

January 16, 2013  
NEHS Auditorium  
117 Evergreen Road  
New Egypt, NJ 08533

The Special Meeting between the Township Committee and the Plumsted Township Board of Education was called to order by Mayor Leutwyler.

**STATEMENT:** "This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. It was presented for publication to the Asbury Park Press and the Trenton Times and posted on the bulletin board". The purpose of the meeting was to discuss safety and security in the School District's buildings.

**THOSE OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

COMMITTEEMAN WYSONG      COMMITTEEMAN MARINARI      MAYOR LEUTWYLER  
BUSINESS ADMINISRATOR DANCER      MUNICIPAL CLERK HENDRICKSON

Deputy Mayor Sorchik was out of town on business and Committeeman Trotta was running late and arrived before the regular portion of the meeting was called to order.

ON MOTION OF COMMITTEEMAN MARINARI, SECONDED BY COMMITTEEMAN WYSONG, RESOLUTION NO. 2013-93, A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF PLUMSTED, COUNTY OF OCEAN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AUTHORIZING THE CONVENING OF AN EXECUTIVE SESSION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT, WAS ADOPTED. ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES.

The meeting returned to Open Session.

Board of Education President, Harry Miller called the Board of Education meeting to order and read the Open Public Meeting Act statement and proceeded with the roll call.

Those in attendance from the School Board were: Harry Miller, President; Jon Hauge, Vice President; Garrett Midgett; Mark Probasco; Leslie Septor; Sandra Soles and Barbara Wig. Also in attendance from the School District were Business Administrator/Board Secretary Sean Gately; Superintendent Dr. Karen Jones and School Safety Liaison Richard DeMarco.

The meeting was opened with the Flag Salute.

Board President Miller thanked the Township Committee for coming together this evening to discuss safety and security in the district's buildings. Mayor Leutwyler thanked the Board of Education for the opportunity to meet with the School District. He said he felt it was important to be here as a group to discuss security issues. Leutwyler introduced the Township attendees. He continued by saying that the safety of the school children is of the utmost importance to everyone. Leutwyler said that the Chief of Police was also in attendance and many of the police officers.

Mayor Leutwyler turned the meeting over to Dr. Karen Jones, Superintendent of the School District.

Dr. Jones thanked the Mayor and Township Committee, the Board of Education, the School Administrators, the public, as well as the Police Department, for attending this meeting to discuss school safety and security in light of the recent tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut. Jones said school safety has always been and will continue to be the first and foremost priority in the school district. This is not a new issue for schools; it is a continuous issue that is wrestled with day in and day out. Jones gave a brief background on school safety and security procedures. She said during the course of the meeting, a description will be given of things they do and things they anticipate doing in regard to safety. Jones continued, all entrances and exits have been secured with cameras. Since they didn't have as a secure system for the after school care program, they hired personal to provide that security at the entrances and exits. Jones said an Emergency Management Plan is provided on a regular basis. They practice with the students, table-top drills, the district is constantly evaluating, adjusting and improving the security measures. Since the recent tragedy there has been increased police presence in the schools. There is annual staff training, a crisis response team and they will continue to expand that to provide additional training. District communications have improved with a two-way radio system connected to the Police Department; a reverse 9-1-1 can be used in the event of an emergency; cameras are in all of the schools and eventually the police will have access to the camera system via their police vehicles.

Dr. Jones turned the discussion over to Richard DeMarco. Mr. DeMarco gave a brief PowerPoint presentation. He said security drills are conducted, one fire drill per month which has to be done within the first 10 days of the month; one school security drill per month, this could be a lockdown; an active shooter; any type of evacuation this has to be done within the first 15 school days of the month. In June when all of the drills have been completed, the School must sign a statement of assurance and send it to the State to verify they are in compliance. Forty-eight hours before each security drill the police, fire, EMT are contacted, they are very helpful in observing the drills and seeing where they can be improved. There is a check list in every schools safety plan and it is a frame work of the existing policies and procedures. DeMarco reiterated what Dr. Jones said earlier in the meeting. The school has had conversations with the State and has made changes upon their suggestions. Mr. DeMarco concluded by thanking the public for attending.

President Harry Miller spoke briefly of the security system and the procedures they have in place. Mayor Leutwyler said everyone needs to be aware of their surroundings, report anything they may see that isn't right. Chief of Police Matt Petrecca spoke briefly and said the children come first.

The meeting was opened for public comments. Harry Miller asked for cooperation during the public comment portion, he said each speaker will be given three (3) minutes to speak.

Luisa Erich-Carr, 12 Holmes Road, asked Chief Petrecca if there were enough police officers on board or do they need more. Said according to statistics Plumsted needs 18 to 20 police officers. Erich-Carr as how the number of officers could be brought up to 20.

Mayor Leutwyler said there is no way the Township can afford to hire additional officers at this time; the Township will look into grants. Chief Petrecca said there is a CAP on the budget. Erich-Carr suggested both Boards look at their budgets.

Ted Kucowski of Colliers Mills Road asked who had the ultimate responsibility for the safety of his children while they are in school. Dr. Jones said the school is responsible. Kucowski asked if there were officers in the school now, Jones said no, currently the SRO officer is not in the school. Kucowski asked if there was money in the school surplus to hire police officers. Business Administrator Sean Gately said there is money in surplus but not certain if it can be used for SRO officers. Board Member Garrett Midgett said most of the surplus the school has comes from Federal Impact Aid. Kucowski asked the school to use the impact aid to hire police officers.

Bill Carr of Holmes Mill Road said he was a retired Police Officer with 30 years of service. Carr recommended hiring retired officers on a temporary basis. They are armed, they are trained and qualify twice a year. Something has to be done now.

Board Member Harry Miller said there are no dollars to hire more SROs, the Board is looking at all avenues to hire officers. They are working with the Chief to find the best answer.

Tilly Hopkins of Archertown Road said her concerns are for the safety of her grandchildren. She asked about bulletproof windows at the doors and alert systems that can be worn by the teachers. Dr. Jones said that the School is looking into various security avenues.

Carol Ann Miller of Toni Drive said there are things that can be done immediately like checking backpacks, hoodies, put up gates to block off sections of the schools when not in use, tighten things up immediately.

Morgan Joiner of Kuzyk Road asked what the policies and procedures are if someone enters the school. Mr. DeMarco said he understands the question and knows how to answer the question but is leery about giving specifics. DeMarco said the classroom doors are locked, all interior and exterior doors are locked, all glass doors at the primary school are locked. Joiner said the teachers, children and bus drivers need to be trained. If there is no money, there are lots of thing that can be done to train the teachers.

Tom Faletta of Jennifer Way said the comment was made that "normally they don't use surplus for police officers or school security", but nothing has been normal since 2001, so they have to think outside the box. There is no more normal. They need to train more than once a month because once you come complacent that is when people get hurt. He said it is no secret that this township is loaded with police officers and they are at their disposal. Use your assets, they are willing to help. Use Class II officers to get over the hump. Chief Petrecca expressed his concerns regarding having "civilians" compared to having a police officer in the schools. Joiner recommended putting open door alarms in place to alert when a door maybe propped open or left ajar. He concluded by saying "we can do this together".

Dr. Jones asked residents to come forward to help.

Nina Hagen of Oakleaf Drive said she and her husband both work for the Department and also recommended that the School tap into their resources for assistance.

Laura Crawford of Bobbi's Terrace noted that she had just been in the halls and the doors are wide open, anyone has access to the building. She expressed her concerns regarding glass doors and windows.

Charlie Kerr of Circle Drive said she has been a resident for 50 years and has recently taken the position of Supervisor for Wolfington (school transportation provider) and will answer any questions the residents may have. She continued by saying that they are working with the Chief so he can educate the drivers more about what they think should do in case of an emergency so the students are much safer.

Ted Kucowski expressed his concerns about how an armed criminal would be stopped. He addressed his question to Dr. Jones. She replied she didn't know how to answer that question. Kucowski said something has to be done to make this work. The School Board has money we need to secure our children. It is very simple, spend the money, hire a police officer. Board President Harry Miller said the Board understands the Township's fiscal restraints, the Board has taken it upon themselves to look into security measures. Kucowski asked how much money the school has in surplus, he was told right now they were approaching \$1.5 million. Mr. Midgett said the school received \$1.6 million in impact aid. They are still owed money from 2010, 2011 and 2012. The current year appropriation, due to federal inability to create a budget for 2013, is zero. Going forward, all of that money could disappear and the Board would be concerned where they get next year's funding in all aspects, teacher's salaries, and school transportation. There are a host of other issues where you just can't take that money and use it toward security. One of the options is using the bank CAP. He said it isn't just about police officers in the school, the best security would be keeping them from getting in. That means bulletproof glass in every window and every door.

Mayor Leutwyler said when the township hires a police officer, they allocate on the high end of the contracted salary scale. Board member Jon Hauge said the Board understands that safety is the number priority. They understand there is a need for more officers. The Township is unable to provide this service. As a Board they are committed, if they have to hire police officers, that is what they have to do, there will probably be program cuts and taxes will go up, but they are committed to keep the children safe.

Chief Petrecca spoke on security measures.

Matthew Kerr spoke briefly.

Tilly Hopkins once again expressed her concerns on school security and the need to have police in the schools. She recommended doing a petition for the residents to sign to make the children safe.

Committeeman Marinari said President Obama spoke on grants for security for the schools. Ten years ago when the SRO and COPS in schools started they were funded for a three year period. After the three years the money was cut off. It was difficult to continuing to fund those programs. Marinari recommended that residents send letters to the Federal government representatives to get programs funded. Hopkins asked for assistance in preparing a petition. Mayor Leutwyler thanked Ms. Hopkins for her comments.

Jacqueline (last name unknown) said she is a single mom who has health issues and would like to see police presence in the schools in order to deter anyone from entering the school. The School Board explained the Township doesn't have the funds available to hire police officers so they have to solve the problem now and they said that is what they are going to do. She asked if the Board had explored all financial aspects or programs that are out there. The Board informed the public that the funding issue went before the voters earlier and it had been turned down by the voters.

Mayor Leutwyler said that everyone's support is needed, The Township has over a \$400,000.00 deficit this year, with tax appeals the Township had to pay back \$375,000.

Laura Crawford asked what procedures were in place in the event of an incident. Dr. Jones explained the procedures. Chief Petrecca explained that Jackson Township and Manchester Township would be called in the event of an emergency situation.

Tasha (last name unknown) of 200 Bunting Bridge Road said she had recently visited the school at 9:00 to pick her children up from a function and the school doors were unlocked. She suggested as an extra procedure the doors should be locked.

Aaron Heller of 68 Evergreen Road school security has been an ongoing issue, police officers in the schools prevent more than just shootings and stabbings. There are drug problems in the school. Having police in the school is one more way to reach out to the kids before something goes tragically wrong, you can't prevent it all. Heller spoke on the CAP issue in municipal budgets. Now is the time to go for a referendum when this is all fresh in people's minds.

Assemblyman Dancer thanked the residents for coming out today. Dancer said Governor Christie spoke on various issues today at his Town Hall meeting, one of which was school security. The Governor expressed the point that the serious discussion that is happening now is staying focused on violence control. Gun control is a part of the conversation; the focus is on violence control. The resources for control comes from either the local government, State or Federal. The one common denominator is the taxpayer. Every 90 days, the Township Committee receives notification of every federal, state, county and foundation grants that are available. There are very few grants through the federal government. On the State level it is a priority for public safety. The governor repeated today that the local communities can prioritize their needs and not withstanding the 2% CAP law that has been mentioned, you have the ability to have a question on the ballot. That was attempted in Plumsted in the 2007/2008 fiscal year there were a number of questions on that ballot. One of those questions for an SRO (School Resource Officer) was defeated. There was a question on the 2011 ballot for the voters to approve \$97,000.00, less than 1 cent on their tax bill this also was defeated by a margin 2 to 1.

Dancer continued by saying the Township could do a petition through the 12<sup>th</sup> Legislative District starting the process. He also pointed out the Township, as a result of the economy for the last four or five years, Plumsted has lost nearly \$54 million in its ratable base the value of land and improvements. When the tax rate is struck, it ultimately means we have fewer and fewer dollars to work with. This year there was about a \$23 million loss of tax ratable. The people at the local level have the power of the vote to appropriate money for the safety of the children. This should be the number one priority. Dancer encouraged the residents to follow-up with the petition and it will be personally presented to the Governor. The Governor will be giving his budget address the last week of August. At that time there may be some insight as to what the Governor's proposal is for appropriations for schools, State Aid, what monies may be available for grants. Dancer assured the residents that the 40 Legislative Districts in New Jersey will be advocating for additional money for the safety and security of the children.

Chris Neuert of Evergreen Road spoke briefly on monitoring potential problems. Dr. Jones explained this is being done.

The Primary School principal said they frequently conduct drills in the Primary School. Linda Leutwyler, a Primary School teacher, said during a recent lock-down the teachers made sure their students were secure in their classrooms, the doors were locked they sang songs, read stories and played games. They kept the children calm and occupied and there was no fear.

Sam LeNoble of 8 Alton Street asked Sean Gately if the 2009, 2010 and 2011 impact aid was stilled owed. Gately explained the Federal Government has made the full payment for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Gately said the school has received about 2/3 of each of those year payments. LeNoble said if a check was in the mail the next day the surplus would amount to about \$2.9 million, Gately said that was correct. Gately was asked of that \$2.9 million how much would be used to for the operations of the next year. He explained, each year for the past two or three years, about \$1.7 million is used to finance the next year. If the Township stops receiving impact aid the Board will have to cut \$1.7 million from the school's operating budget. There would be devastating cuts if the School should lose impact aid. The school is legally required to have funds in surplus under state law but legally CAPPED at 2%. There is currently \$22,000 allocated for the SRO which the School pays to the Township annually. A police officer's salary and benefits would be about \$100,000 a year. It was said that this would amount to about 3/4% of 1% of the 2% CAP. This doesn't take into consideration additional supplies that may be needed or an emergency such as a roof blowing off. LeNoble continued by saying that everyone on the stage is talking about commitment in solving this problem. The commitment is \$68,000 out of a \$200,000 surplus. One SRO is a step in the right direction. It is the commitment to get it moving forward.

Board President Harry Miller said that this must be done the right way and the recreation programs have to take some accountability too to make sure the parents pick up the children and the place is secure. LeNoble agreed with Mr. Miller.

Ben Smith, a resident of Hampshire Court, is a police officer who is responsible for training for situations that are being discussed here tonight. He spoke briefly on response times for incidents such as this and the costs of hiring an SRO. He also spoke on other precautionary measures that can be taken.

Earlier in the meeting a member of audience suggested that the people on the stage should take a pay cut, Mayor Leutwyler explained to the public that the members of the Board of Education and Township Committee do not have a salary for these positions. Leutwyler explained it is not the people in the audience against the people on the stage, we are all part of this. They are trying to do the best job they can to provide the most security while staying within their financial needs. Leutwyler asked other Township Committee members if there was anything they wanted to add.

Committeeman Marinari thanked everyone who took the time to come out. As a former Board President some years ago, this auditorium was packed because the swimming program was not going to be continued. Marinari said tonight he counted about 70 people and he said he really would have appreciated more people coming out tonight for such an important issue. He thanked those who did come out for their decorum. Committeeman Wysong echoed the comments of Leutwyler and Marinari. Wysong added this doesn't end here at this meeting. Don't let any question or comment fall by the wayside, bring it to the Committee. Committeeman Trotta thanked everyone for coming out tonight and the Board of Education and administration. Safety has always been an issue in schools; always a topic of discussion.

Jon Hauge said he is committed to whatever the Board can possibly do. He spoke briefly on the leveling out the financial difficulties after the reassessment numbers come out and the impact it may have the taxpayer to add SROs to the schools.

Other School Board members spoke briefly.

Chief Petrecca thanked the School Board and the Township Committee for their support.

Dr. Jones thanked everyone for coming out tonight.

Board President spoke briefly and thanked everyone for coming out. He said the School Board is committed to hiring SRO's.

Tilly Hopkins spoke briefly on the petition, Assemblyman Dancer instructed her to contact him at his legislative office.

The Board of Education meeting was adjourned.

Mayor Leutwyler asked for a motion to close the Township Committee meeting.

ON MOTION OF COMMITTEEMAN TROTTA, SECONDED BY COMMITTEEMAN WYSONG, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED. ROLL CALL VOTE: ALL AYES.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy J. Hendrickson, RMC  
Municipal Clerk