

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

Pascack Valley Regional High School District

May 24, 2021

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held on Monday, May 24 2021 at
6:30 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>*

The Vision of the Pascack Valley Regional High School District:

To create a culture of innovation, inquiry, and individuality that promotes achievement and choice by cultivating the skills needed to compete and collaborate as ethical and responsible global citizens.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Ms. Tammy Molinelli, Board President

Present: Ms. Tammy Molinelli, President
Mr. Joseph Blundo, Vice President
Mr. Michael Fronte
Mrs. Kristin Martin
Mr. James Stankus
Ms. Debra Stephans
Mrs. Gini Varghese
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

Absent: Dr. Kelly Blundy
Mr. Michael Weaver

II. FLAG SALUTE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

MOTION TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION ON MAY 24, 2021 AT 6:30 PM.

A motion was made by Mr. Stankus to enter into an executive meeting at 6:35 p.m. Mr. Blundo seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education will meet at 6:30 p.m. via an online streaming service, for the purpose of recessing to a closed Executive Meeting.

WHEREAS, the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education has been formed pursuant to applicable New Jersey Statutes; and

WHEREAS, the Board is charged with the responsibility of performing all acts and doing all things, consistent with law and the rules of the State Board of Education, necessary for the lawful and proper conduct, equipment and maintenance of the public schools and public school property of the Pascack Valley Regional High School District; and

WHEREAS, Section 7 of the Opening Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10-4-12) permits the exclusion of the public (“Executive Session”) from a meeting of the Board in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that circumstances exist for such an Executive Session; and

WHEREAS, the Board has found the action described below to be necessary and proper;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board on the date indicated above that:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of and action on the Executive Session herein set forth.
2. The subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
 1. Possible HIB.
 2. A personnel matter.
3. The Board will return to the Regular Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
4. Official action may or may not be taken when the Board reconvenes to Public Session.

A motion was made by Mr. Blundo to reconvene into the public meeting at 7:29 p.m. Mr. Fronte seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

The public session resumed in the Pascack Valley High School cafeteria.

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, October 23, 2020, and May 22, 2021.

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](#)

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:

Mayor John Ruocco of Hillsdale urged the Board to be less dependent in creating the vision statement on identity politics which is not embraced by all the residents and less reflective of a theory of modern Marxism. He asked to call it an Equality Statement and offered alternative language which would be far less controversial and accepted by the majority of the four towns. The Pascack Valley Regional High School District fosters acceptance for all people who wish to learn regardless of race, religion, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, sexual orientation or gender. It recognizes the diversity of these characteristics within its student body, enhances the learning experience and creates tolerance among the student body.

VI. POLICY

Consent Agenda for Items 1 – 3

1. Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Executive Report

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, affirm the findings of the following harassment, intimidation and bullying incident: 21139 -PHH_04222021.

2. Equity Vision Statement

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the district equity vision statement:

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District fosters a culture of inclusivity where students are empowered to be their whole, authentic selves. Multiple expressions of identity (e.g. race, language, nationality, religion, social class, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity) are considered assets for learning and enhance the richness of the educational experience for everyone.

3. New Club

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the District Equity Team as a new co-curricular club for the 2021-2022 school year.

Moved by: Stankus Seconded by: Varghese

VOTE

Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P	Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stephans	<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"/>	Varghese	<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"/>	Weaver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Molinelli	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Mr. Fronte commented that this could be an incendiary topic. He asked if Critical Race Theory will be presented to the club and would the district support it.

Dr. Gundersen indicated that all different topics faced by the district regarding student differences would be brought forward and embraced. The focus will be on climate and culture based on data to make improvements in order for all students to feel welcomed.

Ms. Stephans mentioned that she thought equity and diversity was already being done. Thus, she wanted to know the purpose of the club.

Dr. Gundersen commented that this is to bring students together to support the district in making measurable improvements, especially for those who feel marginalized. It's about students having a voice in these matters.

Mr. Blundo indicated that the club is not empowered to make decisions. It's about making suggestions.

Ms. Stephans asked who came up with the vision statement.

Dr. Gundersen said the Board's equity sub-committee drafted it and the community equity partnership was asked to review it. This based on the Board's goal to create an equity vision statement.

Mrs. Varghese clarified the proposed club currently exists and now it will be formally recognized as a club and that anyone can be a part of the club like a debate club where there can be two different viewpoints. She added she understood that it's voluntary to join the club.

Dr. Gundersen confirmed indicating that there is a probationary period for a new club. He indicated that joining the club is totally voluntary.

Mrs. Varghese referred to Mayor Ruocco comment that the term equity is politically charged and she asked who came up with them.

Dr. Gundersen indicated that the Board has been working on equity for several years.

Ms. Molinelli commented that it is a district and board goal. Goals are developed each year. This is a product of what the Board was guided to do. The hope is for the club to be a diverse group with discussion which is how students learn.

Mrs. Martin wanted to confirm that this is to recognize this group as a club with a paid advisor.

Dr. Gundersen confirmed.

Mr. Stankus mentioned that this has been in the works for a number of years. He referred to past discussions if there was equity in the facilities for the boys and the girls. He commented that politics has crept in and he said that the club is not about Critical Race Theory. He indicated that the club is trying to do good things. It's reflective practice.

Ms. Stephans asked about recommendations made by the club.

Mr. Stankus said they look at the climate surveys and where the trends are headed. It may be those who are neglected. The club is an extension of social studies where an

VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES

Consent Agenda for Items 1 – 12

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 Brendan Field, physics teacher at Pascack Hills High School, for the purposes of retirement, effective June 30, 2021.

2. Change of Assignment

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Brittany Gallagher as social worker at Pascack Valley High School, effective July 1, 2021 for the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Gallagher is currently a counselor at the Park Academy Program.

3. Change of Position (modified)

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Yani Orozco, night-time, Tuesday – Saturday custodian for Pascack Hills High School, at the annual salary of \$62,323, plus night crew stipend of \$517, Saturday differential of \$517, **prorated**, with health benefits, effective May 11, 2021. Mr. Orozco is currently a night part-time, Monday – Friday custodian for Pascack Valley High School.

4. New Hires

- a. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Anthony Aliprantis as health and physical education teacher at Pascack Hills High School, effective August 30, 2021 for the 2021-2022 school year, at an annual salary of \$75,100, MA, step 7, with health benefits.
- b. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Brian Bunger as a substitute teacher to serve as a leave replacement Family and Consumer Science teacher for Pascack Hills High School for Jessica Andersen from September 17 – December 15, 2021, at a per diem rate of \$271.25, without health benefits.
- c. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Caroline Gangi as a guidance counselor for the Park Academy Program, effective August 30, 2021 for the 2021-2022 school year, at an annual salary of \$61,150, MA, step 2, with health benefits.
- d. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Deena Mahmoud as special education/English teacher at Pascack Valley Regional High

School District, effective August 30, 2021 for the 2021-2022 school year, at an annual salary of \$61,150, MA, step 2, with health benefits.

- e. **RESOLVED** that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Crystal Pomales as part-time day custodian for Pascack Valley High School, effective June 7, 2021, at the annual salary of \$31,161, prorated, without health benefits, pending passing physical examination and drug screening.

5. Summer Employment

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Jay Uhl, Pascack Hills High School computer science teacher, for 30 hours of summer employment to assist the district in creating the master schedule, at the professional development hourly rate.

6. Mentor

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve William Crispino, special education teacher at Pascack Valley High School to mentor Luisa Sanchez, special education teacher, for the 2021-2022 school year.

7. Intern Placement

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve an intern placement for Jacob Jaffe, a Montclair University student, at Pascack Hills High School for the 2021-2022 school year.

8. Substitute Teacher

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve Brian Bunger as a substitute teacher for the district for the 2020-2021 school year.

9. Summer Student Help

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the following students for summer employment in the facilities department:

Name	Type	Location
Zachary Panno	Returning	Pascack Valley
Brent Gundersen	Returning	District
Mia Puccio	New	District

NJSBA confirmed that the district’s practice is correct. She mentioned that the Board policy will be reviewed.

IX. 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 May 24, 2021	\$1,254,284.86
Payroll as of May 15, 2021	\$1,671,434.34
Total	\$2,925,719.20

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 2019/20 financial reports, which are in agreement reflecting the district’s financial activities for the period April 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 April 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 April 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	April 2021
b. e-Learning Account	April 2021
c. Capital Project Account	April 2021
d. Student Government Account – PH	April 2021
e. Student Government Account – PV	April 2021
f. Athletic Account – PH	April 2021
g. Athletic Account – PV	April 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 April.

6. Syracuse University Project Advance Agreement

RESOLVED, that the Pascack Valley Regional Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the Agreement between Syracuse University and Pascack Valley Regional High School District to offer courses taught through Project Advance at a cost to students of \$115 per credit hour for the 2021-2022 school year.

7. Agreement with Heartland School Solutions for MySchoolBucks

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education at the recommendation of the superintendent approve the agreement with Heartland School Solutions for MySchoolBucks for online payment system for activities, Mosaic for cafeteria POS and Heartland for meal orders in the amount of \$6,409.00 for a one-time setup fee and the purchase of pin pads with optical scanners and an annual subscription fee of \$2,250.00.

8. Capital Reserve Withdrawal

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 \$12,700 to pay for additional engineering fees related to air conditioning design associated with the HVAC/Filtration Upgrades at Pascack Valley High Schools budgeted in 2021-2022.

9. Agreement with Mackay Ice Rink

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the agreement with Mackay Ice Rink for the 2021-2022 school year at the rate of \$460 per hour.

10. Approve Chapter 192/193 Service Agreement with Bergen County Special Services for 2021-2022

WHEREAS, the Pascack Valley Regional Board of Education, referred to as “the LEA” is a body corporate organized under the laws of the State of New Jersey pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 10-1.

WHEREAS, the Bergen County Special Services School District, referred to as the “BCSSSD” is a body corporate organized under the laws of the State of New Jersey pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:46-29.

WHEREAS, the LEA is required by law to provide remedial and auxiliary services to eligible students attending non-public schools within the public school district served by the LEA. N.J.S.A.18A:46-19.1, et seq. (Laws of 1977, Chapter 193); N.J.S.A. 18A:46A-1, et seq. (Laws of 1977, Chapter 192).

WHEREAS, the LEA is empowered by law to contract with another agency to provide the remedial and auxiliary services required under Chapters 192 and 193 of the Laws of 1977 pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:46-9.7 and N.J.S.A.18A:46A-7.

WHEREAS, the BCSSSD is empowered by law to contract with the LEA to provide the remedial and auxiliary services herein referenced pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:46-19.7 and N.J.S.A.18A:46A-7.

WHEREAS, the LEA and the BCSSSD hereby agree that the BCSSSD will provide those remedial and auxiliary services set forth in N.J.S.A. 18A:46-9.1 et seq., and N.J.S.A. 18A:46A-1, et seq., which services shall be limited to examination, classification, annual review services, speech correction, as well as the instruction, evaluation, and the necessary equipment, supplies, administration and supervision inherent in providing English as a second language instruction, supplemental instruction, home instruction, and compensatory education instruction, as appropriate, to eligible New Jersey resident students attending non-public schools within the public school district for which the LEA is responsible.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the service agreement with Bergen County Special Services School District to provide remedial and auxiliary services for the 2021-2022 school year.

11. Renewal of Food Service Management Company

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the fifth renewal of the contract for food service management with Pomptonian Food Service Company of Fairfield, NJ, for the 2021-2022 school year based on the USDA Waiver of Food Service Management Contract Duration due to the COVID-19 Pandemic supported by the NJDA. The Food Service Management Company shall receive, in addition to the costs of operation, a fee of \$.0681 per meal equivalent to compensate the Food Service Management Company for administrative and management costs. This fee shall be billed monthly as a cost of operation. The Local Education Agency guarantees the payment of such costs and fee to the Food Service Management Company. Cash receipts shall be divided by \$1.00 to arrive at an equivalent meal count. The per meal management fee of \$.0681 will be multiplied by total meal equivalents, as per the addendum.

12. Pomptonian Student & Faculty Lunch Price List

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education, at the recommendation of the superintendent, approve the Pomptonian Student Lunch and Faculty Lunch Price List for the 2021-2022 school year.

13. Submission of the CRRSA-ESSER II Grant

RESOLVED that the Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education at the recommendation of the superintendent approve the submission of the CRRSA-ESSER II Grant as follows:

CRRSA-ESSER II	\$183,836
Learning Acceleration	\$25,000
Mental Health	\$45,000

Moved by: Stephans Seconded by: Blundo
VOTE

Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P	Bd. Mbr.	Aye	Nay	Abs.	N/P
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stephans	<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"/>	Varghese	<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"/>	Weaver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Molinelli	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

X. OLD BUSINESS

Negotiations Committee Report

Dr. Gundersen indicated that the committee had a first meeting with the supervisor’s group and the administrator’s group and a second meeting with each group is scheduled for tomorrow.

Mr. Blundo added that negotiations are moving along well.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

PVRHSD Board Member seat vacancies for the November 2021 election

Mr. Usami indicated that one seat in Hillsdale, Montvale and River Vale will be expiring at the end of the year and nominating petitions will be available through the district website to New Jersey School Boards Association. He mentioned that the deadline is July 26 to submit to the county office (elections/county clerk). He added that a press release will be sent to the Pascack Press as well.

Mr. Fronte asked if there is a policy that allows for the flying of a flag of an organization or club.

Dr. Gundersen and Mr. Blundo responded there isn’t.

Mr. Fronte commented that this may come up for discussion. He indicated that he is for it as long as all clubs have that opportunity. He mentioned that there was a request to fly the rainbow flag. He said if this would fall under the equality and equity statement.

Mrs. Varghese asked if there has been a practice not to fly other flags.

Dr. Gundersen said he needs to ask building administration if other flags such as the MIA POW flag or the state flag have been flown.

Mrs. Martin said that they need to be cautious of who is allowed to fly a flag. She supports this group, but they need to be careful who is allowed and who is not.

Dr. Gundersen agreed. He had reached out to other superintendents who received this type of request and he spoke to one. He mentioned that their board had similar concerns. The superintendent indicated that there were no other requests and that not many school-based organizations have a flag.

Mr. Blundo said Dr. Gundersen made a distinction that it is a school-based organization. He fully supports this group for equality for all. He is concerned that since there is no policy, how will they control it. He indicated that politics have caught up to the issue. He commented that flying the flag could bring out opposition when maybe five years ago there may not have been any opposition publicly. He is concerned that this could become another issue that takes away from the re-opening of schools or focus on academics.

Mr. Fronte commented that he agreed with Mr. Blundo and he fully supports the cause, but said that they are not the arbiters. He mentioned they should strongly consider it which would support a consistent vision.

Mrs. Varghese indicated that they absolutely believe in equality. However, she raised concerns about another club wanting a flag raised and where do we draw the line, the support may be against some people's religion and the flag is a symbol, but they do not discriminate as the district has a transgender bathroom. She believed that flying the flag was passive support and at the risk of offending people.

Ms. Stephans commented that the district is a government entity and it does not mix government with religion. She said it's a slippery slope. How do they objectively decide which organization to support by flying a flag? She indicated setting a new precedent by allowing this and it could disrupt the district due to other requests. She commented that students could celebrate Pride Week in other ways. She added that the United States flag stands for equality and justice for all and we need to respect that.

Mr. Stankus said banners and signs are fine, but the United States flag is intended to be an inclusive flag. He said it may not feel that way for some now, but hopefully someday it will. He indicated that the U.S. flag stands for all/unity and should be flying alone and other flags would distract from it.

Ms. Molinelli commented that the flag celebrates all students. It represents everything we believe in such as equity and inclusion. She thanked Mr. Fronte for bringing up the conversation.

Mr. Blundo said that the majority of the Board does not support the flying of other flags except the American flag.

Mr. Fronte agreed. He asked that a policy be developed to address which flags may be flown.

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 asked if the mascot decision came from the equity movement or Mr. Russo.

Dr. Gundersen indicated that it came from conversations with staff, students, board members, and community members and not the Equity Committee or Mr. Russo.

Ms. Adams indicated that the Critical Race Theory is not nonsense. She read a situation in Loudon County, Virginia Board of Education. She suggested that the Board be careful with the equity statement and equity club. She mentioned the BLM rally at Woodcliff Lake where there were anti-police signs. She asked that people be respectful to the police who do an incredibly good job.

Dr. Gundersen indicated that he and other district employees who were at the rally did not agree with the anti-police signs. He mentioned that some people took liberties with photos of those signs and associated them with district employees.

Ms. Adams mentioned that the Montvale electric bulletin board recognizes events 365 days a year. She said that the school sign board celebrated BLM for a month and they may want to consider other things. She related a story of the 400 plus Navajo Code Talkers who prevented the Japanese military from decoding messages during WWII by using Navajo words.

Eli Moallem of River Vale asked what the Board's version of equity is. He said that equity and equality are being used and they are not inter-changeable.

Mr. Blundo said that he believes that equity is to ensure all students are treated equally and given the same opportunity. Everyone is given equal access.

Mrs. Varghese agreed with Mr. Blundo.

Mr. Stankus mentioned enhancing and positivity. He commented that it's about building people up and not down. He added that it's to give people equal opportunity.

Mrs. Martin said saying something is equal is impossible. She indicated that equal opportunity is given, but children make different selections. She mentioned that equality is giving someone the same opportunity and access and it does not mean everything is equal. She indicated that a special needs student may have modifications to even the playing field.

Ms. Molinelli said their objective is to give the best education possible in an equal way. She suggested that the students on the committee should come and meet with the Board.

Mrs. Martin said students have met with the committee and what they shared was eye opening. The committee learned a lot from them.

Mr. Fronte said it is equality of opportunity and the result is somewhat on the students and somewhat on the circumstances. We give all students the same opportunities and make them feel safe and protected.

Mr. Moallem appreciated the responses. He commented that the members talked about equality and there is no shortage of equality and opportunity at Pascack Valley or in their communities. He said that equity means ownership and it is divisive and, in some communities, it has been done in a heavy-handed way which has alienated many people. He commented that equity is a politically charged term that means ownership that must be earned. He does not want students to be taught that are owed something other than freedom or equal opportunity otherwise it will be a path of misery. He urged the Board to get back to basics.

Al Tab of Hillsdale commented that the meetings have been a big waste of time and distraction for the past year. He mentioned that equity is ownership. He read from the vision statement. He asked how the content of the vision statement will leverage how students improve their math scores or any other subject.

Ms. Stephans indicated that many of this is coming from the state. She mentioned that the club is a safe place and we can all learn from each other. It's spreading more love than hate which will help schools. It can help students focus on education. It's all relative.

Mr. Tab did not agree. He said having the club is alright, but not when it interferes with students having to sit through it.

Mr. Blundo was confused by Mr. Tab's comment. He indicated that this was treated like any other club as it followed the guidelines. He said that the club does not set policy or academic standards or goals. He mentioned that the club may suggest improvements and he further commented that the Board or any future Board will have failed if they make a decision based solely on a club's recommendation. He added that he does not see how this disturbs education.

Mr. Tab asked if all students will be required to enhance their learning through what is the vision statement.

Ms. Molinelli assured him that no student will have any social ideology forced on them.

Mrs. Martin indicated that focus is on overall acceptance. She related an experience of a middle school student experiencing gender identity. She mentioned that the student identified with a magnet in a classroom that made the student feel safe. She commented that when students feel safe and welcome, it impacts the student's learning.

Mr. Stankus said the discussions at the committee are productive and positive, and they are not looking for a problem as it is being framed tonight. He indicated that the climate survey has shown many positives and they want to keep them going. He mentioned that it's about elevating the schools. He recognized this topic has been going on for many years and now the politics have caught up to it. He commented that the committee is a positive group and they are doing good things.

Ms. Molinelli commented that the students in the committee said it's the best thing they've experienced and they feel empowered. They have a different understanding of people. She saw students glowing with excitement, being educated and aware.

Mr. Blundo commented that he works for one of the top five U.S. companies and he underwent a five-hour training today on equity. He reiterated that no student will be forced to join the club. He added that kids who are in the club will already have that experience that he did not have in high school. It will be educational for them in a club setting.

Ms. Molinelli commented that in the workforce it's about how to make people feel comfortable at work and how to teach people to get along. She said it's a strong tool for students.

Mr. Fronte indicated that every one of his major corporate clients require his employees to go through this training, otherwise they will not work with his company. He thinks this would be positive for the students to experience since this is what is going on in the workplace.

Mrs. Varghese indicated that the board members must leave their feelings aside. They have different views and they don't always agree. She commented that they learn when they listen to different views. She said they are responsible to apply governance to the entire district and not an individual or a group. She indicated that they are not forcing the club on any student. It's a voluntary club and parents should discuss this with their child if they wish. She reiterated that some things are mandated by the state and if anyone does not like it then they should contact the state.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Fronte to adjourn the public session at 9:14 p.m.
Ms. Stephans 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.