



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES

March 11, 2025

Executive Session - Administration Building - 6:45 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 6:45 p.m. by Seth Cohen, 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 2, 2025 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: Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Fang Gong, Parul Khemka and Inna Yelisevich

Member Absent: Darcy Bialick

Also in Attendance: Dr. Daniel Fishbein, Jessica Rapp, Mark Stern, Susan Burman and Joann Goldberg

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:

- student matters and personnel

Action may be taken upon return to the public session. The full length of the meeting is anticipated to be approximately 15 minutes; and be it

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

Mrs. Gong seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

At 7:00 p.m., Mr. Cohen reconvened the public meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Budget Presentation

Dr. Fishbein explained that next Tuesday, the Board will be asked to approve our preliminary budget. The final budget is scheduled to be approved on April 29.

Dr. Fishbein began the presentation by explaining the 2025-2026 budget maintains all programs and staffing currently in place, covers all of our contractual agreements, continues to support our technology upgrades and curriculum initiatives and includes a decrease in debt service tax levy.

Dr. Fishbein explained the challenge with the budget is fitting everything within the 2% tax levy cap while expenses such as utilities, transportation and tuition costs continue to increase.

In order to balance the budget, Dr. Fishbein reviewed the following items the district plans to implement. These include expanding the Integrated Preschool Program by opening up two additional sections at Burnet Hill to accommodate everyone who signs up this coming school year, by adding activity fees at the middle and high school, by increasing our subscription bussing rate and by using banked cap and a health care adjustment waiver. Activity fees are one per student per year regardless of the number of activities in which the student participates.

Dr. Fishbein continued that this budget maintains all the levels of support in the continuum of services offered through Special Services.

Mr. Stern explained this budget continues the initiatives and curriculum writing cycles. Mr. Stern also reviewed the new and revised high school courses being offered and how we plan to continue with our professional development work.

Mr. Stern continued that the technology budget will maintain the existing services and programs and is focused on infrastructure and security that will continue to enhance instruction and administrative functions.

Dr. Fishbein reviewed security improvements and the facilities capital budget.

Mrs. Rapp reviewed our State Aid, explaining it decreased by \$294,816. Mrs. Rapp also provided a revenue history of our general fund, provided a five year look back to show the growth of the tax levy relative to the budget, explained how the monies are appropriated and also how the district will continue to provide programs not mandated by the NJ DOE in this budget.

Mrs. Rapp continued that a balanced tentative 2025-2026 budget will be presented on the March 18, 2025 agenda which will include \$1,353,073 of a health care waiver adjustment, \$842,473 of banked cap, which expires this year if we don't use it, an operating tax levy of 3.55% and a decrease in debt service tax levy of 0.78%. The tax increase to an average home is expected to be \$305.

The complete presentation is available on our website.

Mrs. Khemka asked what our options will be for future budget years as the tax levy gap continues to grow and Dr. Fishbein responded it will be tighter next year and we will take the coming year to look at options going forward. If we don't find other revenue streams, we will need to make cuts.

Mrs. Chirls asked, given the increase in population, how do we anticipate what cuts will look like while trying to keep class sizes within guidelines.

Dr. Fishbein explained that the district would receive a bump in State aid when our enrollment increases. Enrollment figures are captured for the state funding formula on October 15 of each year. We have no control over the October 15 deadline.

Mrs. Chirls asked if the additional sections of PreK will remain in the same location given our space challenges and Dr. Fishbein responded they will be held at Burnet Hill. When asked if there are facility related costs, Dr. Fishbein responded we will be taking down a wall and putting another one up but that work will be done internally.

Mrs. Chirls asked if we anticipate having only one college counselor and if we will be increasing any counseling support. Dr. Fishbein responded yes, one college counselor and that we had an outsourced SAC and behaviourist that we plan to replace with full time employees. We would eliminate the contracted service. The district currently has two full time and one contracted behaviourist on staff.

Dr. Fishbein confirmed the equity groups will continue to operate as stipend positions.

Mr. Cohen asked if taking over ownership and the running operation of the Monmouth Court Campus had been included in our budget numbers and Mrs. Rapp responded yes. Dr. Fishbein added if we gain ownership before the summer we might incur some capital costs.

Mr. Cohen asked about the categorical special aid reduction. Dr. Fishbein explained that it was the state average of the number of students on IEP and this time it has been paid out based on the actual number of students on IEP at LPS.

Mrs. Gong asked what the district can do to generate more revenues and Dr. Fishbein responded that we will be working and looking at different options throughout the next year knowing that we will have a tighter budget going into the 2026-2027 school year.

Mr. Cohen confirmed that the student activity fees will cover bringing back the middle school sports program to HMS from the YMCA. Dr. Fishbein confirmed that the coaching salaries will be covered by these fees. He explained that we provide the transportation and pay administrative fees. Mrs Chirls confirmed that the activities fee is for the high school and Heritage.

Mr. Cohen suggested looking at grants to help with security improvements. Mrs. Rapp assured us that she is always looking at grants.

Board Reports

Mr. Cohen read the following Resolution 3.10, that the Board passed at the February 25, 2025 meeting. The resolution has been sent to our elected leaders and he hopes that other districts follow in our lead to advocate for all students.

3.10 A Resolution Requesting the State to Make Adjustments to School Funding to Address Budget Constraints for the Current Fiscal Year and Beyond

WHEREAS, Livingston Public Schools has worked diligently to provide high-quality education to all students despite ongoing fiscal challenges; and

WHEREAS, Livingston Public Schools is facing significant budget constraints for the current fiscal year, with projections indicating continued budgetary pressures in the years ahead; and

WHEREAS, the current allocation of state funding does not fully address the increasing costs of educational services, including but not limited to instructional staff, resources, facilities maintenance, technology, and transportation; and

WHEREAS, the financial difficulties faced by Livingston Public Schools have resulted in difficult decisions regarding educational programming, class sizes, and professional staffing, which may have an adverse impact on the overall quality of education and student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the school district's ability to fulfill its mission to ensure a high-quality education for all students is directly affected by these budget limitations, and the current fiscal landscape presents substantial challenges in meeting the range of student needs; and

WHEREAS, Livingston Public Schools has explored all available internal options to reduce expenses without compromising student services, and yet, the fiscal challenges remain significant; and

WHEREAS, Livingston Public Schools recognizes the need to advocate for equitable funding solutions and long-term financial stability for its educational system. It also believes that the state must understand and address the realities of rising costs and decreased resources facing local school districts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of Livingston Public Schools that the Board formally appeals to the State of New Jersey, urging the following:

1. The state recognizes and adjusts the current funding formulas to reflect the increasing budgetary pressures and constraints facing Livingston Public Schools and districts across the state.
2. The state works with local districts to develop a more equitable and sustainable long-term funding model that can address both short-term budget needs and long-term educational goals.
3. The state considers providing additional funding support for districts experiencing significant financial challenges due to rising operational costs, inflationary pressures in education-related expenses, and professional staff shortages.
4. The state offers flexibility and additional support to districts that are actively working to optimize resources and adjust to financial constraints without sacrificing the quality of educational services.
5. The state permits all districts to increase its local tax levy from 2% to 4%.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Livingston Public Schools will continue to work closely with state officials, state legislators, and educational organizations to advocate for funding solutions that ensure all students have access to the education they need so we can advance the achievement of all students, regardless of ongoing fiscal challenges.

Mrs. Gong participated in Read Across America at Burnet Hill, Collins and Riker Hill Schools.

Mrs. Chirls stated she appreciated all of the staff involved in bringing the Read Across America Program to our schools.

Student Representative's Report

There was no report.

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Public Comment

Ciara Allen, team leader of APEX Leadership Company, provided information on how her company provides leadership and fundraising opportunities to elementary and middle schools. Ms. Allen explained there is no cost to the district and they receive 50% of all the money they earn.

Maria Loji, asked how activities fees will be allocated and if this eliminates other fees students are already being asked to pay for in their clubs. Mrs. Loji mentioned she currently pays dues to the theater club.

Danielle Santola, TAPintoLivingston, asked for any comments on ticket sales for the musical, opening up the dress rehearsal to the community and the fencing and chess teams for her to highlight in TAP.

Dr. Fishbein responded that the girls fencing team won the State championship and there is information about the chess team in Spotlight.

David Lipsic, explained that last year there was talk about the district undergoing a security audit and asked if there is anything about doing so in this year's budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

BUSINESS

Mrs. Khemka moved the following:

3.1 Law Enforcement Units for the Public Schools of Livingston Township for the 2024/2025 School Year

Whereas, the safety and security of the students, staff, and visitors of the Livingston Public Schools is a primary concern; and

Whereas, the staff and faculty of the Livingston Public Schools' Administration must communicate specific information to law enforcement; and

Whereas, law enforcement agencies require specific information to maintain public safety; and

Whereas, the Livingston Board of Education must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); and

Whereas, to comply with FERPA while working with law enforcement and in accordance with Section 2.4 of the Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement Officials, the Superintendent of Schools established a Law Enforcement Unit within the District.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved: that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Livingston Board of Education confirms the revised Law Enforcement Unit list, consisting of the following members for the 2024/2025 school year:

- Superintendent of Schools
- Assistant Superintendents of Schools
- School Security Specialist
- Director of Technology

- Manager of Technology
- Network Administrator
- Systems Administrator
- Principals
- Assistant Principals

3.2 Technology Purchases

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following technology purchases:

Name of Product	Vendor	Amount	CO-OP#
Panic Buttons	Core BTS	\$28,405.41	NASPO ValuePoint State of New Jersey
Strobe Lights	Core BTS	\$117,039.00	NASPO ValuePoint State of New Jersey

3.3 Emergency Reserve Withdrawal

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves that the general fund appropriations include a \$145,444.41 withdrawal from the Emergency Reserve Account for panic buttons and strobe lights to improve school security in the district.

3.4 Bylaws, Policies and Regulations

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves **Bylaw #0155** for second reading and adoption. This Bylaw was mistakenly labeled as Regulation #0155 on the February 25, 2025 agenda.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Dr. Fishbeing explained Resolution 3.1 is an MOA that structures the way the schools, the police department and the prosecutor's office communicate.

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

PERSONNEL

Mrs. Chirls 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
<i>Marlene Zulauf</i>	Bus Driver - 25 hours	Retirement	CO	June 30, 2025
<i>Melissa Muirhead</i>	Teacher of Biology	Resignation	LHS	June 30, 2025
<i>Eileen Villar</i>	Benefits/ Payroll Assistant	Resignation	CO	April 25, 2025, or earlier if a replacement can be found

<i>Lisa Gudd</i>	Accounts Payable Coordinator	Resignation	CO	April 25, 2025
<i>Martine Ives</i>	Instructional Aide	Resignation	RHE	April 11, 2025

**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>Nathalie Ricot*</i>	HMS	Teacher of French	11/4/2024-1/24/2025**	NA	1/25/2025-6/30/2025	8/25/2025
<i>Claudia Netti*</i>	HMS	Teacher of Spanish	2/19/2025-3/10/2025**	NA	NA	3/11/2025

**as amended from a previous agenda*

***Designates time counted toward NJFLA/FMLA*

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
<i>Paul Levitan</i>	District	Supervisor of ELA (Pre-K-6)	First Year Tenure Track	L. Baxter	LSA	1	\$125,054, plus \$1,500 for 2 MA degrees	7/1/2025
<i>Rene Metzgar</i>	CO	Treasurer of School Monies	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$5,500	3/10/2025
<i>Marisa Ehrmann</i>	LHS	Teacher of Health & PE	First Year Tenure Track	D. Jones	BA	1	\$55,390 (prorated)	2/25/2025
<i>Axel Marrero</i>	HMS	Teacher of Spanish	Leave Replacement	C. Netti	BA	3	\$57,090 (prorated)	3/3/2025
<i>Julia Greenberg</i>	MPMS	Teacher of Art	Leave Replacement	A. Pefanis	BA	1	\$55,390 (prorated)	4/1/2025-6/30/2025
<i>Jenna Puleio*</i>	Collins	Elementary School Teacher	Leave Replacement	J. D'Annunzio	BA	1	\$55,390 (prorated)	3/10/2025
<i>Heather Hodsdon</i>	HMS	Teacher of French	Leave Replacement	N. Ricot	2MA	1	\$68,990 (prorated)	3/10/2025
<i>Jake Furbeck</i>	CO	IT Support Specialist	NA	O. Lytvyn	NA	NA	\$55,000** (prorated)	4/22/2025

**as amended from a previous agenda*

***salary/step will remain the same for the 2025-26 SY*

4.4 Long Term Substitute

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:

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Name	Location	Title	Leave Replacement or Long Term Sub	Replacing	Salary	Effective Date
Marisa Ehrmann	LHS	Teacher of Health & PE	Long-Term Sub	D. Jones	\$277/day	2/1/2025-2/24/2025

**amended from previous agenda*

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

4.5 Job Descriptions

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following job descriptions:

Accounts Payable Coordinator
Benefits Coordinator/Payroll Assistant

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Mrs. Burman thanked Ms. Zulauf for her years of service.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Cohen thanked Ms. Zulauf for her years of service and looks forward to celebrating all of the retirees at the retirement ceremony held later this year.

The Board welcomed Mr. Levitan.

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

MISCELLANEOUS

Mrs. Khemka 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, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Yelisevich, Mr. Cohen
Nays - None

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:06 p.m., Mrs. Khemka made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

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Respectfully submitted,



Jessica Rapp
Board Secretary

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