

**BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
MARCH 3, 2008**

Members of the Board Finance Committee met on Monday, March 3, 2008, in the Dining Room of the Education Center, 1516 Sycamore Street, Bethlehem, PA. Mr. McKeon called the meeting to order at 10:00 p.m. The following school board members were present: Mrs. Michele Cann, Mrs. Irene Follweiler, Mrs. Loretta Leeson, Mrs. Charlene Koch, and Mrs. Judy Dexter. Also in attendance were Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance and Administration, Mr. Scott Gilliland, Director of Facilities and Operations; members of the press and other interested citizens.

TAX PAYMENT DATES FOR 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR – Mr. Majewski presented the proposed dates for tax payments for the 2008-2009 school year. There were no concerns expressed with regard to these dates. This item will appear on the Regular Board Agenda for March 17, 2008, for approval.

RENTAL OF LAND FOR FARMING – Mr. Majewski informed the committee that he has been in contact with the Koehler family who has been leasing district property at the corner of Freemansburg Avenue and Farmersville Road in Bethlehem Township for several years for farming purposes. The family has expressed the desire to renew this lease for another year for the sum of \$1,000. This item will appear on the Regular Board Agenda for March 17, 2008, for approval.

BUDGET TRANSFERS FOR 2007-2008 SCHOOL YEAR - Mr. Majewski presented proposed budget transfers for the month of March totaling \$2,168. The funds are being transferred between the Superintendent's accounts for equipment replacement and rental for chairs at the opening day ceremonies.

FISCAL YEAR UPDATE – Mr. Majewski stated he has been watching the cost of health care benefits to see if the spike in costs is continuing. The cost appears to have leveled at this time. Instructional staffing is staying level. Mr. Majewski stated that he would present revenue projections at the April committee meeting. Real Estate taxes make up the majority of the district's revenues and interim tax reconciliations have not yet been received from Berkheimer.

Mr. McKeon asked the collection rate for real estate taxes. Mr. Majewski responded that it is around 96.8 percent. Mr. McKeon noted that many proposed building projects are now being delayed due to financial concerns.

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CONTRACTED TAX COLLECTOR – The district’s tax collection software has become obsolete. After reviewing the options of purchasing a new system or outsourcing, it was determined to be more cost effective to outsource. The district is currently under contract with Berkheimer Associates to collect district taxes in Hanover and Bethlehem Townships and the boroughs of Freemansburg and Fountain Hill. After discussions with both Berkheimer and the City of Bethlehem, Mr. Majewski is recommending that we contract with the City of Bethlehem for the collection and administration of real estate taxes for all municipalities serviced by the Bethlehem Area School District. Mrs. Koch, Mrs. Leeson, Mrs. Follweiler, and Mr. McKeon all stated that they felt this was advantageous to the district as the collections would be kept within the taxing district. The cost for collection would be \$40,000 with a one-time expenditure of \$9,000 to upgrade the City’s software.

Mr. McKeon inquired how long it took for the school district to receive Earned Income Taxes collected. Mr. Majewski replied it takes between 30 and 60 days. This item will appear on the Regular Board Agenda for March 17, 2008, for approval.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR - None requested.

OPEN FORUM – Mrs. Leeson informed the committee that a Skill USA brunch for a Parkland School District Coach with medical problems will be held on Sunday, March 9, 2008, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Parkland High School cafeteria.

Mrs. Leeson reminded the committee of a budget workshop to be held Wednesday, March 5, at 6:00 p.m. in the Dining Room of the Education Center.

Mrs. Dexter inquired as to why the committee received 30 pages of information on Nitschmann Middle School right before the meeting began.

Dr. Lewis responded that the information, due to financing, was delayed and just became available.

Mrs. Dexter stated that the presentation was worthless to her as she did not have adequate time to review the information.

Mrs. Follweiler stated that the Nitschmann proposal is very important, and she would prefer to have more time to review the information. Mrs. Leeson agreed and stated that she does not want projects “dropped” on us.

Dr. Lewis replied that there was no intention not to provide adequate time to review the proposals.

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Mrs. Leeson commented that she was at Liberty High School on Friday, February 29, 2008, and was very impressed with the way Liberty security was set up. Students were searched and police and BASD security were on site.

Dr. Lewis thanked Mrs. Leeson for her comments and remarked that the police were outstanding. Northampton County has effective leadership in emergency management and they came through for us.

Mr. Scott Gilliland commended the police, fire, and emergency services, and thanked Mrs. Leeson for her comments.

Dr. Lewis will ask principals to acknowledge all students who attended school on February 29, 2008. He reported that Mrs. Durante, Liberty High School Principal, provided free lunch for all students attending classes on Friday.

Dr. Lewis stated that there was a 41 percent attendance rate for that day.

Mr. McKeon adjourned the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Adele Embardino, Confidential Secretary to Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance and Administration.