

**Toms River, New Jersey, December 8, 2023**

A Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education of the Toms River Regional Schools took place at 1245 Old Freehold Road, Toms River, on Friday, December 8, 2023 at 5:00 P.M.

Board Vice President Ms. Kathy Eagan read the following Opening Statement:

“Good Evening, Welcome to a Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education of the Toms River Regional Schools.”

“This meeting was announced to the public through a notice published in the Asbury Park Press on December 4, 2023 and The Star Ledger on December 5, 2023, which constituted at least 48 hours notice as required by law under the Open Public Meetings Act.”

A roll call of attendance indicated the following Board Members were present: Mrs. Lisa Contessa, Mrs. Jennifer Howe, Mrs. Ashley Lamb, Mrs. Melissa Morrison, Mr. Nardini, Mrs. Anna Polozzo, Mrs. Michele Williams, Ms. Kathy Eagan, and Mr. Kidney.

Also in attendance were Superintendent Citta, Assistant Superintendents DiMeo, Ricotta, Thomas, Business Administrator Doering, Board Secretary Saxton, and Board Attorney Burns.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION- 5:01 P.M.**

*A motion was made by Mr. Nardini, seconded by Mrs. Contessa and carried that the following Executive Session Resolution be approved:*

Resolved, that the Board of Education, at this time, move to a closed session to be held in High School North Guidance Office, 1245 Old Freehold Road, Toms River, New Jersey, for the purpose of:

Executive Session Resolution – To *Include* – Personnel and Legal regarding the Feasibility Study for Potential Regionalization with Seaside Heights Board of Education; Other. Subject to change.

as outlined under the Open public Meetings Act.

**RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION – 5:35 P.M.**

*A motion was made by Mrs. Howe, seconded by Mrs. Contessa and carried that the Board return to Regular Session at 5:35 P.M.*

*All members present voting Aye.*

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Board President Mr. Kevin Kidney led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

Superintendent Citta welcomed everyone to the special board meeting of the Toms River Regional Board of Education to discuss and vote on a resolution to seek authorization from the NJ Commissioner of Education to hold a referendum to expand the Toms River School District to include Seaside Heights as a constituent member.

Superintendent Citta discussed that administration and the board want to be able to have many discussions throughout our municipalities and answer questions about the pros and concerns of this Regionalization and then let the community decide. Our regional community will have the final say to Regionalize with Seaside Heights.

Superintendent Citta explained that there has been a lot of misinformation being sent out to the communities.

Superintendent Citta compared the performance and demographics of 42,000 students to the 300 students that border our township and explained how this Regionalization would benefit from the resources, love, support, extra-curriculars and continuity of instruction that the students would receive in Toms River with little to no impact on our demographics and performance. He discussed that it is our obligation to educate our public and let the community decide.

Superintendent Citta explained how the Regionalization study from the opinion of our administration and the due diligence we took to examine the pros and concerns of such an endeavor, had him asking the board to move this to the Commissioner for approval of a

vote for our community because the benefits for children, our staff and our taxpayers is one that we cannot ignore.

Superintendent Citta stated that we always present information and recommendations only when it is good for the kids, supportive of our staff and school community, and our taxpayers are considered and the effects those recommendations have on them and our budget.

Superintendent Citta explained how the Regionalization benefits the students of SSH by the continuity of instruction, tons more resources and supports K-12, extra-curricular opportunities and of course, the magic of being a student in the Toms River Regional School Community.

Superintendent Citta explained how the Regionalization benefits the students of Toms River by the instructional opportunities which remain unchanged, with increased funding which means more supports, resources and opportunities for our students district wide in and out of the classroom. He further opined the benefit of the elementary school class size stability and in many cases a reduction.

Superintendent Citta explained how the Regionalization benefits our staff by bringing on the entire staff of fantastic educators from Seaside Heights Elementary, there will be class size reduction and more opportunity to grow our learners.

Superintendent Citta explained how the Regionalization benefits our taxpayers of Toms River from the nearly 7.1 million dollars annually that do not hit the taxes of the four current municipalities. He advised that this sustainable revenue combined with what he is about to share is what makes this opportunity so appealing to the Toms River Regional Community.

Superintendent Citta discussed that over the last 7 years, Toms River Schools have been decimated by a funding formula that has taken over 100 million dollars from our students and put us at our fiscal cliff this past year. He advised that last year we were able to recover the 15 million dollars due to the legislation created to restore 66% of our cut for one year only and the help of the township and taxpayers by using open space funds for the balance of 4.1 million dollars, avoiding more than 27 layoffs and the elimination of students non-mandated programs like athletics. Toms River faces a 26 million shortfall in the 24-25 school year which will include over 100 layoffs and the elimination of all

non-mandated programs which includes all athletic and extracurricular basically bankrupting us if nothing changes. He explained that if you don't believe that is real, take a look at our neighboring district Jackson who began that dismantling process last year after hitting their cliff of only 8 million dollars. Superintendent Citta stated that this is bad news. He further went on to discuss that the good news is during the summer senate bill S3950 was created to help districts with 5 or more municipalities and that have met a litany of criteria which we do. He believes we are the only district that would qualify if we regionalized to 5 towns. This would restore our funding from the 22-23 school year of 14.4 million plus the 4.5 projected to be cut this year in S2 now and forever. This means the catastrophe could be avoided by the laws that already exist and every student in our regional district would benefit from this point moving forward and as our adequacy levels off our taxpayers would start to see real reductions in school tax.

Superintendent Citta asked the Board to vote to give us the opportunity to educate our community, do what's right by the kids and save our district by doing what we do best. Coming together!

**COMMENTS FROM GUESTS AND PRESS** *(limited to 3 minutes as per Board Policy # 0167 – Public Participation in Other Board Meetings)*

- Public Comments were heard by Mark Mutter.
- Public Comments were heard by Scott Campbell.
- Public Comments were heard by Dana Tormollan.
- Public Comments were heard by Glen Tuzzolino.
- Public Comments were heard by Alexa Padula.
- Public Comments were heard by Kathleen Fulcomer.

**APPROVAL OF THE RESOLUTION TO SEEK AUTHORIZATION FROM THE NEW JERSEY COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION TO HOLD A REFERENDUM TO EXPAND THE TOMS RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT TO INCLUDE SEASIDE HEIGHTS AS A CONSTITUENT MEMBER**

*A motion was made by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mr. Nardini and carried that the Approval of the Resolution to Seek Authorization from the New Jersey Commissioner of Education to Hold a Referendum to Expand the Toms River Regional School District to Include Seaside Heights as a Constituent Member be approved.*

*On roll call following the vote:*

*Ayes: Howe, Lamb, Nardini, Polozzo, Williams, Eagan, Kidney*

*Noes: Contessa, Morrison*

*Recused: None*

*Abstained: None*

*Absent: None*

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

*A motion was made by Mr. Nardini, seconded by Mrs. Howe and carried that the meeting be adjourned at 6:27 P.M.*

*All members present voting Aye.*

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*Wendy L. Saxton, Board Secretary*