

**CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 2011**

**HOPE HIGHLANDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**300 HOPE ROAD**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:00 P.M.**

**PUBLIC SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION  
MINUTES**

**A special budget meeting of the School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Hope Highlands School with the following members present: Chairwoman Iannazzi, Mr. Traficante, Mr. Lombardi, Mrs. Ruggieri, Mrs. Culhane, Mr. Bloom and Mrs. McFarland. Also present were Superintendent Nero, Mrs. Nota-Masse, Mr. Balducci, Dr. Lundsten, Mr. Dillon, Mrs. Coogan and Attorney Cascione.**

**The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Bloom, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried that the members convene to Executive Session Pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel; PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation (Contract Negotiations' Update – Bus Drivers / Trades People/Mechanics, Custodians); (Teacher Negotiations; Teacher Assistants/Technical Assistants/Bus Aides Negotiations), (Secretary Negotiations); (Consideration of litigation options and legal options regarding status of aid to education appropriation and legal advice**

relating to the same).

### **Call to Order – Public Session**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted and the roll was called. A quorum was present.

Chairperson Iannazzi reported that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

### **Executive Session Minutes Sealed – June 22, 2011**

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mr. Traficante and unanimously carried to seal the Executive Session Minutes from June 22, 2011.

### **Public Hearing**

**Students (agenda/non-agenda matters)**

There were none.

**Members of the Public (agenda matters only)**

**Annette Bourne, 51 Community Dr.**

I don't know how many of you have gotten your tax bills but I was really dismayed at the tone of the letter and basically letting.....I continue wanting to believe that we're all in this together and I continue being dismayed that I hear evidence that we're not.

**Whatever you can do; I've once made observations based on the census data that about 70% of Cranston residents no longer have school age children. We're pushing a really big rock up a steep hill and I feel badly that a letter like that goes out to all the property owners and we do not have a similar vehicle. This came off of the Info.Works website. I shared it with Stephanie and Steve back in February when Steve addressed the CEAB. Our per pupil expenditures are in the bottom 14 districts. Our tax rate is in the top five; this is FY 08. By my reckoning, the Mayor has it wrong in that letter and I am dismayed that many of the people who get that letter, even the ones with kids in school, don't get to hear the entire story. I don't know what kind of personal animosity issues are going on at this point but I'd like to get this updated. I'm sure the information is out there. Steve and I have talked about really looking at what that ratio is. More than half your tax dollars in every school district goes just to school costs. This is a huge enterprise and educating our children is the most important enterprise. I just wanted to let you know that the letter was upsetting and whatever we can do to address it to the other 70% of the people who may have relatives who are still in the district or have had children who have come through the district. Even if they don't have any children, they still rely on the fact that we produce safe neighborhoods that children are occupied and educated and fruitful to our society to everybody. Thank you.**

**Also, I want to urge everyone to continue to take the high road here because in order for us to make an argument to this 70% of Cranston residents who do not have a primary stake in this school system, we**

need to make them understand that public education is of value. That's why it was established in the United States of America. It was established because it is of value to every citizen regardless of whether or not your child attends a school.

**Mr. Lombardi**

I don't generally respond when you make public comments but this may be the understatement of the year because I along with the chairperson was mentioned in the letter. I was not fortunate enough to get the letter in our tax bill because I escrow my taxes. You can imagine my sentiment when I got called by five people this morning that got their tax bill and said that my name was mentioned in the letter. I have so much more to say. I'm not going to begrudge you tonight and belabor the point with you. I'm going to take it up with the person. You also said "a second issue" and you talk about you hope that our problems can be resolved and quite frankly I don't believe that there are any problems with this Mayor. He started that OP ED piece and then he apologized for the piece. Peter Nero took the heat for creating the OP ED piece. He now cast another stone at the schools, the Council, and everyone else that collects a pension. He blames those three groups for what happened in the City and mentions two people particularly by name. I intend to address it when I need to address it and I would ask rhetorically when he sat with Andrea Iannazzi and I to tell us that we must live within our budgets. I don't recall that meeting and the only meeting I had with anybody regarding that subject was the Council and the Mayor's

lawyer because the Mayor chose not to be there but to be representing Steve Ucci's fund raiser. The word cowardly comes to mind and certainly I don't want to pick your ear about it but I am dismayed at him to mention my name and not give me the courtesy. The question I want to know is, "How can this be written on tax payer dollars?" That is the question I'm going to ask. This is nothing but a political statement. Remember at the Board of Regents meeting where the Mayor sat with them and then there was us. I thought that was symbolic but none the less, I've witnessed these last three weeks where he comes to all graduations, etc. and he champions everything about it to the extent that if there are any olive branches being extended we are extending the olive branches and symbolically at the Cranston West graduation, I had the good fortune to shake many hands that day; but I had the last group of kids. The Mayor wanted to give one diploma at the end and the Mayor does not give out diplomas at the West graduation. I said, "Mayor why don't you stay up there and give the rest out." There has never been anything personal with me so I don't know why he is making it personal now.

**Ms. Iannazzi**

Just to add to that; I support everything that Mr. Lombardi said but in addition to asking the Mayor questions, I'm going to ask the Mayor a question. I'm going to ask him for the refund of the \$250 I donated to his campaign last year.

**Ms. Iannazzi** asked if there was any action to be taken this evening. There being no action, we do not have any new business. Our future

**meeting will be held on June 28th at 5:00 p.m. Executive Session here at Hope Highlands.**

**TABLED RESOLUTION**

**NO. 11-6-31 - RESOLVED, that the 2011-2012 Operating Budget, as adopted by the School Committee, be revised. (Remains on the table until June 28th)**

**Adjournment**

**There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Frank S. Lombardi**

**School Committee Clerk**