

Letter to the Editor: More Hidden Secrets Revealed at Joint Meeting

BOE spent over \$1 million in overtime for transportation and maintenance staff! BOE borrowed against the \$4 million State Grant Money for 290 Brighton Road that it still hasn't received. Budget line items overstated by 5%! BOE has been sitting on \$596,000 left over from the construction of School 17 that should have been used to pay down debt! The old game of Hide and Seek continues but the Council has now joined the game with the residents and taxpayers as the "IT" part of the game! Unfortunately, the business administrator still wants to play this game of hide and seek and refuses to admit defeat and reveal ALL of the remaining hidden secrets!

It was truly a disgrace that it took continued and repeated questioning from the Mayor and Council about the status of the \$4 million grant money for 290 Brighton Road until Ms. Perkins finally revealed that the BOE has not yet received the grant money and in fact they borrowed against this money! Unfortunately, the follow-up question of how much this borrowing cost the taxpayers wasn't asked nor did Ms. Perkins volunteer the information. (For those readers that don't remember the 290 Brighton Road referendum question passed by the voters stated the project would cost \$15.1 million with the BOE bonding for \$11.1 million and remaining \$4 million would come from a NJ Schools Construction Authority Grant.) Several months ago, a resident specifically asked a question about this grant money at a BOE meeting and Ms. Perkins stated at that time the grant money had been received.

Speaking of 290 Brighton Road, isn't it quite funny that we the taxpayers still can not get an answer from the Business Administrator on what the expected total cost of the project is. We do know that to date, the project is at least \$3 million over budget (even more if you include the \$4 million grant money should we not receive it)! I believe even Mr. Daley (the new BOE President) has asked and has not received an answer!

In fact, the State Audit Report released in February 2009 under "#5 The District failed to obtain department approval for change orders that exceeded 20% of the total contract amount contrary to NJSA 6A:26-4.9 concluded "the district is also forewarned that additional recoveries may occur if the district approves any other change orders that are contrary to the provisions of the statute". It required that "the district is further directed to submit an itemized list of all change orders to the Office of School Facilities. The Office of School Facilities will identify the dollar amount of change orders that are contrary to the provisions of the statute and notify the district and the Division of Finance which will determine the timing of any potential recovery to the State".

I spoke to the Office of School Facilities who confirmed that the district still has not sent the State the itemized list of all change orders for 290 Brighton Road! Is it any wonder then that four of our BOE commissioners (Daley, Paitechell, Graupe, and Yeamans) continue to vote not to approve these continued change orders at each BOE meeting? I suggest the five BOE commissioners (Renta, Traier, Fraulo, St. Clair and Tahan) who continue to vote to approve these change orders step up to the plate and join the game of hid and seek as the "IT" players and seek the hidden secrets! It is time these five commissioners start asking questions instead of just blindly approving the continued overspending of taxpayer funds on this project. If not, house cleaning at the BOE will continue next April and three new commissioners will replace those commissioners who are up for re-election.

Mary Sadrakula – Clifton, NJ

