



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

Monday, November 11, 2024
357 S. Livingston Avenue - 7:00 p.m.

A **Five-on-Five Meeting** of the Livingston Township Council and the Livingston Board of Education was held on this date at 357 S. Livingston Avenue and via a Facebook Livestream. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by the Mayor, Alfred Anthony, who announced in accordance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Law, P.L. 1975, C. 231, adequate notice of a joint Meeting with the Livingston Township Council and Livingston Board of Education on Monday, November 11, 2024 at 7:00 pm at Town Hall, 357 S Livingston Ave., Livingston, New Jersey has been provided. Specifically, the 48-Hour Notice was emailed to the West Essex Tribune, the TAPinto Livingston, and Star Ledger on Tuesday, November 5, 2024. Mayor Anthony also 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.

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

LBOE Members: President Pamela Chirls, Vice President Jenissa Arnette, Seth Cohen, Fang Gong and Parul Khemka

Also in Attendance:

From the Township: Barry Lewis Jr., Russ Jones, Attorney Jarriid Kantor, and Carolyn Mazzucco

From LPS: Dr. Daniel Fishbein, Jessica Rapp, Attorney Matthew Giacobbe, and Joann Goldberg

Workshop Items

1. Update on Development Projects

Mr. Lewis explained he continues to try his best to mitigate the impact on the community and schools while also trying to meet the township's affordable housing obligation. There are three areas currently under construction from the third round of the settlement, which include the area by Okner Parkway, the corner of Northfield and South Livingston Avenue, and behind the Ambulatory Center. Mr. Lewis is working closely with the planner and attorney on what they are required to build under the fourth round of the settlement. They are trying their best to keep to one and two bedroom units although the township has no discretion on affordable housing units and some of them must include two and three bedroom units.

Mrs. Khemka asked how many units are left in the third round of the settlement and how many credits are expected to go into the fourth round.

Mr. Lewis didn't have exact numbers but said they will try to maximize the credits they can get. They recently approved special needs housing and will make maximum use of building 55 and over communities to help control the number of kids coming out of the units in the fourth round. Legally, those in a 55 year old and over community are not allowed to have anyone under 18 years old living with them.

Mrs. Chirls asked about timing over a ten year period and Mr. Lewis explained his spreadsheet is a best estimate since some of the developments listed may never get built and some have zoning in place but haven't yet come to the planning board.

2. Update on School Enrollment

Dr. Fishbein provided enrollment updates. At the end of June 2024, we had 6,473 students. In mid September of 2024, we decreased to 6,339 due to a smaller incoming kindergarten class and in mid October, we increased to 6,368. It is difficult to predict from one data point if lower kindergarten enrollment will be a trend. It is also difficult to predict if the decrease is due to less housing stock turning over and whether or not that will continue into the future. Dr. Fishbein will look at our enrollment at the end of June 2025 to see how many students came into the district throughout the school year. In the interim, the board will engage a demographer to perform a study on current housing trends and enrollment.

Attorney Kantor added that school enrollment is not a criteria to limit affordable housing.

3. Update on Process for Establishing a Long Range Facilities Plan

Dr. Fishbein explained that a Long Range Facilities Planning Committee met multiple times throughout last year to review building capacities and enrollment. The committee came up with a number of different options. He is beginning to go through the options to pare down what is not viable and to see which are able to fulfill the space and educational needs of all the students. Now that Dr. Fishbein has received the plans for high density housing, he will share those with the demographer, who, in turn, will get in touch with the Town Manager.

Dr. Fishbein continued that once they decide on a plan of action, he will share it with the Long Range Facilities Planning Committee and the community. It is his plan to have a final facility referendum within two years, which consists of a presentation to the community and a vote. If it passes, it could then take three to four years for a referendum to come to fruition, if there are no roadblocks along the way. Detailed drawings have to be completed, we would go through the bidding process and then construction.

4. Update on Transfer of Monmouth Court

Mr. Lewis is working to find alternative sites for the recreation programs that are currently in the building.

Mr. Lewis has been working through the appropriate NJDEP Green Acres channels to subdivide the Monmouth Court building and parking lot without having to go through a diversion. The two baseball fields will remain on the ROSI list. The Township completed a survey and field work, and they expect a final map within the next week, which they can send over to NJDEP Green Acres so they can amend the Township's ROSI. Mrs. Chirls asked if the Township anticipates any obstacles on the transfer of the Monmouth Court Campus building. Mr. Lewis indicated there are no legal obstacles, and after review by the Planning Board and approval by the Town Council, it can be conveyed back to the Board of Education.

Mr. Klein expressed that the Board of Education doesn't need to own the building to have full use of it.

Mr. Cohen asked whether it would be fair to assume the timing of the transfer for the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. Lewis indicated yes, there are no obstacles to the conveyance by July 1, before the start of the school year. If modifications are required, the ownership matters for the District's LRFP and any work on the first floor by the District after conveyance.

5. Update on LPS Bus Depot

Dr. Fishbein explained that a number of years ago the district had plans drawn up to park all of the district's bus fleet in one location behind the Central Office building. These plans were not realized and he is reconsidering the use of the property for this purpose. Having the bus fleet in one centralized location is more secure. Our buses are currently parked in three locations around town. Dr. Fishbein asked the Township if they would be open to creating a road out through the community center parking lot so all of the buses would not have to come onto Foxcroft and through the surrounding neighborhood. Mr. Cohen added he would appreciate any cooperation the Township could provide in exploring connectivity through the community center.

Mr. Bhuptani suggested parking the buses in secure lots outside of town.

6. Update on Crosswalk and Sidewalk Grants for Safety

Mr. Lewis explained that he has applied for and awarded almost \$800,000 in a Safe Routes to Schools Grant, which is being used to replace sidewalks in a section of town. The goal is to have a plan completed and approved by the end of the year with construction to commence next summer. After this round is complete, Mr. Lewis can apply for another grant and if received, use those funds to replace sidewalks in another key section of town.

Mr. Lewis also submitted for a grant under the Safe Street for All program. This involved a comprehensive analysis of the entire town and includes pedestrian and bicycle safety. He is awaiting an announcement about the award.

The intersection at Wynnewood and Northfield was brought up and Mr. Lewis explained they have a police officer and crossing guards at the crosswalk to help kids cross the street. Mrs. Khemka suggested reaching out to the county engineer to see if they could come out and look into the area and that perhaps both the Township and Board of Education could pass a non-binding resolution explaining that this area is a problem.

Mayor Anthony announced that the issue brought up at the last Five-on-Five in March about the safety of kids around Harrison School has been resolved through the cooperation and efforts of the Pedestrian Safety Ad Hoc Meeting. He thanked everyone in the group for working together to find solutions. New, more visible signage, painted lines and education from police presence has greatly improved the safety in this area.

7. Update on Parking Option at LHS

(Note: For staff, with possible ordinance on the township's agenda)

Dr. Fishbein asked if the Town Council could create an ordinance to change the designation of about 20 parking spots as reserved for staff at the high school. These are current parking spots; the district is not asking for additional spots.

Mr. Klein suggested looking at the Master Plan for Memorial Park as a possible way to help with the parking problem around the high school.

Public Comment

Rob Stecklow, represents his neighborhood against adding the bus parking lot behind the Central Office. Mr. Stecklow reviewed prior notes about bus parking discussions over the years and asked for assurance that no buses would stay in the Heritage parking lot.

Justin Alpert, stated that the community needs to plan for a healthy rate of growth, Two-on-Two Meetings do not engage the public so there should be less of them and that the warehouse district should be for the benefit of the community and would be a good place to park our buses.

Boris Grushin, asked why modular units were put at Burnet Hill, if we have a class size policy, what number over a class size activates the soft border policy, if school capacities can be found online, if there is information about the Long Range Facilities Planning Committee and how it functions online, the timeframe for building out, where he can he find a list of high density developments not yet approved and already under construction and if there is an option to secure the buses in the three locations where they are currently parked.

Lisa Tokuda, asked for clarification on how many kids are projected to come into the school district over ten years from the current building in town. Ms. Tokuda also asked if we are panicked that it will take so many years before students would actually benefit from building through a referendum.

Elliot Lovi, suggested changing Policy 2430 which does not allow students who reside in the district and are not enrolled in the school district to participate in co-curricular activities.

Dennis Hines, Bennington Road, asked if we have looked at purchasing electric buses and how we will address the dangerous, aggressive and reckless driving of students through his neighborhood. These students are coming and going from the high school.

Deputy Mayor Meinhardt thanked all of the high school students who participated in working at the election booths and to Carolyn Mazzucco and her staff for all their hard work last Tuesday.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:36 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Jessica Rapp
Board Secretary, LBOE