



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2024

Executive Session - Administration Building - 6:15 p.m.

Public Session - Administration Building - 7:45 p.m.

A **Workshop Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education was held on this date in the large conference room in the Administration Building and via a Facebook Livestream. The meeting was called to order at 6:18 p.m. by Pamela Chirls, Board President, 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.

Members Present: Jenissa Arnette, Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Fang Gong, Parul Khemka and Jake Ferrans

Also in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Block, Thomas Lambe, Lisa Capone-Steiger, Mark Stern and Joann Goldberg

Mrs. Khemka moved the following:

Executive Session

Whereas, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-11, permits the Board of Education to meet in closed session to discuss certain matters; now, therefore be it

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education adjourns to closed session to discuss:

- personnel

Action may be taken upon return to the public session. The full length of the meeting is anticipated to be approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes; and be it

Further Resolved, the minutes of this closed session be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

At 7:57 p.m. Ms. Arnette reconvened the meeting. There were approximately 40 plus members of the public and staff watching in person and remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

Superintendent's Report

Budget Discussion

Dr. Block explained that the Board will be voting on the 2024-2025 tentative budget at tomorrow night's meeting and that changes can be made to the budget up until the Public Hearing, which will be held on April 30.

Dr. Block continued after meeting with the Finance and Facilities Committee and answering questions from the Board, the administration is recommending moving ahead with the 5.75% tax levy without adding any recurring expenses during the next budget year. Dr. Block added the district is focused on preserving programs and providing what is best for students.

Dr. Block then reviewed the items that have already been cut from this year's budget, which include \$2.5 million of budgeted fund balance, \$600,000 worth of expenses from various line item accounts, \$800,000 from our enrollment adjustment that will be put towards our banked cap in next year's budget and delaying some purchases from this current year's budget.

Dr. Block continued that they will repurpose existing positions and are currently surveying after school clubs and activities to measure utilization of current clubs against new clubs and will make reallocations where appropriate.

Mr. Lambe reiterated that we are decreasing our fund balance and our health benefit expenses to help balance the budget and will continue to look for more efficient ways of saving money without hurting the student experience. One of those ways will be to look at our property casualty insurance; however, he won't have an idea of any cost savings in that area until May.

Mrs. Chirls asked when the stipend analysis will be complete and Dr. Block responded he will check with the high school and get back to her. For the 2024-2025 budget, stipends for a ski team, flag football and eSports were requested and will only be added if other clubs no longer run due to low interest/activity.

Mrs. Chirls confirmed that as the budget stands, we will continue to run all courses at the high school based on enrollment as we have done in the past.

Mrs. Chirls requested an update on specific course enrollment numbers at the high school and a class size update at the middle and elementary level once we have them.

With enrollment spiking and expenses going up, Mr. Cohen expressed support for using all of our banked cap this year. Using all of our banked cap would bring the tax levy up to 6.47% instead of 5.75%.

When Mr. Lambe was asked if he thinks what he proposed, the 5.75% tax levy, is reasonable to maintain our programs, he responded it is reasonable but with less margin for error if expenditures come in higher than we budgeted. Mr. Lambe added that saving this banked cap does not necessarily help us in the future budget.

Mrs. Chirls, Mrs. Khemka and Mrs. Fong all agreed with staying at the recommended 5.75% and creating \$842,000 of banked cap for the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. Cohen disagreed and Ms. Arnette wanted more time to weigh both sides of the discussion. The tentative budget presented at tomorrow night's voting meeting will be inclusive of the 5.75% tax levy.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:43 p.m. Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thomas J. Lambe", written over a horizontal line.

Thomas J. Lambe
Board Secretary

March 18, 2024