

JOINT MEETING FRANKLIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT – BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND  
MUNICIPALITY OF MURRYSVILLE COUNCIL  
April 30, 2008

Council of the Municipality of Murrysville held a Joint Meeting with the Directors of the Franklin Regional School Board on Wednesday, April 30, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building. Present at the meeting were Council members Regis Synan, Dennis Pavlik, Nancy Kacin, Theo van de Venne, Larry Nicolette, and Joan Kearns. Also present were Mayor Joyce K. Somers, Chief Administrator John M. Barrett and Mr. John Cardwell, Executive Director of the Murrysville Community and Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Franke was absent. School Board Members present were Herb Yingling, Allan Shafer, Michael Gigliotti, William Evans, Roberta Cook, and Joseph Seymour. Joseph Thomas was absent. Also present from the school district were Dan Watson, Director of Financial Services, and Dr. D’Arcangelo, Superintendent of Schools.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Kacin called to order the Joint Meeting on Wednesday, April 30, 2008.

**ROLL CALL:** Kim Blauvelt called the roll: Council for the Municipality of Murrysville: Mr. Synan, Mr. Nicolette, Mrs. Kacin, Mr. Pavlik, Mr. van de Venne, Mrs. Kearns. Mr. Franke was absent. Franklin Regional School Board: Dr. D’Arcangelo, Mr. Yingling, Mr. Shafer, Mr. Evans, Mrs. Cook, Dr. Gigliotti, Mr. Seymour. Mr. Thomas was absent.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Mrs. Kacin led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

After introductions from the Municipality of Murrysville’s Council and the Franklin Regional School Board, the meeting began.

Mr. Barrett, Chief Administrator, opened the meeting with a presentation of financial information for the Municipality of Murrysville. He compared the Municipality’s revenues with its expenditures from 1994 to projected figures for 2010 explaining the “peaks” that occur. Mr. Barrett pointed out that the tax base for the municipality has grown considerably in the last 10 years. In 1997, taxes accounted for 41% of the municipality’s revenues, and in 2007 that figure changed to 61%. Mr. Barrett also discussed the General Fund Areas of Service, and projected Real Estate and Earned Income Taxes.

During Mr. Barrett’s discussion, Dr. Gigliotti raised the question as to why homes of extremely different values pay the same real estate taxes. He urged Council to insist on a municipal-wide reassessment so that larger, higher priced homes pay a proportionately correct amount of taxes. Mrs. Kacin responded by saying that Council has always agreed with this point; however, this is a county issue and not something that can be done on a municipal level. Mr. van de Venne said he has considered a lawsuit regarding the same problem. Mayor Somers explained that assessment values are based on what that house would have cost to build in the last assessment, rather than what it would cost to build the house today. Mr. Pavlik continued by saying it is unlikely that another assessment would be done if the chaos occurring in Allegheny County is an indicator. He continued, saying that even if a reassessment was done, there could be many inequities.

Mr. Seymour asked for a better explanation on the Fund Balance Policy. Mr. Barrett, Mr. Nicolette, Mr. van de Venne, and Mayor Somers answered Mr. Seymour to his satisfaction.

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Dr. Giglioti asked Council if the Municipality of Murrysville has any future plans of involvement in drilling for natural gas within the municipality. He added that this could be financially advantageous with the soaring price of natural gas. Mr. van de Venne added that while this sounds like a good idea, he is not absolutely sure the municipality owns the gas rights.

Dr. D’Arcangelo, Superintendent of Schools, began the presentation for the school district with an overview. Included in this discussion was resident population of Murrysville, school population and distribution of students, school employment figures, student assessment and testing.

Mr. Watson, Director of Financial Services for the school district, began his financial report by discussing the district’s expenditures, and explained that 88% of the school district’s budget is fixed and comprised of salaries and benefits, transportation, plant operation and debt service. He said that the student enrollment figures have remained very static from 1997 to present, despite the development which has occurred in Murrysville. He reported that the cost to educate one child in this district is approximately \$11,449 per year, which puts Franklin Regional squarely in the middle of all schools in Westmoreland County. Mr. Watson continued by reporting that 60% of the school district’s revenues come from real estate taxes. In conclusion, Mr. Watson explained how aid ratio is determined. Based upon a school district’s wealth (personal income and real estate values), aid ratio and Basic Education Subsidy are determined. Because Franklin Regional is considered a fairly wealthy community, the aid ratio for the district is very low which means that any subsidy from the state is also low.

Mr. van de Venne asked the members of the school board if they see a student population trend. In general, the board responded that, despite growth in the community, student enrollment has remained rather static; about 290 – 300 students per class.

A discussion ensued concerning streamlining tax collection within the Municipality of Murrysville. The primary point involved eliminating the per capita tax, which was agreed to be a nuisance tax, and collecting these funds within a different tax.

Mr. Barrett continued with an overview of growth, impact trends and projections for Murrysville. Although he agreed there has been growth in the community, existing homeowners may be upgrading their housing by moving into a new, larger home thereby not really affecting the population figures of Murrysville. Citing the Land Use Assumptions Report, Mr. Barrett stated that the Municipality is able to predict where future development may occur. He continued by saying that the past years have seen a “leveling off” of new houses being built in comparison to the 90’s where almost 100 homes were constructed a year. This further explains the fixed trend the school district has seen. He stated that another trend has shifted from single family homes to “maintenance free” homes and condominiums, which would further result in a somewhat fixed enrollment in our schools. Mr. Barrett concluded by discussing some basic trends in population for Murrysville.

George Meert - 216 Ridge Lane - Mr. Meert spoke regarding the need for additional commercial growth in Murrysville. He said that if the municipality continues to grow only in the residential sector, there will be little tax relief for residents. He agrees that the topography of the area makes

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it difficult to find suitable parcels of land for such development, but he urged Council to “find the space” to build commercially.

The meeting continued with a discussion about commercial development in the Municipality of Murrysville. Mr. Cardwell, Executive Director of the Murrysville Economic and Community Development Corporation (MECDC), presented a brief overview of the MECDC and explained that they are a pro-active resource for Murrysville whose goal is to partner with the Municipality to increase economic growth in the community. He continued by reporting that tax revenues for the Municipality of Murrysville and the Franklin Regional School District will continue to grow only if the community can increase commercial development.

Mayor Somers commented that when she attends the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities meetings, she hears of communities who hire organizations, at rather large sums of money, to advise them on areas of business development. She continued by saying that Murrysville is very fortunate to have MECDC to help the community develop business at no cost.

Jerome Wolfe – 2380 Flagstaff Dr. – Mr. Wolfe questioned the practice of buying residential property to build commercially. He revisited the Buncher Property topic and voiced his concerns regarding possible problems with the municipality’s zoning ordinances.

**ACTION ITEM:**

- Staff agreed to investigate the possibility of drilling for natural gas within the Municipality.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Although no dates were set, the Municipality of Murrysville and the Board of Directors from the school district plan to hold a similar meeting in 2009.

The joint meeting of the Municipality of Murrysville and the Franklin Regional School District adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

JOHN M. BARRETT  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Kjb 05/20/08

cc: Mayor  
Council  
Community Development  
Finance

Police  
Public Works  
Solicitor  
Front Office/Library