



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION AND LIVINGSTON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL FIVE-ON-FIVE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Mount Pleasant Middle School Auditorium - 7:00 p.m.

A **Five-on-Five Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education and Livingston Township Council was held on this date in the Mount Pleasant Middle School Auditorium and via Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Board President, Pamela Chirls, who announced that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by amendment to notice approved at the Board's reorganization meeting on January 3, 2024 and posted at the Board of Education office and communicated to *The Star Ledger*, *West Essex Tribune*, *TAPinto Livingston* and the Livingston Township Clerk and by Mayor Al Anthony who announced in accordance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Law, P.L. 1975, C. 231, "48-Hour Notice" of a joint Meeting with the Livingston Township Council and Livingston Board of Education on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Mount Pleasant Middle School Auditorium, 11 Broadlawn Drive, Livingston, New Jersey.

LBOE Members: President Pamela Chirls, Vice President Jenissa Arnette, Seth Cohen, Fang Gong, and Parul Khemka

Township Council: Mayor Alfred Anthony, Deputy Mayor Edward Meinhardt, Council Member Ketan Bhuptani, Council Member Shawn Klein, and Council Member Michael Vieira

Also in Attendance:

From the Township: Barry Lewis Jr., Russ Jones, Attorney Jarrod Kantor, and Carolyn Mazzucco

From LPS: Dr. Matthew Block, Thomas Lambe, Attorney Matthew Giacobbe, and Joann Goldberg

There were approximately 30 plus members of the public and staff in person and watching remotely through the webinar and via a Facebook Live Stream.

Workshop Items

1. LBOE Long Range Facilities Planning Committee Update

Dr. Block explained a committee of 40 people, including district employees, township council members and community volunteers, were brought together in the beginning of the school year to focus on the school district's long term facilities space and storage needs. The group is facilitated by TMI, an educational consulting group, and have met three times. The charge of the committee is to focus on a facilities plan for the future to accommodate the increasing student enrollment around the district. They are looking at repurposing or adding on to existing facilities and/or constructing new facilities. Once a plan is established, it could take three to four years to implement. Dr. Block hopes to have a plan by the end of the school year and has retained the assistance of DiCara Rubino Architects to provide them with a variety of plans and project costs. The public will also be asked for their input on the plans once they are available to share.

2. Monmouth Court Update

Dr. Block has been working with Mr. Lewis on transferring the ownership of the Monmouth Court building back to the Livingston Board of Education.

Mr. Lewis explained the property is on the ROSI list of green acres property in town and that he has been working through the appropriate channels to try and take the building off of the list. Mr. Lewis added that the paperwork says it is partially developed and that the intent when the parcel of land was added to the ROSI was to keep the building off but have the baseball fields included and he may need to go through a statutory diversion process to get it corrected.

Mrs. Chirls asked for a timeline and Mr. Lewis responded it depends if they are successful in making the correction to the ROSI but that could still take up to a year; however, even as they work out the particulars, they can turn over the full use of the building earlier and work on the deed at a later date.

Mr. Vieira asked if we have had any indication that Squiretown would become available as an alternative building for the district to utilize and Mr. Lambe responded we have a lease that goes through 2030 and have not had any conversations that they wish to end the lease earlier.

Mr. Klein suggested the district look to take back that building once the lease expires and both Dr. Block and Mr. Lambe explained how the location and size of the building make it an unrealistic choice. They also do not want to displace our current tenant.

Mr. Klein asked how we would use Monmouth Court and Dr. Block responded that it is currently set up as an extension of the high school but that we could perhaps repurpose it as a preschool.

Mr. Vieira added he would hope we would look to repurpose a building that we currently own and Mrs. Chirls reiterated that right now, it is not a consideration to displace the current tenant.

3. Universal PreK

Dr. Block explained there are rumors that there may be a mandate down the road for school districts to offer Universal PreK and that they are looking at this in conjunction with the future needs of the district in the Long Range Facilities Planning Committee Meetings. Dr. Block continued there would be State funding and possibilities for tuition revenue and would like to work with the Township since it appears there is a high demand for Pre-k that neither the district nor the township can meet on their own.

4. Township Sharing of Population Models, including Development Update

Mr. Lewis explained that he continues to provide Dr. Block with updates on the status of developments in town as well as shares the bedroom breakdown of those developments which directly correlates to the number of school children that may come out of a development. Mr. Lewis added that he tries his best to mitigate the impact on the community and school while also trying to meet the township's affordable housing obligation. In an effort to lower the number of students generated by new developments, while also meeting the township's obligation to build affordable housing, he encourages developers to limit developments to two bedroom units, to build over 55 year old communities, and to build special needs and supportive housing for the developmentally disabled.

Dr. Block added not all of the increase in our student population is coming from new developments, but the student population has also increased from new developments and smaller homes that are being sold and rebuilt with larger square footage footprints or are being subdivided.

It was suggested that the district have a demographer come back to perform another study based on our current circumstances.

5. New Legislation (A4 and S50)

Attorney Kantor explained although a number of towns tried to fight this, new legislation was passed and there will be a fourth round of mandated affordable housing that the township will be obligated to follow over the next ten years that will have an impact on our schools and community. The township has engaged a planner to look at the formula, and once they have an idea of how many units will have to be built, they will release it to the public.

6. Parking, Sidewalks and Crosswalks near district schools

There was a discussion about the change in the traffic pattern during pick up at Harrison Elementary School, and there was a request for traffic studies and the possible need for sidewalks in and around the school property.

Mr. Vieira spoke out against the new traffic pattern since parents have been reaching out to him with concerns that the streets around the school are narrow and crowded. Dr. Block explained that, after reviewing the traffic pattern with the principal and a member of the police department, the changes they implemented have made it significantly safer for students.

Mr. Lewis explained he is actively looking at the sidewalks on township owned property and anticipates using Safe Routes to School Grants, when available, to help with funding of sidewalks around schools.

There was discussion about putting up no parking signs, making Longacre one way during school hours, limiting parking during certain times on Longacre and adding crossing guards. Mr. Meinhardt suggested putting a committee together to study how the traffic and pick up are going and to brainstorm solutions.

Ms. Arnette requested that the township make studying the traffic on Northfield Road between Hillside Avenue and the Circle a priority and look to add a traffic stop since she sees a number of students crossing the busy road within that road span. There is a crossing guard in the morning and afterschool on Wynnewood and Northfield, but after those times, there is no safe place for students to cross. Ms. Arnette will share the two other areas where she notices students crossing in an unsafe manner with Mayor Anthony.

7. Shared Services

The group discussed that they continue to explore ways that we can share services in an effort to save money for the community.

There was a question about recycling in the schools, and Mr. Lambe will check to see how it is currently being handled and contact Mr. Jones to further discuss.

Mrs. Chirls asked about a bus storage solution, and then Mr. Cohen asked for the status of the building of the future site of the DPW and if there is a place for us to park our buses in the future.

Mr. Lewis responded he anticipates building being underway some time this calendar year, but that it will take 18 months before they are in a position to relocate their machinery and stored supplies that are behind the firehouse at the circle on Northfield Avenue. This is an area that has been discussed as a possible place to park the buses.

Dr. Block was asked to have an architect and/or engineer look at the space to see how to get the buses in and out of that area in advance of being given the property.

Mr. Meinhardt brought up an idea for a new shared service. They are short of poll workers for the primary and general elections and asked if there would be interest in having high school students who participate in any work study programs participate. Students would need to be 16 years old and would be paid for their services.

Dr. Block forwarded the information up to the high school and will let them know they can contact Carolyn Mazzucco if interested.

Public Comment

A petition signed by 60 residents about their concerns about the traffic conditions surrounding the elementary school and seeking solutions to ensure the safety of their children was handed to the town council and board of education members.

A number of residents spoke during public comment about the need for sidewalks, suspending parking on Longacre, making Longacre a one way street before and after school, and positioning either police or crossing guards in the area to help keep pedestrians safe around Harrison Elementary School.

Libby Barak, asked that a long term solution for summer aftercare for children with disabilities be added to a future agenda.

Michelle Lemieux, asked what the process is for getting potholes fixed at Burnet Hill School and how to get crosswalks and signs put up to help with public safety around the school.

Jean Stoloff, asked in what specific areas the Township and Board of Education are working together to save the taxpayers money.

Dr. Block responded that he is open to having additional conversations on how they can tighten up the dismissal process at Harrison Elementary and do more in terms of the narrow streets and how to spread students out more when exiting the building.

Mrs. Chirls announced there will be a public budget forum held on April 16, 2024 from 4 to 6 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:55 p.m., Mrs. Chirls asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, and she asked for a motion from members of the Board of Education for an Executive Session, in which no action would be taken and would not be returning to public session.

Mrs. Khemka made the motion.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

The Township Council made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas J. Lambe
LBOE Board Secretary