

The reorganization meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on January 6, 2022, at the New Providence High School/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, by the Board Secretary/School Business Administrator, James Testa.

Mr. Testa led in the salute to the flag.

Mr. Testa read the following statement:

This is a public meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with PL 1975, Chapter 231, in that an actual notice was made in conformance with Section 13 of the Act.

Whenever the business of the Board requires it to convene to Closed session, the session will begin no later than 9:30 p.m. At the conclusion of the need for Closed Session, the Board will reconvene to the public portion of the meeting. At that time, the Board will complete any other business that may be before it and the public will then be given an opportunity to be heard before the meeting is adjourned.

Mr. Testa welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated that tonight’s meeting is the Board of Education Reorganization meeting. As the Board Secretary, he will run the meeting until a Board President is elected by the Board.

**OATH of OFFICE ADMINISTERED**

Mr. Testa swore in Mrs. Coniglio, Mrs. Gunderman and Mrs. Killea.

**ROLL CALL**

Present on roll call were Rebecca Coniglio, Stacey Gunderman, Jennifer Killea, Amanda Marano, and Mary Misiukiewicz. Also present were Dr. David Miceli, Superintendent of Schools; James E. Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; John Richter, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Supervision; thirteen (13) members of the public.

**ELECTION RESULTS**

Mr. Testa reported on the November 2, 2021 School Board Election Results:

Three members were elected for three year terms

Rebecca Coniglio	<u>2,684</u>
Stacey Gunderman	<u>712</u>
Jennifer Killea	<u>2,775</u>
Total Votes Cast:	<u>4,834</u>
Total Number of Registered Voters:	<u>9,790</u>

**BOARD SECRETARY OPENS NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

Mr. Testa opened the nominations for the office of President of the Board of Education:

Mrs. Coniglio nominated Mrs. Misiukiewicz for the office of the President of the Board of Education. The nomination was seconded by Mrs. Marano. No additional nominations were made and Mr. Testa declared the nominations closed. The nomination was carried on the following vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Coniglio
<u>Absent</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Killea
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Misiukiewicz
<u>Absent</u>	Mr. Walsh

Mr. Testa congratulated Mrs. Misiukiewicz on her nomination and approval as Board President. Mrs. Misiukiewicz thanked the Board for the nomination and their support. Mrs. Misiukiewicz said she is heading into her eighth year as a Board member and her second year as Board President. Mrs. Misiukiewicz, who was born and raised in New Providence, noted that she feels fortunate that she had the opportunity to raise and educate her children here. She is honored to be a member of the Board of Education and to be able to work alongside Dr. Miceli and his team.

Mrs. Misiukiewicz also wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed everyone to the Reorganization meeting. She congratulated Mrs. Coniglio, Mrs. Gunderman and Mrs. Killea. She hoped everyone's holidays and winter break proved to be healthy and restful despite the Omicron variant that is looming in the state and nation. She wished the students a year full of success both inside and outside the classroom.

Mrs. Misiukiewicz, on behalf of the Board, expressed gratitude to Dr. Miceli, his administrative team, the nurses and the entire New Providence School District staff for guiding the Board and setting up the next steps for the weeks to come. The staff and administration have spent an inordinate amount of time planning for the students' success in these unprecedented times. Dr. Miceli has continually put the needs of the students first and focused on the best interests of the students. The Omicron variant came on the heels of four uninterrupted months of in-classroom instruction, which is the longest in school time since March of 2020. The staff has indicated that these four months have been tremendous in making strides and growth for students. All the mitigation factors that have been put into place in addition to testing, vaccines, boosters, and antiviral drugs have allowed the schools to remain open for in person instruction.

Mrs. Misiukiewicz thanked the administrative team and the Board of Education for reading each and every email that was received. Currently 84% of the entire student body is in school and fortunately, the District has not experienced any staffing issues. She thanked the teachers who have covered for each other, made in person instruction happen and provided instruction via Zoom. Dr. Miceli and his team continue to weigh the advantages of in-person learning and the importance of physical, social and emotional growth versus interrupting the educational process. The greatest measure of the staff's success is seeing the students thrive and persevere through the most difficult times.

Mrs. Misiukiewicz read some emails that the Board received over the past few weeks which acknowledged the District's hard work and dedication to keep school open for full in person instruction. The parent in the first email she read stated that he/she felt proud and fortunate to be part of the District and was impressed by the courage, transparency and commitment to excellence in providing the best educational program possible. Another email stated that despite the pandemic, the parent felt the primary goal of schooling in America has remained the same as it has been during "normal" times. The last email was from a single parent who mentioned that her kids thrive in school and thanked the entire administration for keeping the schools open.

Mrs. Misiukiewicz recognized that if it becomes impossible to keep the schools fully open due to staffing or other forces beyond their control, the team will reevaluate and weigh the options to make the necessary adjustments. The goal remains to provide as much in person normalized instruction as possible.

**BOARD PRESIDENT OPENS NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICE OF VICE-PRESIDENT**

Mrs. Coniglio nominated Mrs. Cuccaro for the office of Vice-President of the Board of Education. Mrs. Killea seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations and Mrs. Misiukiewicz declared the nominations closed. The nomination was carried on the following vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Coniglio
<u>Absent</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Killea
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Misiukiewicz
<u>Absent</u>	Mr. Walsh

**2022 COMMITTEE and BOARD REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS**

Mrs. Misiukiewicz announced the following Committee and Board Representative assignments:

**Curriculum, Instruction and Technology Committee:**

Rebecca Coniglio, Chairperson  
 Stacey Gunderman  
 Amanda Marano

**Finance, Facilities, and Safety/Security Committee:**

Joseph Walsh, Chairperson  
 Jennifer Killea  
 Amanda Marano

**Personnel, Management and Communication Committee:**

Bernadette Cuccaro, Chairperson  
 Rebecca Coniglio  
 Joe Walsh

**Board Representatives:**

Union County School Boards Association:	Bernadette Cuccaro
Union County Educational Services Commission:	Stacey Gunderman
New Jersey School Boards Association:	Mary Misiukiewicz
New Providence Alliance:	Rebecca Coniglio
Morris-Union Jointure Commission:	Dr. David Miceli

New Providence Education Foundation: Jennifer Killea

New Providence Borough Council: Amanda Marano

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

Mrs. Misiukiewicz, Board President, opened the meeting to public comments at 7:18 p.m. and reminded the public to limit their comments to two minutes and to state their name and address.

#### **Daniel Chen, 19 Pine Way**

Mr. Chen said that everyone cares about the quality of the education but this is a very unique moment that affects a variety of households. At this moment, a one size fits all approach does not work. There is value in offering options for those unique situations and a mutual solution can be found.

#### **Amy Mascarina, 29 Whitewood Drive**

Ms. Mascarina noted that she was speaking on behalf of two families who were not able to attend. First, she read a statement from Dr. Sue Wang, 19 Pine Way. If the goal is quality education, the remote learning option should be available to offer an equitable safe learning environment. It is not so difficult to have Zoom as an option. If families do not feel comfortable sending their children to school, the children should not be penalized because they do not meet the remote learning requirements. The children need to be protected. She added that teachers are covering for each other during the day and there are a lot of substitute teachers teaching class. A virtual option should be offered. The District should trust families to make the best decision for their children. The remote option does not have to be permanent but should be offered.

Mrs. Mascarina also read a statement from David Aguilar, 3 Spring Floral Drive. Mr. Aguilar stated that his family were all vaccinated but were currently in quarantine because of Covid. He would like to have a choice between remote or in person learning. He would like the District to be more proactive. Not having a remote learning option causes a lot of anxiety for families. Providing a virtual option could save lives.

Mrs. Mascarina added her own comment that she would like to see an option for virtual learning. It would not have to be a permanent solution.

#### **Dr. Kristen Empson Hayden, 143 Crane Circle**

Dr. Hayden works in the medical field and has seen the first hand effects of Covid on her patients. She stated the District should be using accurate data moving forward and noted that pediatric hospitalizations are up three times since the pandemic began. While the daily updates are helpful, she would like to see better communication. To date, she has only been able to make day to day decisions about the safety of her child. The District is two years into the pandemic and parents are still in the dark and that is unacceptable. Districts, some smaller than ours with less resources, have specific protocols and policies in place. She would like to have a better understanding of the metrics of how things are tracked and have a better policy in place to include benchmarks and thresholds. She asked what the benchmarks are and what are the plans if those benchmarks are hit. When those benchmarks are hit, what is the communication plan to parents? What does the positivity rate have to be to go to a hybrid option or a fully remote option? The positivity rate at AWR is at 17% and the lack of staff and substitutes impacts the quality of education.

#### **Mr. Peter Springer, 109 Tall Oaks Drive**

Mr. Springer said he was excited to have Mrs. Gunderman on the Board of Education. Mr. Springer stated he was there to talk about the ongoing communication between the Board, Dr. Miceli and the community. According to

the New Jersey School Board Association, the role of the Board and Superintendent is to represent the concerns of the citizens. He believes the Board can do much better. Members of the community have valid concerns that are not heard. The Safer Schools for New Providence group created a petition which was signed by 340 residents. The group asked to partner with the District to fundraise or help in any other way and received no response from the Board. Last Sunday the group sent a letter with 56 signatures, asking for schools to stay open but with a temporary remote learning option. The Board of Education did not respond to the letter. He said the deepest concerns are going into a void. He feels that the Board has communication challenges. He also found it ironic that Mrs. Misiukiewicz only shared letters of praise but none of the concerns that he had. He said it would be meaningful if the Board and Dr. Miceli would respond to those who disagree with them.

**Ms. Laura Castellano, 139 Madison Avenue**

Ms. Castellano thanked the Board, Dr. Miceli and the staff for keeping the schools open. Her children have benefited tremendously from being at school, having lunch with their friends and participating in school activities.

**Ms. Jessica Short, 221 Elkwood Avenue**

Ms. Short congratulated Mrs. Misiukiewicz on her reelection as president of the Board. She thanked the Board, administration and staff for all the work they have done to enable a full day in-person instruction. The remote option was not successful for her children last year. The full day in person instruction has been more successful for her family.

Mrs. Misiukiewicz, Board President, declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 7:35 p.m.

**MOTION TO RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION**

Mrs. Coniglio moved to adopt the following resolution:

This body shall on January 6, 2022 in the New Providence High/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, discuss in closed session, pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Meetings Act, specific matters which may be generally described as follows:

Legal - Board Training

Student Matters related to Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

The minutes of the discussion in closed session of the aforementioned matters may be disclosed to the public after final determination of action has been reached.

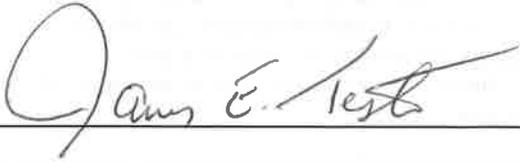
Mrs. Marano seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

**RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION**

The Board reconvened to a public session at 8:35 p.m. Mrs. Misiukiewicz called the Board to order. Members present were Mrs. Coniglio, Mrs. Gundermanm, Mrs. Killea, Mrs. Marano, and Mrs. Misiukiewicz.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business before the Board, on a motion by Mrs Killea, seconded by Mrs. Marano, and carried unanimously, Mrs. Misiukiewicz declared the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.



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James E. Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary  
1/06/2022 Board Meeting