

RIVER EDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY 07661

“Building Bright Futures Together”

Minutes of the Regular Public Meeting – March 3, 2021

6:00 PM Public Meeting

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

Ms. Kang called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM.

MISSION STATEMENT

Ms. Doyle read the Mission Statement.

ROLL CALL

Present on roll call were Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky; Ms. Doyle; Mr. Sim; and Ms. Kang. Also present were Dr. Brockel, Mrs. Napolitano, Mr. Henzel and approximately 185 members of the public.

Mr. Herbst arrived at 6:47 PM

Ms. Juskeliene was absent

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS NOTICE

Mrs. Napolitano read the Open Public Meeting Act Notice.

SPECIAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Public Comment on Agenda Items – None

Honor Retiree Dr. Tova Ben-Dov

Ms. Eun Kang (River Edge Board of Education President), Mr. Louis DeLisio (Interim Executive County Superintendent), Ms. Lauren Proda (River Edge Teacher), Mr. Michael Jordan (Superintendent of Maywood Public Schools and Co-President of the NJASA), Ms. Denise Heitman (Cherry Hill School Principal), Mr. Mike Walker (Lieutenant of River Edge Police Department), Ms. Patreece Koth (Roosevelt PTO), Ms. Jen Kim (Cherry Hill PTO President), Ms. Joanne Haggerty (River Edge Education Association), Ms. Kathy Grado (Secretary to the Superintendent), Mary-Kay Buckley (Former Board Member of the River Edge Board of Education), Ms. Christine Moran (Supervisor of Curriculum & Instruction) and friends and family of Dr. Ben-Dov all commented on the Dr. Ben-Dov's hard work, loyal service and dedication to the students, faculty, and families to our River Edge schools. There were video presentations by some of the River Edge students, the River Edge Administrative Team, the Board Office, Author Janet Wong and friends and family of Dr. Ben-Dov. Ms. Kang announced that the S.T.E.A.M. Lab in Cherry Hill School will be dedicated to Dr. Ben-Dov in recognition of her 10+ years of distinguished service to the River Edge School District. Dr. Ben-Dov thanked everyone for their kind works and appreciation and gave a speech.

RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE OUR HONOREE

Honor Retiree Dr. Tova Ben-Dov

Whereas, Dr. Tova Ben-Dov has served the River Edge School District for over Ten years, and

Whereas, during that time she served as Superintendent, and provided exceptional leadership, and worked tirelessly for the continued improvement for the River Edge School District, and

Whereas, during her tenure as Superintendent, more than 1,857 students have graduated under her leadership and guidance, and

Whereas, under Dr. Ben-Dov's guidance, the Special Education Program thrived - fostering engagement, real life opportunities, promoting all staff and student involvement in a welcoming environment, and

Whereas, Dr. Ben-Dov is known throughout the district for taking the time to visit and celebrate our students during Author Celebrations, Winter and Spring Concerts, Wax Museums, Plays, 100th Day Celebrations, and many other special events, establishing a rapport with the students, and

Whereas, Dr. Ben-Dov is responsible for bringing enhanced academic instructional programs and partnerships, such as Liberty Science Center, Author, Janet Wong, Mayo Performing Arts Theatre, and Dance Residencies to River Edge, engaging students and staff in hands-on, interactive, and entertaining activities, and

Whereas, Dr. Ben-Dov is a leader in Bergen County, Chair of the "Teacher of the Year" County Committee, a dedicated and knowledgeable Mentor to future administrators, sharing her expertise and passion for education with others, and

Whereas, her leadership has shaped and guided the River Edge District towards excellence in Social Emotional Learning for students and staff, participating in the AASA National Cohort for Social Emotional Learning, initiating innovative programs such as Wingman from Dylan's Wings of Change, Peer Mediation, Diversity Instruction, and

Whereas, Dr. Ben-Dov's outstanding stewardship during this Pandemic and navigating the district through uncharted waters included countless committees, Town Halls, and meetings with multiple groups of staff and parents to actively listen and collaboratively make difficult decisions to keep our community of learners safe, and

Whereas, Dr. Ben-Dov's commitment to Margaret Wheatly's quote, "Take Care of Yourself, Take Care of Each Other, Take care of this Place" will forever be our guiding principle, and

Now Therefore be it Resolved, that the River Edge Board of Education of the Borough of River Edge on this third day of March Two Thousand Twenty-One spread upon its minutes this resolution of appreciation and offers its best wishes to Dr. Ben-Dov for a long, happy, healthy, and productive retirement.

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

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

Nays: None

REPORTS

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Brockel reported on the following:

- Dr. Brockel stated Governor Murphy announced teachers will be prioritized and all school employees will be eligible for the covid-19 vaccinations on March 15th. He also announced that schools are on track to re-open in the fall. Dr. Brockel said we are going to be opening more and more as we go on for the next several weeks.
- As of March 1st, in New Jersey, there are 142 districts that are completely remote, 533 districts that are hybrid, 110 districts that are full in person and 27 districts that are mixed.
- According to the last Department of Health guideline on February 25th, the northeast areas of New Jersey are still orange and the southern areas in New Jersey are yellow.
- We discussed combining cohorts at some particular point and at the right opportunity. Dr. Brockel stated he is aware of the communities and boards desire to increase in-person instruction as soon as they are able to. Dr. Brockel said we can combine cohorts at some point if Roosevelt can make some minor adjustments. We are looking at that now. This will allow 5 feet of space among students. This will also be in consideration of the choices parents made by survey in January because the choices they made go through April 30th.
- The combination of cohorts will be coming sooner than later and he hopes for the cooperation and support of everyone.
- We will begin in-person Wednesday classes for our students in grades Pre-K through six on March 10th.

PRINCIPAL

Mr. Henzel reported on the following:

- Mr. Henzel stated as part of Read across America this week Ms. Fox, Ms. Cardia and Ms. Proda organized the masked reader inspired by the popular TV show The Masked Singer. Staff members read a part of the book Goodnight Moon while covering their face. Students will be shown the entire video on Friday.
- March is full of math! We have March Mathness with Ms. Hafers, which includes Family Math Carnival Night at each school, (Roosevelt will be on March 9th and Cherry Hill on March 11th), daily fun facts are shared through the morning announcements, weekly contests designed by her fifth grade students, and the Pi Day competition. Ending the month, we are having Math Night with Greg Tang.
- Parent Teacher conferences will be held on Tuesday, March 16th and Thursday, March 18th.
- Our physical education teachers are bringing back the March Madness Competition. Staff will be participating this year instead of the students.

- Today was the last official virtual Wednesday. We are all set to go next week. Mrs. Heitman and I sent out letters to the parents today. We had to make some changes. In Cherry Hill School the Pre-k schedule was adjusted, in both schools Instrumental Music was changed to accommodate students, and Related Services modified their schedules as well. We will start with Cohort B on March 10th.

BOARD SECRETARY

Mrs. Napolitano reported on the following:

- The full budget was presented at last week's Board Meeting. The state aid numbers were received on Thursday and we are able to fund the proposed budget. We also put additional monies into PPE supplies in preparation for additional expenditures for the upcoming year. We did this since we have not yet been reimbursed through FEMA for any of the expenditures that we have incurred to due COVID. Some money also went to social/emotional and the nursing supply accounts. River Edge is still not fully funded in the formula of state aid and state aid funds were pulled back last year after they were announced.
- More than 20 Board of Educations (River Edge being one) adopted the resolution to have educators vaccinated. We forwarded to the State after it was approved at the February 24th board meeting. On March 1, Governor. Murphy announced that educators and support staff for PreK-12, child care centers and transporters are eligible as of March 15th to be vaccinated. Mrs. Napolitano thanked the board members for passing that resolution.
- Today I attended the Shark Tank facilitated by Ms. Proda. I am very excited to tell you that we got a deal with EDJ Masks Snap. It is a snap on connector so you never forget your mask. I made the deal with Mrs. Miller. I explained as a "state entity" we couldn't supply money to a private organization but I could assist them in finding the process where they could become a "state approved" contract vendor so that we could purchase masks. Ms. Dansky and Mr. Herbst spoke about their experience on Shark Tank as well. They thanked the students and teachers for their hard work and allowing the board members to participate.
- Mrs. Napolitano stated you should have received a PIN number to complete your 2021 Personal/Relative and Financial Disclosure Statements. If you did not receive it, please check with the Board Office. All forms need to be completed by April 30th.

PRESIDENT

Ms. Kang reported on the following:

- Ms. Kang thanked Ms. Proda for inviting the board members to participate in Shark Tank. It was such a fun experience and the students did an amazing job.
- Ms. Kang thanked Ms. Moran and Ms. Miele for helping out with Dr. Ben-Dov's retirement presentation.
- We did receive multiple proposals for the Superintendent Search Firm. The board members will start to review them within the next few weeks.

COMMITTEES

Ms. Dansky stated the Finance and Facilities Committee met on Tuesday, March 2nd. A lot of what was discussed at that meeting was contractual and will be discussed in the Closed Session. One of the items that were discussed was the request from River Edge Girls Athletic League for the banners and windscreens. There are two resolutions on tonight's agenda to approve that request. It is not covered in our policies so that is why it is on our agenda. Once that policy is developed and approved there will be no need for the board to have resolutions because it will be covered in the policy. We also discussed a Region V update and the balanced budget

MOTIONS TO BE ACTED UPON

A. ADMINISTRATION/POLICY

1. That the Board of Education approve the completion of the following emergency drills:

| School | Dates |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Cherry Hill School | February 12, 2021 Evacuation Drill |
| | February 22, 2021 Evacuation Drill |
| | February 23, 2021 Fire Drill |
| | February 25, 2021 Fire Drill |
| Roosevelt School | February 12, 2021 Evacuation Drill |
| | February 22, 2021 Evacuation Drill |
| | February 23, 2021 Fire Drill |
| | February 25, 2021 Fire Drill |

2. That the Board of Education approve the Second Reading of the following policy:

| Policy # | Title |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 6171.2 | Gifted and Talented |

3. That the Board of Education approve the request from River Edge Girls Athletic League to hang two banners as requested from April 1, 2021 through November 1, 2021 and May 1, 2021 to July 30, 2021 at a mutually agreed upon location.
4. That the Board of Education approve the request from River Edge Girls Athletic League to hang windscreens behind the backstops pending approval of the proof sheet to be provided by Regal at their earliest convenience.

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

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

B. CURRICULUM/EDUCATION - None

C. BUILDINGS & GROUNDS - None

D. FINANCE/GRANTS/GIFTS

1. That the Board of Education tentatively adopt the 2021-2022 School Year Budget for submission to the Executive County Superintendent as follows:

| | <u>Budget</u> | <u>Local Tax Levy</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Total General Fund | \$20,828,143 | \$16,352,019 |
| Total Special Revenue Fund | \$1,208,873 | N/A |
| Total Debt Service | \$1,416,100 | \$1,194,506 |
| Total | \$23,453,116 | |

Be It Further Resolved, that the Board of Education requests the approval of a Capital Reserve Withdrawal in the amount of \$390,000. The District intends to utilize \$390,000 for an electrical upgrade at Cherry Hill School.

Motion by: Mr. Sim Seconded by: Mr. Herbst

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

2. **WHEREAS**, River Edge School District Policy and NJAC 6A:23B-1.2 (b) provides that the Board of Education shall establish in the annual school budget a maximum expenditure amount that may be allotted for such travel and expense reimbursement for 2021-2022 school year.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the River Edge Board of Education hereby establishes the school district travel maximum for the 2021-2022 school year at an amount not to exceed \$35,000.

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

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

E. PERSONNEL

1. That the Board of Education accept, with regret, the resignation of Michele Puentes, District Data Coordinator, effective March 26, 2021.

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

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

2. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve Kevin Ahearn, Interim Coordinator of Programs and Services, effective on or about March 8, 2021 through June 30, 2021.

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

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

3. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve Lynn Bosch, Part-time Aide, effective March 8, 2021 through June 30, 2021.

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

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

F. RIVER EDGE SPECIAL EDUCATION - None

G. REGION V ADMINISTRATION & TRANSPORTATION - None

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Doyle stated it is very important we put an emphasis that the students that chose virtual be considered as part of the student body that has an equal opportunity to be in-person if we are offering that to any of our students.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Sebastian Muscarella (781 5th Avenue) Mr. Muscarella is part of a large focus group on Facebook to get our kids back to school safely. They created a petition to state the intentions for re-opening and what we want the board members and Superintendent to focus on. They have already 200 signatures from the River Edge Community. He asked what are the dates and the dependencies to make these things happen of getting our children back in school. Dr. Brockel responded we are working today on some dates we had in mind under the current circumstances with the combination of the two cohorts. He would like to get that as soon as possible. As soon as we know the date and can plan for it we will get it out to the public.

Christine O'Keefe (River Edge Teacher): the Association has been working with the board and Dr. Brockel and our goal is to keep our schools open with following health guidelines. We need to make sure the students and staff are safe and healthy before we start looking at dates and timelines. That is our top priority. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Lisa Baul (679 Westview Court): she asked if the concerns of parents who chose full remote for the year to be taken into consideration. She thanked the teachers of our district and stated we are still in a pandemic. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Lauren Thiffault (159 Greenway Terrace): suggested having a weekly letter informing the community what the district is currently going through, specific to the pandemic, and the plans and changes that are happening. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Jenni Shahin (201 Cherry Lane): thanked all of our teachers for their hard work and expressed why the board should bring the children back in person safely as often as possible. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Dana Hosey (219 Voorhis Avenue): will the children be separated come September or will they be able to sit next to each other? Will children as young as 4,5,6 years old be taught about sexuality, transgender awareness in September? If so, can parents opt out? Dr. Brockel responded and thanked her for her comments.

Dimitrios Papiris (330 Taft Road): urges all to join the Facebook group and to participate in the zooms. There shouldn't be two groups of parents, in person or virtual, we should all work together because we all eventually will be in person parents. He also thinks we should have a regular consistent communication to share more information. Ms. Kang thanked him for his comment.

S. Levy (235 Kensington Road): only saying thank you to the board for your work and dedication.

Taylor Minervini (181 Wales Avenue): thank you Lisa, You are not alone. I second your gratitude to the teachers.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion made by Mr. Herbst, seconded by Mr. Sim to convene into closed session at 8:49 PM.

Motion by: Mr. Herbst Seconded by: Mr. Sim

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

Nays: None

RECONVENE

Motion made by Mr. Sim, seconded by Ms. Doyle to reconvene and adjourn the regular public meeting at 9:31 PM.

All Ayes

Louise Napolitano
Board Secretary/Business Administrator