



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES

April 16, 2024

Executive Session - Administration Building - 6:30 p.m.

Public Session - Administration Building - 7:00 p.m.

A **Workshop/Voting 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 6:30 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 and Parul Khemka

Members Absent: Jake Ferrans

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

Mr. Cohen 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 and student matters

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

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

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

At 7:03 p.m. Mrs. Chirls reconvened the meeting. There were approximately 45 members of the public and staff watching in person and remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

Superintendent's Report

1. Academic Calendar Discussion

- 2024-2025 SY
- 2025-2026 SY

Dr. Block explained that the LEA met with him to express their concerns that the 2024-2025 school year calendar does not contain a February break and if we end up with too many snow days, the spring break would be in jeopardy. The LEA is offering to come in for two days in August and to move the first day of school to Tuesday after Labor Day so that the extra days off could be added in February to provide for the week off and to provide for an extra snow day. There was also a suggestion about using December 23 as a fourth banked emergency snow day.

Dr. Block continued that for the 2025-2026 calendar, they have reestablished the February break, have the three snow days built in and end the school year on June 25.

Mr. Cohen does not support the 2025-2026 calendar having a February break and ending school on June 25 when students have a good amount of time off between December and April.

Dr. Block asked the Board to send him their comments via email and he will bring back another version.

2. Enrollment and Staffing Update

Dr. Block reiterated that the administration made a commitment to the Board not to add any recurring costs to the 2024-2025 budget and will handle any enrollment or staffing needs by shifting or redeploying staff through resignations, retirements or transfers. Dr. Block assured returning staff that we don't believe we have a need to eliminate any personnel.

Dr. Block continued that when they went back to review each position and salary, they found some funds from positions that were not filled this year that could be used in next year's budget. These funds will allow us to fill the music position at the middle school, health and physical education position at the elementary level, special education personnel as dictated by IEPS, a custodian to be split between Burnet Hill and the high school and several stipends for the high school. Stipends include eSports, a ski team, flag football and after school programming that would cater to our special education population.

Dr. Block continued that current kindergarten registration numbers are about ten percent below what they were at the same time last year and that they will work to keep class sizes low. Dr. Block added we may have one to three fewer sections of fifth grade across the district next year.

Mr. Lambe explained that due to supply chain issues and inflation, the ROD grant boiler project costs came in \$1.2 to \$1.5 million dollars over what was originally estimated and that the extra costs will come out of our capital reserve funds. Mr. Lambe explained that this increase does not impact our operating budget. The district will receive 40% in grants off of the original costs in the applications. The plan is to install the high school boilers this summer as they are a priority but that the Mount Pleasant, Harrison and Hillside boilers may need to be pushed back to the summer of 2025.

Mr. Lambe reviewed the budget information he provided back in March and explained that the numbers, including the proposed tax levy, have not changed since the tentative budget has been

approved. The public will have an opportunity to ask questions at the Public Hearing prior to the board's final vote on April 30th.

Looking ahead to 2025-2026, Mr. Lambe explained there will be \$842,473 of banked cap available for a tax levy cap of 2.68% and if an enrollment waiver and/or health benefit waiver is offered, the cap could be higher. Mr. Lambe added that with costs growing faster than revenues, the district must continue to look for efficiencies and savings in order to offset a major budgetary shortfall in future budgets.

Board Reports

Mrs. Khemka and the Equity Committee met to discuss their next steps and are recommending forming a large group, similar to how the strategic plan committee was run, and hiring an advisor to assist with the process of defining the work so they can formulate a strategy, goals and a timeline. Mrs. Khemka added they anticipate forming smaller subgroups as well.

The Board was supportive of the recommendation so the committee will begin to solicit proposals.

Mrs. Gong announced she attended a training conference through NJSBA's Leadership Series and will share those resources with the rest of the board members.

Ms. Arnette reported that all of the board members participated as food servers at the Intergenerational Prom last week.

Mrs. Khemka and Mrs. Chirls attended the GT Art display at the public library.

Mrs. Chirls acknowledged that Dr. Block will be leaving LPS, expressed the Board's appreciation and commended him on the progress he made in the district over the past five years which include leaving LPS with a solid foundation moving forward through his work with stakeholder teams on the creation of the Strategic Plan and recently established Long Range Facilities Planning Committee, leading discussions with the three bargaining units resulting in the district's first five-year agreements with them, forming partnerships with the College of New Jersey and Ramapo College to support the growth of staff members, working with counselors and administrators to strengthen the tools and resources available to help prepare students to navigate the college application process, working with the district's equity teams to address the gaps identified in the recent equity audit to ensure that all students feel safe and secure in their school buildings and supporting the district's commitment to providing enhanced visual and performing arts programs within the schools as well as an array of after school activities and sports.

Mr. Cohen added that the fact that the children of this community know our superintendent is a unique characteristic to him and that his passion for children has never waned in all of the things we have wanted to overcome.

The Board collectively wished Dr. Block well in his new position in Ardsley, New York.

Dr. Block thanked the Board and the many community members who have reached out with words of gratitude and congratulations over the last two weeks.

Mrs. Chirls then explained that the Board has decided to appoint a retired certified superintendent to serve in the interim over the next school year and that they will be seeking public input when the search for a permanent superintendent commences. Mrs. Chirls added they will provide the community with periodic updates as the process moves along.

Student Representative's Report

There was no student representative's report.

Public Comment

Ilyse Shainbrown, asked the board and administration to consider revising the 2025-2026 calendar so that students would not graduate on June 25, 2026 stating there are too many days students will be in and of school that winter, it will hurt students timelines for applying to colleges, seniors will begin AP testing later and it will be hurtful to summer programs and for summer job opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

BUSINESS

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

3.1 Technology Purchases

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the amended amendment to Sales Order No. NJ-ESCNJ-121820-FY21-19158758 with Comcast Enterprise Services for internet and broadband services in the amount of \$2,705 per month.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the purchase from Broadcast Integration Services, LLC for Production Servers in the amount of \$59,975 and Integration, Design, Fabrication and Installation Services for Livingston High School in the amount of \$21,640.

3.2 Conferences and Overnight Trips

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves *Dan Quackenbush* and *Delaney Hoffman* to chaperone approximately 11 students attending the DECA Competition from April 27 to May 1, 2024 in Anaheim, California.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves *Cheryl Coursen* and *Michael Ladolcetta* to chaperone approximately five students attending the M3 Challenge Awards Ceremony from April 28 to 29, 2024 in New York City.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nayes - None

PERSONNEL

Mrs. Khemka moved the following:

4.1 Resignations & Retirements

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the resignations of:

Name	Position	Reason	Location	Last Day of Employment
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<i>Dr. Matthew J. Block</i>	Superintendent	Retirement	CO	June 30, 2024
<i>Susan Siniscal</i>	Instructional Aide	Retirement	MPMS	June 30, 2024
<i>Dawn Elsasser</i>	25-Hr Bus Driver	Retirement	Transportation	June 30, 2024
<i>Mary Kate O'Brien</i>	School Counselor	Resignation	HMS	June 30, 2024
<i>Deniz Schwartz</i>	Teacher of Art	Resignation	LHS	June 30, 2024
<i>Sarah Tighe</i>	Elementary School Teacher	Resignation	RHE	June 30, 2024
<i>Brynn Minghenelli</i>	Elementary School Teacher	Resignation	Collins	June 30, 2024
<i>Caitlin Wittjohann</i>	PRIDE Teacher	Resignation	BHE	June 30, 2024
<i>Ann DeFazio</i>	Teacher of Biology	Resignation	LHS	June 30, 2024
<i>Bonnie Goldman</i>	Instructional Aide	Resignation	Harrison	June 30, 2024
<i>Maria Reed</i>	Playground Aide	Resignation	RHE	April 22, 2024

**as amended from a previous agenda*

4.2 Leaves of Absences

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the leaves of absences of:

Name	Location	Position	LOA w/ pay and benefits	LOA w/o pay, but with benefits (if applicable)	Extended LOA w/o pay or benefits	Return Date
<i>Kimberly Brenneck</i>	MPMS	Teacher of Math	8/29/2024-10/11/2024	10/14/2024-1/10/2025**	1/13/2025-1/31/2025	2/1/2025
<i>Dr. Mary Kate Pretto</i>	LHS	Assistant Principal	7/29/2024-9/13/2024 & 9/16/2024-10/23/2024** & 12/9/2024-1/1/2025	10/24/2024-12/6/2024**	NA	1/2/2025
<i>Carly Haggerty</i>	BHE	TOSD	9/4/2024-10/14/2024	10/17/2024-10/28/2024 & 10/29/2024-1/28/2025**	1/29/2025-6/30/2025	8/27/2025
<i>Amanda Buyes</i>	LHS	Teacher of	8/29/2024-	10/14/2024-	1/13/2025-	1/21/2025

		English	10/11/2024	1/10/2025**	1/20/2025	
Emily Burger*	BHE	Elementary School Teacher	2/19/2024-5/14/2024	5/15/2024-6/20/2024 & 8/29/2024-10/16/2024**	NA	10/17/2024
Kristi Braschi*	LHS	Teacher of Math	4/5/2024-5/15/2024 & 5/16/2024-5/28/2024**	5/29/2024-6/20/2024 & 8/29/2024-10/17/2024**	10/18/2024-6/30/2025	8/27/2025
William Peklo	LHS	TOSD	3/11/2024-4/5/2024**	4/8/2024-5/27/2024**	NA	5/28/2024
Stephanie Crosby*	Collins	Reading Interventionist	1/29/2024-3/8/2024 & 3/11/2024-4/4/2024**	4/5/2024-6/7/2024**	NA	6/10/2024
Jamal Chavis	BHE	ABA Discrete Trial TA	4/8/2024-4/12/2024	4/15/2024-4/23/2024**	NA	4/24/2024
Brian Carr	LHS	TOSD	4/29/2024-5/10/2024**	NA	NA	5/13/2024
Ria DeVito*	Harrison	Teacher of Health & PE	3/28/2024-6/19/2024 & 6/20/2024-6/30/2024**	8/29/2024-11/20/2024**	11/21/2024-6/30/2025	8/27/2025
Melissa Muirhead*	LHS	Teacher of Biology	6/3/2024-6/30/2024	8/29/2024-11/21/2024**	11/22/2024-1/3/2025	1/6/2025
Aubrey Amorim*	RHE	Elementary School Teacher	2/19/2024-4/10/2024	4/11/2024-6/30/2024**	NA	8/29/2024
Alan Predestin*	Transportation	25-Hr Bus Driver	9/11/2023-10/9/2023** & 4/5/2024**	10/10/2023-11/3/2023** & 3/25/2024-4/4/2024**	NA	4/8/2024

*as amended from a previous agenda

**Designates time counted toward NJFLA/FMLA

***schedule varies from teaching staff members

4.3 Appointments

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the applications indicated below (*) for emergent hiring for the following appointments under the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:16-1 et. seq., N.J.S.A. 18A:39.17 et. seq.; N.J.S.A. 18A:6-4.13 et. seq. All appointments are contingent upon reference checks in accordance with P.L. 2018, c.5.

Name	Location	Title	Tenure Track/LOA or LT Replacement	Replacing	Guide	Step	Salary	Effective Date
Dr. Maura Tuite	CO	Director of Secondary Special Education	First Year Tenure Track	S. Middleton	NA	NA	\$172,000 *** (prorated)	6/17/2024
Kelly Gallagher	LHS	Teacher of Biology & Chemistry	First Year Tenure Track	A. DeFazio	MA	11	\$82,490	8/29/2024
Beatriz Lavin	LHS	Teacher of Spanish	First Year Tenure Track	W. Gelman	MA	12	\$86,490	8/29/2024

<i>Danielle Maxwell</i>	HMS	School Counselor	First Year Tenure Track	M. O'Brien	MA	3	\$65,090	8/29/2024
<i>Karen Sanchez</i>	MPMS	Teacher of Spanish	First Year Tenure Track	E. Goldstein	MA+32 (2MA)	13	\$98,440	8/29/2024
<i>Shiyun Wong</i>	Collins	Playground Aide	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$18/hr	4/9/2024
<i>Cheryl Lenoir</i>	MPE	Playground Aide	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$18/hr	4/9/2024
<i>Yvette Archelus</i>	RHE	Playground Aide	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$18/hr	4/9/2024

**as amended from a previous agenda*

***begins 60-day probationary period*

****salary will be the same for the 2024-2025 school year*

4.4 Substitutes

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the appointment of the individual(s) listed below to serve as long-term substitutes as reflected below:

Name	Location	Title	Leave Replacement or Long Term Sub	Replacing	Salary	Effective Date
<i>Jordan Eglow*</i>	BHE	PRIDE Teacher	Long-Term Substitute	C. Wittjohann	\$315/day	3/1/2024
<i>Colleen Cornell</i>	LHS	Cooperative Education Coordinator	Long-Term Sub	NA	\$200/day	4/17/2024-6/20/2024

**to be paid the difference between their current daily rate and the rate quoted above*

4.5 Longevity

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the individuals listed on **Attachment AA** for longevity retroactive to September 1, 2023.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

The board members wished Dr. Block good luck and welcomed Dr. Maura Tuite to the district.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

5.1 HIB Report

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the findings of HIB cases.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

The board reviewed the upcoming items. No questions were asked.

PREVIEW OF APRIL 30, 2024 AGENDA

Public Hearing on Budget

1. Presentation
 2. Discussion
 3. Questions and Comments from Public
- Speakers are asked to stand and state name for the board and public
 - Speakers may raise their hand, state their name for the board and speak through the webinar
 - Each person may speak once with a three (3) minute time limit until all who wish to be heard have had an opportunity to speak

Adoption of 2024-2025 Budget

Approval of Minutes

PROGRAM/CURRICULUM

1.1 Textbooks/DVDs

1.2 Student Teachers

1.3 Field Trips

STUDENT SERVICES

2.1 Out of District Placements

2.2 Related Services/Medical Consultants

BUSINESS

3.1 Payment of Bills

3.2 Board Secretary Report – February 2024

3.3 Transfers

3.4 Conferences and Overnight Trips

3.5 Union County Educational Services Commission

3.6 Essex Regional Educational Services Commission

3.7 Donation

3.8 Acceptance of Funds for the Additional or Compensatory Special Education and Related Services (ACSERS) Program

3.9 Safety Grant

3.10 Subscription Bus Pricing

3.11 Approval: Recognize and Cancel Outstanding Checks

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:48 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Thomas J. Lambe
Board Secretary