

WINSLOW TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Board of Education Meeting – Town Hall Meeting
Winslow Township Middle School – Cafeteria
30 Cooper Folly Road
Atco, New Jersey 08004

Thursday, May 3, 2018
7:00 p.m.

I. **PUBLIC NOTICE** of this meeting was given to all Board Members and Associates in notices dated **04/16/2018**. It was advertised in the Courier Post, posted in all schools, the Adm. Office, the Municipal Building, the Library, Bud Duble Center, Edgewood Acres, Elm Town, and the Winslow Township Post Offices.

II. **MISSION STATEMENT**

The ***Mission*** of the Winslow Township School District, a large diverse and growing community, is to educate all students to become independent, life-long learners, critical thinkers and caring and confident members of their community. The District, in partnership with the community, and in a climate of cooperation and mutual respect, will provide an academic environment which values excellence and diversity, encourages students to strive for personal excellence, and assists them in acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute positively to a rapidly changing world.

III. **ROLL CALL**

Present	Lorraine Dredden	John M. Shaw, Jr.
	Rita Martin	Gail P. Watkins (Left at 8:50 pm)
	Larry Blake	Julie Peterson, Vice President
	Rogers D. Robinson, Jr.	Cheryl Pitts, President

Absent LaVonya B. Wilson-Mitchel

Also Present: H. Major Poteat, Ed.D., Superintendent
 Tyra McCoy-Boyle, Business Admin/Board Secretary
 Dan Long, Esq., Solicitor

IV. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

V. **2017-2018 DISTRICT GOALS**

(Ms. Peterson)

1. Student Achievement – Continue implementation of the academic plan to address:
 - a. Articulation at all grade levels throughout the district
 - b. Focus on classroom instruction at all grade levels
 - c. Increasing the upper elementary proficiency rates
 - d. Evaluation and updating all district programs

2. Continue to foster a positive school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.
 - a. Focus on building relationships among staff that will result in increased learning and more effective instruction
 - b. Promote creative instruction (training and retraining)
 - c. Emphasis on collaboration with all district stakeholders

3. Market our strengths and achievements to all stakeholders to increase capacity for greater parent/caregiver/community support.
 - a. Continue with our Public Relations/Marketing Plan
 - b. Continue to work with the various advisory committees in the district

VI. TOWN HALL MEETING

Public Forum for Open Conversation - Township of Winslow residents, parents, guardians, caregivers, school district staff, and current and former students, are invited to join the Board of Education for this open conversation.

The purpose of this forum is to provide our district stakeholders with an extended opportunity to present feedback to the Board on what is working well within our school district, present and discuss opportunities for improvement, ask questions on policy or procedure, voice concerns and offer solutions to all areas within the school district and the district's day-to-day operations.

The Board of Education is committed to listening to all feedback and taking action as appropriate.

❖ START OF MEETING:

Ms. Pitts recognized the township officials in attendance which included Committeemen Carlos Vascos and Raymond Watkins. Mr. Jeffrey Fortune was introduced as the Town Hall moderator.

Mr. Fortune thanked Dr. Poteat, members of the Board of Education, Mayor Barry Wright, and township committees for their support of the first Town Hall Meeting. The mission of the Citizens Advisory Committee was stated and the members were introduced.

Attendees were advised of the rules for the meeting as follows:

1. All attendees will be chosen at random to present their questions/comments.
2. Attendees can ask their questions from their seat or at the podium.
3. Each person will have three (3) minutes to present their questions/comments.
4. The board or other school representative will also have three (3) minutes to respond.
5. A green sign will go up signifying there is one (1) minute remaining.
6. A red sign will indicate time is up.
7. At the beginning of each hour, anonymous questions submitted on index cards will be presented to the board – (as many as time permits.)
8. All attendees must be respectful to those asking questions and those responding.

Question/Comment

Nicole Murphy – Suggested recommendations for children in special education based on Governor Christie’s K-2 “No Suspensions Before Third Grade” Bill. Recommendation: Instead of in-school suspensions, create a resource/safe room for children to calm down and employ more behavioral therapist.

Response

Dr. Poteat – Winslow adheres to that policy except when a student is at risk of being a threat to themselves or others. Every effort is made by counselors and the child study team to work with these students. Administration however will decide if the child should be sent home.

Question/Comment

Lisa G. – Stated no suspension for children K-2 is a law and asked that the school policy regarding this subject be placed on the website.

Response

Dr. Poteat restated that there are circumstances where Administration has the discretion to send a child home. Additionally, all of the district policies are posted on the website.

Question/Comment

Parent of IEP student asked about assistance with her child who has been acting out. Currently she has an at-home behavioral therapist working with the child and asked the child’s teacher if that professional could observe the child at school since the school does not provide this service. The parent was told that it is against school policy for an outside therapist to do classroom observations. Is the school interested in having therapist at the schools?

Response

The district does employ the services of behavioral therapist however they are not in every school. The board will take the suggestion of having a behavioral therapist at each school under advisement.

Question/Comment

Lois Mongon – Commented on the inconsistency of the uniform policy at each school.

Response

Dr. Poteat agreed with the comments made and asked the parents to work together with the school in enforcing the dress code. It is the job of the parent to send the children to school in appropriate attire.

Question/Comment

Heather Ackerman – (1) Is there a plan in place so that the district can be listed by the State as a school of character? (2) Students should not be punished/prevented from participating in various activities when parents have money owed to the school. Parents may be having financial difficulties. (3) Some children do not feel safe on the buses. Perhaps bus aides are needed to maintain order.

Response

Dr. Poteat responded by saying that character is taught beginning in Kindergarten however, character and respect begins in the home. Again, parents were asked to work together with the schools to accomplish these mutual goals. Letters go out each week to parents when there are fees due. Unfortunately when balances become hundreds of dollars due, action must be taken. Emphasis is placed on bus safety. Each bus has rules and regulations. Again, parents are asked to assist in making sure their children are behaving properly on the bus.

Question/Comment

Lauren Roberts – Complimented School No. 4 and its administrative team. Requested that parents of children in lower elementary be notified in advance when the schools conduct active shooter drills so that the parents can prepare their children.

Response

The recommendation will be taken under advisement. However, when emergencies occur, the children must be ready to respond without warning. Additionally, for the protection of the students, the district cannot advertise when the buildings will be evacuated.

Question/Comment

Can parents be notified after the drill?

Response

Will be taken under advisement.

Dan Long, Solicitor

The active shooter drills are carefully coordinated with local law enforcement who have a clear mandate from the state that these drills are to be conducted without forewarning. This is to ensure that the staff and students are as prepared as possible in the event of an emergency.

Question/Comment

Is there a law which prevents the parents from being notified after the drills in case their children have questions?

Response

No and the recommendation will be taken under advisement.

Question/Comment

Abena McClendon – What plans does the district have for student retention? Also recommended that the district conduct a pilot program that will allow parents to meet and discuss bullying.

Response

Over the years, parents have removed their children from the district for a variety of reasons. At the present time, there are more children remaining and returning to the district than ever before. What the district will continue to do is provide an education that is conducive for the children to receive the best education so that they can be competitive and have choices upon graduation. Parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in discussions regarding bullying as long as the HIB policies are followed.

❖ **At this point the moderator randomly read questions that were written on index cards.**

Question/Comment

Will the district be doing away with “Everyday Math” since PARRC scores are less than 60% in our schools?

Response

A decision has already been made to begin using “Go Math” next school year.

Question/Comment

Years ago there was a summer science program that encouraged student involvement in the sciences. Can this be done again?

Response

The Winslow STEM program is provided to students at every level. Children are also visiting colleges and other programs where the sciences are emphasized. At this time there are no plans for a summer science program but the district will continue to provide day to day opportunities for science programs during the regular school year.

Question/Comment

Lack of consistency with the uniform policy.

Response

Ms. Pitts also read the uniform policy and reiterated that the policy is here to stay.

Question/Comment

What is being done in regards to classroom safety? The writer of this question also reported a violent student in their child’s class who assaults others on a weekly basis.

Response

Several things can take place in order to ensure classroom safety including removing the child from the class, working with the parents, behavior modifications, etc. There are definitely policies and procedures in place for these situations.

❖ **The moderator reopened the floor for questions from the audience.**

Question/Comment

Kenneth Smith – Can the basketball court at School No. 3 be reinstated so the neighborhood children can have a safe place to play?

Response

School No. 3 has endured the most cases of vandalism in the district. The district will have to look at why was the court was removed, how many times was it repaired and equipment replaced and if a minimum amount of supervision needed. This recommendation will be taken under consideration.

Question/Comment

Jeanie Carey – Disgruntled former employee shared an experience while employed by the district.

Question/Comment

Lethia Wilson – Shared inconsistency with the bullying policy and inaccuracies in reporting events. Several instances were shared to support her comments

Response

The board could not respond in this forum due to privacy issues.

Question/Comment

Tamia Govan – As a sending district to Winslow Township, why are the residents of Chesilhurst not permitted to be on any of the advisory committees? Specifically, the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Response

Ms. Pitts confirmed that the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is opened to everyone. Members of the CAC shared the process by which they were accepted on the committee which did not match Ms. Govan's experience. Ms. Pitts also confirmed that since the inception of the CAC, no one has been denied by the Board and asked Ms. Govan to leave her contact information.

Question/Comment

Name inaudible – Shared on behalf of a student the frustration in losing Quest instruction time because the teacher is constantly pulled to substitute in other classes.

Response

The district employs substitute teacher services but the demand is larger than the supply. The best solution to this problem is employees need to report to work.

Question/Comment

Nicole – Concerned about her child's safety when another child has threaten her both in the classroom and on buses.

Response

Safety of the children is a main priority. Administration will continue to monitor the situation and follow up with the parent.

Question/Comment

Bobbi Scales – Noticed a billboard on Route 73 that focused on diversity and inclusivity. She questioned whether something has changed in the district or is this being motivated by some sort of funding?

Response

The billboard on Route 73 is the product of the Township not the school district.

Question/Comment

Debbie Esposito – Spoke on behalf of the Winslow Special Education Advisory. The group would like to hold an event to celebrate the special education support staff but was denied because those individuals are not Winslow employees.

Response

If the staff are not Winslow employees then there is no need to seek the district's permission or consent to have this event.

Question/Comment

Allison Riskowski – Proud of Winslow and the district. She encouraged parents to get involved to reach mutual goals. Asked board members to share if they were a representative of the school or community and why they are on the board.

Response

Ms. Peterson, Ms. Martin, and Mr. Shaw shared their reasons for being on the board.

Question/Comment

Barbara Williams – Spoke with the Child Study Team for help with grandchild having academic struggles and was told that they only work with children who have behavioral problems. Also recommended that school begin in August in order to guarantee a Spring break each year.

Response

Dr. Carcamo stated that the child study team performs evaluations which determine if a child is eligible for special education services. Many factors are involved in the determination. Dr. Poteat responded to the recommendation regarding Spring break and said that hopefully by the next board meeting a recommendation will be made to put this issue to rest.

Question/Comment

Parent – Complimented the full day preschool program.

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Question/Comment

Javanni Polhill – Ms. Polhill complimented the teachers who helped her 3 year old progress from barely speaking to effective communication. She also has a third grader whom she feels was bullied and humiliated by a teacher. She asked if the district provided cultural sensitivity training.

Response

That sort of behavior described by the parent is unacceptable and not tolerated. The parent was asked to have another or follow-up conversation with the school principal.

Dr. Poteat ended the meeting by saying that the Winslow Township School District is not the same school district from 10 years ago. The district receives more accolades from outside sources than from within the district. The education provided to our students is equal to if not better than most schools in this area and across the state. We have tremendous teachers and have received awards for some of our programs. Going forward he asked the parents to share their concerns but also find positives things to share with administration.

The moderator shared that any questions submitted on the index cards that were not addressed will be answered by the board.

Ms. Pitts thanked everyone for coming and Mr. Fortune for moderating the meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT A motion was made by Ms. Peterson, seconded by Mr. Shaw to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. All Ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tyra McCoy-Boyle
Business Administrator/Board Secretary