

May 23, 2018

The Stillwater Township Board of Education met on May 23, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. in the Stillwater School Library for a Special Board of Education Meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Shannon Nothstine at 7:00 p.m. In accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law, the time, date and location of this meeting was provided to the New Jersey Herald & Township Journal on May 21, 2018. Notices were posted in the Stillwater School, Town Hall, and the Stillwater School Website.

Mrs. Nothstine led the flag salute. The following Board members were present: Mrs. Nothstine, Mr. DeGroat, Mrs. Galante, Mrs. Santore, Mrs. Svendsen, and Mrs. McPeek.

Absent: Mrs. LoCascio, Mrs. Saul, and Mr. Theys.

Also present were Matthew Robinson, Superintendent, René Metzgar, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, Cali Roberts, Assistant Principal, Jaclyn Morgese, Board Attorney and members of the public.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mrs. Nothstine welcomed all members of the public and thanked them for attending tonight's meeting. She stated that we at Stillwater School take safety and security very serious and we are open to discussing the concerns of the public the best we can. Our board attorney is present at tonight's meeting to assist us in addressing any concerns. Please state your name and address for the record, each public member will be limited to about five minutes. Public participation was opened at 7:04 pm.

-Jill DePaola- Iris Circle, Newton, NJ.- Doesn't know all the facts regarding this recent incident. Just hearing rumors, but if this child was bullied and wants to be heard, then this is something we need to look into. She put trust in the school and something should have went out to the parents.

-Jim Cantelmo- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- The most concerning is the amount of time it took for notification since the incident took place. The email received was vague. The problem is the parents heard it from the children. He has now heard many rumors from both sides of the spectrum. If it was a small incident, it is now blown way out of proportion. He doesn't even know if law enforcement is involved. The community needs to be informed, if not it puts the community on edge. He was concerned that three school days lapsed before the community was informed. Better communication and in a more timely fashion needs to happen.

-Jill DePaola- Iris Circle, Newton, NJ- Felt the same, was concerned when her child comes home how does she explain this?

-Jim Cantelmo- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- Was law enforcement notified? Was law enforcement notified on Thursday?

- Irene Fuchs- Old Foundry Road Stillwater, NJ- Noted her child was in the classroom. She also stated that she spoke to law enforcement and they weren't notified on Thursday. She is disappointed on how administration handled the situation. We should have been notified.

Children are saying one thing, Administration is saying another. She didn't care how the child was disciplined, but the protocols need to change for how it was handled.

Mrs. Nothstine notified the public that the board needs to discuss this as a whole board. We hear the public comments and understand your concerns. Policy was followed, however, we will be looking into the policy and potential changes to improve on future situations.

-Jim Cantelmo- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- Why wasn't law enforcement immediately notified?

-Moirra Douglas- Ridge Road, Newton, NJ- Was the board notified? Was the school safety committee notified?

(As per the board attorney, responses to these questions could not be answered at this time as it involves personnel matters and the safety & security of the district.)

-Meredith Reilly- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- Stated she contacted a board member and they were not aware of the situation. This has been twisted to be an attack on the child. She also stated she heard about it from another child, and was concerned on how you calm down a child when you are not aware of the situation. She said she called Mr. Robinson on Monday and didn't receive a call back until Tuesday. She received a very vague response. She made a Facebook post, so that is why law enforcement was called? She said that the school can't tell us anything is unacceptable, that we need answers.

-Jenna Miller- Hampton Road, Newton, NJ- No one wants this to happen again. This created a divide in the town. The advantage of a small community is that we want to help everyone. Everyone is arguing on Facebook, what is that doing for anyone? It's important to have all the facts and information so she could explain it to her daughter.

-Tracy Huether- Edgewood Drive- Newton, NJ- What exactly are your policies? How is it that you don't have a policy in place? If it's in a book, why do you have to review it? She also stated the Anti-Bullying Law says we should be notified.
(As per the board attorney, the board policies are located on the website. The board cannot release or discuss any student matters.)

-Scott Huether- Edgewood Drive- Newton, NJ – When something like this happens, everyone should be notified. Just like a school closing.

-Irene Fuchs- Old Foundry Road Stillwater, NJ- If we followed policy then the board should know it. You need to be transparent.

-Moirra Douglas- Ridge Road, Newton, NJ- Were the students in the classroom addressed regarding the situation? Were parents notified in that classroom? Was a crisis person available?

Mr. Robinson did respond that individuals effected by this and parents were spoken to. He spoke to the fact this is a great community and wants all the children to be safe. He sees that communication could have been better for this situation. He has always tried to communicate proactively.

-Jenna Miller- Hampton Road, Newton, NJ- All parents should be notified, not just those in the classroom effected.

- Irene Fuchs- Old Foundry Road Stillwater, NJ- The school needs to talk to the students. No one spoke to her child, they only spoke to the child involved.

Mrs. Nothstine mentioned again the whole board has to discuss this together with administration. We all work together as a team.

-Meredith Reilly- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- Was this not reported because it wasn't reported to the State?
(As per board attorney, this was reported to the State through the Student Safety Data System.)

-Jenna Miller- Hampton Road, Newton, NJ- Has policy changed recently? During the clown incident we had a notification that was a few paragraphs long. What is the difference between the two situations? Has policy changed since then?

-Denise Bessemer- Snook Road, Newton, NJ- As a teacher here, policy changes frequently. Administration always communicates the changes. Even after our fire drills the procedures are reviewed, and communicated to staff and students. Administration has always done a great job.

-Jenna Miller- Hampton Road, Newton, NJ- That's what was alarming, is that we have always had great communication.

-Jill DePaola- Iris Circle, Newton, NJ- Zero Tolerance Act for Bullying- does it work for weapons? Maybe we need a zero tolerance policy for weapons. Going forward what are we going to tolerate?

-Jim Cantelmo- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- What can you tell us about this situation?
(As per board attorney, we are all aware of the situation. Investigation has occurred and law enforcement has been notified.)

-Meredith Reilly- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- So if she didn't post on Facebook, no one would have been at the meeting?

- Irene Fuchs- Old Foundry Road Stillwater, NJ- Asked if our addresses were posted publically in the minutes.

-Tracy Huether- Edgewood Drive- Newton, NJ- Stated she spoke to our SRO and he said he was informed yesterday. Why is it that it took until parents called to call the police? Why do our addresses have to be documented?
(As per our board attorney, we cannot respond to timelines at this time. As per the name & addresses in the minutes, it's required by the Open Public Meetings Act to be noted in the minutes as record.)

-Jim Cantelmo- Marigold Way, Newton, NJ- Does administration or the Board intend to notify the parents once policy is revised? Or to address more concerns regarding this?
(As per the board attorney, if policies are revised and discussed they will approved at board meetings, the board will conduct the investigation and will respond if necessary.)

Mrs. Nothstine thanked everyone again for coming out to express their concerns regarding this situation. She added the board would discuss this incident as a group, consider their

concerns, and work towards improvements in the future.

At 8:01 pm a motion was made by Mr. DeGroat, second by Mrs. Galante to close the public comment portion of the meeting. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

At this time the board will be moving into executive session, and it will be expected to last one hour.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED by Mrs. Svendsen, second by Mr. DeGroat at 8:02 pm the Stillwater Township Board of Education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 and 10:4-13 that said public body hold a closed session for the purpose of Individual Privacy, Personnel Matters, Attorney Client Privileges, and SEA Contract Negotiations it is expected that the minutes taken of this closed session will be made public when the reason for confidentiality no longer exists. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Mrs. Svendsen and seconded by Mr. DeGroat at 9:00 p.m. to come out of executive session. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

The public was invited back into the room.

At 9:03 pm a motion was made by Mr. DeGroat, second by Mrs. Galante to return back into public session. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

The Board Attorney introduced herself to the public. Stated we notified the public that we would be in executive session for about 1 hour. The board has not finished discussing the other items for executive session, so the board will return to executive session for approximately 15 more minutes. No action will be taken tonight regarding this executive session or the next executive session.

Mrs. Nothstine stated we are looking into matters regarding these policies. We appreciate everyone coming tonight and understand the concerns.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

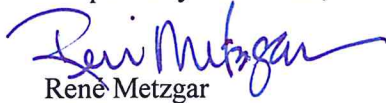
BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED by Mrs. Svendsen, second by Mr. DeGroat at 9:06 pm the Stillwater Township Board of Education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 and 10:4-13 that said public body hold a closed session for the purpose of SEA Contract Negotiations it is expected that the minutes taken of this closed session will be made public when the reason for confidentiality no longer exists. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Motion made by Mr. DeGroat and seconded by Mrs. Santore at 9:20 p.m. to come out of executive session and return to public session. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

ADJOURN

Motion made by Mr. DeGroat and seconded by Mrs. Santore to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rene Metzgar

Business Administrator/Board Secretary