

PARK RIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 20, 2021

Public Started: 6:00 P.M.

Public Ended: 7:00 P.M.

High School Little Theater

I. Roll Call

N. Triano	J. Pierotti	N. Agoos	L. Sum	D. Clare	A. Wagner	D. Bradler
X	A	A	X	X	X	X

Also Present:

R. Gamper	R. Wright
X	X

II. Pledge of Allegiance – was led by Board President, David Bradler.

III. Open Public Meetings Statement – was read by Board President, David Bradler.

This is to advise the general public and to instruct that it be recorded in the minutes that in compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, entitled the "Open Public Meetings Act," the Park Ridge Board of Education on December 17, 2021 caused to be posted at the Office of the Board of Education located at 85 Pascack Road, Park Ridge, New Jersey and on December 17, 2021 sent to The Record, 1 Garret Mountain Plaza, P.O. Box 471, Woodland Park, NJ 07424-0471 and The Ridgewood News, 41 Oak Street, Ridgewood, NJ 07450-3805 and on December 17, 2021 delivered to the Office of the Municipal Clerk of Park Ridge and the Park Ridge Public Library a meeting notice setting forth the time, date and location of this meeting.

IV. EDUCATION DISCUSSION

- A. The purpose of the special meeting is for the public to review and comment on the 2022-23 Park Ridge - Emerson Cooperative Agreement for football, cheerleading and marching band.

The Board distributed copies of the Co-op agreement for the public to view. Dr. Gamper recapped what had transpired to date. In September, the district received a request from Emerson to add Football to their co-operative agreement. A decision was made to wait until the Football season ended before making this request public. Several meetings have taken place with Emerson officials, district stakeholders and the public. Based on the feedback received, an agreement was created. Dr. Gamper thanked Mr. Bradler, Ms. Wagner and Ms. Agoos for the help in developing the document. The next step is for the agreement to be voted on by both districts. Dr. Gamper then opened the meeting to public questions and comments.

V. Hearing of Citizens

A resident asked if the agreement was set or open. An example given was how transportation would be handled. Dr. Gamper said that any item not specifically addressed in the agreement would be left up to the Athletic Directors to decide what is best.

A resident asked if the current uniforms could be upgraded. She felt there were safety concerns. Dr. Gamper responded that any safety upgrades that are needed will be taken care of first. With regards to uniforms, in 2022, they will use our uniforms. Emerson will pay for an incremental cost. In 2023, any change would cost Emerson 75% of the cost. After that it would be a 50/50 split.

A resident pointed out that the current helmets being used are not always the best and felt there was no reason for kids not to have best helmet. Dr. Gamper indicated he would speak to Mr. Brown about the issue.

A resident asked about where home games would be played. Dr. Gamper responded that the only home game at Emerson will be for their senior day. All others would be played at Park Ridge.

A resident asked about practices. She felt all practices and scrimmages should be held at Park Ridge. Dr. Gamper indicated that they would be.

The resident followed up by asking if that would push the practice time later. Dr. Gamper indicated that it would.

A resident asked if there were any talks about coaches not returning. Dr. Gamper stated there were not.

SM 122021

A resident asked if numbers increased and more coaches were needed, if Park Ridge would have to pay for those salaries. Dr. Gamper responded that any additional coaches would be selected by Park Ridge but paid for by Emerson.

A resident asked if salary increases were Park Ridge's responsibility. Dr. Gamper stated that it was, but all stipends are tied into the teacher's bargaining agreement and need to be negotiated.

A resident asked if there would be any changes to the coaching structure due to the increase in numbers. Dr. Gamper responded that the district would hire the appropriate number of staff to safely run the programs.

A resident asked if staffing would fluctuate based on numbers. Dr. Gamper responded that the district will hire based on the numbers they have now. Once established, it will not be an up and down process and teams will not be asking to reduce staffing.

A resident asked if future scheduling was discussed. Dr. Gamper responded that while Emerson agreed to the one day at home for now, it is hard to speak what will happen in future years. He stated that for the foreseeable future, home games will be at Park Ridge.

A resident asked if this could be a clause in the contract. Dr. Gamper stated that it is something they can entertain for next year. He pointed out that such an agreement could flip-flop over the years, based on numbers.

A resident asked if either party can withdraw from the agreement. Dr. Gamper responded that they could. It is a one-year agreement, but it stands, unless one party decides to change it.

A resident commented that she has kids who will be seniors in two years and wants to make sure they will play their games in Park Ridge.

A resident commented that over the past 30 years, the High School wrestling co-op with Emerson has not changed. When Emerson came to Park Ridge to co-op for their younger kids, they started asking for more things. He wanted to make sure that things do not shift with this agreement.

A resident pointed out that the wrestling co-op has been going on for a long time but Park Ridge only received their first home match ten years ago. Feels that Emerson is being pushy in their first year of this co-op by making demands. Dr. Gamper responded that he understands the sentiment being expressed and reminded everyone that the Board would have to agree to any changes in this agreement.

A resident pointed out other examples of difficulties they have been having with the younger student co-ops and warned of potential issues down the road.

A resident asked if the public would be invited back to discuss any contract changes/renewals. Dr. Gamper stated that the Board is always open to having people attend the meetings.

A resident asked why Emerson is in this position. Dr. Gamper responded that they had not been given a lot of detail on why this happened.

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A resident asked if practices and scrimmages were covered under the wording on scheduling. Dr. Gamper indicated that the current wording is open-ended.

The resident followed up that the agreement does not mention anything about termination. Dr. Gamper pointed out that on Page 6, it states that terms remain in effect until a new agreement can be reached. He also stated that the agreement can be terminated based on a conversation he had with the Board attorney.

Ms. Wagner questioned whether a termination clause was reviewed by our attorney.

Ms. Sum responded that the committee was told it could withdraw at any point during agreement.

Mr. Lederman followed up saying there was a State level agreement that allows for that.

A resident cautioned the Board to be careful on how much we give up front.

A resident asked if Emerson requested anything other than uniform changes and field usage. Dr. Gamper responded that the district did not give them leeway to discuss other items such as Coaches.

A resident asked about uniform re-designs and what happens if co-op does not work out. Dr. Gamper indicated that any re-design would be up to the directors to decide.

A resident asked if there was any mention of the 2023 season. They expressed concern that more may be requested from Emerson. Dr. Gamper indicated that while it was possible there have not been any discussions on that. They are more focused on an agreement that both sides can live with.

A resident asked why the agreement could not include a clause stating that Emerson would not get more than one home game in 2023-24. Dr. Gamper stated that everything currently in the agreement stays unless a new agreement is reached. The current wording was designed to be something both sides would agree to. He pointed out that the Board would need to approve any changes and they represent the interests of Park Ridge.

A resident stated that they disagreed with giving up the one Home game.

A resident commented that Coach Curry was very quick to offer a concession and felt that should not have happened. She felt we should lock in the terms for the 2023-24 season.

A resident observed that based on the numbers, Park Ridge should not be caving into their requests. Home games should remain in Park Ridge. He felt there was no reason that a clause could not be put in. You could add wording that if numbers change then can be revisited. Dr. Gamper agreed with the sentiment and stated that while it is not in this agreement, it could be in future agreements.

Ms. Wagner asked if the contract wording could be changed. Dr. Gamper responded that they were on a tight timeline and Emerson has no intention of changing it. He also reminded her that the league still needs to approve it.

SM 122021

A resident stated that last time the Board met with the public, the sentiment was that the district should have all games held here. He asked why this was not addressed in the contract. He felt that giving Emerson the Senior day should be enough, and all remaining games should be put in the agreement as being held at Park Ridge.

Mr. Bradler responded that the Board has no intention of giving anything up. The Board knows how important this is to parents and as such will advocate for them in any discussions moving forward.

A resident asked if anyone asked the players what they want. At this request, several students in attendance raised their hands. It was noted that all the football players present were in agreement that the co-op should happen.

A resident then asked about team Captains. Dr. Gamper indicated that was something that was not discussed and would be left up to the coaches and AD's.

A resident expressed frustration that while they were given an opportunity to make comments, apparently nothing could be changed. She commented that she did not understand what the point of the meeting was.

Mr. Bradler thanked everyone for their comments and for coming out.

VI. Adjournment – 7:00 pm

M: DC S: LS
NT JP NA LS DC AW DB
Y A A Y Y Y Y

Robert Wright
Business Administrator/Board Secretary