

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Pascack Valley Regional High School District**

February 22, 2021

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held on Monday,  
February 22, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. in the Pascack Valley High School Cafeteria and Zoom  
Webinar – <hyperlink to follow>

**Special Note: N.J.S.A. 10:4-8b authorizes local units to conduct public hearings through the use of streaming services and other online meeting platforms in certain circumstances. Therefore, in light of the public health emergency, the board of education will hold its regular meeting in a hybrid manner. The district website contains information on public participation.**

Meeting Regulations

During this regular meeting, two opportunities are provided for citizens to ask questions and to make comments. During the first opportunity, early on the agenda, comments are invited. The second opportunity will occur just prior to adjournment, when residents may address general comments to the Board with time limits being at the discretion of the President.

Persons wishing to speak must, upon being recognized, rise and state their name and address. The Board reserves the right to establish rules for the conduct of its meetings, including such matters as the time at which the public will be heard, if at all, who may speak, and for how long. All such rules shall be monitored by the President unless the majority of the Board present and voting, rule otherwise.

Comments and questions shall be limited to issues. If personal remarks or discourteous statements are made, the presiding officer shall require the speaker to sit down.

To inspect or obtain a copy of any public record required to be made available under N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1, Examination and Copies of Public Records, please contact Mr. Yas Usami, 28 West Grand Avenue, Montvale, NJ 07645.

*Copies of all public meeting agendas are online on the district website:  
<http://www.pascack.org>*

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Ms. Tammy Molinelli, President  
Ms. Janet Bissinger, Vice President  
Mr. Joseph Blundo  
Dr. Kelly Blundy  
Mr. Michael Fronte  
Mrs. Kristin Martin  
Mr. James Stankus  
Mrs. Gini Varghese  
Mr. Michael Weaver

Dr. P. Erik Gundersen, Superintendent  
Mr. Yas Usami, Business Administrator/Board Secretary  
Student Representatives: Aria Chalileh– PHHS; Connor Flinn – PVHS  
Ms. Claudia Gibbs, Administrative Assistant to Superintendent

**II. FLAG SALUTE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Ms. Molinelli led all those present in a salute to the flag.

**III. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRESIDING OFFICER**

Both adequate and electronic notice of this meeting has been provided, specifying the time, place, and manner in which such notice was provided and by mailing copies of said notice to The Record, filing copies of said notice with the municipal clerks of Hillsdale, Montvale, River Vale, and Woodcliff Lake, and publishing said notice in The Record on May 29, 2020 and October 23, 2020.

There are two opportunities for the public to make comments, and when meetings are held in a hybrid or remote manner, there are two methods to comment:

1. Persons attending the public meeting, wishing to speak must, upon being recognized, rise, approach the podium and state their name and address.
2. Persons in attendance via the online streaming service, Zoom, may indicate their wish to speak when prompted by clicking the “Raise Hand” button on their screen, or if accessing by phone, by pushing \*9. You will need to unmute yourself to speak by clicking the microphone button on the screen.

**IV. ROUTINE MATTERS**

Monthly Reports

Superintendent’s Report: Dr. P. Erik Gundersen – [report](#)  
Student Reports: Aria Chalileh – Pascack Hills High School – [report](#)  
Connor Flinn – Pascack Valley High School – [report](#)

Dr. Gundersen congratulated Aria for her accomplishment and Sean Cuffe’s service to the military academy. He commented on the co-curricular activities and community services moving ahead despite the circumstances. He noted the awards achieved by the Trailblazer and PV student publication.

One Agenda Item

**1. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the following Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education minutes:

February 8, 2021	<a href="#">Regular Meeting</a>	7:30 p.m.
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## **VI. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Citizens are invited to make comments regarding agenda items and are limited to five minutes, according to the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education policy number 0167. Persons wishing to speak must, upon being recognized, rise and state their name and address.

Carolee Adams of Montvale thanked Dr. Gundersen for answering her question about insurance for hacking. She asked about a rationale statement for the presentation of selecting a mascot name. She mentioned that Vasili indicated in the video that the committee was told to put their beliefs aside. She would like to know who told the committee to put their beliefs aside. Ms. Adams asked what percent of students will be considered a majority.

Dr. Gundersen asked if the rationale she is seeking is in regards to selecting three choices. He indicated that the choices will be presented to the students and staff tomorrow. The students of the committee will present the rationale for the selections at the March 8 meeting. Dr. Gundersen said he did not want to comment on what someone else may have said especially not knowing the context. He indicated that the committee, athletic directors and principals determine the number of student votes needed for selection. He would imagine that a majority of the students will vote, if not all, and will be determined by those who vote.

Councilman Chris Roche of Montvale asked about the KSI consultant in resolution #4. He asked if this ventilation project will be funded with the savings from the unused funds that were mentioned at the last meeting. He asked if this was something budgeted in the past. He mentioned that the town has lost revenue due to COVID. Residents are out of jobs and businesses are suffering. He asked about a flat budget instead of the 3.1% increase that was mentioned for next year.

Mr. Usami responded that the project is in the 2021-2022 proposed budget using capital reserve. The savings in this budget from athletics and transportation would go towards the mascot signage, logo and other related items. He indicated that funds cannot be carried over to the next year. Funds must go into reserve accounts or as excess surplus in future budget to relieve the tax burden.

Jennifer Wikfors of Montvale asked if students will be following an 8 period academic schedule or back to 7 periods.

Dr. Gundersen replied that it has not been determined. He said the concept of an 8<sup>th</sup> period has been discussed with the curriculum and finance committees. He indicated that students needed to select courses for next year and there is a possibility of an 8<sup>th</sup> period. He is hopeful, but it's not definite if another course may be offered or a Pascack Period that students may elect to take.

Mike Zaretsky of River Vale asked if students don't vote on the mascot then what would Dr. Gundersen take from that if only 40-60% of the students vote. Mr. Zaretsky asked this question a few times. He added that not all students were included in the process and that only a handful of students were involved with the process. Mr. Zaretsky asked if students don't vote then would it be taken as a vote against the process.

Dr. Gundersen said that the voting is open all students and if students elect not to vote then they don't vote.

Ms. Molinelli added that the selection will be based on 51% of the student body voting for a particular mascot. The choice will be brought to the Board for a vote.

## VII. EDUCATION

Consent Agenda for Items 1 – 4

### 1. SAT Prep

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the following teachers for the district's evening SAT prep course for 2020-2021:

Name	Amount
Brett Conrad	\$2,000 per 9 week session x 2 = \$4,000 - Verbal
Katlyn Lewis	\$2,000 per 9 week session x 2 = \$4,000 - Math
Kate Overgaard	\$2,000 per 9 week session x 2 = \$4,000 - Verbal
Christina Rossi-Oosting	\$2,000 per 9 week session x 2 = \$4,000 - Math

### 2. Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (modified)

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Level 1 services for student ID #811696 for the total cost of \$1,205.94 for the 2020-2021 school year, beginning on January 8, 2021.

### 3. Bedside/Home/Supplemental Instruction

- a. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve bedside tutoring for student ID #811571 admitted to High Focus Center, Glassboro, NJ on January 20, 2021. Services were provided by the facility based on 20 hours per week at \$55 per hour through January 21, 2021.
- b. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve home instruction provided by board approved home instructors for student ID #811571 beginning January 22, 2021 for the following subjects: biology, concert band, English, history, Italian, and physical education.
- c. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve home instruction provided by board approved home instructors for student ID #811696 beginning January 19, 2021 for the following subjects: biology, English, history, physical education, and Spanish.





**IX. FINANCE**

Consent Agenda Items 1 - 5

**1. Approval of Bills**

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve bills as follows:

Budget Expenditures as of February 22, 2021	\$1,272,636.30
Payroll as of February 15, 2021	\$1,705,942.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,978,578.88</b>

**2. Use of Title I-A Funds under ESEA**

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the use of ESEA Title 1-A funds for the following teachers to provide translation support to Pascack Valley ELL students at a rate of \$65 per hour.

Dorely Leal-Drago	Debbie Yao	Ivica Kanova
Teresa DelGiudice	Vanessa Martinez	

**3. Donation**

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent accept the following donation:

Date	Donor	Donation	Club or Group
2/17/21	Ms. Antoinette Colletti	Alesis Professional Six-Piece Electronic Drum Set	PV Band & Music Program

**4. Approve KSI Consulting Engineers, LLC Proposal for the HVAC/Filtration Upgrade Projects at Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley High Schools**

**RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education at the recommendation of the Superintendent, approves the proposal from KSI Consulting Engineers, LLC in the amount of \$45,500 for engineering design services related to the HVAC/Filtration Upgrade Projects at Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley High Schools.

**5. Transportation – Aid-in-Lieu Reimbursement for the 1<sup>st</sup> Semester during 2020-2021 School Year for Non-Profit Private School Parents**

**WHEREAS**, Pursuant to 18A:39-11, The Pascack Valley Regional High School District, on behalf of the Hillsdale, Montvale, River Vale, and Woodcliff Lake Boards of Education, shall provide transportation bids through a (CTSA) Coordinated Transportation Service Agency, invoice the districts, and make payments on their behalf for elementary students attending non-profit private schools in the amount of \$29,307.00; and





Dr. Gundersen said they are planning to have as many normal activities as possible.

Mr. Blundo indicated if things don't get worse he asked if graduation will be on a normal schedule, outside and at least two tickets per student depending on restrictions.

Dr. Gundersen confirmed and added that they would like to do as much as possible.

Mr. Weaver asked for an update on the Hills and Valley cheer teams. He asked if the Hills students were given an opportunity to join the Valley team and how many students will join the Valley team.

Dr. Gundersen said that the athletic directors petitioned the conference and they were allowed to merge due to the total number of competitors. He indicated that he did not have the number of Hills students who will join the Valley team, but he will share it later.

Mr. Weaver said it was important that he share his thoughts on the mascot. He believes we should move on from the idea of a mascot. He indicated that the student reps did an exceptional job reporting and asking what is in a name. He wished the Board would take more time to determine what is a mascot and do we really need one. He mentioned teams without mascots like the national teams that are referred to as the United States gymnastics team, women's basketball team or women's swim team. He said he did not associate the women's soccer team and what they did for the sport in the mid to late 90's with a mascot. He only thought about the players on the team. He mentioned the Washington Football Team whose coach battled cancer and a starting quarterback who underwent 17 surgeries over two years and led them to the playoffs. He said that parents of Hills and Valley fall and winter sports teams did not feel that the teams struggled with identity. He mentioned reading an interview with Doug Williams who was the first black QB to start and win a Super Bowl in 1987. He was asked his thoughts about a Washington mascot. Mr. Williams now an executive for the team indicated that the city is more important than the mascot. He supports keeping the Washington Football Team moniker as the biggest thing that resonates is Washington. Mr. Weaver believes this is true for us. We are Pascack. He asked if 51% really represents the best interest to unite us. He said to refer to both schools as Pascack with an emphasis on Hills and Valley. He added the importance is the character of the students and not a lucky charm.

Mrs. Martin did not hear that Pascack (Hills or Valley) was an option. She would like to see that as an option. If this could be the choice then it may realize a cost savings.

Ms. Molinelli believed she heard that Valley did offer it as an option, but they did decide not to consider it. At Hills, they did not discuss it in detail. She added that a mascot or no mascot will not result in cost savings.

Mr. Weaver said a community criticism was that cost was not factored. He heard the position of the Board was that it wouldn't be a cost to the district and any cost would be phased in over time. He heard if there is a change then rebranding must be done at once to avoid any confusion. He indicated that talk in the summer was to phase in changes. If the district went to Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley then the Board could go back to the original thought of phasing in changes which would not cost as much as \$250,000-\$300,000 projection.

Dr. Gundersen said it was the Board decision to retire the mascots. The change could be phased over time. This was discussed with the Finance Committee and it was agreed that

savings this year from athletics, transportation and aid in lieu could be used. This would avoid any impact on future budgets.

Mr. Weaver said if there are new mascots then it probably makes sense to use the funds since they are available. If it's Hills and Valley then it could be phased in over time then a lot of the savings could be used to alleviate the tax burden for the upcoming year based on what Councilman Roche referenced.

Mr. Usami said a lot of the funds go into reserve accounts. The surplus cannot be carried over from year to year except in special revenue account. Capital projects can be carried over from year to year if projects are not completed. He mentioned that the excess surplus may be utilized, however the district is trying to reduce the excess surplus. He mentioned that the district's budget does not want to rely on excess surplus. Savings must be met in the budget otherwise cuts will need to be made. The plan is to slowly reduce the reliance on excess surplus which has been discussed with the auditor.

Mr. Weaver indicated that his opposition is not based on finance, although it's part of it. He said the focus is on the character of the students and highlights them as individuals and as teams.

Mr. Stankus said he has a daughter who is a senior. He commented that the student perspective is that they did not get to participate in events. The students have had things taken away or lost. He believes that selecting a mascot is something meaningful to the students. It's something to consider.

Mrs. Martin said her son is a senior and he desperately wants Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley. She said he did not know who the student reps were. He did not know where to go or who to speak to.

Mr. Blundo said the perception in the community is that the process was manipulated. He indicated that all students were not heard. He is not thrilled with the process. He mentioned that the process developed in October was not followed to a "T" as it went back and forth. He believes that if a lot of people do not vote then it sends a loud message. He mentioned that he respects what the students did and they did their best with what they were handed. He said that River Vale would not be happy if the Hawks is the choice since it's associated with Hillside. He did mention that the River Vale Middle School is known as the Hawks, but that River Vale is known as the Raiders.

Mrs. Martin asked if it's 51% of the student population or those who vote.

Dr. Gundersen said he will reach out to the athletic directors to get the specific mechanics of how the vote is tallied and determined.

## **XI. NEW BUSINESS**

None

## **XII. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Citizens are invited to make comments and are limited to five minutes, according to the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education policy number 0167. Persons wishing to speak must, upon being recognized, rise and state their name and address.

Carolee Adams of Montvale thanked Mr. Blundo for his comments. She believes the administration manipulated the process. She mentioned the flags at half-staff to honor Senator Gerald Cardinale. She said he was the main force in stopping a bill regarding an intrusive student survey that parents would not be aware that their children were taking. She also mentioned that he was opposed to recreational marijuana. A bill passed today where parents do not need to be informed if a minor child is in possession or high on marijuana. Ms. Adams indicated that the YouTube video may be accessed to view Vasili referencing that the committee should set aside their beliefs. She said that the student papers should look into the process and the rationale of the top three choices at both schools. She asked if the minutes could be available in advance of the meeting. She commented that we should be concerned about the finances. Ms. Adams added tongue in cheek that Ms. Molinelli should stop using the term “you guys” since it’s gender specific.

Ms. Molinelli admitted that she needs to break that habit and apologized.

Carina Duffy of River Vale who is the chair of Project Graduation for Pascack Valley asked if Dr. Gundersen and the Board are thinking about Project Graduation. She indicated that it takes a lot of time to prepare for the event and she would like to know if it will move forward.

Dr. Gundersen said that the district supports Safe Graduation. He indicated that the principals will reach out to the PFO and PFA to discuss how to be supportive.

Ms. Duffy commented that River Vale Middle School is known as the Hawks. She would like everyone to come to a consensus and move forward for the betterment of the school district and student body.

Mr. Blundo acknowledged the Hawks reference. However, he does not believe the Hawks represents the town. He said he will follow how the students vote.

### **XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Dr. Blundy to adjourn the public meeting at 8:47 p.m. Mrs. Martin seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

Respectfully,



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Yas Usami  
Business Administrator/ Board Secretary

Notice: With advance notice we can provide personal assistance for the disabled. Please contact 201-358-7005.