



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Hybrid Meeting - Administration Building - 7:00 p.m.

A **Reorganization Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education was held on this date in the large conference room in the Administration Building and via Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Thomas Lambe, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, who announced that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by amendment to notice approved at the Board's reorganization meeting on January 3, 2023 and posted at the Board of Education office and communicated to *The Star Ledger*, *West Essex Tribune*, *TAPinto Livingston* and the Livingston Township Clerk.

Members Present: Jenissa Arnette, Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Fang Gong and Parul Khemka

Also in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Block, Thomas Lambe and Joann Goldberg

There were approximately 75 members of the public and staff watching in person and remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

Mr. Lambe read the election results:

Election Results – November 7, 2023

(Officially certified by the Board of Elections)

For three year term (vote for one) on the Board of Education

Fang Gong - 3,095

Harshavardhan Raju - 1,763

Swearing in of New Board Member

Mr. Lambe administered the oath of office to Fang Gong for a three-year term as a Board Member.

Election of President

Mr. Lambe called for nominations for the position of President of the Board.

Mr. Cohen nominated Mrs. Chirls.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations for the position of President, nominations were closed.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka
Nays - None

Board President Takes Chair

Mrs. Chirls took the chair as President.

Election of Vice President

Mrs. Chirls called for nominations for the position of Vice President of the Board.

Mr. Cohen nominated Ms. Arnette.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations for the position of Vice President, nominations were closed.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka
Nays - None

President/Vice President Comments

Mrs. Chirls made a statement thanking those in the room and online, all former Board of Education members, the staff and community for their support and guidance. Mrs. Chirls thanked Barry Lewis and his team for their partnership, the shared services that help keep our students safe and well and stated she values the close collaboration with the Township Council members that led to the agreement in progress for Monmouth Court that will be brought to the Long Range Facilities Planning Committee as well as continuing to work on the Town Liaison Committee. Mrs. Chirls' full speech can be listened to online.

Mrs. Gong thanked everyone for their support, for Mrs. Khanna for her leadership and mentorship and for the opportunity to serve the community as a board member.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Block congratulated Mrs. Chirls and Ms. Arnette on their leadership roles on the board and to Mrs. Gong in her new role as a board member. Dr. Block expressed that he looks forward to their partnership and to working together with everyone in 2024.

Dr. Block suggested everyone read through the district's newsletter, *Spotlight*, to learn about the many student success stories happening around our district.

Board Member Code of Ethics

The board members each took a turn reading through the ten items listed in the Code of Ethics. It is a requirement of the board to review and sign an acknowledgement of the Code of Ethics each year.

Public Comment

Myra Khan explained that January is Muslim Heritage Month and encouraged the district to incorporate the achievements of Muslims during this month through the school curriculum.

There were a number of community members who spoke about their dissatisfaction with the content of an advisory lesson that was held at Heritage Middle School before the school break that

they felt only addressed anti-semitism and not islamophobia. Some also spoke about their children not feeling safe in school. Parents expressed the need to prepare staff with the proper tools on how to handle these discussions so that we can bring everyone together rather than promoting fear and turning against one another.

A student also came forward to express that she was dissatisfied with the content of the same advisory lesson, does not feel safe in school and that she has brought it to the attention of her principal.

A few community members came forward to express their dissatisfaction with Dr. Block taking a trip to Israel with the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest. A few perceived the trip as endorsing one side over the other.

A few community members came forward that they agreed with Dr. Block's decision to take the two-day to Israel with the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest in an effort to bring back some real life experiences that he can share with everyone.

With respect to Muslim Heritage Month, Dr. Block explained upon returning from the break, he sent an email to all of the principals to make sure they celebrate and commemorate this event in their buildings this month.

Dr. Block continued that if any child is experiencing behaviors that are anti-semetic, islamophobic or hateful, they should report the incident to the principal of their school to be handled and if they don't feel it is being properly addressed, should reach out to him. Dr. Block stated that hate has no place in Livingston Public Schools.

Dr. Block continued that we are doing our best to support our teachers in the lessons they are planning to address these sensitive issues and asked for patience as they work to provide them with the tools to do a better job.

Dr. Block concluded that he was contacted by the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest and asked to join with other educational and civil leaders to learn firsthand what is happening in Israel and the surrounding region. Dr. Block will use this chance to collaborate with other educational leaders and return with knowledge to share with the schools.

Ms. Arnette moved the following:

Rules for School Governance

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education adopts all bylaws, policies and regulations in effect on January 3, 2024 in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

The board discussed Policy #0167 and whether or not they would like to continue offering public participation through the webinar. The board unanimously agreed not to make any changes to the policy and that the online public participation portion will continue going forward.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka
Nayes - None

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

Curricula and Textbooks

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education adopts all curricula and textbooks of record on January 3, 2024 in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-1 and 34.1.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

Mrs. Khemka moved the following:

Bylaws, Policies & Regulations

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves all bylaws, policies and regulations previously adopted by the Board to date.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

Mrs. Khemka moved the following:

Job Descriptions

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves all job descriptions previously adopted by the Board to date.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

Mrs. Khemka moved the following:

Official Newspapers/Media Outlets

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education designates *The Star Ledger*, *The West Essex Tribune* and *TAPinto Livingston* as official newspapers and media outlets for legal notices and other obligations.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nays - None

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

Financial Depositories and Signatures

Whereas, Pamela Chirls has been elected president and Jenissa Arnette has been elected vice president of the Board of Education; and

Whereas, Thomas Lambe has been appointed Secretary of the Board; and

Whereas, Thomas Lambe has been appointed Treasurer of School Monies; and now therefore be it

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education establish the following bank accounts at Somerset Regal Bank, Livingston, New Jersey and that Somerset Regal Bank is hereby requested, authorized and directed to honor all checks, draft and other orders for the payment of money drawn in the name of the Board of Education in the following accounts when bearing the true or approved facsimile signature(s) indicated:

Somerset Regal Bank		
Account Title and Number	Signature(s)	
BOE School District of Livingston General Account 0108010471	Board President and Thomas J. Lambe and Dr. Matthew Block	
BOE School District of Livingston Referendum 0108010505	Board President and Thomas J. Lambe and Dr. Matthew Block	
Livingston Board of Education Payroll Account 0108010463	Board President and Thomas J. Lambe	
Livingston Board of Education Payroll Agency Account 0108010414	Board President and Thomas J. Lambe	
Burnet Hill Elementary School School Account 0108010547	Lisa Sama-Barreto Jessica Byrne Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Collins Elementary School School Account 0108010562	Michelle Cebula Stefanie Lichtstein Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Harrison Elementary School School Account 0108010539	Daniel Garcia Patricia Fernandez Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Hillside Elementary School School Account 0108010570	Carlos Gramata Gina Ioviero Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Mount Pleasant Elementary School School Account 0108010521	Lorena Dolan Gail Witt Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Riker Hill Elementary School School Account 0108010612	Justin Toomey Deborah Paoella Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Mount Pleasant Middle School School Account 0108010554	Bronawyn O'Leary Gina Covello Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Heritage Middle School School Account 0108010513	Shawn Kelly Andrew Espinoza Kristen Fullam Christina Woytas Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston High School Activity Account 0108010588	Danielle Rosenzweig Laura DeNicola Dr. Mary K. Pretto Marie Battist-Rock Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston High School Athletic Account	Danielle Rosenzweig Laura DeNicola	<i>Any 2</i>

0108010604	Dr. Mary K. Pretto Marie Battist-Rock David Cohen Thomas J. Lambe	
Livingston High School Special Account 0108010596	Danielle Rosenzweig Laura DeNicola Dr. Mary K. Pretto Marie Battist-Rock Thomas J. Lambe	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston Board of Education Board Secretary's Petty Cash 0108010489	Dr. Matthew Block Thomas J. Lambe Tatiana Gilbert	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston Board of Education Capital Reserve Fund Account 0108010448	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only Thomas J. Lambe or Tatiana Gilbert	
Livingston Board of Education Unemployment Trust Fund Account 0108010455	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only Thomas J. Lambe or Tatiana Gilbert	
Livingston Board of Education Cafeteria 0108010430	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only Thomas J. Lambe or Tatiana Gilbert	
Livingston Board of Education Summer Pay 0208020752	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only Thomas J. Lambe or Tatiana Gilbert or Amy Connolly	
Livingston Board of Education FSA 0108010422	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only Thomas J. Lambe or Tatiana Gilbert or Amy Connolly	

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Mrs. Khemka asked about investing our money in treasury bills and Mr. Lambe responded that he is looking at options with Somerset Regal Bank as well as the State of NJ ARM but will also look into treasury bills and report back when he has updated information on all of them.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nayes - None

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

Establishment of Annual Public Meeting Calendar

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education approves the following annual public meeting calendar and executive session meeting calendar for 2024:

January, 2024		July, 2024	
(Wed) 3	<i>Reorganization</i>	16	<i>Voting</i>
9	<i>Board Retreat</i>		
16	<i>Voting</i>		
February, 2024		August, 2024	
6	<i>Workshop</i>	13	<i>Voting</i>
13	<i>Workshop</i>		
27	<i>Voting</i>	September, 2024	
March, 2024		10	<i>Workshop</i>
12	<i>Workshop</i>	24	<i>Voting</i>
19	<i>Voting</i>	October, 2024	
April, 2024		8	<i>Workshop</i>
16	<i>Workshop</i>	29	<i>Voting</i>
30	<i>Public Hearing/Voting</i>	November, 2024	
May, 2024		12	<i>Workshop</i>
7	<i>Exec Session on Personnel</i>	19	<i>Voting</i>
14	<i>Workshop/Voting</i>	December, 2024	
28	<i>Voting</i>	10	<i>Voting</i>
June, 2024		January, 2025	
11	<i>Workshop</i>	7	<i>Reorganization</i>
18	<i>Voting</i>		

Until further notice, all meetings are to commence on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. in a hybrid format both in person in the large conference room at the Administration Building, 11 Foxcroft Drive, and via a Facebook livestream, unless otherwise indicated. Please confirm dates on the District Calendar.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
 Nays - None

BUSINESS

Mr. Cohen moved 3.1:

3.1 Board Member Assignments

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the President’s designation of the following committee assignments as shown on **Attachment A**.

Ms. Arnette seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nayes - None

BUSINESS

Mr. Cohen moved 3.2 to 3.4:

3.2 Purchasing - Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the resolution as follows:

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-2 provides that a Board of Education shall assign the authority, responsibility and accountability for the purchasing activity of the Board of Education to a person or persons who shall have the power to prepare advertisements, to advertise for and receive bids and to award contracts as permitted by this chapter, and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A-18A-3 provides that contracts, awarded by the purchasing agent that do not exceed in the aggregate in a contract year the bid threshold (currently \$44,000), may be awarded by the purchasing agent without advertising for bids when so authorized by Board resolution, and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A-18A-37c provides that all contracts that are in the aggregate less than 15% of the bid threshold (currently \$6,600) may be awarded by the purchasing agent without soliciting competitive quotations if so authorized by Board resolution, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Livingston Board of Education , pursuant to the statutes cited above, hereby appoints Thomas Lambe, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, as its duly authorized purchasing agent and is duly assigned the authority, responsibility and accountability for the purchasing activity effective for the period January 3, 2024 through to the date of the 2025 Reorganization Meeting, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Thomas Lambe, as purchasing agent, is authorized to process payments as necessary as part of regular District operations, to be ratified at the subsequent regular public meetings of the Board of Education, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Thomas Lambe is hereby authorized to award contracts on behalf of the Livingston Board of Education that are in the aggregate less than 15% of the Bid threshold (currently \$6,600) without soliciting competitive quotations, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Thomas Lambe is hereby authorized to seek competitive quotations, when applicable and practicable, when contracts in the aggregate exceed 15% of the bid threshold (currently \$6,600) but less than the bid threshold of \$44,000.

3.3 Purchasing - Assistant Business Administrator

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the resolution as follows:

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-2 provides that a Board of Education shall assign the authority, responsibility and accountability for the purchasing activity of the Board of Education to a person or persons who shall have the power to prepare advertisements, to advertise for and receive bids and to award contracts as permitted by this chapter, and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A-18A-3 provides that contracts, awarded by the purchasing agent that do not exceed in the aggregate in a contract year the bid threshold (currently \$44,000), may be

awarded by the purchasing agent without advertising for bids when so authorized by Board resolution, and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A-18A-37c provides that all contracts that are in the aggregate less than 15% of the bid threshold (currently \$6,600) may be awarded by the purchasing agent without soliciting competitive quotations if so authorized by Board resolution, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Livingston Board of Education , pursuant to the statutes cited above, hereby appoints Tatiana Gilbert, Assistant Business Administrator, as its duly authorized purchasing agent *pro tem*, in the event that Thomas Lambe, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, is unavailable, and is duly assigned the authority, responsibility and accountability for the purchasing activity of the Livingston Board of Education effective for the period January 3, 2024 through to the date of the 2025 Reorganization Meeting, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Tatiana Gilbert, as *pro tem* purchasing agent, is authorized to process payments as necessary as part of regular District operations, to be ratified at the subsequent regular public meetings of the Board of Education, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Tatiana Gilbert is hereby authorized to award contracts on behalf of the Livingston Board of Education that are in the aggregate less than 15% of the Bid threshold (currently \$6,600) without soliciting competitive quotations, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Tatiana Gilbert is hereby authorized to seek competitive quotations, when applicable and practicable, when contracts in the aggregate exceed 15% of the bid threshold (currently \$6,600) but less than the bid threshold of \$44,000.

3.4 Cooperative Purchasing

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education authorizes the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to jointly, by agreement, provide goods and services with other boards of education; and to seek sealed bids, from any and all education cooperative pricing systems, county contract and/or state contract for all goods and/or services required during the period of January 3, 2024 through to the date of the 2025 Reorganization Meeting. Date, receipt and advertisement of bids to be determined by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary. The list includes but is not limited to the following:

Educational Data Services Inc.
Educational Services Commission of New Jersey
Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission
Morris County Cooperative Pricing Council
NJ Division of Purchase and Property (NJ START State Contract)
Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission
Sourcewell/Cooperative Purchasing Advantages

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nayes - None

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

3.5 Overnight Trips

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves *Dr. Matthew Block* to join the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest on a trip to Israel from January 21 to 24, 2024, at no cost to the district.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Abstain- Mrs. Gong
Nayes - Ms. Arnette

At 8:20 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a student and legal matter. The board will come back into public session to take action.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

At 8:43 p.m., the Board came back into public session and the meeting resumed.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

HIB Report

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the findings of HIB cases.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka, Mrs. Chirls
Nayes - None

Old Business

There was no old business.


Adjournment

At 8:44 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a legal matter. No action will be taken and the Board will not be returning to public session.

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas J. Lambe
Board Secretary