

**RIVER EDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION
RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY 07661**

"Building Bright Futures Together"

Minutes of the Regular Public Meeting – May 18, 2020 – 6:00 PM

The Board of Education, Borough of River Edge, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey conducted this meeting through a Zoom Meeting.

CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

Mr. Herbst called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

MISSION STATEMENT

Ms. Dansky read the Mission Statement.

ROLL CALL

Present on roll call were Ms. Dansky; Ms. Doyle; Ms. Juskeliene; Ms. Kang; Mr. Sim Mr. Herbst; Also present were Dr. Ben-Dov, Mrs. Napolitano, Mrs. Heitman and approximately 15 members of the public.

Ms. Brown was absent

Ms. Doyle left the meeting at 7:38 PM

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS NOTICE

Mrs. Napolitano read the Open Public Meeting Act Notice.

SPECIAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Public Comments on Agenda Items – None

Summer School and Graduation Discussions

Dr. Ben-Dov reviewed the three components of Summer School: ESY (Extended School Year), Academic Support, and the Enrichment Program. She explained that we have these three components every year and reviewed what each one is. She stated we waited a long time for guidance from the Department of Education regarding whether to implement virtually or in-person the mandated part of this program. She was told to plan for in-person learning and Virtual Learning and a decision will be made. Dr. Ben-Dov stated since we did not receive any guidelines we are inclined to believe it will be a virtual environment for Summer School. Without any guidelines, the board decided to have Summer School for the mandated part of the program. The enrichment part of the program will not be possible this year as virtual. The District thought we would have W.I.N. (What I Need) Academy for the non-mandated part of the academic program to help students maintain the academic skills. Mr. Armen and Dr. Ben-Dov will continue to work on this. They need to see how many people are interested and how many teachers are interested in virtual teaching this summer. Dr. Ben-Dov will keep the board updated as she gathers more information.

The District has a Graduation plan that is a combination of a virtual component and an in-person component that is very safe, memorable, and will be meaningful for our graduates. Dr. Ben-Dov does not want to share the details of the in-person component because she will hate to disappoint everyone if we cannot do it. She stated teachers are on board and everyone is excited for it. On Friday, Dr. Ben-Dov received an email from the County Superintendent stating to put all plans of Graduation on hold until further guidance is provided. Dr. Ben-Dov said they will continue to plan to make sure we have a

memorable Graduation for the class of 2020. Ms. Dansky suggested that Dr. Ben-Dov check with our insurance company for the activities that we are planning to make sure all activities are covered under our insurance. Dr. Ben-Dov will call our insurance with Mrs. Napolitano and keep the board posted on the plans for Graduation.

REPORTS

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Ben-Dov reported on the following:

- Dr. Ben-Dov thanked all of our teachers, but she wanted to offer a special thank you to our veteran teachers. She said the veteran teachers were fearful of the unknown in the beginning of virtual teaching. She said she is so proud of these teachers because they were the generation that did not grow up with this technology and they had to overcome this. Over the past couple of weeks Dr. Ben-Dov has seen amazing lessons planned and implemented by veteran teachers including, videos, and engagement with special new tools.
- Dr. Ben-Dov stated the District would like to do something for parents in the form of a Parent Academy. We are offering a workshop on Zoom Fatigue on Wednesday, May 20th. Ms. Elmera has some great suggestions for parents on this topic. We had a sign-up sheet and over 70 people signed up. We decided to close this session since we had such a big turnout. We want to give people the opportunity to participate and ask questions. We decided to have a second session on this. A date and time for this will be determined and the sessions will also be recorded.
- We will hold a Parent Academy with Janet Wong, our Author-in-Residence from last school year, on June 1st for English Language Learners.
- We are trying to plan a Parent Academy with Liberty Science Center as well. Liberty Science has been working with our First and Sixth Graders and our Building Bridges/Building Connection classes since our closure. They have some good ideas for parents.
- We are trying to plan for our faculty and Fifth and Sixth grade students sessions with a social emotional focus and a Professional Development with Rodney Salomon who had already worked with our staff and was well received.
- We have student and school possessions that need to be returned to their proper owners. Dr. Ben-Dov is grateful to our teachers and custodians for all of their help with this. The custodians emptied all of the desks and lockers and the teachers are coming back to school in a safe way to gather all of the belongings and label them for the students. The parents will come and collect them in a safe manner. At the end of the school year we will need for parents to return Chromebooks and musical instruments.
- The Executive County Superintendents from different Counties have formed a Committee to meet with Governor Murphy and the Commissioner and will hopefully come up with guidelines for September. We do not know how to proceed and we need guidance. The County is trying to get some Cooperative Purchasing for the schools for adult masks and gloves. Mr. Starace contacted Dr. Ben-Dov about Cooperative Purchasing for our District. Dr. Ben-Dov told him what we will need.
- Dr. Ben-Dov stated we need a Personnel/Management Committee. The Committee spoke and decided to have it on Thursday, May 28th at 4:00 PM.

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Heitman reported on the following:

- We often have parents coming into the buildings. They are getting some student books and some Chromebooks.
- Our Cherry Hill School Gymnasium looks fantastic. Mrs. Heitman is super excited about this and she thanked the Board of Education for this.
- Our Secretaries have been in the building making folders for the students' artwork and making large labels for each student's belongings.
- The Principals continue to have grade level and program level meetings weekly.
- The staff is scheduled to come in to help sort and label student belongings. They will practice strict social distance guidelines.
- The staff has finished placing our EDS (Educational Data Services) orders for next year online.
- We had a 6th grade meeting to discuss graduation. We had a meeting with Mr. Freedman, from River Dell, to discuss ideas and see what the Middle School is planning for graduation.
- We are discussing plans to organize student's belongings and schedules for parents to pick up the items.
- Mr. Henzel and I have had several I&RS and 504 meetings via Zoom.
- Mrs. Heitman is looking forward to parent Academy for Zoom Fatigue with Ms. Elmera.
- Mrs. Heitman has been in touch with her PTO weekly regarding several items.
- The Fifth and Sixth graders will have a social emotional guest.

BOARD SECRETARY

Mrs. Napolitano reported on the following:

- We have been cleaning and cleaning our facilities. We have people coming into the buildings and we need to keep it cleaned and sanitized as people come in and out.
- The painting of the Cherry Hill Gym is completed along with the Nurse's Office and part of the Front Office. The gym was scraped, recoated and repainted. Roosevelt Old Gym was scraped and redone and the new gym was recoated.
- We have been working hard on looking at making accommodations such as additional sinks, using custodial closet sinks and converting them into possible additional student sinks along with converting water bottle filler stations to sink areas for hand washing. We are looking at ordering additional touchless paper towel dispensers and soap dispensers, ordering of handless sanitizer dispensers and Plexiglas partitions for in front of desks of office staff with repeated exposure. We are also calling other schools to see what accommodations they are providing.
- On tonight's agenda there is a resolution to approve the opposing S-2392/A3969 which is delaying tax payments.

- Ms. Dansky asked Dr. Ben-Dov and Mrs. Napolitano if we can get the engraving of the Bricks in front of the schools. These bricks are memory bricks. Ms. Dansky thought it would be a wonderful way to memorialize and commemorate the graduating class of 2020. We would dedicate bricks to the students and teachers. Mrs. Napolitano and Dr. Ben-Dov looked into it and found out we can purchase the bricks. Dr. Ben-Dov will see if the PTO is interested in taking this on.

PRESIDENT

Mr. Herbst reported on the following:

- Mr. Herbst gave the board members an additional update from Mr. Jim Gaffney, President of the Bergen County School Board Association. He stated there will be no in-person NJSBA Workshop in Atlantic City in October. There will be a virtual workshop on October 20th through October 22nd. Bill 3969 passed both houses and no municipality can withhold payment to their school unless they can prove it is an absolute necessity to the State Department of Education and State Department of Community Affairs. Senator Sweeny recommends Districts to have two budgets ready (one with an aid increase and one without an increase). He said hopefully Districts will get guidelines on how to re-open the schools. He suggested looking at the NJSBA suggestions on how to re-open. He said to plan on possibly hiring extra staff to implement and support the re-opening of schools (unfunded). All Districts will need a re-closing plan in place just in case. If possible school boards should plan to meet once a month in the summer to stay current on issues. If Districts are planning on holding a Graduation in July or August they should contact their insurance representatives for liability. The Superintendents Evaluations are due on July 1st. There will be a virtual Bergen County Schoolboards meeting on Wednesday, May 27th.

COMMITTEES

- Ms. Dansky congratulated Mr. Herbst who graduated Summa Cum Laude from Ramapo College this month.
- Ms. Dansky gave an update on Region V. She stated with receiving the Region V bills things are improving, however there still is an area that was recorded incorrectly on a great deal of the billing. It is a way in which related services are being indicated on the billing. Mrs. Napolitano will follow up on this with Region V.

MOTIONS TO BE ACTED UPON

A. ADMINISTRATION/POLICY

1. That the Board of Education approve the Minutes of May 6, 2020.
2. WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor has declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency, and ordered all schools closed for in-person instruction; and

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislature has revised N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9 to permit the use of virtual instruction to establish compliance with the 180 school day requirement during a public health emergency, subject to Board approval of a virtual instruction program;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board hereby approves River Edge Revised School Health-Related Closure Preparedness Plan which includes the program of virtual instruction to meet the 180 school day requirement and also includes virtual and/or in person instruction for ESY, ESL and summer academic support, which was previously submitted to the Department of Education on March 13, 2020 and implemented since the District's closure on March 16, 2020.

- WHEREAS**, Senate Bill 2392 and Assembly Bill 3969, currently pending in the state Legislature, would authorize the Department of Community Affairs to permit municipalities to delay or alter the transmission of property tax revenue to school districts during gubernatorial-declared emergencies; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's public schools are highly dependent on property tax revenue to support education programs; and

WHEREAS, on average, local property taxes constitute close to 60% of public school revenue, with the percentage even greater in a significant number of districts; and

WHEREAS, delaying or altering the transmission of property tax revenue from municipalities would result in a financial crisis for school districts, seriously disrupting the educational process; and

WHEREAS, although public school buildings are closed during the current health emergency, the education of our students is taking place through remote instruction and, therefore, continued timely transmission of all property tax revenue due to the school district is critical for the educational process to continue without interruption; and

WHEREAS, under our state's current structure, municipalities are designated as the authorities to collect property taxes, but those taxes are levied for specific purposes—e.g., municipal, school, county, fire district—and these obligations must continue to be met; and

WHEREAS, municipal governing bodies are empowered under current law to borrow in order to ensure that full payments to school districts are made;

WHEREAS, the River Edge Board of Education recognizes the impact of the current public health emergency on the state and local governments, as well as local school districts, but believes that this legislation would only worsen the situation for our communities; and

WHEREAS, while S-2392/A-3969 would require a municipality to pay a percentage of the revenue due to a school district based on consultation between the state Departments of Community Affairs and Education, the amount of taxes collected at the time and the financial condition of the municipality and school district, it does not address subsequent payment to the school district to make up the full shortfall amount; and

WHEREAS, as currently written, S-2392/A-3969, which is designed to ease a financial burden on municipalities, would place a severe strain on school districts and the students and families that they serve.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the River Edge Board of Education urges the State Legislature and Governor to oppose S-2392/A-3969; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be delivered to Governor Philip D. Murphy, State Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and the 38th Legislative District's representatives in the state Senate and General Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Motion by: Ms. Kang Seconded by: Mr. Sim

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst
Nays: None

B. CURRICULUM/EDUCATION - None

C. BUILDING & GROUNDS - None

D. FINANCE/GRANTS/GIFTS

1. That the Board of Education approve the bills & claims dated May 2020 totaling \$428,555.49 including checks #43394 through #43448. Payrolls dated April 15, 2020 and April 30, 2020, totaling \$1,228,882.68 issued therefore, a copy of such warrants list be attached as part of these minutes. (Addendum)
2. That the Board of Education approve the Budget Transfers for the school year 2019-2020 as of April 30, 2020 (Addendum).
3. That the River Edge Board of Education approve the Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports for the period ending April 30, 2020 (Addendum).

Further, we certify that as of April 30, 2020, after review of the secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of our knowledge no major account or fund has been overexpended in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11 and that sufficient funds are available to meet the districts financial obligation for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Motion by: Mr. Sim Seconded by: Ms. Doyle

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst
Nays: None

E. PERSONNEL

1. That the Board of Education designate Michael Henzel, Affirmative Action Officer, for the River Edge School District for the 2020-2021 school year.
2. That the Board of Education approve the Affirmative Action Team, under the Affirmation Action Officer Michael Henzel, for the 2020-2021 school year:

Abby Burns-Paterson
Alrick Douglas
Janel Blake
Christine Moran

3. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve a Maternity/Disability leave of absence for Kaitlyn DeVasto to commence on or about, October 1, 2020 through November 10, 2020, followed by a State/Federal Family leave of absence to commence on or about, November 11, 2020, through February 3, 2021.
4. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve an extended Child Care leave of absence for Anne Marie Spiegel to commence on August 17, 2020 through January 22, 2021.

5. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve Beth Rosen as the Leave Replacement for the Literacy Coach and Instructional Supervisor to commence on September 1, 2020 through January 22, 2021 at an agreed upon per diem rate. Additional work days will be scheduled during July and August 2020, not to exceed a total of twenty (20) days, at the same per diem rate.

Motion by: Ms. Doyle Seconded by: Mr. Sim

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst

Nays: None

F. RIVER EDGE SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. That the Board of Education approve the contract with Bergen County Special Services School for 192/193 services to non-public schools for the 2020-2021 school year.

Motion by: Ms. Doyle Seconded by: Mr. Sim

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst

Nays: None

G. REGION V ADMINISTRATION & TRANSPORTATION

1. That the Board of Education approve the bills & claims dated May 2020 totaling \$444,502.77 including checks #73595 through #73682.

Motion by: Mr. Sim Seconded by: Ms. Juskeliene

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst

Nays: None

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Dansky attended the NJSBA Board of Directors Meeting virtually on May 8th. A lot of the meeting centered on the workshop in October. She stated they are not having the workshop in-person because they will not know what the restrictions will be in October and the Convention Center was used as a hospital site so it's not accessible. They need to clean out the space and it may potentially be used as a hospital site again. The workshop will be held virtually. Ms. Dansky recommends looking at the NJSBA website for the latest updates in different areas. They also spoke about how the Department of Education is providing specifics very slowly, mandatory training is still available online, LEE group of organizations are meeting weekly, and the budget for NJSBA.

Ms. Dansky met with the members of the Department of Education on May 13th and spoke with two members of the Department of Education in the area of Special Education. She stated it was forthcoming and they answered a lot of questions. There are a lot of issues regarding Special Education during this time. She said they stressed the importance of documentation, ESY (Extended School Year) will be left up to the individual schools, there were questions on Due Process, it was stated we need to address social/emotional needs of staff and students, we need to prioritize the needs of tiered interventionists, and transportation needs to be addressed.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Everlin Kim (780 Elm Avenue) stated the needs of the Sixth Grade students should to be addressed. She stated we need social/emotional support for them. She also stated some school districts are trying to come up with a big event for the graduates. She stated those districts are not waiting, they are still planning. Mr. Herbst answered we have a lot of special plans to commemorate the graduates and he is very excited about them. Dr. Ben-Dov stated as of Friday night, we were instructed to stop planning. Dr. Ben-Dov does not want to go against the County Department of Education Directive. She also stated we do have activities planned that are meaningful if we are allowed to carry them out.

Joan Kristan (655 Fifth Avenue) stated while Plan A might be on hold you may want to entertain a little more deeply a Plan B which could involve something in July or August. She asked that it's not completely out of the running to have a graduation in the summer.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion made by Ms. Dansky, seconded by Mr. Sim to convene into closed session at 7:45 PM.

Motion by: Ms. Dansky Seconded by: Mr. Sim

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Juskeleiene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst

Nays: None

RECONVENE

Motion made by Mr. Sim, seconded by Ms. Dansky to reconvene and adjourn the regular public meeting at 8:08 PM.

Motion by: Mr. Sim Seconded by: Ms. Dansky

Ayes: Ms. Dansky, Ms. Juskeleiene, Ms. Kang, Mr. Sim, Mr. Herbst

Nays: None

Louise Napolitano
Board Secretary/Business Administrator