

COMMACK PUBLIC SCHOOL- COMMACK, NEW YORK

Board of Education Regular meeting
Hubbs Administration Center
Thursday, February 12, 2009@ 8:30 p.m.
Attended by John Karahalidis

I entered the meeting room at 8:20 p.m. Minutes of the previous meeting were available on a table at the entrance. There were approximately 60 individuals present, many were couples. It became apparent that many of the participants were regular attendees as they were warmly greeted by some of the Commack staff that was also at the meeting. I took a seat in the middle of the room near the aisle. I was not greeted by any Commack school employees.

The seating arrangement had attendees seating in typical row alignment facing the Board members situated in a crescent shape separated by a distance of about 30'. The Board members entered the room from a rear entrance and took their seats that had titles on a place card for each member at 8:47 p.m. There were 12 members I was able to see from my vantage point. They included the President of the Board, Superintendent of Schools, Board Vice President, Assistant Superintendent of Business, School Attorney, Board Trustee, District Clerk and others I could not determine from my location.

The Board president situated at the rear of the crescent began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a roll call of the Board which interestingly neglected to include herself. The first order of business was to acknowledge the accomplishments of two high school students that were awarded first and second place finish in an Art show that took place at Suffolk Community College. Pictures were taken with the Board. The Board then recognized a teacher who successfully performed the Heimlich maneuver on a choking student. The Student presented flowers to the teacher. Again pictures with the

Board followed. Third, the Board approved signs that announced that Commack Schools are tobacco free on all entrances to the school to be displayed when the public is invited for school or community events. The Board President asked the Board if they have reviewed the past minutes and had any comments which included announcements of hiring's and resignations as well as contracts and invoices for services rendered to the district. At this time the meeting continued with a power point presentation by teachers involved in a new writing program designed to increase early writing skills in elementary school. The initial part of the meeting ended with the Board president directing the Board members to new business, which included accepting bids for services contracts. All contracts were unanimously agreed upon.

The public was then invited to come to the podium and present their comments or concerns. Approximately twelve individuals lined up with similar concerns over a school "anti violence assembly". Eleven of the twelve individuals were concerned over one particular segment of the assembly they felt had "political" implications and presented a negative view of Israel in it's defense of Palestinian terrorism. All of the presenters did say they were either Israeli nationals or had family members living in Israel and felt it equated Israel with a violent group. The group each wanted the Board to print an apology in the school newspaper or as an announcement over the classrooms that this was a biased viewpoint presented at the assembly. One woman stating that she was Jewish said she was not offended by the assembly as there was no mention of political parties or religions in the show. The Superintendent remarked that he had seen the video of the show 7 times and could see what the others found offensive. The Board president would not guarantee the requests would be implemented but as she and the majority of the

Board had nor seen the show they will review the video and report back to the community by next board meeting.

The second major issue included a proposal of exploring cost saving measures to the district by increasing the distances for bus pickup for all students by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile for elementary and high school students respectively from present locations to save approximately \$1,000,000.00. and 13 teacher jobs. A number of parents came forward surprised over not being informed over the proposal and vowed to fight its approval. The last issue was brought up by a parent upset over the school dropping German as a foreign language option. A high school Principle present stated that the cut was necessary as enrollment for German was down to less than 12 students.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting which was accepted. Meeting concluded at 10:53 p.m.