

Meeting Minutes of July 13, 2004
Board of Supervisors Special Meeting

Chairman McCaffrey called the Board of Supervisors (BoS) Special Meeting of July 13, 2004 to order at 7:30 p.m. and then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Board Members Chairman Thomas J. McCaffrey, Vice-Chairman Carl S. Lindborg, and Supervisor Josef G. Obernier, Sr. were in attendance along with the Township Manager Ronald A. Rambo, Jr. Also in attendance were Donna Urban, Eric Brown, and Cynthia Quinn of the Coatesville School Board.

Chairman McCaffrey explained this was the second special meeting held at WBT that was called to discuss CASD issues. Chairman McCaffrey thanked the Township's School Board representatives for attending the meeting. Chairman McCaffrey introduced the School Board Members along with the Board of Supervisors, and Township Manager. He explained that they are here tonight to hear from the School Board representatives and at the end of the meeting they will take the most important issues that were mentioned and ask for a hand vote where people stand on that particular issue.

Vice-Chairman Lindborg thanked everyone for coming out to show his or her concern and support. He noted that the entire School Board was invited along with the CASD Administration.

Supervisor Obernier suggested the audience be ready with their questions written down so that the meeting runs expeditiously.

Chairman McCaffrey explained that he would like everyone to think about the process of participating in and what takes place in local government and hoped that this is something that the audience would stay a part of. He felt it was better than the Fourth of July with everyone in attendance today. He would like to see people continue to participate in their local government meetings even when there is not a horrible issue.

Cynthia Quinn, CASB Vice-President and Chairperson of the Finance Committee, stated that the tentative budget was amended from 6 mills down to 4.9 mills. Currently as a result from the Finance Committee meeting that was held, there was a motion from the Finance Committee that voted 2 to 1, that advocates an increase back up to the 6 mills. It is probable that the 6-mill increase will not go through but hopes that it will go downward from the 6 mills. She noted they

have a good Board; the Board has a different philosophy as to how to reach our objectives. It's apparent from the public outcry that going full steam ahead at eighty miles an hour is not worth it. They are here tonight to listen and answer questions from the public.

Eric Brown, CASB Operations Committee thanked the WBT Board for giving them the opportunity for this meeting and the pleasant format in which to actually discuss the business at hand. Eric Brown also thanked Ms. Quinn and Ms. Urban for the work that they've done up to this point in reducing the potential tax increase and noted that they are a real credit to WBT voters for the hours they have spent trying to get information that is difficult to get. Mr. Brown stated that it is his goal as well as everyone here to reduce the budget.

Donna Urban, CASB Community Committee apologized that she was unable to attend the last meeting. She stated that this has basically become a mission for the School Board to keep digging to verify that they have the most accurate, up to date numbers when they are looking at the budget. She applauded the many taxpayers that have contacted them directly with their own ideas and opinions of things to look at and felt they have been very helpful.

Vice-Chairman Lindborg was concerned about the inability to obtain a Line Item Budget and why it is not available. The fact that this is unavailable is causing people to become suspicious.

Cynthia Quinn was also concerned about having limited access with such restrictions to the Line Item Budget as well. Last year at this time she had a copy of the Line Item Budget. She heard from former Board Members that in past years they had received a copy of the Line Item Budget, that is the only way that you can make an informed decision. She began requesting it in May and the first time she received an official response was at their June 15, 2004 meeting. She was told that she could look at it in the administrative offices. It was proposed that they get the Line Item Budget at the meeting in which they were going to vote on the budget, they could look at it and make their decision that night, which is totally inappropriate. The CASD solicitor's recommendation was that it be held because of the negotiations. She commented that last year they were in negotiations with their support staff and the Line Item Budget was released. Except for some personnel files and some other highly sensitive information it should be available to residents.

Chairman McCaffrey stated that West Brandywine Township has been trying to get a copy of the Line Item Budget since there have been so many inquiries about it, the BoS thought it would be nice to have a copy at the Township for its residents. The Township contacted and has a written opinion from the Township solicitor that the Line Item Budget is a public document. Chairman McCaffrey commented that it would be unheard of for the Township Manager to tell the BoS that they couldn't take a copy of the budget home. There is a problem with the CASD administration, when that administration decides what that elected body has access to.

Cynthia Quinn explained that this has come up in the past about who they report to and the answer is that there is a multiple constituency here. They are not just the representatives of WBT; they represent all of the school district, voters, non-voters, registered, non-registered, and the students. Their job is to plan, enact policy, and evaluate, in order to deliver educational services. They also have a constituency in the teachers because without quality teachers they are not going to have good students and good scores; this is really a balancing act.

Chairman McCaffrey stated that as an elected official for fifteen years he disagreed with Ms. Quinn. The School Board represents the people that voted for them, they do not represent the students. He noted that they broke the school district up into districts, so that each district would have a representative there.

Elizabeth Zanowiak asked the School Board members when they are sworn in, who do they swear to take care of? She stated that while the School Board members were pondering that, she feels that time is of the essence and that lengthy editorials should be put off until another time.

Bob Mastripolito was curious that if part of the increase in tax revenue is going to be used to eliminate \$6,000,000 in previous debt, would that indicate that next year the taxes could be decreased by that amount?

Cynthia Quinn explained that there is \$6,000,000 expected to be the deficit fund balance at the end of this fiscal year of which 1.5 mills is allocated to reducing that deficit by \$3,000,000 and the same 1.5 mills is earmarked for next years budget to reduce that to zero. The following year the 1.5 mills would be used to build up the fund balance. That would be part of the increase that will be staying with us, if we can restore that fund balance we will be in a better position. Proponents want the School Board to extend the length of the deficit payback; this is going to take a much longer time to first eliminate that deficit, and then restore it to a positive balance.

Donna Urban followed up to what Cynthia had said, she truly believes they will never see this come back to us again, the hope is that somewhere down the line when they are at a positive fund balance, they will see an increase of approximately \$3,000,000 and they would have that 1.5 mills built into the budget so that they would not have to ask for the 1.5 mills. That would be ideal but would not make any promises.

Phillip Waite commented that based on the Philadelphia Inquire's report, of the 150 school districts in Southeastern, PA, and NJ, with this new budget we will pay \$14,700 per year to educate each student from kindergarten through twelfth grade, that will rank us third behind Lower Marion and Radnor. If parents think they are getting their monies worth, then they should vote for the budget.

Cynthia Quinn explained that it costs more to educate the children in charter schools and special education; they have a high number of special education students. This year in particular, the numbers in benefits have increase significantly due to the retirement of 57 teachers; they will be covering the retirees until they are on Medicare and Medicaid for the next couple of years. They are looking at benefits of about \$3,300,000 of which \$2,000,000 is severance pay and accrued vacation/sick time.

Ron Taggart asked what the CASD is doing with the 100 acres at Rainbow and suggested that it be sold to pay the deficit off. He commented that they have too many administrators and asked why they are hiring more people. The school should be cutting, they should not buy or spend anything, and only what is necessary.

Eric Brown explained they do have 100 acres that run along Route 30, West of Rainbow, if they were to sell that land the proceeds of any sale would go back into the capital projects budget, it would not go into the general operating fund because of a state law.

John a WBT resident asked what the law requires as the absolute minimum per curriculum and suggested they find out how that budget comes out, then they can cut from there.

Eric Brown stated that the Board has looked at the minimum education requirements for students. If you eliminate a course that is not required under state law or a graduation requirement, you still have those students that you have to place in a classroom and would still need a teacher unless you start to large group, then when you consider that, they don't have any available rooms of that size. The Board is not running courses that don't have high student enrollment; there are a lot of variables that effect the situation.

Donna Urban stated that in the front of the course selection catalog, there are certain state requirements in terms of the amount of credits that students have to take in a program, in addition to the basics like History, Math, and English. They have to have a certain number of credits to meet the state requirements, so there are classes outside what you consider basic education that is required in order to graduate.

Leah Fox, a WBT resident, had concern that one of the biggest issues that she sees facing the tax payer is they are paying high taxes for very low quality schools. This explains why parents are sending their children to private and charter schools as a result. If she felt that the increased budget would increase the quality of schools, then she would be the first person to write a check. This does not seem to be the case. She asked if the School Board would support a proposal for WBT to leave the school district.

Cynthia Quinn stated that as a resident, taxpayer, and parent, it is an option that should be looked at, as a School Board member, she would hate to see WBT leave because it has been part of the district. With any issue, you need to take a look at all options.

Eric Brown explained that the ultimate decision to secede from CASD needs to be decided by WBT residents. He adamantly disagreed with the statement made about the quality of the CASD schools. He graduated from Coatesville in 1996 and got into the collage of his choice, all of his friends in honors classes were able to get into the colleges of their choice. The problem is when you look at an average test score, that average is being affected by a large segment of the student body that comes from homes that don't have parent involvement, from students that don't have plans on going to collage who may not have plans of even graduating from high school, sadly it brings the district average down. He noted that as a teacher in West Chester, about ninety percent of the students there come from middle to upper middle class families with strong parental involvement who monitors their child's grades closely. In Coatesville, having personal experience, you are not getting that kind of student, they have 30 to 50 percent of the students that don't live with parents and certainly don't have parents that are monitoring their grades and the students have no plans to go to school. When you average demographics like that, although the honor students are scoring 1,300 to 1,400 on the SAT's, the other half that are scoring 900 to 1,000, you will get an average that is much lower than the demographics of West Chester or some other district. It

doesn't mean that a student that is in an honors class with parental support and involvement isn't going to get the same quality of education and have the same opportunities than that of a student in a neighboring district.

Donna Urban agreed with Mr. Brown, she has been a strong advocate of CASD; she is from an affluent school district that has very high-test scores. When she came to the district she thought she would give this district a try, but could always move on if she felt the need to. It never crossed her mind to pull her children out of school and put them elsewhere, she always had good relationships and good responses with the facility. A lot has to do with parental involvement, if you care about your child's education it's going to transfer into what they want to learn. When you break down the various subgroups in the PSSA, you could see the impact of the ESL students and the impact of the low socioeconomic students and because they do so poorly on their test scores it brings down that average. If you have children that you push to academic excellence, they will succeed because the district staff has the ability to give them the education that they need to go onto secondary education or whatever their goals are in life.

A resident explained she is a very involved parent, but since her son who is a gifted student, has entered into the middle school, he has been having great difficulties. She can't get the teachers to do what needs to be done after having meetings with the guidance councilors; he's not being motivated and his test scores have gone down. She disagreed with the School Board and does not feel they are getting their monies worth when it comes to the education that we are supposed to be getting. If they were getting the education that they needed, she too would be the first one to write a check.

Supervisor Obernier stated that it has been reported that those who have not paid their school tax are getting away without any repercussions. If this is true, then is there a plan of action to collect that money.

Cynthia Quinn believed that once the school taxes are uncollectible they are liened and remanded to the County for collection; the process is that you don't collect the taxes until sheriff sale or when the property is sold. This issue can be raised to see if there is another method to effect collection. There is \$12,000,000 owed in uncollected school taxes. She stated that she is not aware of the full process to collect the taxes.

Jim, a WBT resident, asked if they have looked into reducing administration, health insurance costs, and other various things, because all the taxpayers are going to have to cut back in some manner.

Cynthia Quinn stated that as far as administrative positions, this is an area that at least four of the School Board members want to address as a proposal for the following Monday. As far as health insurance, they are in the negotiations process. The proposal that the School Board is going forward with does require co-pays; they hope to have that when the contract is settled. Since they don't currently have co-pays in this contract, they don't want to budget as though they will get it. She doesn't agree with that concept and would like to weigh in on the conservative end and at least plan for something.

Donna Urban stated with regards to looking into other health insurance companies, in the past the school district had found that being self-insured provided the best service and was most effective. However, this doesn't mean that in the future they won't be looking at other insurance companies or plan types to provide the benefits. She noted they are running into a cash flow problem, with the teachers knowing they may have to pay in for insurances a lot of services are being run up. She then explained how they figure out their net income for a fiscal year.

A resident stated that two years ago the taxes went up because CASD didn't receive money from the state of Pennsylvania, the CASD since received that money from the state and asked where the taxpayers refund is? Eric Brown stated that money has gone into helping to restore the fund balance. When you hear the amount of 5.8 million dollar figure that is including that rebate.

The resident commented that a person in CASD had sold their new home, and before they settled they were required to pay their 2003 – 2004 school taxes because they had never been billed and asked if a lot of money from the new developments have not been collected.

Cynthia Quinn stated she was extremely concerned about the interim tax bills and the County's collection process. She thanked the residents that have been writing to her and letting her know about this issue. She will follow up with the County Assessment office.

Donna Urban said there was public comment regarding tax bills that went out, the real estate taxes for the fiscal year 2004 – 2005 were not mailed, but it was the interim tax that was mailed.

Mike Richey asked what the process was between this meeting and the following Monday and felt that most things at the CASB meetings are decided in advance.

Cynthia Quinn stated that the tentative amended budget is sitting on the table at 4.9 mills. The Finance Committee has made a recommendation to amend that budget and bring it back up to the original 6 mills. The Finance Committee meetings are over unless a special meeting is called, at this point it will be up to individual board members to make recommendations to the board to vote on each amendment separately or in total.

Joe Sullivan thanked the Township Supervisors for having this special meeting. It is clear that the Community has a very clear outspoken wish against an increase of any kind until they have reviewed that Line Item Budget. He also agreed with our Township Supervisors about elected officials, they are here to represent the Township's residents. He suggested that if they get Ms. Treadwell and Mr. Shearer they would then have a quorum to simply refuse to vote until they have all had an opportunity to review the budget before approving it. It is irresponsible to vote without reviewing the details of the budget. Ms. Quinn, as Chairperson of the Finance Committee, had stated that she knew very little about the County tax collection process and recommends that she spend more time investigating that to see if there are additional revenues there before voting yes in any capacity.

Cynthia Quinn stated she intends on looking into the County collection process and said that some of these properties may need to go into sheriff's sale so they can get their money. In response to whether or not they have had a look at the tentative budget, in passing this budget, this budget was

supposed to be passed by June 30, 2004. There were sufficient votes not to pass the budget, which is the reason, why the budget is not passed and why they don't have operating authority.

A resident noted that the School Board members present are preaching to the choir, he would like to see the other School Board members attend this meeting. He noted that while driving to the meeting he saw several houses for sale, they are not being sold, people are beginning to feel the effect of this, which will unfortunately get a lot worse. This doesn't make it into the press; they typically report that the average household of \$100,000 will only feel a mere increase of \$500 and that the wealthy folks in WBT can afford it. Putting that \$500 into perspective is - six weeks of groceries, pays for ballet lessons, soccer lessons, or pays for the dentist. Anyone, including the Daily Local News, who attempts to minimize the effects, is irresponsible. He applauded all of the BoS and the School Board members in attendance. He would like to see the tax increase below ten, at zero. He recommended that the first administrator to go would be Dr. Scarnati.

Vice-Chairman Lindborg commented that the \$500 is in addition to a very high tax bill, which isn't emphasized enough, that is the issue that is facing everyone. He disagreed about the comment about preaching to the choir, these are our representatives that are the key people that are out here to listen. We are asking them as our representatives to cut the proposed budget and come in with a reasonable budget, and to also delay any new construction of new schools. He felt there are a lot of people with good ideas that could contribute.

Hugh Redditt commented about the credibility and respect that has to be earned by the School Board, he noted he was on the School Board in 1995; they spent a lot of money and didn't receive anything in return. He feels that stating the costs of the Charter schools and special education costs are all a smoke screen, the Charter schools are still part of the Pennsylvania school system, they are public schools that fall under School Boards, that money goes with those kids, he noted that the special education costs look high, but in our school district we do this internally, then when you spread this amount over 7,200 students it looks artificially low. Lets not short change the special education students even if they have to go to another school. Second, academically that the top ten percent of the children in CASD can go to any school and do real well. The bottom ten percent of the CASD, if you spend a lot of money for life skills, they do real well. We have \$14,000 per student and that goes against that 80 percent and their out in outer space. Don't raise the taxes if your not going to work with that middle 80 percent. Before stealing any more money out of the taxpayer's pocket, start delivering what was promised ten years ago.

Cynthia Quinn stated she wasn't here ten years ago, though she was in the audience then, she has only been a member of the School Board for six months and she is working on it.

Donna Urban explained the reason the Charter schools cost more and how it affects the budget. They have to pay per student costs that are based on a formula that is put out by the state according to the charter schools. She noted that another cost factor for charter schools is that they have full day kindergarten and in the regular school they are half days.

Mr. Redditt stated that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) said that they give eighty percent of the revenues and they keep twenty percent, they are supposed to do a reduction in the

budget for each one of those kids and asked if they are losing 100 more students to charter schools, then where is that reduction reflected in the budget?

Cynthia Quinn stated that this reduces the class sizes; they are spread out throughout K-12. Mr. Redditt stated that he has information from PDE that has the ratio on it which doesn't make sense with what the school district has. Cynthia Quinn asked Mr. Redditt to bring that information in to share with the School Board.

A resident commented that they came from West Caln Township and Caln Township and are here as the School Board's constituents and that they vote the School Board in. She also voiced concern for all the people on fixed incomes. It was noted at one of the School Board meetings that they wanted more commercial and industry to come in, and asked how could they possibly come in with the school taxes this high. She had been a Township Manager and knows how budgets work and currently works for an engineering firm. She said they are doing a 1,000 home subdivision in West Caln Township. This will bring in substantial tax to the CASD.

Chairman McCaffrey commented that a new development does not add to the tax base, but worsens the situation. It costs \$14,000 to educate a student and if a new house has two children, they pay \$3,000 in taxes to the school district. You can see that someone else is going to make up that difference, which will probably be all of us.

Cynthia Quinn stated that there is considerable commercial development going on in West Caln and Caln Township and are taking this into consideration when looking at this budget. There are some very viable businesses that will be on the tax roll in September and December and into the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005.

Supervisor Obernier asked if the School Board has the authority to request a zero increase budget and if so, has the School Board done that?

Cynthia Quinn answered affirmative to the first question, and no they did not ask Dr. Scarnati or the administration to provide a zero increase. She noted the budget process this year was different, rather than taking a historical budget and tacking on a three percent increase, they worked with the Curriculum Committee and each department. Before it got to the Finance Committee they cut 2 mills off that budget that shows a 6-mill increase.

Vice-Chairman Lindborg asked how much of this proposed budget is going towards the Master Facilities Plan? Cynthia Quinn stated that the Master Facilities Plan is through the Capital campaign, they just had a refunding this past year of debt that allowed a small decrease in millage relative to the debt. Vice-Chairman Lindborg asked if that particular budget does not include payment for building new schools. Cynthia Quinn answered no, they just had a bond that they consummated in June that covered the Benner cost overrun and will be funding the architecture and engineering studies for the two elementary schools on the first master plan.

Scott asked about the \$500,000. Donna Urban noted that Scott was referring to savings they incurred by reissuing the bond and that money was then turned over to go into the master facility studies, so there is no increase in the budget, but they didn't realize the savings of reissuing the

bond. She noted that the board was presented a plan of restructuring that was not going to cost any additional money, because they were eliminating positions, reorganizing, and replacing. At the time she voted for the reorganization, although she voted against some of the actual positions when they came up for approval. Now knowing that she was operating in a vacuum because nobody had informed her of the 6-mill increase in taxes, she would have never voted for the reorganization. Even though they have approved the plan, the School Board must vote on each administrative position that is scheduled to be in the 2005-2006 year. Just because they passed the plan doesn't mean they have to fill each of those positions.

A resident asked the BoS if they have contemplated taking legal action regarding the school budget to be obtained as public record. Manager Rambo stated they are in the process under the Pennsylvania Right To Know Law of trying to obtain a copy of the budget. Letters have gone out to Brenda Haws requesting a copy of it, she has responded saying she has forwarded his request to the CASD solicitor to get his opinion as to whether it is a public document. He has thirty days in to respond to her.

Chairman McCaffrey explained that they are constrained by the law. If they refuse to give them the budget, then yes, they will go to court and get the budget. The solution would be to have the School Board vote and tell the administrators to give them the budget. Chairman McCaffrey then stated that shortly he would like to take a vote to some of the questions that came up at tonight's meeting.

Dan Schaffer stated that they can't afford the proposed 4.9 mills or 6-mill increase and asked if there was a possibility the budget could be lowered. Cynthia Quinn stated they are still looking at different options. The audience stated they want a zero increase.

A resident was concerned about the way the school district is figuring the reimbursement to the charter schools with regards to full day kindergarten. Cynthia Quinn explained the formula that was set up by the state that they were given last Thursday, which has to do with the prior schools average daily rate. She noted that the piecemeal concerns her because she had been asking about charter school information for weeks.

William Hochella found it odd that the School Board stated that they have gone through detailed steps in creating the budget and asked how that was possible to do without having access to the Line Item Budget. Cynthia Quinn explained that was because each department had their own Line Item Budget areas. They were also dependant on administration to help formulate those budgets and present to the board the information and assumptions.

Lisa Abrams stated she is a single parent with three children in CASD. Ms. Abrams stated that she is happy where she is at and doesn't want to move to Downingtown. She agreed that if you are involved with your children they would do well. This is all about the children. She explained that for the last nine years the school taxes have been a financial problem. They need to find a common ground to address the financial problems. She stated that she was against redistricting to Downingtown and felt that you would have the same problems there.

Cheryl Zalesky expressed that there should be no more excuses from the School Board and took issue with Ms. Urban when she said, “she would have never voted for this if she had known that.” That is a lesson learned, it is very obvious about how the administration behaves; they are disingenuous. They should demand the information and should not vote until they get it, they work for the School Board, the School Board does not work for the Administration. People are upset because they are faced with dire circumstances and hard choices need to be made. The people don’t see hard choices coming from the School Board, they see “raise taxes,” which is a copout. The people know what it means to balance a budget; it doesn’t mean to give a handout to everyone that asked for it, which is what they are doing. The budget has to be cut for a few years until they get back on track. The purpose of the school district is education; it is not a social welfare program to make sure every person has something to do.

Cynthia Quinn agreed with Ms. Zalesky about the social policies. She referred to the fiasco they had the previous year when it was said that they were going to do away with sports, everyone knew that wasn’t going to happen, maybe it should, but you can’t do that arbitrarily, they have contracts with PIAA, and other people. How many years have we been buying people out and not educating kids? This needs to be evaluated to cut the right things.

Ms. Zalesky disagreed with Ms. Quinn about educating kids and explained that they are cutting purely academic programs and stated that is wrong to cut programs such as French IV because there are only four kids in the class, these are the kids that will go onto college, but won’t consider making an administration cut or sports cut.

Cynthia Quinn explained they have cut the sports programs by twenty-five percent; they cut basketball at the ninth grade level and five middle school sports programs. There are community programs that can balance what they don’t offer in the schools. The booster organizations have picked up a lot of the funding from what the district previously covered. She stated that you have to balance out one teacher teaching a French IV class of four students versus something that have sixty kids involved. Ms. Quinn will forward the list of cuts to Ms. Zalesky.

Ms. Zalesky referred to a letter that was sent by Representative Ross regarding Coatesville’s state subsidies and asked if the subsidies would be included in the budget. Ms. Quinn stated they have not received notification yet. They will probably only be able to recognize \$400,000 of the subsidies.

Chairman McCaffrey asked for a hand vote from the audience for the following items.

1. Do you want a vote to release the Line Item Budget, a vote taken by the board and given to the administration making it available to the public? YES
2. Do you want teacher benefits cut, even if this precipitates a strike during the upcoming school year? YES
3. Do you want the CASB to investigate and report to the public on the collecting of back taxes and interim taxes? YES
4. Do you still want to see administration cuts, even if you see a decrease in response time and detailed management for student’s needs? YES

5. Will you support a vastly reduced tax increase, even if it may cause the reduction or elimination of your personal pet program or interest and possibly a teacher's strike? YES

6. Will you support the slow down and spending of funds on the Master Facilities Plan? YES

(All votes received unanimous support.)

A resident asked if all three of WBT School Board representatives intended to show up on Monday's School Board meeting to vote? Ms. Quinn answered yes.

A resident asked why the teacher's benefits are still paid after they retire. Ms. Quinn answered that is part of the contract that they are trying to renegotiate. The resident suggested they break the contract, Lukens did.

A resident asked if the School Board had ever considered firing Brenda Haws for not doing her job? She commented that the CASD was a mess and that Dr. Scarnati and Brenda Haws are not doing their jobs. Ms. Quinn stated that there were problems and internal controls have been tightened up. Brenda Haws has been operating without a lot of personnel because of major cutbacks two years ago.

A resident commented that when children have problems it is up to the parents to solve the problems, not the teachers. Eric Brown stated that they couldn't legislate what parents do with their own children. Ms. Quinn noted that for the special education students programs, they have to stay in compliance with the state or else they will be fined.

John Conti, builder and WBT Planning Commission member, stated that he appreciated Chairman McCaffrey's editorials to the Daily Local News and commented that in a newspaper article it stated that the taxes would have a disastrous effect on real estate and that Cynthia Quinn had commented, "in a couple of years it will be over." Tonight she commented that there was a lot of commercial and residential building that is going to come into the area. As a member of the Planning Commission and a builder, in the past ten years he noted a positive change in the attitude toward CASD and was concerned that the increase in taxes will set the community back 20 to 30 years. Cynthia Quinn is the swing vote; this is the life of this community.

Donna Urban agreed that Cynthia is their swing vote and thanked her for all her work on this. She agreed with John Conti with the whole development process, and was concerned that people would run away in fear, new developments would not come in, and people can't sell their houses because of the high taxes. In a conversation with a real estate broker, they noted that there was a balance, the housing was cheaper than the neighboring school districts, but the taxes are higher. If you were a parent that is going to be educating a child, where would you pick to go? They have to make the CASD as attractive as possible, if they are going to run people out of the area, they are not doing themselves any favors.

Eric Brown concurred with Mr. Conti and that a 20 to 24 percent tax increase would be devastating to the home market in Coatesville regardless of the merits that some may make as to why it is needed. The biggest priority that you need to consider here is the value and security that one places in their home.

Cynthia Quinn explained that the paraphrase was wrong from the newspaper, she did say that the building would be slowed down. Even when the first tentative budget was presented it didn't mean that she was in full favor of it. Secondly, after all her involvement in the community and this process has developed, she has seen the negative effects that this type of increase would have. You very seldom ever go back and reduce taxes. One banker said they had fourteen applications in but ten were withdrawn. She was also concerned about the senior citizens having to choose between paying for their medicine or food.

Tom Greenfield from Sadsbury Township, noted he is part of the CASD, stated that on the 14th or 15th there is going to be a vote in Sadsbury Township that will change an industrial piece of land into high density housing. This will mean a loss of \$1,000,000 to the CASD and the need for another school. He suggested that everyone attend the meeting.

The Coatesville Taxpayers Alliance meeting will be on Thursday, July 15, 2004 at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of the Good Shepard on 17th Street, Coatesville, all are invited to attend.

A resident asked the BoS, "What can they as a Township to secede from CASD, what is the BoS currently doing about that, and what can the residents do to contribute to that effort?"

Chairman McCaffrey explained that they are looking at alternatives; WBT is trying to provide information to make a reasonable decision. He felt that the CASB might have been insulted by the information that was placed in the Township's Newsletter with regards to seceding. The BoS have not picked a particular path nor is the Board heading in any one direction. If there is a movement to secede, it has to originate from within the population who draws up a petition. The process that you have to go through is not something that is initiated by the BoS, it comes from the community and involves a petition of over 50 percent of the landowning population.

Vice-Chairman Lindborg concurred with Chairman McCaffrey, they are not advocating any particular position, but felt that since they got so many inquiries, they put information in the newsletter.

Supervisor Obernier stated that they have talked about this as a Board, if the people that live here desire to secede and go to a different school district, it has to come from the people, not from the BoS. They have had many folks ask them for information, and they were able to get the information that was in the Newsletter without cost from an attorney that works for school districts. He wanted to make it clear that the initiative has to come from the people. It has to be from 51 percent of the taxpaying property owners. He thought that there might be three different groups that are each doing something a little different; the BoS is not trying to endorse any one group. They are trying to provide information between the elected representatives on the School Board, the people that elected them, as well as the taxpayers of West Brandywine Township. The BoS is trying to listen to the people and give them what was asked of them. Whatever happens in the long term, what everyone understands right now is that every year there is a massive tax increase. We understand that this is a problem and how do we fix it, the BoS felt that by providing the information and talk directly with the elected school Board members they could really hear the people. They don't have that opportunity in a School Board meeting and tried to give them that

opportunity tonight. We have tried to not have any personal attacks, it is important for the School Board to not feel threatened. They are all well meaning people, but brand new in a job. The BoS has been working together for fourteen years now, which gives them in opportunity to interact with each other.

Eric Brown stated that when you look at case history and secession, it is highly unlikely and not very feasible. He suggested that something more realistic would be to redraw the regions of the district. Most of the money comes from WBT and Caln. We have a much larger population than either of the other regions, yet each of the regions is still electing three, in essence WBT's vote is watered down when compared with the other regions.

Cynthia Quinn stated that she is developing a committee with people that have expertise in different areas who will look for different ways of improving or developing revenues. One of the things they could do is a Tax Commission that would look into redistricting and some other issues. In response to Chairman McCaffrey's comment that he thought the CASB may have been insulted by the information in the Newsletter, the BoS forwarded the information before it went in the Newsletter. She felt that all the residents need to have that information made available to them, even if they don't go through with it, they can make their own decision.

A resident asked if the Board approves the 4.9 or 6 percent, then what recourse do they have? Donna Urban stated that they do have the opportunity to reopen the budget, but didn't know the criteria for that.

In reviewing the numbers of Downingtown (11,000 students) and Coatesville (7,224 students) and compare that Downingtown can educate their children for \$12,000 and for Coatesville the cost is \$16,000. The numbers don't seem to match. Downingtown has 14 administrative positions and CASD has 30 administrators.

Donna Urban stated that you have to compare apples to apples; on Downingtown's organizational chart they list administrators strictly in a sense of the administration building. They don't list their principals, and assistant principals. With the reorganization plan they would like to have a reorganization chart, they currently have a partial one that has been provided to the Board, but it doesn't include all of the positions. In terms of the student population you would have to add in the students that attend charter schools, which may close the gap somewhat.

Chairman McCaffrey noted that on the PA Department of Education Website they do have a common look of administrators that is posted, whatever key they use to count them, they use the same key in each district.

Cynthia Quinn commented that Standard and Poor's also does comparative studies called the peer group. You have to be careful in comparing other criteria; some may not have the same socioeconomic factors that we do. One of the reasons that she wants to have an Adjunct Finance Committee is because of one of the projects they have started is taking an analytical view of other school districts that would be part of their peer group, e.g. Phoenixville, West Chester, Downingtown, etc., and others outside the geographical area, to see where it is that they are falling

short. She hasn't been analyzing this long enough to determine that and feels they need some other expertise working with them.

A resident met with Senator Rafferty and was given the figures that Coatesville will receive and asked if the budget reflects the dollars they will be getting from the state. Ms. Quinn stated at this point she doesn't feel they will be getting any new figures regarding revenue. The assumption made in state revenues was based on approximately a 2 percent increase in state revenues, they now know what the figures are and need to make sure that the numbers that were provided by the state are the numbers that they have in the budget and adjust accordingly. They are waiting for confirmation for the \$1,000,000 grant, they will only be able to technically budget \$400,000 of that. This is currently not built into this year's budget.

Brian Sutton asked if they could outline the process if Monday's vote comes a 5 to 4 vote against the budget. Cynthia Quinn stated they will just be meeting until the budget gets passed.

Donna Urban was hoping they would have a list of alternate amendments, so that 5 of them can pass something that they can live with.

Bob noted a petition that was circulated regarding Act 50, there have been enough valid signatures and have been given by the direction of the County of Chester to the Board as of June 21, 2004, that the Board has to establish a task force of five individuals consisting of taxpayers, of which only one person may be a School Board member or teacher and asked what the Board has done since that letter was issued. Ms. Quinn stated that the Board hasn't done anything yet, their first meeting as a Board, where they can take Board action will be on July 19, 2004.

Bob asked how they would determine which taxpayers would be selected. Scott stated that Act 50 is effectively dead because of the new gambling referendum bill. School districts will be prevented from implementing it if they have not done so already. Ms. Quinn stated there are other provisions or avenues for recourse.

Patricia Gregor asked how the new law for legalized gambling that has been passed effect the taxes; the monies that will be made by legalized gambling are to be used to specifically lower school taxes. Ms. Urban stated that in talking with Representative Ross he indicated that it would be at least a few years before anyone sees any relief from legalized gambling.

Jill Pike commented that earlier they heard that Brenda Haws received a letter regarding the Line Item Budget that Ms. Haws forwarded onto her solicitor and she has thirty days in which to respond and asked, when does that thirty-day period expire and if after the School Board meeting then what recourse can be taken? Manager Rambo stated that the time period happens after the vote; his guess is that it will be forwarded to the Township after the budget is passed.

Mike Fogerty of Caln Township commented that it was common knowledge that the administration was playing games with the budget. In May's School Board meeting on the miniature version of the budget, the revenues seemed to be over inflated from previous years. He explained that more time is needed to look at the budget and said they are trying to hide more of a deficit. He commented that the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website states that the

School Board is required to allow the public to inspect the budget for twenty days, then they have a ten day period where they have to announce when the vote will take place. The Line Item Budget based on Sear Valley versus Hanover makes it a fact that this should be given to the public to see in the case of a municipality or a school.

Cynthia Quinn doesn't disagree with the fact that the Line Item Budget be made available, but for the twenty day and ten day it is the form that is submitted to Harrisburg that rules. Mike said that is states that the forms that are provided by Harrisburg. Ms. Quinn explained to Mike that it is not the actual budget that will be sent to Harrisburg, there is a difference between that form that is submitted to PDE and that which is the Line Item Budget. The Line Item Budget for the state may vary from what the 401 pages that are in the administrative office, that is not sent to the state because it is submitted on an eight-page form.

Vice-Chairman Lindborg explained that he read the case and that the only possible exception that he could fathom is that Hanover Township is governed by municipal code and that PDE and school law may require something different. The Right To Know Law doesn't differentiate or distinguish any differences. If you are challenging him to give an exception for why this case wouldn't govern that would be the only reason he could think of.

Mr. Fogerty stated that legally if they are found to be in the right, then technically they have not been able to inspect the budget as we are supposed to, because the twenty days have not started yet. Ms. Quinn stated that you can reopen the budget.

A new WBT resident stated that she moved into the Township in October and has just received her Interim tax bill, which is missing a zero in her favor. She felt that was a CASD Tax Collector issue.

Adjournment

With no other business to discuss, Vice-Chairman Lindborg motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 p.m. Supervisor Obernier seconded the motion. Board Members Lindborg, Obernier and McCaffrey all voted aye in favor of adjournment.

Ronald A. Rambo, Jr.
Township Manager/Secretary/Treasurer