



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

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Hybrid Meeting in Heritage Middle School Cafeteria - 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 Heritage Middle School Cafeteria and via Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by the Board President, Seth Cohen, 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, 2022 and posted at the Board of Education office and communicated to *The Star Ledger*, *West Essex Tribune*, *TAPinto Livingston* and the Livingston Township Clerk.

LBOE Members: Jenissa Arnette, Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Vineeta Khanna and Samantha Messer

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

Also in Attendance:

From the Township: Barry Lewis Jr., Adam Loehner, Russ Jones, Jarrid Kantor and Carolyn Mazzucco

From LPS: Dr. Matthew Block, Michael Davison and Joann Goldberg

There were approximately 22 members of the public and staff in person and approximately 29 members of the public and staff watching remotely through the webinar and via a Facebook Live Stream.

Mr. Cohen and Mayor Meinhardt recognized Mr. Fernandez and Ms. Messer for their years of service and contributions to the community.

Workshop Items

1. Young Adult Transitional Program

The group celebrated the partnership of this program between the Township and Board of Education. Students in our 18-21 year old program get to participate in real life experiences through working for local businesses and afterwards, some of them have been offered sustainable employment in the community.

2. Welcome to Livingston

The group discussed how we can bring back the Welcome to Livingston program and expand it to include the individual PTAs and HSAs so they can get information about the community and their schools out to new families.

Deputy Mayor Vieira suggested having a joint committee with more representation to discuss the logistics of making it a larger event so that new members of the community can get the information they need about the town and the school their children would be attending. Mr. Cohen asked that our PT Council co-presidents be invited to sit on the committee.

Mr. Davison will have this committee added to the Board's shared committee list that gets approved at their reorganization meeting in January.

3. Presentation of LPS Strategic Plan

Dr. Block reviewed the district's Strategic Planning process and explained that the new plan sets a mission and vision for our work, outlines our beliefs as a district and provides long term objectives in five defined areas. The five areas are: Safety and Wellness, Teaching and Learning, Leadership and Government, Community and Culture and Finance and Facilities. Dr. Block continued that under Finance and Facilities, creating a multi-year plan to create flexible innovative educational space that meets the needs of our growing and diverse population is what he would like to discuss with the Council, which falls under the next agenda topic for tonight.

4. Presentation of LPS Enrollment / Architectural Building Analysis

Dr. Block continued that we commissioned a demographic study, brought architects in to do a capacity report and are closely monitoring our enrollment. Dr. Block explained that our current enrollment figures are already higher than what the demographer predicted they will be over the next few years.

Mr. Cohen added that we would like to discuss the certainty of what developments are coming up in the town in the next five years.

Ms. Messer added we would like to be able to adequately predict numbers so we can make smart decisions about building.

Mr. Cohen asked how we can establish a more firm set of communication and flow of information on this topic.

The two groups agreed to have a meeting once a month with the Township Manager, CFO, Dr. Block, Mr. Davison and one elected official from both sides to have these discussions and to take information from the meetings back to their respective groups.

Mayor Meinhardt will work on coordinating a group that will meet on a monthly basis.

5. Space/Land for Possible School Expansion

Mr. Cohen brought up four spaces to discuss: Haines Pool, the old recreation center across from the high school, Monmouth Court and the second floor of Town Hall.

Mr. Cohen asked the Township if they have put together a plan or have a timeline for determining the status of the town pools and should they choose to close down one pool, if they are open to transferring the piece of property where Haines Pool resides to the LBOE to utilize for our needs at the high school. Mr. Cohen also asked what hurdles might be involved if the area is designated as green space.

Mr. Lewis explained that based on its location, the pool and old recreation center are part of the same parcel of land that includes the oval and wraps around to Little Peoples Park and the green space behind the park. Mr. Lewis continued that initially, it would involve a subdivision; however, that entire parcel is on the Township's recreational space inventory and would involve petitioning the State to allow us to transition it off, which is called a diversion. Mr. Lewis continued that a diversion generally requires the Township to offset the land with other green acres land and there is a possibility they have some diversion acres available.

Mr. Lewis added there has not been a definitive decision made on whether or not they continue with two pools or go down to one.

Mr. Klein announced he is in favor of giving up the Haines pool area for the betterment of the high school and suggested the Board help them out with funding the renovation to Northland pool in exchange for them donating the Haines pool land.

Mayor Meinhardt added they have no timeline on when a decision will be made about the pools but that it will be on their agenda to discuss beginning in January.

Mr. Cohen stated the district is open to working together to accelerate a decision on this property. It was decided this topic would be part of their monthly conversations.

The second property, the old recreation center, is part of the same parcel of land with the pool, so the situation is the same.

For the third property, Monmouth Court, Mr. Cohen stated we would like to reacquire that property back from the Township through a transfer of ownership. Currently, the district utilizes the majority of the building and ownership of the building will allow them to expand for school purposes.

Mayor Meinhardt suggested adding this as a topic of discussion at the monthly meetings.

The last property discussed is the second floor at Town Hall. Mr. Cohen explained we would like the option to explore moving our district offices into that space so we could repurpose the existing administration building.

Mr. Fernandez explained that was the intention when Town Hall was built. Mr. Lewis will assess how much space there is for us to use and provide us with architectural plans. Mr. Davison will have our architect review the space on the second floor of town hall as well as at Monmouth Court.

6. Shared Funds from PILOTs

Attorney Giacobbe explained that a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) is an incentive to encourage developers to make investments in properties that are deemed in need of development or rehabilitation. When a PILOT takes place, the funding is determined by the occupancy of units with 95% going to the municipality and 5% going to the county. The municipality can work with the school district to provide them with additional funds to offset the cost of higher enrollment. PILOTs allow the municipality and school district to work above the 2% tax levy.

Shared funds from PILOTs will be added as a topic of discussion at the monthly meetings.

7. Shared Turf Fields

Mayor Meinhardt asked for an update on the status of the turf field at the PIT.

Mr. Cohen explained the decision to reject the bids to turf the PIT was due to all the data they received on the future needs of the high school and the uncertainty about our future expansion plans. Mr. Cohen added it is the Board's hope to incorporate turfing the field into a larger facilities plan.

Mayor Meinhardt asked to keep this as a topic of discussion at the monthly meetings.

Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes

Matthew Boxer, 6 Trombley Drive, stated he doesn't understand why keeping in constant contact is difficult for the two governing bodies.

Justin Alpert, 56 Amherst Place, suggested we pick a consistent rate of growth each year so we know how much we need to develop and not constrain ourselves to the 2% tax levy, schools are the crown jewel of the community so we must plan for healthy growth, look at eminent domain of Newark Academy and have the students in the classroom work with the data to present it back to us.

Bob Gebroe, 30 Hemlock Road, Chairman of the LACD, represents students with special needs in town and requested help with a student tutoring and mentoring program. Mr. Gebroe suggested a committee be formed to help move this along.

Jean Stoloff, 18 North Drive, sent an OPRA request for information on building additions and is hoping Livingston isn't getting saddled with development that is not needed.

Rosie Bagolie, 10 Wilshire Drive, as a councilwoman-elect, is committed to working collaboratively with the Board to build a better future for our students.

Parul Khemka, 70 Elmwood Drive, asked for a ticker on the town's website so the community can be made aware of the number of units coming and their location, both at fair share and market price, suggested bringing a Unified Club to the school district, and about the cost offset in the calculation of taxes after the 30 years of a PILOT have expired.

Buddy August, 27 Knollwood Drive, asked if the new town garage will have electric charging stations.

Mr. Cohen responded that we have representation on the LACD and welcome being part of the conversation on driving solutions that help the special needs community.

Mr. Cohen responded to Mrs. Stoloff that the structure of schools is very different today and that there will be no decisions about expansion made in the absence of good data and analysis.

Mr. Giacobbe explained PILOTs are based on the number of homes sold or rented in a given unit and that Livingston won't have a problem generating PILOT funds because people generally want to move here. Mr. Giacobbe continued the benefits are that it is less expensive for a developer, people purchasing the homes pay a smaller portion and the funds go to the municipality to share with the school district. Mr. Giacobbe continued that ultimately, it will go back to an ad valorem tax after the PILOT expires. Mr. Giacobbe added that PILOTs are utilized in areas that otherwise would not be developed so there would be no tax advantage to keeping them vacant.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:10 p.m., Mrs. Chirls made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Khanna seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Davison", is written over a solid horizontal line.

Michael Davison
Board Secretary