



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION VOTING MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

Executive Session - HMS Faculty Room - 6:15 p.m.

Public Session/Hybrid Meeting - Heritage Middle School Cafeteria - 6:45 p.m.

A **Voting Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education was held on this date in the Administration Building and via Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 6:19 p.m. by Vineeta Khanna, 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, 2023 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, Vineeta Khanna (via Zoom), Parul Khemka and Jake Ferrans

Also in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Block, Thomas Lambe 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:

- legal 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. Chirls seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

At 6:58 p.m., Mrs. Khanna reconvened the public meeting. There were approximately 100 members of the public and staff watching in person and through the webinar and Facebook Live Stream.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was no public comment on agenda items.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

BUSINESS

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

3.1 Payment of Bills

Whereas, the Board Secretary has audited certain vendor claims as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:19-2 and Board Policy 6470 and presented them to the Livingston Board of Education with the recommendation they be paid, now therefore be it

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the payment of the following bills in the amounts listed and attach a complete copy of these bills to the minutes of this meeting.

Fund	Name	Amount
10, 11, 12	Operating Budget (checks 103801 - 104248; Adv 37-93)	\$12,999,579.41
20	Grants (checks 103801 - 104248)	\$ 255,221.19
40	Debt Service Fund (checks 103801 - 104248; Adv 37-93)	\$ 6,498,900.02
60	Cafeteria (checks 1511-1533; 60003-60006)	\$ 193,246.04
	TOTAL	\$ 19,946,946.66

3.2 Board Secretary Report – August 2023

Whereas, the Livingston Board of Education has received the Report of the Board Secretary for August 31, 2023, consisting of:

- 1) Interim Balance Sheets
- 2) Interim Statements Comparing Budgeted Revenue with Actual to Date and Appropriations with Expenditures and Encumbrances to Date
- 3) Schedule of Revenues - Actual Compared with Estimated
- 4) Statement of Appropriations Compared with Expenditures and encumbrances, and

Whereas, the Livingston Board of Education has received the report of the Treasurer for August 31, 2023, which report is in agreement with the Report of the Board Secretary, and

Whereas, these reports show the following balances on the date indicated:

	Cash Balance	Appropriation Balance	Fund Balance
(10) General Current Exp. Fund	\$23,414,575.09	\$126,758,051.23	\$12,416,602.49
(11) Current Expense			
(12) Capital Outlay			
(20) Special Revenue Fund	\$0.00	\$3,641,486.52	\$ (27,390.94)
(30) Capital Projects Fund	\$4,569,168.68	\$0.00	\$4,565,706.13

(40) Debt Service Fund	\$0.00	\$1,196,149.98	\$ (1,256,526.13)
Total:	\$27,983,743.77	\$131,595,687.73	\$15,698,391.55

Whereas, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:20-212(d), the Board Secretary has certified that as of August 31, 2023, no budgetary line item account has obligations and payments contractual orders which in total exceed the amount appropriated by the district board of education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8, 18A:22-8.1, now therefore be it

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education accepts the above referenced reports and certification and directs that they be made part of this resolution by reference, and be it

Further Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education certifies that, after review of the Secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of its knowledge no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C.6:20-2.13(d) and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

3.3 Board Secretary Report – September 2023

Whereas, the Livingston Board of Education has received the Report of the Board Secretary for September 30, 2023, consisting of:

- 1) Interim Balance Sheets
- 2) Interim Statements Comparing Budgeted Revenue with Actual to Date and Appropriations with Expenditures and Encumbrances to Date
- 3) Schedule of Revenues - Actual Compared with Estimated
- 4) Statement of Appropriations Compared with Expenditures and encumbrances, and

Whereas, the Livingston Board of Education has received the report of the Treasurer for September 30, 2023, which report is in agreement with the Report of the Board Secretary, and

Whereas, these reports show the following balances on the date indicated:

	Cash Balance	Appropriation Balance	Fund Balance
(10) General Current Exp. Fund	\$22,535,848.95	\$113,115,929.95	\$12,416,602.49
(11) Current Expense			
(12) Capital Outlay			
(20) Special Revenue Fund	\$0.00	\$ 3,552,430.31	\$(27,390.94)
(30) Capital Projects Fund	\$4,570,889.58	\$0.00	\$4,565,706.13
(40) Debt Service Fund	\$0.00	\$1,196,149.98	\$(1,256,526.13)
Total:	\$27,106,738.53	\$117,864,510.24	\$15,698,391.55

Whereas, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:20-212(d), the Board Secretary has certified that as of September 30, 2023, no budgetary line item account has obligations and payments contractual orders which in total exceed the amount appropriated by the district board of education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8, 18A:22-8.1, now therefore be it

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education accepts the above referenced reports and certification and directs that they be made part of this resolution by reference, and be it

Further Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education certifies that, after review of the Secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of its knowledge no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C.6:20-2.13(d) and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

3.4 Transfers

Whereas, the Superintendent of Schools recommends certain transfers among accounts in the 2023-2024 budget for August and September pursuant to Board of Education Policy 6422, now therefore be it

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education ratify transfers pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8.1 and N.J.A.C. 6:20-2A.10 as shown on **Attachment A**.

3.5 Conferences and Overnight Trips

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the conferences and overnight trips as shown on **Attachment B**.

3.6 Donations

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the donation from the Burnet Hill HSA in the amount of \$1,500.00 to be used to help pay Porchlight for the school play.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the donation of \$6,665.95 from the Livingston Municipal Alliance Committee (LMAC) to fund Mental Health First Aid Training.

Ms. Arnette seconded the motion.

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

PERSONNEL

Ms. Arnette 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
Laura Urato	ABA Discrete Trial TA	Resignation	BHE	November 30, 2023
Lisa Kindzierski	School Nurse	Resignation	LHS	January 16, 2024
Lisa Marazzo	Transportation Manager	Resignation	CO	January 29, 2024

**as amended from a previous agenda*

4.2 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
<i>Elizabeth Calenda</i>	Harrison	Elementary School Teacher	First Year Tenure Track	M. Scully	MA	12	\$85,575 (prorated)	1/23/2024
<i>Katherine Baach</i>	LHS	Nurse	NA	L. Kindzierski	NCSN	7	\$70,499 (prorated)	12/1/2023
<i>Arian Zaku</i>	B&G	Maintenance	New	NA	Maintenance	7	\$55,881 (prorated)	11/14/2023
<i>Ethan Layton</i>	MPE	Playground Aide	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$18/hr	11/27/2023

4.3 New Position

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the addition of a full time, tenure track, teaching position at Livingston High School effective January 2, 2024. For the balance of the 2023-2024 school year and the 2024-2025 school year, the positions will be allocated to the math department. The PTR for the position will be 1901-050-MATH712-024.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

MISCELLANEOUS

Mrs. Chirls 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 - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Khanna
Abstain - Ms. Arnette
Nays - None

Superintendent's Report

1. Equity Audit Presentation

Dr. Shelley Zion, from a2z equity coaching, provided a presentation with highlights of the equity audit. She began with their charge, which was to get a comprehensive global view of how the work the district has engaged in over the past few years is paying off or where there are gaps. Dr. Zion then reviewed their process in obtaining the information, furnished points of clarification and provided takeaways. Dr. Zion also explained they were remiss in that they did not differentiate the experience and concerns of parents of special education students and that she

will go back to review that data and submit an addendum to the report. Dr. Zion expects to get the addendum on special education students to the district within the next two weeks. Tonight's full presentation is available on our website.

Board of Education Questions

In response to Mrs. Khemka's questions, Dr. Zion stated that the affinity groups did not specifically include those in subset classrooms or out of district students. Dr. Zion also stated that reviewing the HIB reports was not included as part of the audit.

Mrs. Khemka asked if the total percentage of school responses could be added to the report.

Mrs. Chirls asked what method Dr. Zion has found to be particularly effective to provide clarity in a multi-tiered support system and she responded that their first recommendation is to have a clear action plan and very clear goals for the district. Districts that have the least number of goals tend to have a better job of communicating them as they are easier to clearly articulate. If there is too much information for anyone to make sense out of, they tend to take out the pieces that directly impact them which leads to those inconsistencies.

Mr. Ferrans asked Dr. Zion her opinion on why there was a disproportionate number of males involved in the study.

Mr. Cohen asked if Dr. Zion would be open to editing the report to change the *theory of action*, noted on page 5 of the report as well as in the presentation, from a visual to an overarching strategic action that needs to be undertaken.

Mrs. Chirls asked for recommendations on addressing the challenges of anti-semitism as they are happening, consistently amongst buildings and taking into account the lived experiences of students and staff.

Dr. Zion responded the end goal is to have all of the adults in the district be comfortable having those conversations; however, it does take time to build a common framework, understanding and comfort level. In the interim, she suggested having a few teachers or counselors who are already good with and comfortable at holding those types of conversations in each building as the "go to" people, who could make a space available where students can show up and be supported.

Ms. Arnette asked as we continue this process, should we be turning people away who want to be part of it and Dr. Zion responded she always feels including more people is better.

Mr. Cohen asked about successfully balancing the right of professional development on equity without losing the professional development on necessary teaching skills and Dr. Zion responded that diversity and equity should not be a separate conversation but should be integrated into the other training when possible.

When discussing how fear of retaliation was mentioned in the report but that no one provided Dr. Zion with any concrete examples, she announced that anyone who wants to reach out to her in confidence is welcome to do so through her email.

Public Participation on Equity Audit

Some members of the public provided Dr. Zion with questions and statements written on index cards that are briefly summarized below:

- Q. Where can we find ideas on how to get started and what is everybody doing in different groups?
- A. She can share information about what other districts have done with the equity committee.
- Q. How can we evaluate if we are progressing in the right direction?
- A. Through the development of an evaluation plan.
- Q. What percentage of interviews were self-selected vs. randomly selected?
- A. They were all self-selected because people either volunteered or were invited and recruited. There was no random selection.
- Q. How strongly does a role to selection bias play in your data?
- A. She suggested we look back at the first slide of the presentation to see who volunteered to come speak with us and have conversations.
- Q. How can the district use DEI work to address the disparity in educational outcomes by race and by economic disadvantage?
- A. She needed more information to address this question.
- Q. Did any of the survey data cite the lack of a vice principals as a contributing factor for student misbehavior.
- A. She did not recall seeing anything in the student open comments citing the lack of a vice principal as a contributing factor. She said students mostly talked about how they were mean to each other.
- Q. Why was certain grade level data grouped together and not grouped by school building?
- A. Surveys are different by grade level for readability. The survey was designed by age and reading level. They did not do a building by building analysis.
- Q. A few cards stated they attended multiple focus groups but that the data was not captured in the report and how can they be sure these will be addressed in the addendum.
- A. The assurance is that she made a commitment tonight to go back and review the information and provide an addendum to the report within the next couple of weeks.
- Q. How to handle a parent's fear of retaliation when advocating for a child.
- A. It appears that there is a perceived threat of retaliation but she was not provided with any concrete examples. She is open to receiving emails with this additional information.
- Q. Why were no HIB reports, special education referrals or exit interviews part of this report?
- A. This was not a compliance audit so none of those are in the scope of work of this report.
- Q. Did the report mention the district needs to do more social justice education and if so, why?

A. Social justice education is one of the mechanisms to get to the challenge issued at the beginning of the presentation that asked, "how do you be the kind of district where all of the young people are leaders in a global 21st century world, everybody can be their full selves and you lean into the hard conversations about the challenges that are facing us."

Q. How do you hold teachers accountable in voicing their opinions on certain current events at the moment?

A. The goal is to create a space where we can be engaged in difficult conversations and share divergent opinions while being respectful of who people are and how they show up. If we have this, which she doesn't believe we do, then you have an accountability structure in place.

Q. Should we have anti-semitism training?

A. She advocates for having the hard conversations/training/dialogues about all of the ways that we divide and be hateful towards each other so that we can learn critical consciousness and self-reflection.

Dr. Zion read statements that guidance administration does not support scheduling changes even if they align with redefined higher level goals determined by students. Students mistrust the same adult who is supposed to be their advocate. Students are concerned it will impact guidance college recommendations.

Dr. Zion continued if you were present for a focus group and didn't feel that something discussed was represented in the report, let her know via her email and she will take another look at the information.

Dr. Zion finished reviewing the questions and statements provided to her and Mrs. Khanna opened the floor to other public comments.

Marin Harris asked that the district consider adding more levels of high school classes to the curriculum so that there is a just right option for every student.

Mrs. Harris also expressed she did not feel the work of the HSA/PTA's and PT-Council was accurate in explaining the work they are doing with DEI and that notable changes have been made in the past several years and they are further along in the continuum than the report leads one to believe.

Libby Barak urged the district to review the data/numbers, not just the subjective perception of the audit report, asked why there was nothing in the report about anti-semitism and would like to see the information on how many students have IEPs in the district and are included in extracurricular activities.

Richard Tepper stated retaliation is real and people in positions of power use intimidation when parents try to provide their viewpoints. Mr. Tepper asked Dr. Block to let teachers and case managers know that they can speak in an open and confidential manner with Dr. Zion about their experiences.

Mr. Tepper continued that for years, out of district students did not receive the same emails as in district students and were not invited to take high school photos, invited to the prom or graduation.

Suzanne Steckert requested the questions submitted by the audience and their responses be submitted into public record since it was difficult to hear them, asked to see a breakdown of the data from the two middle schools and asked if there are plans for the administration to reinstate an Assistant Principal position at MPMS.

Cindy Goldstein asked that we make sure we are addressing the anti-semitism issue with both students and parents.

Nina Vespani stated she attended four focus groups and things that were said are not part of this report.

Melissa Gorvitz asked how we can create a safe space where people feel comfortable to share their experiences to eliminate this fear of retaliation.

Michelle Amin asked why there has been no push to discuss the current events that are happening right now in our history classes or relevant curriculum and suggested bringing in a specialist to handle those discussions if our teachers are not adequately prepared to do so.

Jane Kizner expressed that the Jewish community is worried about the use of derogatory and improperly used terminology and asked the school to address the definition of these terms in the curriculum.

Paul Boxer expressed it is a problematic omission that they couldn't include HIB reports as a lot of serious harassment problems were discussed in the focus groups. Mr. Boxer added he hopes that going forward, when changes are meant to be implemented we will bring in other teams rather than using the same ones that have not been effective in the past.

Sarah Aronow expressed her disappointment that her out of district special education group was not represented in the report and feels there is still a lot of work to be done.

Ari Gourvitz stated the report left off a lot of complaints that were raised by special education parents at the elementary schools.

Starr Preston asked why HIB and identification recommendations were not in the scope of the report; was it because a2z cannot perform this part or were not asked to perform this work? Ms. Preston asked what our next steps will be and if a2z is an option to coach us through them.

Michelle Lemieux asked about fixing the areas where students cross at a crosswalk at Burnet Hill. She would like to see yellow lines drawn in the area and potholes filled in.

Mrs. Khanna left the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Dr. Block explained he will share any feedback about the audit provided during this portion of public comment with Dr. Zion, that we always look at the rigor of our classes at the high school level, that we do exit interviews to find out why people leave the district, that we have made strides with the updating of our communication systems to include our out of district students, that we will continue to review our administrative staff, including the Assistant Principal position

at MPMS, that he will inquire about fixing the crosswalk at Burnet Hill and that staff members and the community are welcome to contact Dr. Zion any time via her email.

Going forward, Dr. Block has plans to set up meetings to go through the audit with the Board, equity teams and administration and will be putting together a deliberative process to set up a path to address the issues. Dr. Block is setting a February deadline to come up with some concrete action steps.

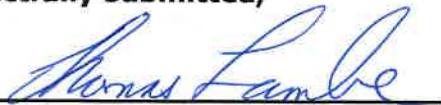
ADJOURNMENT

At 9:30 p.m., Ms. Arnette made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas J. Lambe
Board Secretary