



MAYOR CHRIS BOLLWAGE

CITY OF ELIZABETH PRESS RELEASE



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CITY COUNCIL SAVES TEACHERS AND PROGRAMS CUTS \$5 MILLION IN ADMINISTRATION EXCESS

ELIZABETH, NJ MAY 18, 2010—Taking a cue from the electorate who rejected the EBOE’S 10 percent tax levy increase, the Elizabeth City Council, today, saved teachers jobs and programs and instead, cut \$5 million in administration expenses from the EBOE’s budget.

“Voters spoke loud and clear last month when they rejected the EBOE’s \$4.4 million tax increase,” stated Council President Frank Cuesta. “We labored over the entire BOE budget and have eliminated than \$5 million of Administrative excess. What we are most proud of is the fact that we could save tax payers such a significant amount and not have to eliminate teachers and scholastic programs. We even added money to hire more teachers.”

Some notable changes include:

- Reduction of Superintendent’s \$257,560 salary and annual bonus
- Elimination of Parent and Attendance Liaisons
- Cut two investigator positions
- Stop wait service and overtime fees associated with serving BOE members and their guests at meetings
- Reallocating funds to hire more teachers for grades 1-5

“With reductions in state and federal aid, municipalities have been operating with less,” said Patricia Perkins-Auguste, Councilwoman-At-Large. “However; the Elizabeth BOE continues to fund high salaries and waste taxpayer’s hard-earned dollars. Elizabeth’s residents and students deserve better than the continuation of this reckless misappropriation of funds.”

As City Council researched the EBOE budget and supporting documentation, it not only uncovered excessive administrative spending, but misuse of taxpayer funds as well.

In a letter from former Department of Education Commissioner Davy’s Chief of Staff John Hart to EBOE president Francisco Gonzalez, Hart details an audit which found more than \$63K of inappropriate spending. The letter refers to costs associated with a defamation lawsuit on behalf of the EBOE vs. anonymous defendants.

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“What is perhaps equally egregious,” stated Frank Cuesta, Councilman-at-Large, “is how the EBOE has engaged in subterfuge with its employees and the electorate; blaming the City Council for the recent spat of layoff notices circulating through the EBOE. Well, the teachers and the voters have had enough of the Board’s wastefulness.”

The letter reads, “The school district and/or the superintendent and board president did not act appropriately in conducting an investigation, hiring attorneys and engaging in litigation...Therefore, any expenditure of school district funds to pursue such actions including hiring of special counsel, investigators, filing lawsuits and other related expenditures were a misuse of school district funds and should not be permitted.”

Hart also states, “...the litigation was more geared to the superintendent and Board president’s personal interests.”

In addition to misallocating funds that should be used to support the educational needs of Elizabeth’s children, the EBOE continues to make attempts to divert the public’s attention from its history of fiscal mismanagement and shift the blame, misleading both parents and children.