

# Holmdel Township Board of Education

## Community Relations Committee

### Combined Meeting Notes for December 19, 2008 and January 16, 2009

**Present: Board Members:** Ana M. Vander Woude–Chair, Barbara Garrity, Michael L. Collins, and Jim Shelton

**Administrator:** Barbara Duncan

#### **1. Open Public Meeting for Discussion of Special Education Programs and**

**Services:** Ana, Jim and B. Duncan shared their observations of the open public meeting with the committee. Although the substantive elements of the meeting fall within the parameters of the Special Education Committee, this committee’s discussions focused on public perception. Concerns were raised as to the benefit of the meeting due to limited community attendance and what may have caused it. Factors such as limiting the public to specific discussion topics and a non-district moderator may have had a negative impact on the public’s perception of the meeting.

**2. Communications to Board Members:** A query was raised regarding the procedure for addressing communications received by Board members from the public. Mrs. Duncan explained that typically such communications are forwarded to her by the Board President and that she addresses the issue raised. Concern was expressed that there should also be a formal reply from the Board acknowledging receipt of the correspondence and explaining the subsequent procedure to the community member. The committee decided to discuss this issue at the next public meeting, as well as whether or not all Board Members should be copied in such replies.

**3. How to Better Promote E-Alert:** The district’s electronic messaging system has been in place for about one year now, and is advertised primarily on the district website and calendars. In order to make better use of E-Alert, the committee recommended that there be greater outreach to the parent groups for inclusion in their newsletters and announcements at their meetings. Mrs. Duncan agreed to raise this item for discussion at her next President’s Council meeting.

**4. BOE Visit to the Half-Century Club:** The committee discussed the goals and objectives for the BOE’s scheduled visit on January 20<sup>th</sup> to the Half-Century Club. In light of the fact that the District’s budget has not been finalized, it would not be possible to discuss specifics for the next school year. The Board is primarily interested in better understanding the community’s concern regarding the budget. Moreover, the district would share with the club membership measures undertaken by the district to promote greater efficiencies, as well as the present uncertainty involving state and federal funding.

**5. Operation Get Out the Vote:** In preparation for public budget presentations, the committee discussed involvement by Board Members. Recently a notice regarding Operation: Get Out The Vote was distributed to our district families via kid mail. The form was soliciting volunteers to assist in several capacities including: hosting a neighborhood budget forum with a BOE member leading a budget discussion (around February or March); and, hosting a neighborhood budget tea with a BOE member presenting the approved budget. In the event that there are community members willing to host a budget forum or tea, the

committee recommended drafting a sign-up sheet for Board members available to participate. The sheet would then be provided to Mary Pomarico (the project coordinator). The committee also agreed to extend an invitation to Ms. Pomarico to further discuss ways to promote community involvement in the April elections.

**6. Budget Pamphlet:** The committee was tasked to review last year's budget pamphlet for discussion at the February meeting.

**7. NJSBA Annual School Public Relations Forum:** Ana, Michael and Jim will be attending said forum on January 23, 2009. Of particular interest will be the presentations on "Effective Year-Round Communications" and "Reversing the Trend: Strategies for Budget Approval." They will report out at the next committee meeting and Board meeting.

**Next Meeting:** February 8, 2009 at 11a in the Superintendent's Office.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Ana M. Vander Woude**