



## **LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Executive Session - Hybrid Meeting - 6:00 p.m.

Public Session - Hybrid Meeting - 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 Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by the Board President, Samantha Messer, who announced that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by amendment to notice approved at the Board's reorganization meeting on January 4, 2021 and posted at the Board of Education office and communicated to *The Star Ledger*, *West Essex Tribune*, *TAPinto Livingston* and the Livingston Township Clerk.

Mrs. Chirls 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:

- Legal Matters

Action may be taken upon return to public session. The full length of the meeting is anticipated to be approximately 60 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.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer  
Nayes - None

At 7:04 p.m., Ms. Messer reconvened the public meeting.

Members Present: Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Vineeta Khanna, Ronnie Konner, Samantha Messer and Ethan Hirsch

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

There were approximately 10 members of the public and staff in person and approximately 87 members of the public and staff watching remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

## **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Block thanked Mr. Stern and his department for the productive professional development day that was held yesterday.

Dr. Block explained Mr. Stern's department is working on the Start Strong Assessment in English Language Arts, Math and Science that many students in the district will be taking next week. This NJ Department of Education assessment is designed to help us understand the level of support children need at the beginning of the school year.

Dr. Block continued that at next week's meeting, we will hear about Red Ribbon Week events, have a discussion about a potential athletic field project, hear about curriculum writing projects that happened over the summer and will have our conference with the Livingston Education Association Executive Board.

### **1. Calendar 2022-2023**

Dr. Block explained this calendar has already been approved but we needed to amend the start date for school in order to incorporate having Juneteenth as a day off. The amended calendar reflects September 1, 2022 as the new start date for school.

Dr. Block continued as a district, we have decided that if we have to quarantine a student, we will provide video access into the classroom for that student within 36 hours.

Dr. Block explained that through *The Road Forward*, the State is requiring districts to come up with a plan to provide remote learning in case we have to be closed for three full days due to an emergency. Dr. Block continued that *The Road Forward* has nothing to do with the quarantining of students and is to be used in emergency situations only.

Dr. Block announced his first chat with the superintendent for this year will be on Thursday, October 14 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Gazebo.

Dr. Block offered congratulations to Livingston High School junior Matthew Zhang, who recently received the New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Award. Mr. Zhang, the founder of Livingston Youth Organization for Human Services (LYOHS), received the "Youth in Service Award" while his 120-member volunteer group received the "Youth Volunteer Program Award."

## **Board Reports**

Ms. Messer announced the board will be voting to amend the policy put forth at the last meeting to allow not only individuals with proof of a vaccination to attend a board meeting but also those that are able to provide a negative PCR test within 48 hours of the meeting. Ms. Messer continued they will suspend a bylaw to approve the amendment in one reading so we can put this into effect for the next board meeting.

Mrs. Chirls brought up that a number of years ago we had mental health and wellness committees in place in response to a number of things that happened in the community and requested starting them up again in a way that could be attached to the strategic planning process.

Dr. Block responded that mental health is a huge issue that has been compounded by the pandemic and we have made a firm mental health goal one of our district goals this year. Dr.

Block added as part of the strategic planning process, people will be invited to join in on particular topics to help the team move forward and mental health needs to be one of them. Dr. Block expressed support for putting together a committee who will initially focus on our next five years and our efforts in that area.

Mrs. Konner and Mrs. Khanna added their support for putting a committee together that could align with the strategic plan since mental health is a community issue.

### **Public Input on Agenda Items ~ up to 15 minutes**

Ms. Messer explained that over the last two weeks she has had the opportunity to speak with many people in the community about their issues and concerns and when she speaks with them one-on-one, they realize they have more in common, the problems are solvable and that we are on the same team. Ms. Messer asked that we all work together to understand each other's perspectives, to understand what is working and how we can improve because through those kinds of continued conversations, we will constantly evolve and get better.

Syeda Zainab, 34 Hemlock Road, requested the observance of Eid be added to the district calendar as a holiday.

Dr. Block responded that for 2022-2023, Eid begins on a Friday night which doesn't affect this calendar; however, when the board reviews the 2023-2024 calendar next year, they will include the possibility of making it a school holiday in their discussions.

Noreen Akhter, 32 East Harrison Place, stated Eid plays an important part in her family and community and requested we add it to the school calendar as a holiday.

Ms. Messer responded we will look at it when we review the 2023-2024 calendar next year.

Parul Khemka, 70 Elmwood Drive, requested the SEPAC representation process be modified to be parent led, open to all and the reps be chosen by the special needs parents because she feels the current structure is not working. Mrs. Khemka also asked that all special needs parents be made aware of the existence of SEPAC.

Pam Tepper, 10 Langtree Drive, expressed she is upset that out of district students are left off district email lists of their peers which excludes them from the many activities going on in and around the schools.

Ms. Messer responded that we can look into how representatives are chosen for SEPAC.

Mrs. Steiger added that the bylaws from 2010 when SEPAC started state that parents are selected because they volunteer through the HSA and have a child with an IEP. There is a minimum two year commitment so we have continuity on the committee.

Mrs. Steiger also responded that she will check on the email lists for out of district families.

Jorge Rivera, 5 West Lawn, questioned the board's decision to suspend and approve the bylaw about public participation at board meetings in one reading, that the only people allowed to look at immunization records should be a professional of the health community and encouraged everyone to get out and vote on November 2 because we have two open seats on the board.

Ms. Messer responded that the intent of approving the bylaw to allow for one reading was to get the public back in person as quickly as possible and that we will suspend this bylaw again tonight to amend it so we can get even more public participation. Ms. Messer continued we will

check on who is allowed to look at a person's vaccination status to make sure we aren't in violation of any HIPAA laws.

## **VOTING ITEMS**

### **BUSINESS**

Ms. Messer asked for a motion to add 3.1 Policies and Regulations as a voting item on tonight's agenda.

Mr. Cohen moved the motion.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer  
Nayes - None

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

#### **3.1 Policies and Regulations**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education suspend Bylaw #0131 for this meeting and adopt the following amended bylaw in one reading: #0167.1 Public Participation During Board Meetings Covid Rules.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer  
Nayes - None

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Mrs. Konner moved the following:

#### **5.1 HIB Report**

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

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer  
Nayes - None

## **PREVIEW OF OCTOBER 19, 2021 VOTING MEETING AGENDA**

The Board previewed the items that are coming up for a vote at next week's meeting.

### **Conference with LEA**

- 1. PROGRAM/CURRICULUM**
  - 1.1 Student Teachers**
- 2. STUDENT SERVICES**
  - 2.1 Out of District Placement**
  - 2.2 Related Services/Medical Consultants**
- 3. BUSINESS**
  - 3.1 Payment of Bills**
  - 3.2 Board Secretary Report – August 2021**

- 3.3 Transfers**
- 3.4 Conferences and Overnight Trips**
- 3.5 Academic Calendar Revision - 2022-2023**
- 3.6 Plan for Virtual or Remote Learning**
- 3.7 American Rescue Plan Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (ARP IDEA)**
- 3.8 Tuition Students (Receiving)**
- 3.9 Morris County Cooperative Pricing Council**
- 3.10 On-Tech Consulting**
- 3.11 Parental Contract for Student Transportation**
- 3.12 Policies and Regulations**

Mrs. Konner asked if there was any consideration given when looking to have the start date for students be on Wednesday instead of Thursday on the 2022-2023 calendar and Dr. Block responded during their discussions about moving the start date, everyone agreed not to bring kids back prior to September 1.

Mrs. Chirls asked since Lunar New Year is on a weekend but is acknowledged on the 2022-2023 calendar, can we do the same for Eid and Dr. Block responded that we could.

Mr. Cohen asked about the purpose of the funding under resolution 3.7 and Mrs. Ramos responded it is not new funding but rather an enhancement to what we are currently doing under the IDEA application.

### **Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes**

Cindy Goldstein, 24 Mayhew, asked how parents interested in joining, get on a building equity team, has it been advertised to parents and how are we going to ensure that there is adequate representation on the teams. Mrs. Goldstein also asked about the process and what specific groups are being targeted to become part of an equity affinity group.

Mrs. Steiger responded for the building equity teams, any interested parent should reach out to their building principal. Last December teams were put together and they are examining the data collected in the community survey and looking at the work they did to determine what voices aren't at the table and who else needs to participate. Mrs. Steiger added principals will do another outreach to their school community. Mrs. Steiger continued that they will advertise through next week's *Discover* if any interested parents and staff members would like to participate in the equity affinity groups. One of the affinity groups will be LGBTQIA+ community members and one will be Asian community members.

Soma Chaudhuri, 9 Knollwood Drive, expressed that the integration of the different software that we use throughout the district is causing stress for students.

Dr. Block responded that before the pandemic, we were looking into this issue but then our focus shifted. Dr. Block asked Mrs. Chaudhuri to email her feedback to him and assured her that this issue will be looked at as part of the strategic planning process.

Tugce Yalt, 8 Fieldstone Drive, agrees with acknowledging Eid on the calendar, asked if we will be starting school before Labor Day going forward and requested that we have a chess club or brain games after school.

Ms. Messer responded it is a year to year conversation because the first day of school has a lot to do with when the holidays fall. When holidays fall on weekends, it gives us more flexibility with the start dates. When holidays fall during the week and we are committed to observing them, it doesn't give us as much flexibility in terms of when to start or end school.

Ms. Messer also encouraged Mrs. Yalt to speak with her school to get a listing of after school activities that are offered.

Jorge Rivera, 5 West Lawn, agrees with Ms. Messer that listening to all sides allows us to work together to form better solutions for everyone, that he didn't mean to insinuate we were circumventing anything when suspending the bylaw to have one reading, that we need to be cognizant of personal freedoms and privacy issues and that we should offer students a remote learning option.

Rachel Kemelman, 29 Norman Court, asked if the board is open to looking at the revised elementary schedule and the amount of time that has been allocated for lunch because the kids don't have enough time to eat under this new schedule.

James Calderon, 130 Hobart Gap Road, suggested the board invite citizens to participate on committees, asked if the reason for the incident on the bus last week was due to there not being enough seating for students and believes we should offer proof of a negative test as an option for people to come into our buildings.

Ms. Messer responded that the board passed a policy earlier in the meeting that will allow for negative tests in lieu of vaccine cards.

Dr. Block responded that our buses are not oversubscribed and that even though there is a seat for every child, sometimes social dynamics for students at the secondary level are challenging.

### **Old Business**

There was no old business.

### **New Business**

There was no new business.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:15 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer  
Nays - None

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**Steven K. Robinson**  
**Board Secretary**