

AGENDA  
INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY TOWNSHIP  
SPECIAL ADVERTISED MEETING

5 March 2019  
7:00 PM

Independence Fire House  
24 Cemetery Road  
Great Meadows, NJ 07838

Sunshine Notice  
Flag Salute  
Roll Call

Independence Township  
Liberty Township

Adoption of Agenda

Unfinished Business

New Business

Discussion: Re-Establishing Annual School Elections for the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education

Resolution

Re-establishing Annual School Elections for the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education to be held on the Third Thursday in April, beginning in 2020

Public Comment

Adjournment

A special advertised meeting of the Townships of Independence and Liberty was held in the Independence Fire house, 24 Cemetery Road, Great Meadows on 5 March 2019. The meeting was opened by Independence Mayor Robert Giordano with Adequate Notice of Meeting and the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Independence Township:

Mayor Robert Giordano, Deputy Mayor Glenn Cogle, Tim Norton, Bonnie Kelsey, and Michael Pennington

Liberty Township:

Mayor John Inscho; Deputy Mayor Daniel Grover; Peter Karcher; Carl Cummins, and Michael Beyer

Also, Present:

Independence Township:

Leslie Parikh, Municipal Attorney and Deborah Hrebenak, Municipal Clerk/Administrator

Liberty Township:

Roger Skoog, Municipal Attorney; and, Diane M Pflugfelder, Municipal Clerk/Administrator

RE-ESTABLISHING ANNUAL SCHOOL ELECTIONS FOR THE GREAT MEADOWS REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mayor Giordano turned the meeting over to Liberty Township Deputy Mayor Dan Grover.

Deputy Mayor Grover

Deputy Mayor Grover reviewed public documents and spoke on past school budgets; student enrollment; facility maintenance and improvement costs; election opportunity for the residents; GMRBOE budget transparency; GMRBOE audits; and Warren County school records.

Mayor John Inscho

Mayor Inscho reported that previously, voters elected board of education members and approved school budgets at a special election in April. Voter turn-out averaged 20%. If the school budget was defeated by the voters, the board of education and governing body met to review and identify any possible cuts, or approve budget "as is". Cuts could be appealed to County Board of Education if the two bodies could not agree.

In an effort to increase voter participation, state passed a law in 2011 that allowed BOE to choose to move their elections to November General Election, in exchange for removing the need for voter's budget approval.

In the last five years of April elections, Liberty Township voter turn-out averaged 49%. In six years of November election, the average number of voters casting a ballot for the board of education candidate dropped to 372. (Note: this is not the total number of voters in the elections. Nearly half of the voters in the November General Election chose not to vote on the BOE candidates). The only above average year was 2016 – Presidential election.

Moving the Board of Education elections to November has not increased voter participation in Liberty Township, yet has removed the public's ability to vote on the school budget.

Liberty Township BOE Voter Turnout

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Votes Cast	516	475	514	404	553	N/A
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Total Votes Cast	1193	810	711	278	1423	863
Votes for BOE	506	365	39	199	642	482

PUBLIC COMMENT

A motion by Independence Mayor Giordano to open the floor to public comment on the consideration of re-establishing annual school elections for the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education to be held on the third Tuesday in April, beginning 2020 carried.

Bob Pace, Independence Township

Mr. Pace spoke in support of establishing an April BOE election with student enrollment, property tax impact, OPRA of BOE, \$2 million overpayment to school, shared services, 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade merger information.

Lori Prymak, Liberty Township

Ms. Prymak spoke in opposition of establishing an April BOE election with cost of April election, school budget increases over past ten years and percentage of non-school children households.

Jodee Inscho, Liberty Township spoke in support of establishing an April BOE election with legislative history on moving BOE election to November and current participation.

Charlie Barabbas, Independence Township questioned if the BOE budget could be placed on the November Election? Liberty Township Deputy Mayor Grover explained the timing of BOE FY budget.

Cindy Newman, Independence Township spoke in support of establishing an April BOE election.

Matai Acres, Independence Township questioned how the public can be educated on the BOE budget and what the process is when the voters turn down the budget?

Marisa Wilhelm, Liberty Township spoke in support of establishing an April BOE election for checks and balances and transparency.

Gene Leddy, Liberty Township questioned how the BOE budget is generated and depth of BOE members involvement.

Mayor Giordano stated that with the consideration of adoption this Resolution will be effective for the next five years.

At 7:46 pm, a motion by Mayor Giordano to close public comment carried.

Comment was heard from members of the Independence and Liberty Township Governing Bodies in support and opposition on the adoption of said Resolution.

Liberty Township

A motion by Mayor John Inscho to adopt the following Resolution carried.

Independence Township

A motion by Deputy Mayor Glenn Cogle to adopt the following Resolution carried. Committeeperson Horton voted in opposition of adoption.

**TOWNSHIPS OF INDEPENDENCE & LIBERTY  
RESOLUTION RE-ESTABLISHING ANNUAL SCHOOL ELECTIONS FOR THE  
GREAT MEADOWS REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION  
TO BE HELD ON THE THIRD TUESDAY IN APRIL, BEGINNING IN 2020**

*WHEREAS*, the Township Committees of the Township of Independence and Liberty ("Townships") serves as the governing body for the Townships of Independence and Liberty, municipal corporations of the State of New Jersey, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey; and

*WHEREAS*, the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education ("GMRBOE") is a body politic of the State of New Jersey, and a public school district serving students in grades pre-Kindergarten through twelve (12) from the Great Meadows Regional School District, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey; and

*WHEREAS*, the GMRBOE adopted a resolution moving its annual school election from the April annual school election to the November general election, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:60-1.1; and

*WHEREAS*, based upon this action, from 2011 to 2019, candidates for the GMRBOE have been elected in the November general election; and

WHEREAS, based upon this action, the GMRBOE is exempt from voter approval of its increases to the general tax fund levy, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:60-1.1(a)(2), whereas, returning school board elections to April provides voters with a greater voice on a majority of their property tax bill; and

WHEREAS, approximately 56.98% of Independence Township’s property tax levy is allocated to the GMRBOE with no refunds being provided when tax appeal judgments are rendered; and

WHEREAS, approximately 63.66% of Liberty Township’s property tax levy is allocated to the GMRBOE with no refunds being provided when tax appeal judgments are rendered; and

WHEREAS, the Townships find that by holding the annual school election during the November general election, school board candidates and education issues have become overlooked by the general elections for federal, state, county, and municipal offices, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:60-1.1(b)(1), the Township Committees of the Township of Independence and Liberty, as the governing bodies of the municipalities partially constituting the GMRBOE, is authorized to return the annual school election from the November general election to the third Tuesday in April, commonly known as the April annual school election; and

WHEREAS, the Townships provided adequate notice of the meeting at which this Resolution has been considered, including a copy of this proposed Resolution, to the Secretary of the GMRBOE, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 19:60-1.1(b)(1).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committees of the Townships of Independence and Liberty, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The Township Committees of the Townships of Independence and Liberty hereby agree to move the date of the annual school election for the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education from the November general election to the April annual school election, to be held on the third Tuesday in April, in accordance with law as set forth above as if adopted at length herein.
2. This resolution shall be effective in moving the 2020 annual school election for the Great Meadows Regional Board of Education from the general election to be held in November 2020 to the April annual school election to be held in April 2020.
3. The Municipal Clerks are hereby authorized and directed to transmit a certified copy of this Resolution to the Secretary of the Great Meadows Board of Education, Warren County Clerk, Warren County Board of Elections, Warren County Superintendent of Elections, the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Elections, the Warren County Executive County Superintendent, and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption in accordance with law

Roll Call Vote:

Liberty Township

- aye - Mayor John Inscho
- aye - Deputy Mayor Daniel Grover
- aye - Peter Karcher
- aye - Carl Cummins
- aye - Michael Beyer

Independence Township

- aye - Mayor Robert Giordano
- aye - Deputy Mayor Glenn Cogle
- nay - Tim Norton
- aye - Bonnie Kelsey
- aye - Michael Pennington

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion by Mayor Inscho to adjourn the meeting carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Township of Independence  
Deborah Hrebenak, RMC  
Municipal Clerk/Administrator

Township of Liberty  
Diane M Pflugfelder RMC/MMC  
Municipal Clerk/Administrator