Mr. Goldring stated there are many empty seats at the local School Board meetings and he urged people to attend. Mr. Goldring stated the local school administration had the Primary School roof repaired for one-half the price of the bids received, and the State will be reimbursing the cost of the repair. Mr. Goldring stated the teachers' contracts are being negotiated this year. Mr. Goldring stressed the importance of community. Mayor Florek commented the local Board of Education's and Township Committee's ability to work together for an agreed-upon budget reduction shows a level of civility.

Ms. Doris Resh, a resident, stated things have to be put in perspective. Ms. Resh stated we are living in different times. She stated the Board of Education must realize what is going on in the world and cannot be cavalier. Ms. Resh stated administrators salaries are what they are while the public sector is expected to absorb 10% reductions. Ms. Resh stated we will be back here next year.

Mr. Tom McGowan, a resident, questioned what the results would have been if teachers suggested a salary freeze. Mr. Eastman stated the sub-committee did not take that approach; they looked at class size, and recommended one Administrator be cut. They didn't back into the Governor's baseline number. Mr. McGowan stated the majority voted the budgets down at the polls. Mr. Eastman stated in the event of a school budget defeat, the Township Committee is charged with the responsibility of reviewing the defeated budget. The local sub-committee looked at like-sized school districts and determined Colts Neck has the lowest class size. Mr. Eastman stated the process was approached methodically and resulted in making measured determinations. Mr. McGowan stated the people of the Town may want more reductions. Mr. Eastman suggested the people may want to attend School Board meetings.

Ms. Marybeth Tomaro, a resident, stated the population number versus the number of persons actually voting in the school board election do not mandate school budget cuts. Ms. Tomaro stated when programs are cut at the high school level, what happens to the Township when the children have nothing to do? Ms. Tomaro stated through school organizations, students are volunteering in the community with Habitat for Humanity restorations, food pantries and homeless shelters. Ms. Tomaro stated someone should pursue the budget of the County vocational schools, where the annual per pupil cost is estimated at \$16,000+ versus the estimated \$11,000 per pupil cost at the FRHSD. Ms. Tomaro stated she voted for Chris Christie, who sent his children to private school. Ms. Tomaro stated Education Commissioner Schundler has zero experience and is sending his child to a private school at a cost of \$29,000 per year.

Mr. Chris Wilson questioned the local school student-to-teacher ratio. Mr. Eastman stated in this type of school district, Colts Neck has the lowest student to teacher ratio, which is an indicator we are spending too much in this area. Mr. Eastman stated by reducing one teacher in each school, class size would increase to between 20 and 22 students in most instances.

Mr. Engel stated these decisions were not made in a vacuum, and the impact of each decision was weighed. With the shifting of teaching staff, the total class size increase is minimal. The fifth grade would have the largest class size at 25, the Primary at 18, and the Elementary at 20. When questioning if the quality of education would remain the same, the sub-committee was assured by the local Board of Education the highest quality of instruction will remain in each classroom.

Mr. Fred Garber, a resident, stated it is refreshing to hear of the reasonable approach taken by the Township Committee. Mr. Garber stated people care very deeply about the schools. Mr. Garber stated no one votes on the municipal budget, and comparing the two budget processes is like comparing apples to oranges. Mr. Eastman responded stating the process is quirky, but this is the current law under which we operate.

Mr. Robert Sayko, a resident, stated he is aware of the importance of good schools and a good sports program in the college application process. Mr. Sayko does not believe a possible reduction in the sports program would have children running wild in the streets, stating there are responsible parents in Colts Neck. Mr. Sayko stated the goal of this process is an efficient school system. Mr. Sayko stated with regard to transparency, the Township had budget information on its website, some of which was difficult to interpret; however, there was limited budget information on the local Board of Education's website.

Ms. Elaine Hempstead, a resident, stated she was pleased the two elected bodies worked together and commended both. Ms. Hempstead stated she attended the local Board of Education budget meetings and noted the budget is reviewed line by line. Ms. Hempstead stated she believes the process worked.

Ms. Andrea Giannopolous, a resident and local School Board President, stated the vocational budget is \$5 million and is not voted on. Ms. Giannopolous stated there is no relationship between class size and the capacity of a building. Ms. Giannopolous stated the Township Committee's percentage reduction of the local school budget is higher than the percentages reduced by neighboring towns with defeated school budgets. Ms. Giannopolous stated parents have been told the kids will be fine, but fine is not ok.

With no further comments, Mayor Florek closed the meeting.

4. **MOTION TO ADJOURN:** Mr. Eastman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald and unanimously carried by voice vote.

RECORD OF VOTE						
Committeeman	M	S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Florek			X			
Schatzle						X
Engel			X			
Eastman	M		X			
Fitzgerald		S	X			
X - indicates vote    NV - Not Voting    Ab - Absent    M - Moved    S - Seconded						

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

---

Robert Bowden  
Township Administrator/Municipal Clerk

Attachment