

# **RIVER EDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY 07661**

*“Building Bright Futures Together”*

## **Minutes of the Regular Public Meeting – August 12, 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 6:05 PM.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Ms. Dansky read the Mission Statement.

### **ROLL CALL**

Present on roll call were Ms. Dansky; Ms. Juskeliene; Ms. Kang; Mr. Sim; Mr. Herbst. Also present were Dr. Ben-Dov, Mrs. Napolitano, and approximately 89 members of the public.

Ms. Doyle arrived at 6:10 PM

Mrs. Brown left the meeting at 7:34 PM

### **OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS NOTICE**

Mrs. Napolitano read the Open Public Meeting Act Notice.

### **SPECIAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Public Comment on Agenda Items - None

### **REPORTS**

#### **SUPERINTENDENT**

Dr. Ben-Dov reported on the following:

- Dr. Ben-Dov stated we are postponing the presentation that we were planning for tonight because the board needs time to discuss the new information from Governor Murphy today. Dr. Ben-Dov apologized for this change.
- Our Task Force Committees has continued working on our Re-opening Plan. We received the checklist from the State and submitted our plan. We are still looking at different things and making changes for when they need to re-submit.
- On Monday evening we had a very well-attended Health and Safety Town Hall meeting. Dr. Ben-Dov thanked Mrs. Johnston, Mrs. Vernieri, Ms. Faustini, Mrs. Napolitano, Mr. Stevens, Ms. Moran, and Mr. Werner. It was a good meeting. Dr. Ben-Dov does believe the nurses inspired the feeling in parents that whatever they can do to keep the staff and students safe will be done.

- On Tuesday morning, we held our Building and Grounds Task Force Meeting. Additional concerns were brought up about ventilation. Discussions took place. Air purifiers were discussed and one of our parents recommended we look into a specific brand of air purifiers for all of our instructional spaces. Inquirers were made on this and it may take a little time to get. Another concern that was brought up was that Related Arts Teachers were going into every classroom in person in the original plan. That does increase the danger of exposure. Discussions were held on what would happen if a Related Arts Teacher contracted Covid-19. They came up with the idea of Related Arts Teachers teaching virtually. We had to adjust schedules so the students can be supervised in the classrooms.
- Dr. Ben-Dov was asked about the parental responses and what the rate of response was for each instructional model. The rate of response for the district was 31% of parents wanted virtual instruction where 69% wanted in-person instruction. The difference was between the two sides of town. In the Cherry Hill area we had approximately 39.8% wanted virtual learning only and in Roosevelt School it was 22%.
- The River Edge Board of Education needs to discuss the Governor's press conference today and what the new development that this presents to us might be. Prior to the Press Conference today, there was a plea from the NJEA, NJPSA, and the NJASA to open the schools virtually. People felt they were spending months on creating a model they were not confident about. They weren't given the time to develop a true virtual/hybrid model that they felt was going to be safer until there was more reassurance. The Governor spoke today and came out with an executive order that says in-person instruction should resume provided that the district had satisfied the four major aspects of safety. He also said that districts that could not meet the health and safety standards with certainty may start the school year virtually, provide the reasons why they didn't feel they were ready to start in-person, and give a date they feel they can resume in-person instruction. He had two different Superintendents present two different scenarios: one who was ready to open in person and one who could not open their district because of several challenges. The district that could not open plans to open in November and expect to resolve their issues by then. The Health Commissioner also spoke. She said that different colors will be assigned to the different counties in New Jersey based on how dangerous their current pandemic situation was. She said they are watching Bergen County because of the rise in cases.
- Dr. Ben-Dov wants the board to have a discussion on the different aspects of the Governor's message. She would like for them to weigh in and give their thoughts. Dr. Ben-Dov stated we were given no choice from June and had to open in-person. Now, there is a different angle to the Governor's message Dr. Ben-Dov stated we are ready in many ways to open with the Re-opening plan as submitted, but we do have a back order of some of our PPE and equipment. The air purifier recommendation concerns her because of looking at the cost, making sure we have the funding and the time it will take to get them. We also have a back order of technology devices. The reasons above were given by the superintendent the Governor brought forward as an example of not being ready to open. We need to be as sure as we can be in making this decision. Dr. Ben-Dov needs guidance from the board regarding the direction in which they would want her to move given these circumstances,. She would like this to be a collaborative effort. Each board member gave their perspective on starting in-person versus starting virtual. The discussions that took place were on: how long would this be postponed to, do you think the time would be sufficient to catch us up where you feel more comfortable about

reopening, what is the back order ETA of the technology devices, if we were fully prepared today to start school with all of our PPE supplies; is there anything else stopping us, is there more time for Professional Development for staff, what happens if the number of cases rising for staff and students verses community members, tabling the resolution for approving the Re-opening Plan, feedback on our plan from the County, How will we make the plan better and safer if we start virtual, and the guidelines for ventilation. The board spoke and discussed this topic thoroughly. Five of the board members want to start the school year virtually and two board members would like to start with the hybrid model. They would like to set a day in which the in person component would start.

- Kindergarten Orientation will take place on Thursday, August 27 at 11:00Am for Cherry Hill School and at 2:00 PM for Roosevelt School. Information went out to the parents today.

### **PRINCIPAL**

No Principal report at this meeting

### **BOARD SECRETARY**

Ms. Napolitano reported on the following:

- We have some of our signage in and are waiting for the rest to come. We are waiting for some of our PPE supplies to be shipped and the hand sanitizer units are back ordered. We did receive 100 pieces of Plexiglas for some group instruction but they still need to be mounted on the tables. We are having the ventilation system evaluated and looking into adding air purifiers. We are hiring a new leave replacement custodian and we are upgrading the fire walls for technology.
- There is a resolution on tonight's agenda to approve the current reduction in State Aid in the amount of \$179,159 to be funded using unassigned general fund surplus to maintain budgeted appropriations.

### **PRESIDENT**

Mr. Herbst reported on the following:

- Mr. Herbst stated the Board Self Evaluations and the goal setting needs to be completed.
- Mr. Herbst thanked all of the parents and community members that called into tonight's board meeting. He thanked them for being involved, asking questions, and being dedicated to our community and students. He stated it's not an easy decision. We like to get everyone's feedback and insight. It's very important to us.

### **COMMITTEES**

No committees reported at this meeting

### **MOTIONS TO BE ACTED UPON**

#### **A. ADMINISTRATION/POLICY**

1. That the Board of Education approve the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of July 29, 2020.

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

Policy #	Title
1250	Visitors

3. That the Board of Education approve the First Reading of the following policies:

Policy #	Title
3510	Operation and Maintenance of Plant
6173.1	Remote Learning
5141.2	Illness

**Motion by: Ms. Doyle Seconded by: Ms. Dansky**

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

4. That the Board of Education table the approval of the River Edge School District Re-opening Plan for the 2020-2021 school year.

**Motion by: Ms. Doyle Seconded by: Ms. Dansky**

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

5. That the Board of Education approve the Mentoring Plan for the 2020-2021 school year.

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

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

**B. BUILDING & GROUNDS - None**

**C. CURRICULUM/EDUCATION - None**

**D. FINANCE/GRANTS/GIFTS**

1. That the Board of Education hereby approve the current reduction in State Aid in the amount of \$179,159 to be funded using unassigned general fund surplus to maintain budgeted appropriations.

**E. PERSONNEL**

1. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve Nicole Krapels, Part-time Clerical Assistant, 19.5 hours per week for the 2020-2021 school year. Salary will be substantially funded by IDEA.
2. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve a Semester I, two days per week clinical practice, to commence on or about September 4, 2020 through December 4, 2020, and a Semester II, five days per week (500+ hours) clinical practice 2 to commence on or about January 4, 2021 through May 7, 2021 for the following:

Sara Correa  
Shannon O'Brien

- That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve the following as Substitute Teachers for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Sara Correa  
Shannon O'Brien

**F. RIVER EDGE SPECIAL EDUCATION - None**

**G. REGION V ADMINISTRATION & TRANSPORTATION**

- That the Board of Education post approve the following Quote Contracts for the 2019-2020 school year.

Route #	Transporter	Per Diem Total
Q208	Sun Transportation	\$75.00

- WHEREAS, the River Edge Board of Education (the "Board") is the lead education agency ("LEA") for the Bergen County Region V Council for Special Education ("Region V"); and

WHEREAS, Region V provides shared services for its member districts such as evaluations, direct services, and consultation; and

WHEREAS, as the LEA, the Board must approve the consultant agreements of the providers that Region V utilizes to deliver shared services to its member districts.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, re-approves the consultant agreements of the following Region V Shared Services Consultants, Psychologists, Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants, Social Workers, Speech Language Specialists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, and Translators to provide evaluations, direct services, and consultation, to non-public and public schools for member districts upon request for the 2020-2021 school year:

Laura Dispoto	Speech and Language Specialist	Evaluator
Maria Manning	Psychologist	Direct Services & Evaluator
Patricia M. Carroll	Psychologist	Direct Services & Evaluator
Pessie Finkelstein	Speech and Language Specialist	Direct Services & Evaluator
Tobana Professional Corp. (Meryl Schreiber)	Speech and Language Specialist	Direct Services & Evaluator

3. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, award the following contracts to provide Nursing services to non-public and public schools for member districts upon request for the 2020-2021 school year:

Bayada Home Health Care, Inc.	Nursing Services
Bayada Home Health Care, Inc.	Nursing Services for A.K.
Epic Health Services, Inc. d/b/a Aveanna Healthcare and Loving Care Agency. d/b/a Aveanna Healthcare	Nursing Services

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

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

Nays: None

**OLD / NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Dansky attended a virtual state wide WebEx meeting on health and safety concerns. All of the concerns and questions we expressed are the concerns people are expressing all over the state.

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

Nina (River Edge Resident) stated maybe specials should only take place on the days that all are virtual. Mr. Herbst answered that was the plan to begin with and now given the recommendation this will move forward.

Daniel Katz (276 Valley Road) stated the number doesn't exist for how many people need to contract covid-19 before it constitutes a shut down. He also stated isn't the implicit assumption with this line of discussion that virtual is the best plan. Mr. Katz stated it's not the best plan. Mr. Herbst disagreed with that. He stated that was the discussion at the time towards the majority of the board.

Nina (River Edge Resident) stated that the Board of Education and the sub-committees have worked very hard and the majority of parents want to send their kids back in person. Mr. Herbst stated this is true at this point and time.

Nina (River Edge Resident) stated you can keep the windows open to have fresh air. Mrs. Napolitano stated you can have the windows open and we will have the air conditioning going and the unit-vents running.

Monique Akhaabi (92 Elizabeth Street) stated if River Edge starts remote, will that include those with an IEP? Dr. Ben-Dov stated she imagines so. Somethings like testing that can't be done virtually may have to be done in person. Instruction might be remote. This is very new and we need to discuss this more.

Daniel Katz (276 Valley Road) stated how about the fact that the majority of parents don't want it.

Jenni (River Edge Resident) stated shouldn't the results of the parental survey be taken into consideration as that's who the board is representing? 70% of parents were comfortable with the hybrid option. Mr. Herbst stated the majority of the board has not reached that consent with those numbers.

Nina (River Edge Resident) stated what is the data that says we should have air purifiers? Mrs. Napolitano stated there is a lot of data and thoughts out there. We are going with the information we are receiving from other school districts and Business Administrators.

Jenna Heydt (River Edge Resident) stated if we don't have chrome books wouldn't that be worse for remote learning. Dr. Ben-Dov stated we have chrome books, but we do need additional ones. We will be able to start the school year and we are expecting a new shipment soon.

Yelena Kodrayanu (River Edge Resident) asked what if the school is split by those who will have trouble learning virtually the most and need in person instruction the most. Those would be special education kids and kids in lower grades (pre k through 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grades). The rest could all be virtual until a set date. This will allow teachers to adjust to new regulations and for the school to see what works and what doesn't. It would also allow more space for kids in classrooms. If all classrooms are used for a fraction of the kids. Mr. Herbst stated we do not have any guidance at this point in time.

Daniel Katz (276 Valley Road) stated it's also a mandate that the kids go back to school by the way the majority of the parents feel. He feels a lot of the assumptions that are being talked about in terms of why we should go virtual are based on erroneous data or logical fallacies. Mr. Herbst thanked Mr. Katz for his comment and he stated he understands where he is coming from.

Mr. Herbst read the comment from Jenni (River Edge Resident) that stated the hybrid option still requires extensive childcare for parents and 70% still chose it.

Mr. Herbst read the comment from Joe Barone that stated 70% of us feel the school is taking all preventative measures. We are okay with the school opening two days a week for in person instruction.

Anonymous Person - asked just curious what teachers will expect of first grade parents who in reality really do not have the time to sit with their children for hours and hours a day to do school work. Dr. Ben-Dov stated the parents of younger students chose to keep their children home for virtual learning. It's an ongoing discussion that we have. Kindergarten and first grade without parental help is extremely difficult.

Mr. Herbst read the comment from Carley Aroldi that stated thanks to all of the board members. This is such a difficult decision for a community member to make in so many ways, with so much weight behind it.

Joe Barone (River Edge Resident) stated if you choose to open remotely I am curious as to what the virtual learning will look like in general. I appreciate all you have done thus far. Dr. Ben-Dov answered she envisions it will be done from the classroom and will be very structured and scheduled.

Tammy (310 Taft Road) asked has anyone thought about the mental health of the students. Is there a plan for the mental health of the students. Dr. Ben-Dov stated we were going to speak tonight with our presentation about the social emotional activities for the students. We will apply some of those activities to the virtual format and will follow up with families to see who needs more assistance and help and support. Every effort on our end will take place to support students.

Yelena Kodrayanu (River Edge Resident) asked if there is a breakdown by grade and percentage of parents who want their kids in school. Dr. Ben-Dov stated she has the breakdown for the different schools. It varied by grade levels. It showed strong numbers for lower grades and one of the upper grades in Cherry Hill School.

Dana (219 Voorhis Avenue) asked how strict will you be with work being completed for first grade students for parents who truly do not have the time to sit daily and assist them. Dr. Ben-Dov answered we will also distribute physical material to the students this way everything is not virtual and doesn't depend on parents helping with digital work. This all will be thought about and planned. Dana also asked whether the advice of the American Academy of Pediatrics being taken into account. Mr. Herbst stated it's not just the recommendation of various groups, this decision is being thought through with the logistics of the school day as we know our district functions on a day to day basis.

Jenni (River Edge Resident) stated it should be taken into consideration what the county does. River Edge should not be the only district to choose virtual because of the board members personal feelings regardless of what the rest of the county is doing. Mr. Herbst said her comment was noted.

Mr. Herbst read the comment from Dana Hosey that stated that she could not agree more with Dr. Katz

Yelena Kodrayanu (River Edge Resident) stated that she totally agreed with Dr. Katz. She stated she I owned child care centers all across Bergen County and services about 150 kids at the moment. They re-opened mid-June and saw the mental and emotional toll the quarantine took on their kids. Doing in-person learning is very doable. Taking extra precautions when kids show any kinds of symptoms helps greatly. Mr. Herbst thanked her for her comments and said they were noted.

Jenni (River Edge Resident) stated our plan calls for 100% masks and six feet of distancing. The option for all virtual was meant to be for districts such as Jersey City whose population probably triples ours and cannot accommodate even on a hybrid schedule. Mr. Herbst thanked her for her comments and said they were noted.

Jenna Heydt (282 Traft Court) asked can a board member list the exact items that you feel aren't prepared? This decision should be made on facts not fears. Mr. Herbst, Dr. Ben-Dov, and Mrs. Napolitano reviewed some of the points that were mentioned earlier during the board meeting.

Anthony and J. Taylor Mimervini (River Edge Residents) stated it may be worthwhile to survey the district one more time. This is purely anecdotal, but they have heard from a number of parents that they chose hybrid in order to hold a spot but think they may ultimately decide to choose virtual. He thinks that less than 70% may actually be planning to send their children come September. Mr. Herbst thanked them for their comments and said they were noted.

Dimitrios Papiris (330 Taft Road) stated our district has communicated more than any school he has heard of. They have over communicated and he commends them for doing that. We are all trying to do everything to keep our kids safe. This is not forever and it can buy us some time to fix or tighten things up to make things more safe. There is no right answer. Mr. Herbst thanked him for his comments and said they were noted. He also thanked him for being on the Finance and Building and Grounds Sub-Committees.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

Motion made by Mr. Sim, seconded by Ms. Dansky to convene into closed session at 8:35 PM.

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

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

Nays: None

### **RECONVENE**

Motion made by Mr. Sim, seconded by Ms. Kang to reconvene and adjourn the regular public meeting at 9:06 PM.

Voice vote all Ayes

Louise Napolitano  
Board Secretary/Business Administrator