

**BARNEGAT BOARD OF EDUCATION  
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING WITH BARNEGAT  
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**May 5, 2008  
Monday, 6:30 PM**

Barnegat High School  
180 Bengal Blvd.  
Barnegat, NJ 08005

*OUR MISSION: The Barnegat Schools, in partnership with our community, nurture and educate our children in accordance with all core curriculum content standards to prepare them for responsible citizenship and success in life.*

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Melchiondo: I would like to call to order the joint meeting of the Barnegat Township Committee and the Barnegat Township Board of Education for May 5, 2008.

**PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW**

Ms. West: Pursuant to the requirements of the OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW adequate Public Notice of this meeting has been given by publication in the required newspapers of the date, time and location of this meeting more than 48 hours in advance; by posting advance written notice on the Official Bulletin Board in the Municipal Building; and by filing advance written notice with the Township Clerk for the purpose of public inspection.

Mayor Melchiondo: Mr. Houser?

Mr. Houser:

**II. OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT**

The notice of this Special Board of Education meeting has been forwarded to the Asbury Park Press and The Beacon, placed in the foyer of the Barnegat High School, the Municipal Building and filed with the Municipal Clerk, in conjunction with the Open Public Meeting Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-10.

### III. ROLL CALL

Mayor Melchiondo: Roll Call of the Township Committee members.

Mayor Melchiondo	Present
Deputy Mayor Cirulli	Present
Committeeman Morano	Present, on advice of the attorney I must excuse myself.
Committeewoman Ryan	Present
Committeeman Hartman	Present

Mayor Melchiondo: Mr. Houser?

Mr. Houser: Roll Call please.

Mrs. Taylor	Present
Mr. Scully	Present
Mrs. Sarno	Present
Mrs. Pilovsky	Absent
Mrs. Mitchell	Present
Mr. Davis	Present
Mr. Adorno	Present
Mrs. Becker	Present
Mr. Houser	Present

Also Present: Thomas C. McMahon, Superintendent  
Brian S. Falkowski, Board Secretary  
Ben Montenegro, Attorney

Mayor Melchiondo: At this time we ask all those with cell phones please turn them either off or to vibrate. Would everyone please rise to salute the Flag?

### IV. FLAG SALUTE

All: Flag Salute

Mayor Melchiondo: Mr. Houser?

### V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND/OR ADDITIONS

Mr. Houser: Motion for approval of Agenda and/or Additions. Can I have a Motion?

Mrs. Taylor: So Moved; seconded by Mrs. Sarno.

Mrs. Taylor	Yes
Mr. Scully	Yes
Mrs. Sarno	Yes
Mrs. Mitchell	Yes
Mr. Davis	Yes
Mr. Adorno	Yes
Mrs. Becker	Yes
Mr. Houser	Yes

Mayor Melchiondo: Good evening everyone, and thank you for attending the first of two open public meetings with regard to the Barnegat School District 2008-2009 budget. The second meeting will be held next Monday evening, May 12, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. here in the high school auditorium. I would like to thank the Board of Education for hosting these meetings here at the high school. Tonight's agenda is short and sweet with only one item for discussion, that being open public forum to hear the opinion of the residents on the defeated school budget. When we open the discussion to the public, it is your opportunity to tell the Committee and the School Board whether you think the budget should be cut, where it should be cut or that it should not be cut at all.

We are all here tonight to listen to your thoughts and include them into the decision-making process. This is not a question and answer period, but merely one for you to be heard. I must caution all of you that this is not the forum to voice your opinions on any personnel matters pertaining to any personnel or persons either employed by the school district, elected officials or members of the general public. Your comments are to be kept strictly to the issue at hand, the school budget. I would ask that you limit your comments to five minutes or less so that everyone may be heard. I will call on Barnegat residents first. Any non-residents will be heard following Barnegat residents. When you address the microphone please state your full name and address for the record. Again, on behalf of the Barnegat Township Committee and the Barnegat Township Board of Education, thank you for attending tonight and let's make it a productive meeting. Thank you.

## **VI. PUBLIC HEARING/SESSION –BUDGET DEFEAT**

Mayor Melchiondo: May I have a Motion to open to the public?

Mr. Hartman: Motion to open to public comment.

Mr. Cirulli: Second

Mayor Melchiondo: All those in favor? Aye. Ok, I am not sure how many people want to speak tonight so with a show of hands how many residents of Barnegat Township that are here would like to address this issue? Just with a show of hands. That is not too many, ok, then we will start, Mr. Taylor?

Jake Taylor, 106 Newark Road: First place, the citizens/tax payers of Barnegat resoundly defeated the school budget, no squeaker, they knocked it down bad. They want a financial change in Barnegat, that should be obvious to everybody. What is also, I don't have a, I am not fortunate enough, to have the budget in front of me, I have never even seen the budget, but I know from the past year or two some of the outlandish expenses that have to be taken off the budget. I would like to see a list of all the jobs and the salaries in the school district. Where is that list, have you seen it?

Mayor and Committee: Yes, we have.

Mr. Taylor: Well, when am I going to see a copy? You expect me to get up here and comment on the jobs and assistants and the Assistant Administrators and Assistant Principals? While we are on Assistant Principals; our grammar schools have Assistant Principals, not necessary. I did some checking throughout Ocean County. Assistant Principals in grammar schools is a rarity. So right off the bat you can start getting rid of them. We got the Assistant Consultant to the Superintendent; I guess we can't say his name, his initials, AD, that is what he is hired as. When I submitted an OPRA request they said he didn't even work there. He gets \$300 and...I have his because I OPRA'd this information. If you want me to OPRA all the employees I can do that too. He gets \$385 an hour for consultant to the Superintendent. Get rid of it, we don't need it. If I had the information on the rest of them I could be more specific.

Also, you got an Assistant Athletic Director, check throughout Ocean County, unnecessary job. It is just padding the payroll, you got... I read the Township Administrator's article in the Beacon where he says, I think if I can quote it right, \$3 million, according to the State recommendations we are spending \$3 million too much. That is the kind of cut I want to see in the budget. I have been around here a long time and I seen cuts in school budgets. I remember one \$50,000; you might as well leave it in there. The voters spoke and they want it cut, they don't want a token, they want it cut, a financial cut, a large one. The taxpayers are hurting in Barnegat. We need, I'll get into the busing, we are spending \$4 million on busing. Every time the issue comes up it is the favors and the people and the soccer moms and all and it never gets cut. I can show you letters years ago where certain busing...I suggest that the School Board hire an outside consultant to go over the busing in the Barnegat school system and follow the recommendations to a "T", not where people, oh, we can't do it for this section, we can't do it to that section. The kids over in Settlers walk to school; they have been that way for years. We used to have a member of the school board, that was his favorite thing, how come my kids have to walk and the other ones don't? \$4 million is a lot of money to bus some kids to school. Guaranteed some of them have to be bused, it is unsafe to walk, but trick me in the words and McMahan mathematics makes it where everybody gets bused.

You got the sidewalks; you don't even have sidewalks over in front of the Horbelt School. That is partly the Township's fault, people in the Township don't want to push forward where you need sidewalks, you need them so that kids can walk to school safely. If they can't walk safely you have to bus them. So that is a joint venture you have to look

into. I would like to know when I am going to get the list so that I can make recommendations at the next meeting. Am I going to have to OPRA, it is probably about 20 pages long.

Mayor Melchiondo: I will say this much, that...

Mr. Taylor: Is it at Town hall for my examination?

Mayor Melchiondo: The list, which is a school document, I am sure it would be available at the school board office. I don't want to speak for the school board, but you can go there and sit down and take a look at it.

Mr. Taylor: It is not available at the school board office unless I OPRA it. I am lucky to get in the door over there.

Mr. Dasti: Why don't we wait and see what we can do?

Mr. Taylor: Well, you know, Jerry, I have been around a long time, wait to see what you can do? I would like to say am I going to get the list or ain't I going to get the list? Am I going to get the list?

Mr. Dasti: Why don't you wait and see what we can do?

Mr. Taylor: No, well I figure, that is a lawyer talking. We probably have quite a bit of them working for the school board too. If I had the list I could be more, you know, more appropriate on what jobs. I want to press on the Assistant Principals, the assistants to the assistants and the overburden of friendship hiring that has been going on in town. I know it and you know it. So, I think it is about time that something be done about it. There was a lot of leaflets that went out on the election and I expect people to live up to what they say. You have got to cut the budget, the people want it cut, not tokenly cut, cut it substantially. Thanks.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you. Who else would like to speak? The lady in the back, oh, it is Sue. I can't see too well, I am sorry. We will get to you Frank.

Susan Gorman, 21 Janelle Drive: I am not shy, I will come up. I have two kids in the school district. There is already a 3% tax decrease, I mean a .03 tax decrease, I don't want to see the budget cut. I understand that we have a majority of new people up on the Board, I don't have any problem with them, if they want to make any adjustments, but I think if you cut the budget it will only affect the kids. I really support our Township Council; everybody up there knows that I do. I don't have a problem with anybody on the Township Council, I support them, but my one concern is that there is nobody on the Township Council that has a kid in the school system. I wonder if you would cut the budget if you had a child in the school system. I think it is really, really important to the parents to know that you are behind us and you stand behind us 100%. I have always felt that even though you do not have any kids in the school district you do back the school

system. I have not seen the budget, but I can say with complete faith that I believe that we have a sound budget and I am just really, I am sure most of the parents feel the same way that I do, nobody wants to see any more cuts, nobody wants to see anything, we are one town, we work together and I honestly believe in my heart that the school is the heart of the town. People do not want to move into towns that have bad school systems. If we continue to bring up our school system and make it better then our town is going to go up, the value of our home is going to go up and really that is what we are all looking for. It is really, really important to keep a focus of what is going on. It is not only for the children, but it is for the value of Barnegat. So, good luck, I hope you make the right decision.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you. Mr. Pesci?

Frank Pesci, 11 Hemlock: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It is quite unusual the setting, not the high school, in fact the setting that a budget failed and now it is going through a process of a public hearing. Very unusual in the 600 and some districts that are in the state, I doubt very much if there is 1/10 of 1% happening like this, I would be really shocked. When it fails, you know the procedure under Title II, it goes to you ladies and gentlemen there of the municipal council. You do what you need to do, it goes back to the Board, then you kind of argue it out where it is going to be cut and where it is not going to be cut. In my experience with thirteen years on the school board and eight years on a college board and 21 years at inter-state, usually money is built into a budget in case it does go down. So, when we are looking at budgets, it must be Lenny Morano's phone going off. That 21 year-old is calling.

All I know is that when you ask for the budget and you are told by people within the school district that the budget failed so there is no budget and four pieces paper and that does not tell you anything about what is in the budget and what is not in the budget. What I read and what I hear is we are in, and education is in and Barnegat education is good and it is for education. It is not for recreation, we have a built-in recreation department and pay taxes to the municipality and that is where we should be looking at. So, if you are looking at a place instead of camps for the schools, the school should not be handling them because all you are doing is transferring money anyway. The city should be handling that type of program. Busing, Mr. Taylor mentioned, and I am certainly sure when I was on the Board here in Barnegat, they should have cut out what they call courtesy busing right across the street from the Collins School. We have flashing yellow lights and red lights and you people provide two crossing guards or three cross guards, what makes it unsafe that the children in that development have to be bused? You have got two miles and one mile, and that is what should be happening now.

I am not going to tell you where and how to cut because I am not privy to that budget, but I could certainly once I look at it, make some recommendations, but it is not my job and I don't intend to. You people make the decisions, you go back to the Board and if you do not agree then the County Superintendent comes in and then he goes on from there, but you have got to do something. Otherwise, the 400 and some votes that said do something about the budget, and they were not all senior citizens, I can tell you that now, so what

we have to do is honor those people who decided that it was too much. Look at the budget, truly look at the budget and cut out where it was. It was in the paper, if reported right, that they said, the State said there is \$3 million over. Well, all I know if I took the fiscal budget this year and divided the number of students into it, that is a lot of money. So, we are not educating what we say we are, \$8,000-10,000 per student because the math does not work out that way. So, when I look at that, what it takes to run a school district, I divide the number of students or faculty into it and that should give me the number. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, Frank. Is that Ms. Clemente? It is a little hard to see with these lights.

Maryann Clemente, 565 E. Bay: I apologize, I came in a little late, so I did not hear what the beginning of the meeting was, but if this is a budget meeting and I am probably reiterating something that Jake said, but do we not get to see the budget so that we can make intelligent comments on the budget. I mean we are coming in here kind of blind without seeing what there is available to analyze.

Dr. McMahon: The school board budget was advertised before the vote of the school board. Wasn't the entire budget advertised?

Ms. Clemente: It is out on paper? I don't think so, the school board, the people who just got elected did not see it until after the election.

Dr. McMahon: I am trying to ask Mr. Falkowski if it was published.

Mr. Falkowski: The portions of the budget that are required to be advertised are.

Ms. Clemente: I did not hear what he said.

Mr. Falkowski: The required portions of the budget to be advertised were advertised.

Ms. Clemente: Required portions of the budget that were to be advertised, were advertised? So does that mean that some of it is not for public view? I don't understand. I come from a financial background and as a financial person you look at every line item; I mean I can go through the same thing with the Township budget.

Mr. Dasti: Ms. Clemente, I think what Mr. Falkowski is saying is that, and I don't know exactly what the specific requirement is, but there must be some statutory requirement that portions, not all of the budget, have to be advertised before the vote and he is saying that statute was adhered to. Now, if you want to look at the entire budget you are certainly entitled to do that, but you can ask the Board to give you a copy or OPRA it.

Ms. Clemente: Is that available for the public to see?

Mr. Dasti: I am sure it is on file, it is in your office, isn't it Mr. Falkowski?

Mr. Falkowski: That is correct.

Mr. Dasti: So in other words, Mr. Falkowski is saying that if you want to see the budget, Jake wants to see the budget, they can go to the Board office, request to see the budget, you can sit down there and read the budget and go from there.

Ms. Clemente: Again, I am probably going to repeat something that you covered in the beginning because I cam in a little late. So, what is the purpose of this meeting?

Mr. Dasti: The purpose of this meeting is for yourself and other residents of Barnegat Township to give us your opinion on what should be done about the budget. Do you think it should be cut, should not be cut?

Ms. Clemente: How can you make those decisions when you don't know what is there.

Mr. Melchiondo: I understand exactly what you are saying.

Ms. Clemente: Well, then you are wasting your time..

Mr. Dasti: Ms. Clemente, to be fair, you had an opportunity to go to the Board and say let me see the budget. And I presumed when you voted on it one way or the other you would have looked at it to see what you were voting on.

Ms. Clemente: I don't think it was made available, Mr. Dasti. Secondly, I just wanted to comment on that woman asking that you folks make the right decision, I think no one in this town is against anything for the kids. I mean we all recognize the fact that when we were young we were the ones that were putting out the money to support the children and the seniors where there helping us out when we were bringing up children. The same thing occurs today. We can comment that on the school board there is no senior on it, every person there has a child in school, but we trust them to be making the right decisions for us so I think that you folks, although I would love to see a young guy or woman on the Township Council. It would be wonderful to have some youth involved in politics. You know, none of you is under 35.

Mr. Melchiondo: That is correct.

Ms. Clemente: I am going to have you arrested for assault. Alright, that is it, but I just wanted to mention just one other thing that I mentioned at the last Township meeting, tomorrow there is a....

Mr. Melchiondo: No, this is not...

Ms. Clemente: No, I am not saying anything...

Mr. Melchiondo: No, no

Ms. Clemente: But it is for the benefit of a high school senior..

Mr. Melchiondo: OK

Ms. Clemente: If they go to Calaways and have a coupon, 20% of your check will go to a scholarship.

Mr. Melchiondo: Mrs. Clemente.....We will now have a rebuttal from the Republican Party. Who else would like to speak? The gentleman in the back there.

Tom Flynn, 2 Harbor Court: Just following up on what most people have mentioned already. Discussing the budget is not an easy task; it is kind of like providing an answer when you don't know the question. A few days ago I called the school administration to see if I could get some information or a copy of the budget. I was quickly advised that the budget was defeated and there probably were not any copies of the budget available. After I persisted after three phone calls, they took my name and number and said they would call me back. About one and one-half days later I got a call back saying if I came in and filled out a form and paid the required fee and seven to ten days a budget would be available for me to look at. Of course, that would be after this meeting was over.

In any event, I did finally get a copy of budget compliments of the Township Committee, same day service, thank you very much. I could not get anywhere with the school. The main question is we are all being asked to review potential cuts in the budget that we have never seen. No one has ever seen this information it is like pulling teeth to get the information. I have lived here about two and one-half years or so, prior to that I was from Central New Jersey. I got involved in going to school board meetings and township committee meetings as so forth. When I ask for a budget, it is a matter of going to the school, picking up the budget and going home. Here it is impossible and the main question, I think, the public is concerned about is you are asking us to look at, to vote, to approve, reject something that we don't know anything about. That is a difficult problem here. My question really is why is it so difficult to receive this information? You are asking us to vote on something, \$30+ million that we can't see. That is my main question.

Mr. Melchiondo: Well, as I said in the beginning, this is not a question and answer period. That is not what we are here for; we are here to hear comments. And, I do understand everyone's sentiments about the fact that everyone does not have a copy of the budget.

Mr. Flynn: Sir, you mentioned comments on cutting the budget. You are asking us for comments and cutting something and we don't have any scissors. We don't know what the budget is. That is our main concern.

Mr. Melchiondo: I do understand that Sir, and I think the main reason for saying that or stating that is the reason for being here this evening is because it was a mandate of the people to defeat the budget and so now tell us why. Why did you make that decision?

Mr. Flynn: I think most people vote negative because they don't know what they are voting on. But that is the main thing. If you are asking me to vote for \$30+ million and I don't know what the heck it is, obviously I am going to vote no. I mean I don't know, I would vote yes, possibly, if I read the whole budget. It is just impossible to look at, that is my main concern, thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you very much, sir. Mr. Cotton?

Mr. Steven Cotton, 11 Third Street: First of all, I don't know if it is proper or improper or how common it is to have a meeting like this with the Board of Ed and the Town, but I applaud you for the cooperation you guys are extending to one another. The only thing I have to say is again, nobody knows what the budget is, or some people do and some people don't, but I would ask that the decisions be made without political alignment or anything else. I know I have had several conversations with some of the new Board members and all I really care about is what is for the benefit of the children. All I would ask is to put all of those things aside and rather than making cuts across the board, I don't know if it is possible, proper or whatever, if you could give the public the opportunity to say if we still want to have the program and you guys are going to have to pick up the cost for some of it, for all of it or a portion of it rather than just slashing programs and everyone...I realize there is going to be cuts and rather than just slashing whole programs and saying, listen, the money is just not there to do it. Is it possible to set aside parts of it and say, listen, we know there has been heavy involvement in this in the past, does the public want to pick up a portion of that or all of it or whatever it is, but at least afford us the opportunity rather than just making a line slash and saying listen those programs have to be slashed from the budget. The same way the public voted to say, listen, we are not for the budget, could we be afforded the opportunity to say, listen, even if it is our expense can we turn around and have some say in that rather than just line item cuts out of it. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, sir. All the way in the back?

Sue Mayo, 165 Ravenwood: I have two boys that go to the Collins School and I am also a teacher in the Collins School. First of all, I would like to say that there was opportunity to see the budget, Dr. McMahon had a Board meeting and I was there and I was able to see it. You can also see it online. I am very disappointed that our budget was voted down because I thought it was a budget that was going to go for our children and we have schools that are fantastic schools. We have programs like the K+ program, our Project Ready Program our Basic Skills Program that really benefit our schools. These are programs that we do not see in other districts that really enable our children to do something that they would not get if they were in a different district. So, I just hope when you are coming together to decide on what you are going to cut that you do look at these things that Dr. McMahon and the Board have done and established these fantastic

programs that really have taken our schools to a higher level. I also disagree with the one man saying about our Vice Principal because he is really needed at our school.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, Ms. Mayo.

Michele Rowan, 126 Bengal Blvd.: It is my opinion that we should not be cutting this budget, and I would like to address the Council and ask them a very simple question. Was there a teacher, administrator, guidance counselor that touched your lives?

Mayor Melchiondo: Did you want that answered?

Ms. Rowan: If you have an answer I would love to hear it.

Mayor Melchiondo: Well, like I said before, although this is not a question and answer period. I think I could probably answer that, and yes, I am sure we all did at one time in our lives.

Ms. Rowan: I understand that you have a tremendous job in front of you with this budget, but please keep in mind the personnel and administration behind us are like a second family to our children. They spend more time at school than they do at home. So, please if they would go to school next year and not see a face, it is devastating for them. These are small kids, these people are very important in their lives, so please keep that in mind, our administrators, our faculty, our guidance or support staff, they are needed in this district and that is what gives these children these wonderful opportunities. So, please just keep that in your minds. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you.

Jerry Ihnken, 181 Ravenwood Blvd.: I did not plan on coming and speaking to you people here tonight, but I am compelled to right now. There is a budget that was an avid decrease that we failed. I do believe that budget failure is based part upon the re-evaluation we recently had and the re-scheduling of taxes throughout the town. A lot of us took a pretty heavy hit in tax increase and I think the school budget right now is bearing the brunt of that. It is unfortunate that a budget that was going to have a reduction got defeated. To the Board, to the Committee, you have to be very cautious in whatever you do in making cuts in this budget. Number one, our children's education is at stake. That should be the number one focus here; I think that is the number one focus for all Board members. We do have five new Board members on the Board who are going to have a huge part in what gets cut. These Board members don't even have Board training yet.

I think that any cuts that are made administratively whether they are clubs, busing or what have you, they should be done fairly and without vengeance and without retaliation. I think this Board should also seek and engage in cooperative purchasing, shared services, things of that nature that will help save money in time. I don't think the budget should be cut, that is my personal opinion, I think the budget that was put out there

should be passed. I don't envy the new Board and the seated people on the Board; I don't envy your positions right now. I went through this whole deal with school budgets being failed back in the 70s when I was in the Central Regional School district, and that was attributed mostly to senior citizen developments that were brought into that area and that district. I feel that at this time though, I do not feel it is completely senior citizens that failed this budget. I think it is parents that had a hand in failing this budget as well, so I believe it is across the board.

If our schools are working, getting good grades and functioning properly why are we looking to cut administrators? If we have enough administrators to get the job done and make sure our children have the best education and continue to get the best education I think we should try and keep things pretty much in tact. The bottom line is I think politics should not be a part of this budget at all and politics should not have an affect on our children's education. I think politics have to do with committee, gubernatorial elections, Senate, Assembly, Presidential, but not our kids' education. Our parents tried to see that we got the best education growing up; I think that we should see and you people should see that our children continue to get the best education going through this school system which is a great school system. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you. Mr. Settino:

Frank Settino, 1 Old Mill Court, the Mirage: I am hearing questions here and some questions are coming from the front table to the residents. You ask people why did you vote for the budget and you ask them why didn't you vote for the budget. Any answer is superfluous for the simple reason, nobody saw the budget. The question I want to know, is I understand that the State says certain requirements have to be advertised in the budget. Is there a State law that says you can't show people the budget? I am hearing a lot of silence here. Certain requirements have to be advertised?

Mayor Melchiondo: If your question is, are you allowed to see the budget, the answer is yes.

Frank Settino: Yes, so why don't we do the right thing, you have got people in the room; put a budget out as many pages as it is. Certainly, there is a lot of printed material that goes back and forth to the children on their way home; they carry it in their backpack. So why don't we print the budget and do what the Township does, we all look at it, we all call each other names and we figure out what is the best way to go. Voting blind is ridiculous. The last gentleman just said there is new people on the budget, are they going to know where to go? Maybe not, but maybe they got a cousin that is a CPA, a well-known CPA, and he wants to look at it and give them advice. Wouldn't that be the better way to go? To vote blind is nuts, I ran a business and if I could not get good advice from my people on how to do it, what is the use of being there. So, folks what is going on now is a pep-rally on one side, they want to blame the seniors, but they know seniors probably put in \$12-14 million in taxes in the town, so it is the devil that does or the devil that doesn't. You wipe all the seniors out and wipe them all out you could not afford anything including the building we are in. So let's print the budget and evaluate it, there

is many people in here that were professionals in the past, perhaps they can help. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, sir.

Debra Wyjas, 35 Hanily Road: Good evening, I am the mother of two children that presently go to the Barnegat Township Schools and I am also a secretary at the Cecil S. Collins School. I would like to just ask you all that are up there to remind you of one important thing when you think about the Township and the budget. My child or children and all of your children's educational destiny lies in your hands. Also, when you look at the numbers, and that is what they are, they pertain to real people. I know you are going to look at numbers and names, but I would like you all to think about that pertains to someone who is a mother, a brother, a sister, a father, I am nervous, I am sorry.

Mayor Melchiondo: That is ok, take your time.

Ms. Wyjas: The person is possibly the bread-winner of someone's family, and I would just like you all to take the opportunity to think about what you are doing. I understand you are all up there because you feel very strongly about what you do, and think about it and make a decision that when you go to bed at night you will be able to go to sleep with. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, very much.

Michael Masci, 3 Sterling Lane: I am a parent of one child currently at the Collins School, I also work at the Collins School and I am a resident as well. I would just like to say one of the reasons I work and live in Barnegat is because I want to live in a community that is innovative and at the front line of education and what works for children. A couple of other residents mentioned other districts don't have this, other districts don't have that. I prefer to be the district that other towns look to for examples, and for best practice on how to develop programs and deliver services to our children. Our camp program may seem like something that could easily be cut, let the residents pay for it, but providing the year-around experience to our students to continue to invest in their recreational and academic potential will only serve to reinvest back into this community and make our future citizens and leaders, if they chose to stay in Barnegat, even more strong and more productive.

If you make any cuts to this budget they should be minor and you should keep in mind that the current administration and the people who work very hard for this district want nothing more than a top-notch, quality education. We should not be looking anywhere else but with Barnegat to lead Ocean County and even the State in terms of what is new, what works and what is innovative. So, I ask you that if there are any cuts, make them minor and keep in mind that we invest is what....you are going to get what you put into something and if it is \$30 million so be it.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you. All the way in the back, yes you.

Karen Bell, 8 Hot Springs Terrace, Mirage: I have no children in the Barnegat school district, I live in a senior development, however, I am appalled that the budget went down. I think people were angry at a lot of other things that had gone on in the township and they took it out on the school budget. I also think that it was very nice that you invited the public here to discuss it and to make comments. However, who knows what the children need in education more than your very capable Superintendent, the Assistant Business Administrator and the Principals. You should be talking to them. I would hope that you would not cut staff, I would you hope that you would not cut books, supplies, computers, the arts and a lot of the other programs that our kids are lucky enough to have now. That would have a direct impact on the children and I just hope that, well, I wish that the budget had not gone down and I hope that you don't cut anything from it. That is all I can say at this point. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you very much. Mr. Kostka?

Thomas Kostka, 36 Anchor Road: I think we are putting the cart before the horse. I think it is your job as the Committee to give the school board a number that they have to cut. We can sit here all night with the Wawa think tank and the arm-chaired quarterbacks with possible scenarios of what to cut and who to cut, like I said, all night long, I am sure everyone has an idea here or there. One idea that I would hope that this Committee would look at would be kicking their fair-share to the SROs. I believe this was a topic we brought up awhile back that our school board is paying 100% of both of our SROs in the district. That would be a nice cut for us not to burden the taxpayers for this budget, so maybe you could go back and think about that as well.

Mayor Melchiondo: Not to interrupt you, but I will interrupt you, that this Committee, the Township, does pay 50% of the cost of the SROs. It is shared, so.

Mr. Kostka: That was not the agreement; we were paying for what, \$90,000 for the SRO.

Mayor Melchiondo: No, we could show you differently, but go ahead, Tom.

Mr. Kostka: Ok, secondly, like I said, I believe before you make anyone here come up with ideas on what to cut give us a number, whether it be one dollar or \$100,000. Then secondly, I suggest to the School Board, the newly elected School Board and the four members up here who voted for the budget to present that budget with a .03 decrease that there should be no cuts. Rely on the administration, just like the woman who before me said, we have administrative staff second to none, our teachers are second to none. The ideas for any cuts that should come I respect their opinions more than anyone else. Go back to them, I charge the Board, go back to your administrators and your staff and look to them for ideas if there is cuts needed before you come to the public. I am sure you could come up with a thousand ideas here, but I put a lot of faith in our administration and our staff and, like I said, our teachers are second to none. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, Tom. One thing before we go on I am sure some of you do know this but we are under a deadline of May 19 to get this thing accomplished. That is one of the reasons this meeting is tonight and the meeting next Monday night is being held because we need to do something probably by next Monday night so that it can be passed on to the County Superintendent. So, while it would be nice to have as much time as we think we would like to review everything, we just don't have that luxury. Would anybody else like to speak?

Lou Balka, 4 Colts Neck Road, Manahawkin: I am President of the Barnegat Education Association and I work for the Barnegat school district, I am their Union President. This Committee tonight has important decisions to make for failed budgets are never easy, never easy to deal with for the staff, for the students or for the Committees. Let us keep in mind tonight that we have an obligation to the children of this community to provide them with the best education. We also have an obligation for our children to provide them with a safe environment. To provide them with safe passage to and from school. I can remember back in 1995 or 1996 when courtesy busing, so they called, was cut from this district. It was put back through a special referendum because the Township did a Committee and held a study and found there was much hazardous routes within this Township especially going over the Parkway Bridge. I usually don't agree with some people here, but yes, there is, there are no sidewalks in front of many of the schools which makes it hazardous that is why they are bused. I heard tonight too often to cut busing. Busing is an important part of our educational process. It guarantees the safe passage of our children to and from school.

Let me go on, I hope the Township and this Board can make a commitment to maintain our staff and the programs that are crucial to maintaining our high standards that we have set. I look around and I go through these schools every day. We have the finest and most dedicated staff you will find anywhere within this country. And I would like to thank you. You know our test scores consistently get higher every year and I have been teaching since 1976, and I look at this district and every year they get better. I ask myself how could it every get any better, but every year, you know what, you surprise me and do it every year. You know why, because our programs were maintained and our staff was maintained. I hope this Board and this Committee tonight can make a commitment to keep our staff and keep our programs in place because that is what it takes to run a good educational institution and Barnegat you have the finest.

Before any Committee jumps to any conclusion about eliminating any busing, I hope and seriously urge you to do a study first to make sure the children of this community can get to school safely and home safely. Thank you very much.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, sir. Ms. Lally?

Kim Lally, 42 Bowline: I do believe we did a study on the busing and there is not a single route in Barnegat that is considered courtesy. It is 100% all safety busing; correct me, those of you who were on the Board at that time if I am wrong. I believe I still have the study at home, but I am almost certain that every single route in Barnegat is

considered safety busing and not courtesy busing. Also, I heard a couple of people make mention of “what other districts do”. To be quite honest with you I could care less what other districts do, I don’t live in other districts, I live here and I care what we do. I care what happens to our students, I care what happens to our staff, and I care what happens to our Administrators and we do have the best. We are very lucky. Before you even consider cutting any VPs I suggest you spend a day in an office, just a day. There are a number of reasons why this budget failed and it is not the seniors, it is not only the reevaluations, it is not only the former Board, it is all of it. Every single factor is what failed that budget. We have to work together to see that does not happen again, but the main thing is don’t lose sight of why we are all here; and why we are all here is to educate children and that should be the only thing we are concerned with right now. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you.

Ralph Splendorio, 98 First Street: I was not going to speak tonight but I heard a couple of things that I think I could add a little perspective to that you probably won’t hear from others. One thing, if you look into administrative costs, one of the things we are both proud of and fearful of as we were going through budgets in the past and I was Budget & Finance chairman well over ten years. So I am fairly familiar with it, is that we moved from a K-8 to a K-12 district with administrative structure that was K-8. Given the standards that existed in the Department of Education, we were not allowed to increase our administrative costs to a K-12 structure because of arbitrary loss. So, I think as you look at the administrative cost structure you need to realize that this district is running a K-12 district with a K-8 structure which is already, in my view, overtaxed.

I also, now I am going to get off my technical/budget speech, but I have to look to all of you up there except for maybe two, and say if you really want to know why the budget failed, it is all you. And here is why I say that. Last, November, before last November’s election, Mr. Breeden, your Township Administrator, was calling Press saying that our Board was under investigation for illegal practices, the campaign manager.

Mayor Melchiondo: Mr. Splendorio, comments are on the budget.

Mr. Splendorio: I am, because you are the ones that said the Board of Education was acting inappropriately and irresponsibly, financially. Mr. Cirulli asked for the Superintendent to resign and these kinds of things do not bring confidence by the public to the Board. It was said that Ms. Mitchell was in a conflict of interest with Commerce Bank or there were secret meetings and there was an ethics violations charge put against her and you know what the result was? No evidence exists to find that, did that make it into the paper, no. Time and time again in the Press that Dr. McMahon has relatives working in the district or buddies implied in no-show jobs. Never knew of anyone we have hired like that, I am waiting for you guys to find them, then fire them. Find them and fire them. They do not exist. OK?

The people complain about the Superintendent's salary, Pt. Pleasant just hired somebody last week for \$185,000 a year and their district is not anywhere near as complex as our is. I think you need to do a few things, that is the reason the budget failed because, Mr. Mayor in all due respect, you, Mr. Cirulli and Mr. Novak from last year, Mr. Breeden, ok? Instead of writing letters to the State Department of Education or calling them up and then printing that in the Press, holding our bonding information and then printing in the Press that we don't know how to pay bonds, ok? You are the ones who held that back against us but yet in the paper it looks like the Board of Education can't pay its bills. You have people who ran for office last year saying that we are wasting money.

Mayor Melchiondo: This is not the forum for all of that.

Mr. Splendorio: I think it is the forum, sir. I do.

Mayor Melchiondo: Well, it is not.

Mr. Splendorio: Well, I will tell you, if you can't find those things that you said existed and if the people back there can't find the money that they said was wasted, then they owe a lot of people an apology. Because I will tell you right now, if you don't find it, you pass the budget as in tact because I am saying to you, those things create failure of the budget and now you have the chance to find all the things that you said existed. I want you to find them, and I am going to OPRA them everyday because either you lied or you are hypocritical. This is really, coming from education, let's do a multiple choice: (A) they lied, (B) hypocritical or (C) both of the above. I think you need to look to yourselves for the failure of the budget and, I think, it is your irresponsible charges that created the lack of confidence in a sound budget with a sound foundation and that is why it failed. So, if I was you I would look to myself. This is a farce, you had people you are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars here, they know budgets, this is nothing but a PR campaign to salvage your own political future. So, what you do is turn around, pass the budget and do the right thing. I know it is pretty hard for you to do.

Mr. Melchiondo: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Cirulli: First of all, there can be significant cuts without affecting the quality of education in this township because of the nonsense that went on, and I am not directing this at the teachers and the programs. There is enough things that I looked at and I know this new Board of Education and the Township Committee is looking at diligently, and one thing I can guarantee you is even after the cuts or what cuts will be decided upon, there will be textbooks in the schools, there will be a librarian in the schools and there will be books in the library.

Mr. Melchiondo: The lady in the back?

Kimberly Hockrin, 3 Tulip Court: I did not come here planning to speak at all, as a matter of fact I missed the first the first part of this meeting, I walked in a little bit late, but based on those last statements I just heard, why are we here? If you already looked at

this budget and you have decided what to cut and you found significant places to cut this budget. I don't understand.

Mayor Melchiondo: This is part of the process, Mam.

Kimberly Hockrin: This isn't part of the process, it should not have come before us, it is your job, we elected you, the Town Council, to look at this budget after the School Board looked at it. The people of this town voted and it failed, unfortunately, because I sure voted for it, but people are out here giving you suggestions telling you what they think went wrong and someone on your Board, Mr. Cirulli I think it is, just replied that you have looked at the budget and you have found places to cut. So, why don't you tell us what you have already found so that we can give you our opinion on how we feel about those?

Mr. Cirulli: There is so much information coming in and this Board as well as the Board of Education does not want to just go and recklessly through a number out. The amount of information that has to be gone over is tremendous in a short period of time. We were handed some information which was "that thick". We have seen some places where cuts could be made. It has not been decided upon yet. The statement that I made a few minutes ago stated that there will be significant cuts, I can see that, but I cannot tell you the exact areas right now until it is discussed with the Board of Education. We will come up with a number, but we will sit down and we are going to do this right. My background is education and I am not going to allow, and I will make sure and I know the rest of them have all agreed that we are not going to do anything reckless, but there is enough fluff in that budget which will satisfy the residents of this township and will not hurt the educational process and will not recklessly eliminate teachers' jobs and programs.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, Al.

Voice: From Audience

Mayor Melchiondo: I am sorry; we cannot have you speaking from the audience. If you want you can come up to the microphone.

Just so everyone knows, there was a budget subcommittee that was set-up between the Township Committee and the Board of Education and we have met on a couple of occasions over the past two weeks to start the process of taking a look at everything and this process tonight was to incorporate your views into our thoughts also. That is why you are here; I do understand that it can be a bit frustrating if you don't have all the information. But, quite frankly, we may not have all the information either if we don't have the information from you and what your feelings are. So that is why we are here tonight. Would anyone else like to speak besides Ms. Clemente, you will have to wait until last to speak. Mr. Bilker?

Scott Bilker, 7 Driftwood Court: The only thing I really want to talk about is what you just mentioned, Mr. Cirulli, you said there is plenty of fluff and we are all here tonight so let's just here some of what that fluff is and then maybe we can decide if it is fluff we want to keep or fluff that we don't want to keep. If there is a lot of that let's here what it is. I think that is fair. So, that is my only question, I know it is not back and forth, I know it is not the forum, but you did open it up by letting us know there is something you want to take care of. We are all here so let's all take care of it right now. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: At this time until this Committee and the Board sitting behind me have gone through everything, we will have the answers for you by next week. This is not going to be tonight, we are not going to say what we have been looking at, exactly what we have been looking, but we are looking into a lot of different things and something that we might be looking into two days ago we may not look into because of what we heard here tonight. So we are just going to continue on the way it is here tonight with comments and we will go from there. There is someone behind Ms. Clemente in the back?

Kimberly Hockrin, 3 Tulip Court: Is there a certain number that you have to cut by law?

Mayor Melchiondo: No

Kimberly Hockrin: You are allowed to decide. Well, then my input to you will be to cut \$1.00 from the school budget and save all of our programs and save our schools, thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, Ms. Clemente?

Maryann Clemente, 565 E. Bay: I am not going to take that as an affront that you took her before me.

Mayor Melchiondo: It is the lights.

Ms. Clemente: What? It is the lights, Ok. I want to answer your questions, especially you, Mr. Dasti in terms of why people voted. Because I have been speaking to a few people that I have been seeing at the cell tower meetings and various other meetings. Why people voted this budget down. I don't think anybody wants the kids...

Mr. Dasti: I did not ask why people voted the budget down.

Ms. Clemente: Oh, you asked me why didn't...

Mr. Dasti: So there is no misunderstanding, Mrs. Clemente, I questioned why you would have voted on something not having read it. That is what I asked you.

Ms. Clemente: OK, I think enough people got up here to say it really was not available. I will tell you why I think most of the people voted it down was by voting it down they

thought that giving you guys a change to review it as well as God-hoping a new Board comes into play, would have a change to review it and some cut some of the fluff as Mr. Cirulli accurately states. Every budget, I don't care what budget you are talking about, has got fluff. I worked in a major money center bank and worked on budgets throughout the different departments and every budget has fluff. So, I know you are going to work responsibly on this and do what is right for the kids and cut the unnecessary items. That is it.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you. Anyone else?

Kimberly Lally: I have a question? Do you folks in the front row decide on the money amount? The dollar amount?

Mayor Melchiondo: The dollar amount.

Kimberly Lally: And then you recommend to the folks in the back row on what that dollar amount is? With all due respect I think you should really stick to that, let the Board decide what they will cut, let the Board decide what is the fluff, that is what they were elected for, not you guys. You can give them a dollar amount and you are fully capable to doing that, give the folks in the row behind you the dollar amount in which you think should be cut but please...I don't think that you have, this is going to sound rude and I don't mean to be rude, but I don't think you have a right to make an opinion on what you think the school district should cut. You have the right and the legal responsibility to give them the dollar amount, but not the specifics.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you.

Dan Lanier, 3 Faulkner Place: I am not a member of the Barnegat Township Board of Education, I am not a former Board member or anyone who tried to run for the Board of Education, but I have spoken to a lot of people in Barnegat and the consensus always seemed to be they thought that the Board of Education was spending too much money and spending it foolishly. Nobody every mentions teachers' salaries, teachers' benefits or how many teachers we have. You have a very tough job; I don't envy you and thank you for this forum. But if you find that there is fat, and there is probably fat a lot of it, it is your job to give a number and let the Board take care of it. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, sir.

Maria Depisa, 20 Starboard Ave.: I have been here for 35 years. I am a paraprofessional at Barnegat Russell O. Brackman School. I have been there since the school opened. This fluff you talk about I think we are talking about cotton candy or a topping on ice cream, ok? I am going to tell you there is nobody at my school that has got any fluff. Those people work and they work hard and I am talking about from the janitors, to the bus drivers. I am a para, my Principals, my teachers. OK? I don't see any fluff. They all do an excellent job. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you.

Danielle Purcelli, 38 Pulaski Drive: I am sitting here with absolutely no intentions of coming up to speak to anyone, but I feel that I have to. I have one son right now in the district and I have two more that will be coming into the district. I am coming from a previous district last year. The job that the school and some of the teachers and administrators that are here have done with my son this year, it scares me so greatly to have two more children coming into this district and they may not have this. They may not benefit from what my one son, in not even one full school year, has with the programs that Barnegat offers. I think if you take these programs away and off the table these kids are going to suffer. We should not be up here fighting; we should not be up here arguing. We should be worried about these children. In order for our children to be the future, we need to give them everything possible, and I think it is ridiculous to take anything away from our children. I also think if you were to look at my son and see how the teachers have helped him, you would say to yourself why would you take that away from a child? Why would you let a child suffer? All this talk about fluff and busing, do you really want your child walking home on these streets? Or do you want to know they are safely in a bus, with a bus driver being dropped off to your door? I moved here for all of these things and I want to stay here for all of these things. I just hope that these new Board members remember that. I want to have faith in them and I want to say that I am proud to be here. I want to say that I am proud to be here.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you. Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

**CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mayor Melchiondo: May I have a Motion to Close Public Comments:

Mr. Hartman: So moved.

Mrs. Ryan: Second

Mayor Melchiondo: All in favor? Aye.

I want to thank everyone for their input this evening. Your comments and suggestions regarding the defeated budget will be considered in our final decision. The process of dealing with a defeated budget is not an easy one. We as the Township Committee are required to follow State mandated procedures to come up with an Agreement with the School Board. After tonight's meeting the Budget Sub-Committee will meet to finalize our decision on the budget proposal. At next week's meeting the Township Committee along with the School Board will outline the proposed cuts by line-item for consideration. At that time, the public will again be invited to comment on the budget proposal prior to the vote. At this time we will have comments from members of the School Board and the Township Committee and we will start with the School Board, Mr. Houser?

Mr. Houser: We would like to thank all of you for attended tonight's special meeting for public comment on the failed school budget and providing us with your input. After tonight's meeting the Budget Committees for Township Committee and the Board of Education will be meeting to discuss your input and to work on finalizing an agreement on cutting the budget. It is our intention not to cut anything from the budget that will adversely affect the quality of education for our students. Thank you very much for attending.

Mayor Melchiondo: Thank you, Mr. Houser. Would anyone else on the Board of Education like to comment?

Mrs. Mitchell: Yes, I just have a question of Mr. Houser. Mr. Houser, at what point is the Board as a whole going to discuss what you are going to discuss with your Committee and theirs to appoint Committee members? So we will go into closed session separately as a Board of Education correct?

Mr. Houser: We will go; we will have a session, whether we will have a closed session or not is still yet to be determined by the attorney.

Mrs. Mitchell: Ok, but we will have a chance to discuss it, that is what I am looking for.

Mr. Houser: Of course, you will have discussion at the meeting, correct.

Mrs. Mitchell: OK, and we will get nothing from you or the Committee until that meeting? Like a weekly update, a Friday update of what happened?

Mr. Houser: Of course, you are going to receive the Agenda from the meetings before the meeting.

Mrs. Mitchell: OK, I know we will receive the Agenda, but will we receive a Committee Report in that Agenda then?

Mr. Houser: Correct.

Mrs. Mitchell: OK, thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Anyone else from the School Board like to speak? Would anyone on the Township Committee like to comment? Committeeman Hartman?

Committeeman Hartman: Thank you, Mayor. I just want to say, too, reiterate what Mr. Houser said, I want to thank everybody for coming out, taking there time out to come out and give us their opinion. Tonight's meeting was simply to ask you what kind of programs, if there are any programs that you feel should be cut, get your input. There has been, this is what we have been given, plus more, that we have been reading and going through. I have had a lot of questions and I put them through our liaison with the Board,

those questions have come back and I have been given some answers and that is all in the mix. What you guys said tonight will also be in the mix.

As Committeeman Cirulli has said, we are not going to go out there and cut needlessly across the board and go after anything the kids need to insure their education. Definition of fluff in my mind, you know, everybody has a different definition. I am asking, giving the new Board members the opportunity, you elected them to run the school, I do not know education and what is needed to make a school run properly and provide the right amount of education. I have given them my suggestions through our liaison and expecting that back through out liaison as Mrs. Mitchell said, we should all have a report that we can review over the weekend before Monday's meeting at which time I believe the Board is going to give this Committee their recommendations of line-items and dollar value and we will determine if that is acceptable as the intent of the people. That is where I plan to go and I can assure everybody that it will be done with an open mind and to ensure the needs of the kids for their education to give them every opportunity to excel in this world, this highly-competitive world, the opportunity to do so. We have a lot of great teachers; we have a lot of great administrative staff and support staff. I am not looking to get rid of them, but we are looking to do what the people have asked and we are going to do it evenly, consistently and intelligently. Thank you.

Mayor Melchiondo: Any other comments from the Township Committee?  
Committeewoman Ryan?

Mrs. Ryan: I just want to say again, thank you, we appreciate everybody coming tonight and I realize that it is difficult to make constructive comments when you have not seen the budget. I know I put a lot of time into reading most of the material I have here. I won't pretend I have done every page, page by page, but I have read a lot of what goes into the school. We do have a mandate from the State, we being the Township Committee; we do have a deadline date of May 19 and that is only two weeks when we have to have our recommendations in the form of a Resolution handed over to the Board of Education. I, for one, do not want to see any one child in this district hurt, and I don't think anyone else sitting up here does. I include both Boards in that. I want you to be comfortable that whatever we recommend will be in the best interest of every child kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Thank you.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Melchiondo: With that, may I have a Motion to adjourn?

Mr. Hartman: So moved.

Mr. Cirulli: Second

Mayor Melchiondo: All in favor? Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Falkowski, Board Secretary  
Assistant Business Administrator