

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

Pursuant to notices sent to each member of the Board of Education, the special meeting was held virtually for the public on Thursday, September 2, 2021 using the Zoom meeting platform.

1. Call to Order by the Board President and Reading of the Sunshine Announcement at 7:00 p.m.

"Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by sending such notice to the Asbury Park Press, The Middletown Patch, and the Middletown Twp. Public Schools District Website and the posting of such notice at the August T. Miner Administrative Offices and each elementary, middle, and secondary school website in the district".

2. Roll Call

Present: Leonora Caminiti, Michael Donlon Thomas Giaimo, Barry Heffernan, John Little, Deborah Wright, Frank Capone and Joan Minnuies
Absent: Jacqueline Tobacco
Also present: Mary Ellen Walker, Amy Doherty and Danielle Pantaleo, Esq.

3. Resolution for Executive Session at 7:02 p.m. – Motion made by Mrs. Caminiti, seconded by Mr. Capone to go into executive session for; legal matters related to mold. Motion carried on a voice vote.

4. Call to Order by the Board President and Re-Reading of Sunshine Notice at 9:03 p.m.

5. Roll Call

Present: Leonora Caminiti, Michael Donlon Thomas Giaimo, Barry Heffernan, John Little, Deborah Wright, Frank Capone and Joan Minnuies
Absent: Jacqueline Tobacco
Also present: Mary Ellen Walker, Amy Doherty and Danielle Pantaleo, Esq.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Discussion of Mold Issue in District Buildings

- Mrs. Doherty provided an update on the mold found in two district school buildings. Surface mold was identified in a classroom and immediately remediated at Lincroft Elementary school but it soon became apparent that the problem was an issue in other parts of the building as well. Simultaneously, a teacher from Nutswamp Elementary school reported surface mold in their classroom. The district hired a remediation firm to begin work immediately on the two schools. An environmental consultant was hired to inspect and test all district buildings. Initial results of the High School locker rooms, cafeterias and bubbles were all negative so sporting events are clear to continue as scheduled. At this time, testing is ongoing and the district will take the approach of addressing the immediate issues as the results come in. Short-term plans include Investing in commercial grade dehumidifiers to be utilized throughout the district where needed. Finally, a long-term solution to stabilize the moisture and humidity levels in the classrooms is going to be required.

7. Opportunity for Public Comment - limited to thirty minutes

- Megan Callus stated a retired teacher told her the mold problems have existed for 45 years and requested the name of the environmental consultant (*Mrs. Doherty replied: we have hired Mike McGuinness of RK Occupational and Environmental and is a certified industrial hygienist*).
- Vera Piasecki commented on the feasibility of school starting in person on 9/13/21 and the option to start remotely (*Mrs. Walker replied: more than half the schools do not yet have test results so no plans have been made beyond the anticipated 9/13 start date*).
- Kate Farley inquired about contingency plans for students, should some schools be unable to open due to mold on 9/13/21 (*Mrs. Walker replied: no plans have been made beyond the anticipated 9/13 start date*).

- Jaime Sanacore inquired about the 'audit mechanism' for mold detection. *(Mrs. Doherty replied: visual identification and reducing humidity will be implemented as preventative measures).*
- Dennis Deans asked why school was delayed as opposed to starting using remote instruction. *(Mrs. Walker replied: a three-day delay was more appealing than starting remotely for acclimation of students and meeting teachers for the first time).*
- Prentice Kielty asked when test results are anticipated. *(Mrs. Walker replied: Tuesday or early Wednesday, 24-48 hours on a rolling basis).*
- Ashley Studd asked what the worst-case scenario would be for school starting on 9/13/21 *(Mrs. Walker replied: we are working toward a 9/13 start date).*
- Laura Abt inquired if remediation was in progress at Nutswamp *(Mrs. Doherty replied: yes, remediation at Nutswamp has begun).*
- Stacey Jones inquired how long the remediation takes once mold is identified. *(Mrs. Doherty replied: currently unknown due to the extent of mold found and retesting requirements).*
- Kate Farley inquired again about contingency plan specifics *(Mrs. Walker replied: contingency plans are in the development phase based on what is being discovered).*
- Kristen Rooney asked for dates that contingency plans will be shared with parents *(Mrs. Walker replied: this depends on the completion dates of tests).*
- Kelly Brodin inquired if the mold test reports would be made public and when the missed school days will be made up. *(Mrs. Walker replied: yes the reports would be made public, and make-up dates are undetermined at this time).*
- Mithro Busler commented on allowing public participation via Zoom for all Board meetings.
- Carrie Barreiro inquired about contingency plans and thanked the Board for allowing Zoom participation at this meeting *(Mrs. Walker replied: all possibilities are being considered).*
- Loly Tor commented that Lincroft had mold last year and asked when the Board learned about this instance of mold *(Mrs. Doherty replied: she is unaware of any past issues in Lincroft).*
- Michele Collins commented on Zoom participation at future Board of Education meetings.
- Valerie inquired which schools have test results to date and what contingency plans are in place *(Mrs. Walker replied: results have been received for Lincroft, Nutswamp, New Monmouth, Navesink, River Plaza).*
- Laura Abt expressed concern about school starting on 9/13/21 and if professional development days would affect that date *(Mrs. Walker replied: PD days are happening virtually).*
- Diana Brink commented on teachers having time to set up classrooms and inquired about chrome book availability should virtual learning be required *(Mrs. Walker replied: yes, there are chrome books for all children).*
- Rebecca Jones expressed concern about contingency plans *(Mrs. Walker replied: all options are being reviewed).*
- Prentice Kielty asked how pervasive the mold issue is *(Mrs. Walker replied: to date 4 of 5 schools tested have mold but all schools have not been tested yet).*
- Ashley Studd inquired about the contingency plan and would virtual be an option *(Mrs. Walker replied: all options are being considered).*
- Stacey Jones inquired about the contingency plans for individual schools versus the entire district and remediation turnaround times *(Mrs. Doherty replied: remediation depends on how many rooms are impacted).*
- Lauren Abramson asked where the funds to pay for the mold problem will come from *(Mrs. Doherty replied: the maintenance reserve which is for unexpected and unbudgeted items and we will submit a claim with our insurance).*
- Amanda Asterita inquired about the process for reporting mold by students and/or staff *(Mrs. Doherty replied: notify building administration/principal who then notifies facilities).*
- Loly Tor asked if the Board plans to allow public participation via Zoom going forward *(Mrs. Minnuies replied: there is no plan to use Zoom at this time)*
- Jaime Sanacore asked for the dates when administration and the Board were made aware of the mold problem *(Mrs. Walker replied: the dates in question are not on hand but focus is on remediation and prevention).*

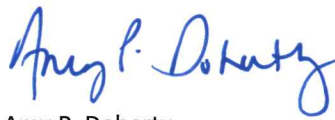
- Diana Brink inquired about the timeframe for parents to be notified of test results and contingency plans (*Mrs. Walker replied: as the information comes in it will be shared with parents and only the notification of the River Plaza results are pending*).
- Kathleen Brown a former Middletown teacher inquired about plans to improve HVAC units. (*Mrs. Doherty replied: once the immediate issues of mold and stabilizing the climate in the buildings are addressed, the replacement of HVAC units in elementary schools will be looked at*).
- Megan Callus inquired the species of mold found, and specific humidity levels as well as the cleaning of air vents (*Mrs. Doherty replied: all of this will be included in results of testing*).
- Jason Nadal inquired when and what format the mold test results would be published as well as if causal results would be included (*Mrs. Doherty replied: that is undetermined at this time*).
- Laura Abt inquired about hiring additional resources to speed up the remediation of mold to accommodate the start of schools and asked for the date the mold was first reported (*Mrs. Doherty replied: first reports were made in late August*).
- Amanda Asterita asked if there is any concern for the health of students and staff who had been in the buildings where mold was identified (*Mrs. Doherty replied: summer programs ended a few weeks ago and the mold was not present at that time and mold develop in about 36 hours*).
- Mithra Busler commented on allowing future public participation via Zoom. (*Mrs. Minnuies replied: there is no plan to use Zoom at this time*).
- Kathy Rozza commented on allowing public participation via Zoom and Board members wearing masks.
- Kathleen Brown asked about mitigation of failing HVAC units and their filters and Zoom participation. (*Mr. Cahill explained the work order process, maintenance schedules and quarterly filter replacements*).
- Stacey Jones inquired about the timeframe required for remediation (*Mrs. Doherty replied: additional remediation teams would be added as necessary*).
- Allison Sompta inquired about the root cause of the mold (*Mrs. Doherty replied: moisture levels in the buildings due to high humidity promotes the growth of mold*).
- Rich Liebeck asked if testing would include measuring humidity and moisture in the classrooms. (*Mrs. Doherty replied: yes, the air is being tested*).
- Carrie Barreiro asked if dehumidifiers would be permanent in classrooms and for continued public participation via Zoom be allowed. (*Mrs. Doherty replied: current units are portable and will be used when and where required*).
- Lauren Abramson asked if all of the facts of the projected expenses for mold testing and remediation have been provided and where the funds to pay for it were coming from. (*Mrs. Doherty replied: billing by the vendor is hourly. The maintenance reserve of about \$500,000 can be used as well as filing a claim with our insurance. Mrs. Walker explained that we are providing the facts, as we know them*).
- Melissa Gissubel asked why the schools where mold was not found could not be occupied and if masks are sufficient protection for students and staff (*Mrs. Walker replied that testing is in process of all schools and that masks do help*).
- Jesse Wade asked if shutting the HVAC units down and simply running the fans alone would reduce the levels of condensation and thereby humidity also if the Covid compliant filters are not allowing sufficient air flow. (*Mrs. Doherty replied: the filters in use are the filters specified for our systems and HVAC operation is being reviewed for shutoff set points as well as maintaining temperature and humidity*).
- Raquel Manning inquired about availability of contingency plans for school starting 9/13/21 (*Mrs. Walker replied: as soon as we know what we are dealing with the plans will be made public*).
- Suzanne Siegler asked if Kindergarten orientation is a priority (*Mrs. Walker replied: yes*).
- Joe Gerace commented on the use of Zoom for future public participation.
- Lauren Andersen asked for clarification of the chain of command for reporting mold/moisture and requested Zoom be used for future public participation (*Mr. Cahill replied: teacher should*

report problem to school custodian and principal then can escalate directly to himself or a facilities supervisor).

- Pamela Villano asked if the district needs permission to start remotely if students are unable to return to school buildings as planned (*Mrs. Walker replied: the local health department would have to declare a state of emergency and it would require a minimum 3 day delay*).

9. **Motion to Adjourn meeting at 10:46 p.m.** – motion made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mrs. Caminiti to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted



Amy P. Doherty

APD/tn
September 27, 2021