

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

Pascack Valley Regional High School District

March 8, 2021

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held on Monday, March 8, 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

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 22, 2021 [Regular Minutes](#) 7:30 p.m.

Moved by: Fronte Seconded by: Blundy

VOTE

Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P	Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P
Bissinger	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Molinelli	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blundo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stankus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blundy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Varghese	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fronte	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weaver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Martin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Dr. Gundersen praised Dr. Bachenheimer, Mr. deMarrais and Mr. Wieland for the work they had done in 2014 to initiate remote learning in the event of a snow day. He said the spirit of calculated risk taking at that time positioned the district for today's remote and hybrid learning. There were other virtual days after 2014 realizing this was an important experience and skill set for the students. Teachers improved their skills to teach virtually. Other hybrid classes such as financial literacy and virtual high school which was completely remote were introduced. Students could be prepared for remote learning classes in college and working remotely afterwards. Pascack Valley has led the way in remote learning. The district was invited to the U.S. Department of Education and discussed the work the district had done on this topic and Dr. Gundersen was among 100 superintendents invited to the White House to sign the first Connect Ed initiative. He added that the district was invited two other times for research and development symposiums.

V. PRESENTATIONS

Hybrid Learning Mid-Year Update:

Dr. Barry Bachenheimer – [outline](#)
Glenn deMarrais
Tim Wieland

Ms. Molinelli thanked and praised the administration and staff.

Mrs. Martin appreciated the extra hours that have gone into hybrid learning from the administrators, teachers, Mr. Zeller and his team, and especially the nurses who have gone above and beyond to have the students in school as much as possible.

Mr. Blundo commended everyone for the great job. He asked if the administration sees any possibility that all students will come back this school year.

Dr. Gundersen said it's very hard to predict what the governor will allow and does not want to make any promises. He said they are waiting for any word from the NJ Department of Education and NJ Department of Health that may allow the district to bring back more students or extend time students may be allowed in the buildings. He indicated that the district is committed to the six foot guidance issued by the NJ Department of Health.

Mr. deMarrais commented that 60%-65% of students at both schools are in-person, while checking with two districts of comparable size they are at 30%-35% in-person. This is why they may combine the cohorts. He indicated that there would be 147 classes at both schools with over 12 students if cohorts were combined.

Mrs. Martin mentioned that her district is combining cohorts on March 29. She said they are going from 6 feet to 4 feet distancing. She asked if there is a difference for K-8 and high schools or if this is something from the Board of Health.

Dr. Gundersen said that everything they do is in conjunction with the local health officials and Northwest Bergen Regional Health Commission. He indicated that he cannot comment on Mrs. Martin's district.

Mrs. Martin believes there is a difference between elementary schools and high schools since elementary students can stay in a classroom and teachers can be rotated and that does not work in a high school. She added that different boards of health also provide different direction in different areas.

Ms. Molinelli mentioned that with increased vaccinations the process may be expedited and the district would have the ability to get more students into the classrooms.

Mr. Weaver indicated that the community has children at all different grade levels. He received a survey from Montvale K-8 regarding middle schoolers. It asked if parents would consider sending students back at 6 feet or less. This led to parents of elementary students to ask what are the expectations of the high school since the schools are in the same town. He asked if parents were surveyed what options they would consider for their children going forward.

Ms. Molinelli said that the district leaves the safety to health professionals.

Dr. Gundersen added that the decisions are made with the recommendations of the local health officials and the NJ Department of Health guidelines. He said that the district has not asked for parental opinion of what they are comfortable with.

Mr. Weaver asked if the Montvale schools operate under a different department of health guidelines than the high school district. He added that this is what the community is asking. He indicated there is confusion about this since the schools are in the same town.

Dr. Gundersen indicated that three out of the four municipalities utilize Northwest Bergen Regional Health Commission. The district consults with the Montvale and Hillsdale health officials regularly since the schools are located in the two municipalities. The district does consult with the health officials in River Vale and Woodcliff Lake. He does not know why Montvale K-8 sent out the information/survey. Dr. Petersen should be consulted.

Mascot Committee Voting Results:

PHHS – Alexa Sipos and Jacob Levin – [report](#), Jacob not present

PVHS – Delia Collis and Vasili Karalewich – [report](#)

Vasili expressed his opinion on the process. He believed they represented the committee well, but not the school. He questioned whose choices of the mascot for selection and that they were given two days to decide on a mascot that would last decades. He said the students not on the committee were not heard. He believed they should have been surveyed. He commented that no matter the decision the process was not a waste of time since they learned valuable lessons. He would have spoken out about the process and made it more inclusive based on what he knows now. He indicated that 47% of all the

seniors voted for the panthers. He believed a survey at the start would have determined if this was the right direction. He asked why the school paper conducted a survey and they did not. He was grateful that he was asked and able to serve on the committee.

Delia emphasized that this was Vasili's opinion.

Mrs. Martin commented how proud she was with the students and the committee. She thanked Vasili for his bravery in expressing his feelings. She added that this was what she has been hearing from the community.

Mr. Blundo wanted the students to know that they did a phenomenal job with the hand they were dealt. He commended Vasili for speaking his mind knowing it was not easy. He thanked the committee for their efforts.

Dr. Blundy thanked the students and the committee. She commended them for their efforts and working together on a controversial topic. She also commended Vasili for expressing his feelings.

Mr. Weaver commended the students on their maturity and professionalism on how they presented in public when most adults would have difficulty. He added his thanks for what they had done.

Mr. Stankus thanked everybody for the great job as he realized there was a lot of work.

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.

Dena O'Brien of River Vale said her son was a senior last year and has another child who is a junior at Pascack Valley. She did not feel the process was inclusive of all students. She mentioned the Instagram account that was shut down due to a large number of people who were upset over the idea of doing away with the Indians since the 1950's. She asked why students were not surveyed last spring to express their opinion. She asked why the mascot needed to be changed and many in the community felt the same way.

Carolee Adams of Montvale honored her husband's legacy. He was a Pascack Valley Regional High School graduate and played tennis and baseball with his twin brother. He always did things the right way which is the title of a portrait of him with other scouts painted by Norman Rockwell. She commented that Dr. Gundersen and the former Board did not act the right way. She said they have created a divisiveness. She indicated that they acted in secret about the mascot change. Cowboys were indiscriminately removed on a knee jerk suggestion by a board member without consulting with the finance chair. She referenced in 2016 some of the board members voted down videotaping board meetings. Only a resolution proposed by Montvale and supported by Mr. Blundo did it take effect. She mentioned an email sent to two teachers in June to give supporters of name changers first consideration to speak. Others had to wait and others never got to speak. She mentioned that students were manipulated and beliefs were suppressed. She thanked Vasili for speaking out. She stated that there are no black panthers in NJ, but there is a population of Indians. She cited that broncos are male and not sexless. She

thought Valley and Hills was not exciting, but her thoughts changed as she mentioned an accomplishment by a girls' basketball player with Pascack Hills on her jersey that did not stop her from achieving her accomplishment.

Tim Wieland (Principal of Pascack Hills) of River Vale indicated that there was a buzz at Pascack Hills on the day of the vote. He mentioned that the committee selection process (facilitated by Mr. Paspalas, who is as Pascack Hills as a human being can be) mirrored that process of 57 years ago when the Cowboy was selected. He said the coach sent a video of the boys bowling team giving a 123 Broncos chant. He mentioned that he has received fund raising requests to have Broncos on shirts. Mr. Wieland would have agreed in July with not having a mascot for Hills. He heard from many alumni, students and staff who were upset about the removal of the Cowboy, but they wanted to know what was next. He spoke to seniors and other classes that they wanted to graduate with a mascot. He commented that no matter what how the Board votes, it will not change the pride at Hills or Valley. The pride is due to the student body, teachers, counselors, and support staff. Students voted (the Broncos) and it was as much of a mandate that they could get.

Anthony Oliva of Hillsdale and a graduate of Pascack Valley 1958 spoke on behalf of his classmates and many others. He asked why the voting has not been transparent and why did it not go out to the alumni especially those who initiated the Indian in a process that included everyone.

Dr. Gundersen said that the process has been transparent. At a public meeting on October 26, the athletic directors outlined the process to conform to the board goals for establishing mascots. The Board did not have opposition to that process.

Steve Frischer of Montvale thanked the Board and speakers for sharing all the details of an intensive and inclusive process. He said respect is owed to those students who spurred on the change. He commended them. He indicated a clarification that there are Native Americans in New Jersey, as well as Indians from the country of India.

Shirell Gross of River Vale recalled her time in middle school and being called a derogatory name towards African Americans when riding the bus. The students may or may not have known it was offensive, but it hurt her. The students now are doing something to make a change. She said to vote not to support an inclusive mascot would be a disservice to the entire community. She mentioned that students cannot go out in the real world with the behavior that they don't care if it's offensive. She mentioned that her son is 100% remote and he felt included and knew what was going on and he voted. She believed the process was fair and transparent. She said it's important for students to remember this experience and that they stood up for what is right.

Kiera Foster of Hillsdale and class president of Pascack Valley High School said she spoke last year in support of the removal of the mascot. She mentioned that it was racially insensitive and perpetuates a stereotype that is inaccurate and inappropriate. She believes there are better ways to honor Native Americans. She indicated that she will be proud to be the first graduating class with a new and inclusive mascot. She was proud and honored to serve on the selection committee and students had the opportunity to voice their opinions. She was disappointed to hear that people thought the process was not transparent and that students did not have an opportunity to speak up. She was proud

of the work by Delia Collis and thanked Mr. Buchanan. She added that she did not believe the process was rushed.

David Steinberg of Woodcliff Lake thanked the students representing the committees for their reports, time and hard work. He said they were very polished and that their parents should be proud of them. He thanked Dr. Gundersen and his staff for providing a platform for students to develop their skills. He indicated that he did things behind the scenes to have meetings aired. He mentioned that almost every year students go to meet Native Americans at Pine Ridge in South Dakota and were told not to wear any mascot clothing. What would happen if Native Americans of Pine Ridge came here. Would people take down signs (Save the Indian) or not wear mascot clothing. He mentioned on the University of Wyoming's website the university is trying to rebrand the Cowboy image. He believes the university is rebranding because the image is not inclusive. He mentioned in his community Asians are the second largest group, yet he has not seen an Asian cowboy.

Mr. Weaver indicated to Mr. Steinberg that he highlighted that the Board should have had the conversation about the Cowboy in June. The conversation about the Cowboy never took place. He mentioned that he has made his feelings known. The retirement of the Cowboy was an add on. We should accept it and he has accepted it. He is not here tonight nor last meeting advocating for the Cowboy. He indicated that people are not going to like hearing what he has to say which is he does not now or will not support in the future a return of the Cowboy or Indian as mascots. He said the damage has been done on both sides and they need to move on, but he added what do they move on to unite the community. He said this should be the focus of their conversations.

Tom Crowley said he started Pascack Valley High School in 1955 and their class started the Indian mascot. He and all of his friends are very disappointed that the Indian is being taken away. In high school, everyone in the surrounding area was afraid of the Indians. In 1961 the Pascack Valley Indians was in Sports Illustrated.

Will Frantin of River Vale said he and Mr. Crowley started Pascack Valley High School in 1955. They voted almost unanimously for the Indian. He mentioned that people are wrapped up on how words are used today. He did not believe that the Native Americans would object to the use of Indian. They viewed them as tough and a part of history. He indicated that history cannot be erased and said that there is a lot of bad history citing some examples. His class believed it was a good mascot and did not have any objections. Now, it's objectionable to a lot of people. He believes it's going in the wrong path. He indicated that many of the alumni have sent letters against the decision. He said they would like to see the voting processed tabled.

Lenore Stier of Hillsdale with current students in school. She said Vasili did an amazing job. She referred to the October 26 presentation where Mr. Paspalas said he did not want this to be done quickly and they want the kids to take their time to think this through. He mentioned that the election process could go on throughout the year. She said that Mr. Buchanan added that it could go on longer depending on how the process unfolds. She mentioned that the students only had two days to vote on choices in which they had no input. She indicated that both school papers reported that a majority of the students felt the process was unfair and rushed. They did not have a say or were not in favor of the

decision. She believes that the decision should wait until students are back in school which would then have more student involvement. She asked with only six meetings between January and February if that was enough time to get fair student representation. If there was no student survey then why wasn't a none of the above choice in the election.

Dr. Gundersen said the committee established the voting process in conjunction with the building administration. The timelines were dependent upon on what they felt would work best for the committees. The board and central administration were flexible on the time needed.

Alice Urbiel of Hillsdale said she supported the decision made by the students. She is a graduate of Pascack Valley (2014). She mentioned that this has been topic of discussion since she graduated. She said there were discussions in the summer and fall and it appeared to her that it was transparent. She said if people don't like the outcome or plan for it then the process was not democratic/transparent for something that needed to be done.

Eli Moallem of River Vale who has two graduates and two current students at Pascack Valley said first it was the Indian, then it's Dr. Seuss. He said it's getting ridiculous. He indicated that social justice costs taxpayers money. He mentioned that the students and parents have gone through quite a bit during this time and they deserve some recognition and appreciation as well. He indicated that he and his children do not feel like they have been included. He added, shouldn't the fact that there is this much feedback tell them it was not transparent. The focus should be on the well being of the students and this issue is not something the community needs right now. He said his family and others want to keep the Indian and it's nothing but honoring and respecting the Indian. It's upsetting people that history is being changed. The change will cost money. He would like the Board to own how much the process will cost the taxpayers. He loved having the students involved with the process, but it's not their money.

Dr. Gundersen said the costs have been discussed in previous meetings.

Jennifer Falkoff of River Vale thanked the Pascack Valley staff for going above and beyond everyday working with her son. She indicated the community feels the process was not transparent. If inclusivity is the objective then the community feels slighted. She referred to Vasili who acknowledged there were areas where they should have done better. She feels this discussion was borne from a politically charged climate. She said it was ludicrous to be rebranding at this time when students are not in school. Pascack Valley has always been a leader and they have an opportunity to set a precedent and not succumb to the cancel culture of canceling history. Do not rush to judgement. Rebranding is not necessary at this time.

Dr. Gundersen assured that the administration is dedicated to getting students back in school and making sure that students' needs are being met remotely and in-person. The mascot topic has taken a lot of the Board's time.

Delia Collis of Hillsdale emphasized that she is speaking as an individual and not a committee member. She said as a senior she is upset that people have said the process was rushed. She indicated her perspective may be different from other students since she served on the committee. She said she would love to graduate with a mascot. She

understands parents' concerns about taxes and financial concerns. She believes the financial aspect can be explained and it will be seamless.

Carolee Adams of Montvale indicated that she has two grandsons whose father is from Ghana. She is worried by Black Panther and this could be further divisive. She referred to what occurred on the Woodcliff Lake reservoir.

Dr. Gundersen indicated that the logo process is forthcoming depending on what the Board decides. The people who serve on the committee and the consultant will make sure the design of the logo will conform to the concept from the student committees.

Jessica Frohlich of River Vale echoed everything that was said. She thanked the students and understands Delia's frustration, but said that not all students were included. She indicated that people called in saying the process was not inclusive, so the selection should not move forward. She said she wants test scores and rankings up and not spending time on mascots. She had mentioned in a previous meeting that all students should vote. She believed that only athletics and clubs were part of the committee which is not inclusive. She said she is very disappointed.

Julie Metrione of Hillsdale a graduate of Pascack Valley 2014 read an excerpt from a Native American activist opposed to mascots. The point is that mascots are created on racist and stereotyped versions of the white man's interpretation of Native Americans.

Steven Bussanich of Hillsdale who is a senior at Pascack Valley thanked his peers and teachers for their work in the process. He indicated that the school paper had a survey with more than 70% of the 300 people who responded voted for none of the choices. He feels that the students should have more choices for such a crucial decision.

Michelle and Bob Ax of Hillsdale said they are in full support of the change. She indicated that the mascot is racist and divisive.

Allison Varghese of Hillsdale indicated that the survey results from the publication was unofficial. She said that anyone could vote and a person could vote multiple times.

VII. POLICY

1. A Resolution Requesting Governor Murphy to Include Public School District Personnel in the Official Expert Vaccine Allotment Panel's Definition of Frontline Workers

WHEREAS, the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education recognizes that the United States, the State of New Jersey and local health authorities, as well as the World Health Organization, have declared a public health emergency regarding the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the federal and state authorities have put in place guidance detailing the precautionary measures schools must implement to stop its spread of this disease; and

WHEREAS, public schools have a profound impact on millions of students, families and staff and are charged with the care, education, nourishment of their students and are an integral part of the health and safety of our communities; and

emotional, social, and academic wellbeing. The lasting effects maybe for years if not decades. Students need teachers to learn and some of them have risk factors. The Board supports a return to school and would like to see the vaccine readily available to any school employee who wants it. She indicated that CVS has administered flu vaccines at both schools over the years. She would like to see that for the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Gundersen has reached out to CVS and the local health commission about vaccinating our educators and staff at the schools.

Mr. Blundo said he is uncomfortable with the process. He indicated that the students did the best they could under the circumstances.

Motion to table Policy #2 Mascot Selection

Moved by: Blundo Seconded by: Martin

VOTE

Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P	Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P
Bissinger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Molinelli	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blundo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stankus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blundy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Varghese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fronte	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weaver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Martin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Dr. Blundy said she was not part of the original decision. She indicated on how will they move forward. She said there is disrespect towards the efforts of the students, staff and administration, however she would like to see all these efforts go towards health, wellness and academics. She mentioned that there is more negativity on this subject. She indicated that it's alright to take a pause and concentrate on getting students in school and focus on the well-being of the students and academics.

Ms. Bissinger said the Board should move forward and show support to the students to whom they asked to select a mascot.

Mr. Fronte mentioned that his family are all Pascack Valley alums. He indicated that he heard concerns that the process went a miss, but not intentionally. He mentioned that the Board must be hands off which is required by law. He indicated that he feels bad since no matter the decision there will be a lot of unhappy people. He mentioned that the former Board made the decision and committed to allow the students to decide. He believes they need to honor that and realizes that this puts the new members in a precarious spot. He said made the commitment to let Indian go which was very difficult for him and the commitment to let the students decide. He understands the passion of the alumni. He also feels the same about the Cowboy. He added that he understands times are different now than when he was a student.

Mrs. Martin indicated that it is important for the kids to decide, but the decision was not made by them and it's clear based on what they have heard from the student population. She thanked those who have sent emails to her as she understands the research and time put into them. She referred to the pandemic and the plight that many are facing and the time that has been spent on the mascot. She said the vast majority of students were not involved in the process which was supported by committee members. She believed it

was a select group of students who were selected for the committees and tactics were being used to manipulate what was spoken on matters. She brought up an email from a committee member who asked if a student survey could be sent with a none of the above option and the person was denied. She believes that to truly gauge student opinion then that should have been a choice or Valley and Hills. She referred to publication survey where 75% did not like any of the choices. She indicated that we did not listen to the students based on that vote. She referred to a publication survey on the process which she read some of the comments. The tone was negative regarding the process. She indicated that the focus should be on how to get the kids back to school safely, the 8th period option and expand trade programs. She strongly believes the schools should be identified as Valley and Hills and if there is an interest and a need for mascots then the topic could be revisited. The students will be defined by their character and not a cartoon character.

Mr. Stankus mentioned that this has been a divisive issue for the school community and the community. He said that we can move on or delay it. He has seen it go on for years. The decision was made in June and he agrees with Mr. Weaver that the decision was made and unfortunately the new members inherited the decision. He indicated that they heard from students who said it was unfair and not transparent and students who said it was fair. He does not want to take away from what students have done. He would like to move forward. He commented that the publication survey was not a valid poll since people could vote multiple times. He said we can be sure of the vote that took place. The number of students who voted and did not vote, and what was voted. He said he has to respect that. The student body voted and what does that say about those who voted. He said if the result is not favorable then argue the process and push it back again. He does not agree with that. It's time to move on.

Mrs. Varghese said she has kept an open mind on the subject. She has read emails that have been for and against the issue. She has heard from community members that they are mascot fatigued and they cannot understand that the Board is at odds on this topic when there are important issues in the midst of a pandemic. She wanted to see if a large majority voted before making her decision. She added that the publication survey was not valid since anyone could vote and anyone could vote multiple times. She indicated that 75+% of the eligible voters voted in the school mascot selection which is statistically significant. It would be ideal to have everyone eligible to vote, but that is unrealistic and it is wrong to assume that the 25% who chose to be heard by not voting. There is no way to know why they did not vote. If the results are disregarded with a process that took months then we're telling the students their vote did not matter and adults can overturn their decision. She added that it's impossible to satisfy or make everyone happy. The Board must do what they feel what is the best for the district. She would like to move forward and accept the result of the mascot selection vote and strive for a more transparent process in the future.

Mr. Weaver indicated that he has heard that students made the decision. He clarified that students do not make the decision, they make the recommendation. He indicated that the Board sets policy and this topic is about policy. He commented that with a process in place with a recommendation to move forward without examining the additional quantitative and qualitative data is just rubberstamping and compounding how flawed the

issue has been. He said that he did not believe any of the new board members ran because of the mascot, but was certainly asked about it. It was a main focus of the community and possibly why there are four new board members. He said that a former board member to comment about a conversation about substance should have been done 10 months ago. He thanked fellow board members for listening to his thoughts and sharing their perspectives with him. He thanked the students on the committees and both school publications for their coverage on this topic. The publications played an integral role in the process with balanced coverage and helped him understand how the students' feel and think. He wanted to clarify the finances that have been reported. He read the details and the total estimate was \$276,000. He indicated that finances are to be considered by the Board and not by the students. He mentioned that data should drive the process and that the vote did tell a story. He indicated that 25% not voting is significant since slightly over 50% of eligible voters voted for the respective mascots. This quantitative data does not indicate that we are united. He believed based on the reporting in the school publications, student dissatisfaction over the selection and others who feel they not informed, included or did not care about the choices. He said it appears that their choice to be heard was by not voting. He does not believe if the goal is to unify around a mascot and support all students then the two recommendations do not fit with 50% support of the student body to move in that direction. He reiterated that he will not support bringing back Indian and Cowboy and would like to move on, but to what. He indicated that he has an issue with Bronco since they are named and ridden by a cowboy and commonly known as an untrained animal. Would we want our students to be known as untrained? This is contrary to what the athletic directors mentioned as traits for the mascots. He had mentioned this to Dr. Gundersen and Ms. Molinelli when the choices were revealed. He did not see any historical relation of a panther to Pascack Valley and only 40% of all seniors voted for Panther. He cited no connection to the two schools with the proposed mascots. The name should unite each of the schools, but also unite the two schools. Based on the data this does not unite the district. Hills and Valley does. He would like Pascack with an emphasis on Hills and Valley. He said mascots do not defined our schools and that all extra-curriculars be identified by their sport or club and be defined by their character and players.

Dr. Blundy said she respects the idea of moving on. She indicated that she has an issue with the cost especially during a pandemic. She believes there are families that are struggling financially or with Internet connectivity. She mentioned that she is not against moving on, rather the spending of a lot of money during this time.

Mr. Blundo said Indians and Cowboys are not the issue for him. It's time to move on. He indicated that Dr. Gundersen and the team have done a great job on what is important as they delivered a wonderful presentation. He gave his opinion that based on more evidence he received, the process was flawed and manipulated. He said we must have an honest process with integrity. He cited a letter from Mrs. Valko indicating that a public school district needs to listen to the public. He referred to a student who said the vote was fair and democratic. He said the (local) election was as well. He said the result of four newly elected board members was slanted by the people who lost trust with the district. He indicated the result was due to a large portion of the public had lost trust in the leadership of the Board. He said the Board needs to regain that trust by creating processes that are transparent. He mentioned that he has heard the cost can be made up

with expenses not paid due to COVID such as buses, events, referees. He suggested that the \$300,000 could be spent on finding ways to get more students in the classrooms instead of replacing the end zone. He would like this tabled and go with Hills and Valley. He said when the district is ready then launch an open and transparent process.

Ms. Bissinger clarified that two of the open seats were due to board members retiring and not being voted out.

Mr. Blundo said he stands corrected, but reiterated that the public spoke loud and clear that they wanted a change.

Ms. Molinelli said that the community is divided. She mentioned that she understands how the alumni was connected to the mascot and she sat across from sobbing students who were negatively affected and what it represented. She indicated that she represents all 26,000 individuals over the age 18 and this includes students, senior citizens and alumni. The whole community. She said the Board has been tasked to make a decision. They told the superintendent to contact the schools and he tasked a remarkable administrative staff in both schools. She commented that at the final hour when the result is not to one's liking then the administration is blamed or athletic directors did not engage enough students or vice principals and principals could have done a better job on how to get enough students engaged with the process. She said she does not believe that the community questions their leadership. She hears praise that the students are going into the classrooms. She mentioned that students who did not vote did not mean that they didn't have the opportunity to engage, ask questions and vote. She believes everyone had an opportunity to vote and the process was transparent. She mentioned that Mr. Weaver is correct that the Board does not manage processes, the Board receives recommendations and they decide based on the board goals and district goals. They do not do the jobs of the superintendent or principals or athletic directors. She said the community has the right and responsibility to be involved with the work done by the Board. She indicated that the community is divided and has been for a long time. She is saddened by the community taking pot shots at board members who are volunteers and sending hate mail. She said they are trying to do the right thing with this issue. She indicated that they need to prioritize student wellness, get teachers vaccinated and a better way to measure student performance. She feels that the Board needs to make a decision on the mascot issue.

Mr. Weaver said he has not received any hate mail, yet. He took exception of the insinuation that this has been questioned at the last minute. He indicated that his first correspondence to Dr. Gundersen and Ms. Molinelli was to take a pause, so the Board with the four new board members could discuss this topic. He said the response was dismissive and was informed that the process was put in place and the process will take place. He affirmed that there are 26,000 voters and they spoke loud and clear. He commented that there should have been a pause in January when the four new members joined the Board and had a discussion on this very important topic.

Mrs. Martin said that she knows for a fact that the community is questioning the Board's leadership. She mentioned the emails they have received speaks volumes that they are questioning their leadership. By saying that they are not questioning the leadership is saying you're not listening to the emails. She indicated that people are not happy and if Panthers and Broncos are selected she believes they'll be back again because people will

Mrs. Varghese asked if taxes are going up due to the change in mascots as she has heard from the community.

Dr. Gundersen said there was discussion about rebranding with new mascots or not and possibly doing it over time. Also mentioned the end zone. He indicated that the Finance Committee had several meetings about financing the rebranding. He mentioned the unfortunate circumstances with COVID that there are unused funds in athletics and transportation. There would be no impact on next year's budget.

Mr. Blundo asked if the funds could be used for mental health or equipment (dividers) in classrooms to allow more students into school or other areas (services) that we chose not to spend in order to rebrand.

Dr. Gundersen said that the funds could be spent on other things, however the principals and assistant superintendent are not reporting anything at this time.

Mr. Blundo could not believe that there are no other expenditures to benefit the district other than to spend it on rebranding. He reiterated that if the administration cannot come up with other projects that would benefit the district other than changing the end zone at Pascack Hills (example of rebranding) then there are bigger concerns.

An exchange followed between Mr. Blundo and Dr. Gundersen.

Ms. Molinelli interjected that if there is an issue with employee of the district then an opportunity for conversation needs to be held in closed session and not public.

Mr. Blundo asked yes or no if the funds for rebranding could be spent to improve student experience.

Dr. Gundersen said it could be spent elsewhere. He indicated that conversations with the Finance Committee have taken place for weeks/months about utilizing the funding for the rebranding, so it's not earmarked for anything else. The end zone would be funded through maintenance reserve as a maintenance project. The bus transportation funds could be used elsewhere, but it's been earmarked for knowing that the intent of the Board is to use it this year to avoid increasing taxes for next year.

Mr. Blundo said it's inconsistent with what they were told June-August. He indicated that rebranding was to be phased in and not spend a lot of money from Day 1 and now it's been earmarked from the beginning. He is confused which one it is and the inconsistency has him worried.

Dr. Gundersen said he listened to the input of the Board and he indicated the different options at the end of spring. He said the end zone did not need to be replaced and a rebranding could be done over many years. It was the Board after a lot of consideration over the summer and fall suggested to do the rebranding now. He said the insinuation that he made the decision is false as there has been plenty of input from board members.

Mr. Weaver said he received the rebranding figures in January and participated in two Finance Committee meetings where this was discussed once. He asked if the savings can be used to offset the 2% tax levy increase.

Mr. Usami indicated that it could be done, but it would mean adding to the excess surplus to fund the budget. He said the district is trying to reduce the reliance on excess surplus

to fund future budgets. He mentioned that would mean relying on saving money year after year to fund future budgets. He indicated that the excess in 2020-2021 would go towards the 2022-2023 budget since the 2020-2021 audit would be done at the end of the fiscal year in June and performed over the summer to determine the excess surplus. The plan which was shared with the Finance Committee is slowly reduce the reliance on excess surplus.

VIII. EDUCATION

Consent Agenda for Items 1 – 3

1. Overnight Trip

- a. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Pascack Valley High School students, teachers, and if necessary, chaperones, to travel to France for cultural exploration and immersion from April 14-23, 2022.
- b. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Pascack Valley High School students, teachers, and if necessary, chaperones, to travel to Italy for cultural exploration and immersion from May 26 - June 4, 2022.

2. Additional Assignment

- a. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve an additional five periods per week assignment for Rose Welyczko, nurse at Pascack Hills High School for additional duties that have arisen due to required COVID-19 procedures for the entire 2020-2021 school year.
- b. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve an additional five periods per week assignment for Diane Fallon, nurse at Pascack Valley High School for additional duties that have arisen due to required COVID-19 procedures for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

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 home instruction for student ID #811577 in Algebra 1 beginning March 2, 2021 for the 2020-2021 school year, for 2 hours per week, to be provided by a board approved home instructor.
- b. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve supplemental instruction for the following Pascack Hills High School students, beginning February 1, 2021:

Student ID	Subject
#810636, #810683, #811112, #811211, #811213, #811299, #811799, #811806, #811896	Executive Functioning
#811806	Algebra 1
#810636, #810683	Algebra 2 w/ Trig

- c. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve supplemental instruction for the following Pascack Valley High School students, beginning March 1, 2021:

Student ID	Subject
#811694, #811945	Executive Functioning
#810028	Algebra 2

Moved by: Fronte Seconded by: Stankus

VOTE

Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P	Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P
Bissinger	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Molinelli	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blundo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stankus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blundy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Varghese	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fronte	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weaver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Martin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

IX. HUMAN RESOURCES

Consent Agenda for Items 1 – 5

1. Resignation

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, accept, with regret, the resignation of Steven Myers, Student Family Resource Liaison for Pascack Valley High School effective June 30, 2021.

2. New Hire

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Kelly Dunnigan, leave replacement general secretary at Pascack Valley High School for Jamie Taylor

X. FINANCE

Consent Agenda Items 1 – 13

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 March 8, 2021	\$1,031,952.66
Payroll as of February 28, 2021	\$1,670,378.21
Total	\$2,702,330.87

2. Secretary’s and Treasurer’s Financial Reports

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, accept the Secretary’s and Treasurer’s unaudited 2020/21 financial reports, which are in agreement reflecting the district’s financial activities for the period January 2021.

3. Ratification of Board Secretary’s Monthly Certification – Budgetary Line Item Status

RESOLVED pursuant to N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)3, the Board Secretary certifies that as of January 2021 no line item account has encumbrances and expenditures, which in total exceed the line item appropriation in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(a).

BE IT RESOLVED pursuant to N.J.A.C.6A:23-2-11(c)4 that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education certifies that as of January 2021 after review of the Board Secretary’s and Treasurer’s monthly financial report, in the minutes of the Board each month that no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(b).4.

4. Approval of the Following Reports

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

a. Cafeteria Account	January 2021
b. e-Learning Account	January 2021
c. Capital Project Account	January 2021
d. Student Government Account – PH	January 2021
e. Student Government Account – PV	January 2021
f. Athletic Account – PH	January 2021
g. Athletic Account – PV	January 2021

5. Transfers

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve transfers for the month of January.

6. Capital Reserve Withdrawal – Engineering Fees

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education at the recommendation of the Superintendent, approves a capital reserve withdrawal in the amount of \$45,500 to pay for engineering fees related to the HVAC/Filtration Upgrades at Pascack Hills and Pascack Valley High Schools budgeted in 2021-2022.

7. Approval of 2021-2022 Tentative Budget

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools approves the tentative 2021-2022 school year budget as follows:

General Fund	\$	60,275,049
Special Revenue Fund	\$	977,867
Debt Service	\$	2,017,325
Total	\$	63,270,241

The amount to be raised by taxation is:

General Fund	\$	51,580,482
Debt Service	\$	2,017,325
Total	\$	53,597,807

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the tentative 2021-2022 school year budget includes a Capital Reserve Withdrawal in the amount of \$3,351,012 for capital projects.

8. Renewal of Altice (Lightpath) Agreement

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education at the recommendation of the Superintendent, approves the renewal of Internet connectivity and data transmission with Altice (Lightpath) through Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ) Cooperative and the New Jersey Digital Readiness for Learning & Assessment Project (NJDR LAP) covering a three-year period from September 1, 2021 to August 31, 2024 in the amount of \$10,148.00 per month.

9. Submission of Projects to the State DOE

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Pascack Valley Regional High School District approves the submission of the following projects to the State Department of Education as an “Other” Capital Project:

Proposed Room 110 HVAC replacement at Pascack Valley High School

State Project # 3960-050-21-2000

Proposed Band Room HVAC replacement at Pascack Hills High School
State Project # 3960-040-21-3000

Proposed Running track replacement at Pascack Hills High School
State Project # 3960-040-21-2000

Proposed HVAC Upgrades at Pascack Valley High School
State Project # 3960-050-21-3000

Proposed HVAC Upgrades at Pascack Hills High School
State Project # 3960-040-21-4000

10. 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
2/23/21	Nu Products Seasoning Company	\$1,500	Robotics

11. Authorizing Participation in The Inter local Purchasing System (TIPS)

WHEREAS, The Inter local Purchasing System (TIPS) is a National Purchasing Cooperative formed between the National School Boards Association and several state school boards associations, developed to comply with state laws which require government entities to make purchases through a competitive procurement process, and

WHEREAS, TIPS give school districts and other public entities the advantage of leveraging the cooperative's ability to obtain bulk discounts, combined with the ease of online, web-based ordering, along with costs savings to the board associated with bidding and

WHEREAS, the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education ("District") has determined that it would be beneficial for the District to join TIPS National Purchasing Cooperative created for the benefit of school districts and other governmental entities nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the District is authorized to enter into the National Purchasing Cooperative by executing the National Purchasing Cooperative online membership form; and

WHEREAS, the District desires to participate and join with other governmental entities in the discharge of their respective public and governmental purposes, objectives, needs, programs, functions and services relative to purchasing;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education hereby authorizes the Business Administrator to proceed with the online membership agreement in order that the District may become a member of the TIPS National Purchasing Cooperative.

member, and led by Dr. Bachenheimer and Dr. Gundersen. The committee will select 3-4 candidates for the second round. Another committee will conduct the second round. He hopes to have a recommendation by the middle of April.

Mr. Fronte thanked Nu Products Seasoning Company for their gracious donation.

Mr. Weaver raised a question about the return to school for the high school since the Montvale K-8 was discussing their own return tonight. He would like to better understand the board of health's position on six feet distancing since it's raising questions within the community.

Dr. Gundersen said he will reach out to Dr. Petersen and confer with the Montvale health official for clarification.

XIII. 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.

Aria Chalileh commented that as a student representative it would be a disservice not to comment on the mascot issue. She indicated that she is a mascot committee member and a senior. She said it was the right decision to move forward and most unifying decision and we can move on with mental health and the curriculum.

Connor Flinn agreed with Aria and said it was a good decision to move forward even though some may not enjoy a mascot or disagree with it. This could still unify the schools at this time.

Carolee Adams of Montvale commented on the new marijuana law. She had reports from the police chiefs of Montvale and Westfield indicating that this is about disrespecting parents. She mentioned that it strongly restricts law enforcement to discuss with parents of minors if minors are caught for marijuana or alcohol use for first time offenders. There is no mechanism to track how many offenses a minor has violated. The officer may issue a warning to the minor and cannot discuss with the parent(s) of the minor. She mentioned potential liability issue if a minor is involved in an accident. She indicated that the county prosecutors will take action to have this law changed. She asked the Board to look into this and form a committee.

Dr. Gundersen thanked Ms. Adams and said that he, Dr. Bachenheimer and the principals will meet with the four police chiefs to discuss this topic and other topics. He indicated that the police departments are focused on the growth of teenagers and not the punishment.

Mr. Stankus asked if the jurisdiction of a school or school grounds different with different set of rules for this type of issue.

Dr. Gundersen said that schools typically have greater latitude and the police will look to the schools for assistance.

Councilman DeRosa of Hillsdale said the Hillsdale Police Chief issued a press release objecting to this law. He said the students did an admirable job based on what they were

charged to do. He mentioned that the four representatives should be commended for presenting in public so well. He commended Vasili for speaking out. He indicated that when the former Board made the decision at the end of spring he mentioned to them that they missed a teachable moment. He said they rushed into a decision and that fueled conflict within the community. He commented that the Board missed the opportunity to take a pause to correct the decision. He said he was saddened. He indicated that the election spoke loudly how they feel about the Board. He mentioned that he praises the Board more than he criticizes it. He said they missed an opportunity.

Ms. Molinelli asked if he was speaking as a resident or councilman.

Mr. DeRosa said that he hears a lot of opinions good and bad from the residents as councilman, so he is reflecting what he hears from the residents.

Elizabeth Santos of Hillsdale responded to Councilman DeRosa's comments. She said she is a Pascack Valley graduate and a parent. She said that Councilman DeRosa does speak on behalf of her and said she is not disappointed with the Board. She mentioned that she heard a lot of people's voices were not heard. She indicated that we take this as a teachable moment to continue to educate the students about all of the voices that have been marginalized past and present, the importance of active citizenship and respectful conflict resolution. She thanked the Board for making the decision in order to move on to educate our children and working for the best for our community.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Dr. Blundy to adjourn the public meeting at 10:53 p.m.
Ms. Bissinger seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

Respectfully,



Yas Usami
Business Administrator/ Board Secretary

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