

Suburban Trends

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PEQUANNOCK BOE corrects 10-year-old mistake

BY BRYAN LA PLACA Staff Writer

For at least the past decade, the School Board has been incorrectly advertising its meetings. While it's too late to do anything about most of them, the Board made a corrective action at its last meeting and is now advertising its meetings according to state law.

Superintendent Dr. Larrie Reynolds said that it was discovered after a special meeting of the School Board on Aug. 1 that the board had not been correctly advertising its upcoming meetings for the past decade, maybe even longer.

At the Aug. 6 School Board meeting, the trustees took action to correct their error. That meeting, like all others from now on, was advertised in two newspapers, as required by state law, instead of just in one, which is what the board had been doing.

Reynolds said he investigated the state law and how other districts respond to it, and discovered that many are also in violation because they only advertise school board meetings in one newspaper.

He said that the school trustees do not have to re-vote on every action taken by the school board in the past 10 years. All those meetings count, he said.

After 45 days, "whether (a meeting is) advertised or not, it becomes unchallengeable Reynolds said. The only meetings that the school board needed to revisit were from the prior 45 days, Reynolds explained.

"As opposed to going through each individual item line by line, making this a very long meeting, based on (the school board attorney's)

advice, this could be done in one resolution," Reynolds said.

The superintendent explained that the single vote would confirm all the action taken by the School Board at its meetings of June 28, July 16 and Aug. 1.

The trustees could opt to reexamine individual items from those meetings, and even change their votes, explained Board Attorney Anthony Sciarrillo.

Sciarrillo said that even though the School Board had been incorrectly advertising its meetings for over a decade, it still got the word out about its meetings through not only the newspaper, but also the district web site and the televised board meetings on Channel 77

The attorney said he had worked for the district for about 17 years, and during that time no one ever brought up the advertisement error issue, and their had never been a public meeting when no member of the public showed up.

The past three meetings from the 45-day timeframe could be reaffirmed by the School Board with a single vote, but the trustees had the opportunity to review the past action items and could pull them out individually, Sciarrillo said.

School Board President Megan Hollberg asked if any of the trustees wanted to change any of their votes from the past 45 days. None did, and aside from abstentions for absences, they voted unanimously to approve the past 45 days' of school board action in one resolution.

Hallberg said the advertisement error was a mistake and neither "malice" nor "intent" was behind it

Bryan La Placa's e-mail address is laplaca@northjersey.com