



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 9, 2020

Executive Session - Virtual Meeting Via Zoom - 6:30 p.m.

Public Session - Virtual Meeting Via Zoom and Facebook Live – 7:00 p.m.

A **Workshop/Voting Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education was held on this date via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by the Board President, Ronnie Konner, who announced that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by amendment to notice approved at the Board's reorganization meeting on January 7, 2020 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:

- Student Matter, Personnel and Negotiations

Action may be taken upon return to 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.

Ms. Messer seconded the motion.

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

At 7:03 p.m., Mrs. Konner reconvened the public session.

Members Present: Charles "Buddy" August, Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Ronnie Konner, Samantha Messer and Aditya Desai

Also in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Block, Steven Robinson, Lisa Capone-Steiger, Susan Burman, Lisa Marazzo, Fire Chief Christopher Mullin and Joann Goldberg

There were approximately 115 members of the public and staff watching remotely through the webinar and via a Facebook Live Stream.

Mr. Aditya Desai led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Konner asked for a moment of silence for David Shomakia, a student, Patricia Tetta, a long time substitute, as well as those who have lost their lives to COVID-19.

Community Partnership - Bus and Van Donation

As part of our community partnership with the Livingston Fire Department, Dr. Block and Mr. Robinson announced the donation of one school bus and one van to the department for use with extrication training.

Workshop Items

Mrs. Konner congratulated Vineeta Khanna on winning the open board seat and thanked Janissa Arnette, Bridgette Nevola and James Calderon for participating in the election.

Board Goals

The board reviewed their four goals for the next year. The goals came from input provided to the board in their self-evaluation.

Mrs. Chirls explained the first goal is to launch a new Strategic Plan in 2021 by supporting the LPS in its efforts in its search for a consultant. A committee will be made up of diverse public and district stakeholders who will help identify the core values of our schools starting with Profile of a Graduate. Regular updates on the Strategic Plan will be provided to the community at board meetings.

The board discussed what the timeline might be for finalizing a contract with a consultant and Dr. Block responded the end of January would be a good goal for securing one and having a general plan to move forward.

Mr. August explained the second goal, which is Professional Development for the board members. Mr. August continued this includes scheduling a retreat to establish business norms and practices for all members. The group discussed hiring other experts, in addition to NJSBA, to conduct the different areas of professional development.

Ms. Messer explained the third goal, which is Governance, which includes improving the Board's collaboration in order to facilitate timely and efficient decision making. Part of this goal is the board's scheduling time to determine whether or not to add a public question to the November ballot to increase the size of the board. Ms. Messer explained starting the process in January of 2021 will provide the board with enough time to identify the problem they are seeking to solve, identify and engage the appropriate stakeholders, deliberate and make their decision by May.

Also included in this goal is to introduce timed agendas with clear protocols for both public meetings and executive sessions that include identifying the purpose of the meeting, information sharing, input gathering and decision making.

Mrs. Chirls suggested holding a public forum prior to a board meeting as a way to gather input.

Mr. Cohen agreed that providing a separate opportunity for gathering feedback allows the board meeting to become an arena for the board to use that feedback, ask their own questions and to make decisions.

Ms. Messer suggested we try to have more detailed agendas that identify what needs to be determined and with a timestamp prior to the start of a meeting in an effort for the board to be more disciplined in their decision making.

Dr. Block stated he has had experience with timed agendas in the past and will support the board if they choose to move in this direction.

Mr. Cohen explained the fourth goal, which is Communication. Mr. Cohen continued the goal is to improve communication and transparency between the Board and the public to ensure the community views the Board as an effective representative and governing body. This goal is to increase transparency and reduce complexity by being as clear as they can be and by having discussions about board business when they are all together at the table.

Mrs. Konner suggested finding a way to get input from the public on topics they are discussing at the table.

Mrs. Chirls suggested considering the items the board would like to address when they set the calendar for next year.

Ms. Messer and Mr. Cohen requested board meeting minutes be approved more often so they can be posted as close as possible to the recent meeting.

The board members will edit and refine some points in the presentation prior to its being voted upon and posted on the website.

Superintendent's Report

Opening of Schools

Dr. Block thanked the four candidates for running for the board and looks forward to working with the new board member in January.

Dr. Block reviewed our COVID-19 communications protocols, explaining every time a case is identified, we go through contact tracing, work closely with our health department and follow the Department of Health and CDC guidelines. Dr. Block added our ability to keep schools open relies on people doing the right thing when outside of school. Unfortunately, due to some events held outside of school that created a number of positive COVID cases, we had to close the high close for in person learning. Dr. Block continued despite the rise in cases in the community, the schools themselves have not been a cause for spread. When in person, we continue having everyone fill out a daily COVID tracker form, take temperatures, enforce our mask wearing policy and socially distance. Dr. Block added we are also working on putting a case tracker on our website.

Mrs. Chirls asked if substitutes are aware of the protocols for mask wearing and what parents should do if they have concerns that staff are not following protocols. Dr. Block responded that parents should notify him and we will address the situation right away. Dr. Block added that substitutes go through training and are aware of protocols.

Mr. Cohen suggested we contact the Township about putting out a message to the public that everyone's behavior matters towards keeping our schools open and everyone safe and healthy.

Mrs. Konner suggested also utilizing the TV Studio to get some public service announcements out to the community.

Mr. Desai asked if there are other benchmarks that need to be met besides the 14 day quarantine period currently in place at the high school in order for schools to reopen.

Dr. Block responded that there could be other factors, including an increase in community spread, that intervene that could prevent us from reopening the high school on November 17 but we don't see any of those right now.

Ms. Messer asked what our rationale was for closing the high school if everyone is wearing masks and following the six foot social distancing rule.

Dr. Block responded the six foot distance and mask wearing serves the purpose of slowing and preventing the spread; however, the Department of Health recommends time spent together in an indoor space does mandate quarantining the entire cohort when there is a spread within that cohort and we are following their guidelines. Dr. Block continued following these guidelines has helped us not having any spread within our buildings.

Board Reports

Mr. Cohen explained a number of board members attended the virtual NJSBA annual meeting and that there were some great presentations about how to use COVID as an opportunity to focus on the future. Mr. Cohen suggested we look at the idea of eSports teams to give our kids an opportunity to be on a team in a different way than being on an athletic field.

Mrs. Konner agreed there were many worthwhile programs that are available for a year if anyone wanted to go back and review some.

Mrs. Konner explained that she and Dr. Block sat in on an interview about the School Leader Award that will be featured in an upcoming magazine.

Mrs. Konner added the Garden State Coalition of Schools posted the program on social emotional learning presented by Dr. Maurice Elias.

Mrs. Konner announced that the NJSBA meeting on November 18 has been changed to 9 a.m. from 3:30 p.m. and will feature CJ Price and a discussion on recruitment for diverse educators.

Public Input on Agenda Items ~ up to 15 minutes

Michele Cohen, 15 Woodland Terrace, asked about inaccurate updates about missing student assignments posted on Schoology.

Dr. Block responded he will check to see what is happening.

Alyse Heilpern, 4 Highland Drive, asked if there has been any consideration of having a 2 on 2 or 5 on 5 with the Township to discuss spreading a joint message about COVID cases.

Mrs. Konner explained we had a 2 on 2 and discussed joint messaging but it is certainly something we can revisit.

Cindy Goldstein, 24 Mayhew Drive, asked about the revised report we were waiting on that included additional high school HVAC testing, if we hired any new custodians to help with increased cleaning assignments, if we purchased replacement Merv 13 filters since their life span is only three months and if we have considered giving staff members shields in addition to masks.

Mr. Robinson responded the testing agent has tested the rooms at the high school and they came back okay, we are working on some non classroom spaces, have made adjustments to

those and are awaiting those to be tested. Mr. Robinson continued that we have replacement Merv 13 filters that will be installed over the next couple of weeks and we have hired additional substitute custodians to help with additional cleaning procedures that were put in place.

Dr. Block added we did purchase masks and shields and although the Department of Health and CDC guidelines do not require them, we have a few staff members who use them.

Stefanie Cohen, 20 Stonewall Drive, asked why we need to hire and pay for a consultant. Mrs. Cohen stated some board members seem unnerved about the thought of having more transparency and applauded the fact that our COVID protocols for in person learning are working as the outbreak came from outside the school but didn't spread within the school.

Mrs. Konner responded that the hiring of a consultant has to do with strategic planning.

Dr. Block explained that strategic planning is a joint function between the administration and the board and the goal is written with the board in a supporting role. Dr. Block continued hiring a consultant enables you to be reflective as they are not attached to any particular program or initiative.

Tracy Lee, 30 Longacre Drive, asked for clarification of the COVID procedure if your child is in a classroom that has been asked to quarantine, what happens to their siblings?

Dr. Block responded if the sibling is of someone who has tested positive for COVID, he or she is considered a primary contact and must quarantine. If it is a sibling of someone who had been identified as a primary contact as a result of being in the cohort, that sibling does not have to be quarantined.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

BUSINESS

Mr. August moved the following:

3.1 Community Partnership Donation

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education donates one retired 2005 54-passenger bus and one retired 2005 25-passenger van to the Livingston Fire Department so firefighters could practice extrication on a real bus and van.

Ms. Messer seconded the motion.

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

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. August moved the following:

5.1 HIB Report

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

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

PREVIEW OF NOVEMBER 23, 2020 VOTING AGENDA

The board reviewed the items that are coming up at the November 23 meeting.

Conference with the Livingston Education Association

Board Reports

1. Board Budget Goals

Mrs. Konner asked everyone to come to the meeting with suggestions as we begin preparations for the 2021-2022 budget. Ms. Messer suggested board members submit their goals to Mr. Robinson by November 17 so they can be shared with the entire board prior to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

1. Voting Meeting Minutes of August 19, 2020
2. Workshop/Voting Meeting Minutes of October 12, 2020
3. Voting Meeting Minutes of October 19, 2020

1. PROGRAM/CURRICULUM

- 1.1 Textbooks/DVDs**
- 1.2 Student Teacher**
- 1.3 Educational Leadership Intern**

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 – September 2020**
- 3.3 Transfers**
- 3.4 Independent Contractor - IT Support**
- 3.5 Settlement Agreement**

4. PERSONNEL

- 4.1 Resignations**
- 4.2 Leaves of Absences**
- 4.3 Appointments**
- 4.4 Transfers**
- 4.5 Substitutes**
- 4.6 Extra Work Pay**
- 4.7 Stipends**
- 4.8 Mentor Fees**
- 4.9 Contract Adjustments**
- 4.10 Extra Period Assignments**
- 4.11 Job Descriptions**

5. MISCELLANEOUS

- 5.1 HIB Report**
- 5.2 Suspension Report**

Mrs. Chirls asked for a summary of what has been spent so far on COVID related work in our buildings and Mr. Cohen asked for a general budget review for our next meeting.

Mrs. Chirls asked how we are using Literably, which she saw on this month's Bill List.

Mr. Cohen confirmed that the job descriptions are updated to make them more in line with the work that is currently being performed and Mrs. Burman confirmed that Teresa Rehman handles the coordination of technology with Curriculum and Instruction and Student Services.

Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes

There was no public comment.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Mrs. Konner asked the board if they are in agreement with contacting Vince DeLucia to provide a presentation on mental health services at a future meeting and everyone agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:30 p.m., Mr. August made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Steven K. Robinson
Board Secretary