



School Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHELSEA SCHOOL COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
March 24, 2011

Approved April 28, 2011

The Chelsea School Committee held two Public Hearings Thursday, March 24, 2011, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 500 Broadway, Chelsea.

Members Present: Chairman Ed Ells, Vice-Chairman Rosemarie Carlisle, Melinda Alvarado-Vega, Michael Caulfield, Lucia Colon, Ramona Foster, Ana Hernandez, Lisa Lineweaver and Morrie Seigal.

Also Present: School Superintendent Dr. Thomas S. Kingston, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Mary M. Bourque, Executive Director of Administration and Finance Gerald McCue, Director of Personnel Tina Sullivan and School Business Manager and Clerk to the School Committee Barbara Martin.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman Ells stated the purpose of the public hearings was on the following two items :

- a. School Choice decision for the 2011-2012 school year, and
- b. The presentation of the proposed school budget for Fiscal Year 2012

3. School Choice for 2011-2012

Dr. Kingston stated that each year the district is obligated under Massachusetts General Law to examine the district's enrollment and to determine whether the Chelsea Public Schools should be a school choice district. Dr. Kingston stated that based on projected enrollments, the administration does not recommend Chelsea Public Schools be a school choice district.

Chairman Ells asked if any one in the audience would like to speak on the school choice issue. There being none, Chairman Ells stated that the hearing on School Choice for the 2011-2012 was closed. The Chelsea School Committee will vote on School Choice at their next meeting.

4. Proposed School Budget for Fiscal Year 2011

Dr. Kingston introduced Executive Director for Administration and Finance Gerald McCue to give a presentation on the proposed FY 2012 school budget. A copy of the presentation is enclosed and forms a part of the minutes.

At this time Chairman Ells explained the procedures for the public comment section of the meeting. Since several members of the audience signed in to speak Chairman Ells began by calling the first name listed.

Mary Ferriter, president of the Chelsea Teacher's Union, noted that her biggest concern was the fact that the union was not included in the preparation of the budget. Ms. Ferriter also thanked the strong, dedicated hard working teachers.

Felix Chavez, a member of CUDE and the father of two daughters in the school system, asked that the Committee not cut after school programs or the athletic program because it helps keep children off the streets and out of trouble. He suggested charging a fee to help defray the cost. He also felt positions could be cut in maintenance and security.

Rosa Matias, a Chelsea resident and CUDE president, asked the Committee to think twice before making cuts and to evaluate all the schools and to work with CUDE in defense of the children of Chelsea.

Carmen Pagan, a thirty-year resident proposed looking at the administration for budget cuts. He noted that children are the future; don't force them out in the streets. He asked the Committee to please consider the students and their parents.

Damaris Gonzalez, a twenty-eight year resident and a member of CUDE, was happy to see all the teachers in the audience. She said she understands the economic situation, but asked the Committee to think twice about the cuts because education is so important. She does not want to see the after school program, the summer school program, or the athletic program cut and feels parents would be willing to pay fees to keep the programs. Ms. Gonzalez also felt that security at Chelsea High School should be reviewed.

Kevin Luu, a junior at Chelsea High School spoke in support of the athletic program and asked the Committee to compromise on the budget. He also agreed that there are security issues at Chelsea high School.

Rogger Andrade, a senior at Chelsea High School asked to spare the athletic program. He said it not only keeps children off the street but encourages commitment and teamwork. He feels that students would pay a fee to play sports.

Dennis Saraffin, a junior at Chelsea High School also asked the Committee to continue the athletic program.

Luis Perrones, a CUDE member said he was very surprised that a country so great would want to close schools and asked the Committee not to close any schools.

Carlos Hoffers, a resident for many years was very sad to hear about cuts and asked the Committee not to cut after school programs and transportation. They are very important and education is the key. He noted that lawmakers promise to do things, but where is their support now? There is a need to find the right solution, for the students and the teachers.

Alejandra Rodriguez asked the Committee not to cut summer school, after school programs, or teachers at Chelsea High School or the Middle Schools.

Sherri Rosenthal, a teacher at the Sokolowski School noted that teachers have been making sacrifices and currently pay 17 ½% for health insurance while other City employees pay 15%. Ms. Rosenthal said a freeze would be detrimental to teacher's livelihoods. She urged the Committee not to sacrifice students and teachers.

Suyapa Perez, a site council member, said she can not see budget cuts while American planes are bombing other places. Why is there no money for education but money for other things? Ms. Perez is thankful for the teachers and values education.

Bob Salois, a teacher at Chelsea High School, noted that Deans of Students and Security Officers are highly thought of in other communities. He also referred to a Chelsea Record article that stated the City of Chelsea had \$11 million dollars. Mr. Salois clarified that he did not read the article but was told about it.

Miriam Acevado, a senior at Chelsea High School suggested that raising the cost of summer school would not only help the budget, but encourage students to study harder during the school year instead of failing and going to summer school.

Alla Azrilyan, a teacher, urged the committee not to eliminate coaches; they are not administrators and are needed in the school.

Nancy Uribe, a Caminos teacher, thanked the parents for coming. Ms. Uribe said she was sad and overwhelmed with the potential cuts. She noted that parents come to this country so that their children can get a better education. Classes with 30-35 students are too high. Do not cut after school programs but cut principals.

Angeline Avilo wished to thank the Early Learning Center teachers and said the furlough days would only be acceptable if everyone from the President down received furlough days.

Faisal Yerow, a freshman at Chelsea High School, asked the committee not to cut transportation because his younger brother takes the bus because they have no car. He also said that because of income some families could not afford a fee.

Beverly Hajazi, a teacher for 23 years, said that teachers work many extra hours and proposing a 3 day furlough it totally disrespectful to the middle class. She suggested closing the school buildings for the three days and save fuel costs. Ms. Hajazi noted that teachers need a 15% increase just to get by and hurt that the administration would even suggest such a thing.

Kettj Fiorentino, a teacher at Browne Middle School and also a parent, spoke about how her parents sacrificed so that she and her brother could get an education. She noted that teachers love what they do, but it is not easy. You cannot have 35-40 students in a class; cut what you don't need.

Anna Hernandez felt that teachers are like a second parent and do a good job. She asked the committee not to cut teachers, transportation, or security.

Mary Ellen Crocker, a paraprofessional and mother of three watches, what teachers do everyday; they are dedicated and make sacrifices. Ms Crocker feels that teachers deserve every penny they make.

Since there were no additional speakers, the hearing on the proposed school budget was closed. Chairman Ells thanked everyone for their comments and said the Committee respected them and the comments made by all the speakers. Chairman Ells said the Chelsea School Committee will vote on the proposed budget at their next meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 31st at 7:00 PM

5. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8.35 p.m.

Recorded by

Barbara A. Martin
Business Manager
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