# Mansfield Township Board of Education

## August 15, 2024

**7:00 p.m. Executive Session**
**7:30 p.m. Regular Meeting**

**Call to Order -** Mrs. Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**Roll Call** - Ms. Morris, Acting Business Administrator, conducted Roll Call. The following members of the Board of Education were present:

**Mansfield Township Board of Education**

| Name | Present | Absent |
|---|---|---|
| Judy Irwin | X | |
| Jonathan Lemp | X | |
| Alison Lorentson | X | |
| Diane Margolin | X | |
| Constance Quinn | X | |
| Jonathan Rood | X | |
| Jennifer Rosenblum | X | |
| Linda Watters | X | |
| James J. Winand | X | |

Others in Attendance
Ms. Diana Mai, Superintendent,
Ms. Kelly Morris, Acting Business Administrator/Board Secretary,
Ms. Noreen Matias, Director of Curriculum and Instruction,
Mr. John Melitsky, Principal,
Mr. Jonathan Busch, Board Attorney
There were community and staff members in attendance.

First Executive Session
*On a motion by Ms. Watters and seconded by Ms. Quinn, the Board of Education adjourned to closed session at 7:02 p.m. to discuss personnel and attorney/client privileged matters.*
*Voice Vote. All Yes.*

**WHEREAS**, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-11, permits the board of education to meet in closed session to discuss certain matters.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Mansfield Township Board of Education adjourns to closed session to discuss:

1. *Personnel Matters*
2. *Matters of Attorney/Client Privilege*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Mansfield Township Board of Education reserves the right to discuss such other matters rendered confidential by law should the need arise; and
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the minutes of this closed session be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists. Action may be taken.

*On a motion by Ms. Quinn and seconded by Ms. Rosenblum, the Board of Education returned to open session at 7:35 p.m.*
*Voice Vote. All Yes.*

***Call to Order*** *- Ms. Quinn opened the public BOE meeting at 7:36 p.m.*

**President's Announcement -** *Ms. Quinn read the Statement of Advance Notice*

**Statement of Advance Notice**
The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, The Mansfield Township Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Mansfield Township Municipal Building and sent to the following newspapers: *The Express Times and Star Ledger.*

**Pledge of Allegiance -** *Ms. Quinn conducted the Pledge of Allegiance*

**President's Report** - Constance Quinn
*Ms. Quinn shared an update on the financial status of the District by stating that the Board is very upset as they did not know there was a cause for concern, and they have a lot of questions. A forensic audit will be approved tonight with a firm that has no prior connection to Mansfield Township, and at the end, the Board will demand that the auditors present their findings publicly at an open meeting. She shared that the Board understands that, as taxpayers, the public wants to know what occurred. She further promised that the Board will share any updates available along the way to maintain transparency. She acknowledged that tough decisions had to be made quickly by Ms. Mai and the Administrative team, and she thanked everyone present for their support.*

**Superintendent's Report** - Diana Mai

1. *Ms. Mai presented the four District Goals for the 2024-2025 school year, which included:*
    - *Increased student achievement in math, ELA, and science*
    - *Development of a District-wide MTSS model*
    - *Increased student centered learning*

- *Improved internal controls for District finances.*

2. *Ms. Mai thanks Mr. Kady and the Buildings and Grounds staff for their hard work this summer to get the buildings clean and ready for the return of staff and students.*

**Administrators' Reports**

1. Acting Business Administrator - Kelly Morris
   - *Reminder to Board members to please complete annual mandated training through New Jersey School Boards.*

2. Principal - John Melitsky
   - *Thank you to the custodial crew; the building looks spectacular!*
   - *Teachers have been in to set up their classrooms, which look very welcoming for kids. Their dedication is a credit to our teaching staff.*
   - *August 21 and 22 will be opening days for staff with professional development*
   - *August 21 will be Kindergarten orientation and August 22 will be Preschool orientation.*
   - *Thank you for Ms. Matias for planning a special opening day for August 26.*
   - *There is a very different leadership team this school year. He thanked Ms. Mai, Ms, Matias, and Ms. Morris for all of their hard work and efforts in working well together. He shared that the District is getting close to great, great things.*

3. Director of Curriculum & Instruction - Noreen Matias
   - *Results of the ELL Access testing from the 2023-2024 school year were presented. She shared that 54 students were tested, and 39% of those tested are making good progress; however, a significant amount of support is still needed for students to meet grade level work expectations.*
   - *Ms. Margolin asked if data from this testing will drive this important instruction, and Ms. Matias confirmed that LinkIt will be used to develop individualized plans for each student.*

**Communications and Petitions (If required) –** The Superintendent and members of the Board may acknowledge any communications and/or petitions received. - *None received.*

**Public Comment**

Public comments are invited on matters pertaining only to the agenda action items at this time. All participants shall be given three (3) minutes to speak and shall state their name, place of residence, and group affiliation, if appropriate. The Board uses the public comment period as an opportunity to listen to citizen concerns, but please be aware that not all issues brought to a board meeting will be resolved this evening; rather, the Board will, in appropriate cases, delegate the authority to investigate the matter to the Superintendent or his designee. Please let the record reflect that the BOE does not endorse your comments nor will the BOE be held liable for comments you make about a staff member, or other person, which the staff member, or other person, may consider defamatory and/or libelous, as that individual retains all rights to pursue

any legal remedies against you. The Board will hear all public comments and then close the public comment session and respond if appropriate.

1. *Joyce Farrah questioned how the financial matters happened and when the Board knew. She stated that not much information was shared with the public. She asked how far in debt the District is at this time, and what is being done to operate moving forward.*

   *Ms. Quinn shared that the Board learned in early July, and that immediate action was taken with further action tonight with the approval of a forensic audit. Mr. Busch, Board Attorney, clarified that care is needed with the process of the investigation. Ms. Mai added that a new Business Administrator came aboard quickly to establish a balanced budget for the upcoming school year. Decisions were made to rescind employment offers, reduce force, and re-organize staff to meet the needs of the District within the revenue parameters presently available.*

2. *Russ Onderko shared that he was pleased to hear that cost control efforts are in place. He questioned how much the budget was deficient, if there was any criminal activity, and if the Board will pursue charges if so. He also asked if all of the academic program initiatives shared in the District goals are funded in the revised budget.*

   *Ms. Mai shared that the estimated budget deficiency based on what is known at this time is around $1.4 million. She stressed that the budget for the new school year is now in balance, and that the deficit has been corrected with all presented programs funded. She shared that she has been in consultation with our risk management group in the event that claims arise. Mr. Busch shared that the forensic auditors will look into criminal activity, and assured the public that the Board is obligated to pursue charges through the prosecutor if anything potentially criminal is found. He also stated that matters related to personnel cannot be discussed.*

3. *Jess Marhevka inquired about the District's library program in the upcoming school year and asked if a Media Specialist has been hired.*

   *Ms. Mai shared that teachers will be scheduled to take their classes to the library weekly, but that a Media Specialist has not been hired; this position was rescinded due to the financial concerns of the District.*

**Consent Agenda - Recommended Action(s)**
**Board Member: Linda Watters**
**<u>Approval of Minutes and Reports</u>**

1. Motion to approve the open and closed session minutes of the July 18, 2024 Regular meeting.

*On a Motion by Ms. Watters and seconded by Mr. Winand, the Consent Agenda was approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 9-0-0 roll call vote.*

**Approval Agenda**
**Chair: Diane Margolin**
**Education/Policy Committee - Recommended Action(s):**

1. Motion to approve Registered Bright and Beautiful **Therapy Dog**, Dusty Mai (Member ID#164587), and his handler, Diana Mai, to attend the District schools in accordance with Board policy, as recommended by the Superintendent.

2. Motion to approve **District Goals for the 2024-2025** school year, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.

3. Motion to approve **District Professional Development Plan (PDP) for the 2024-2025** school year, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.

4. Motion to approve **District Calendar for the 2024-2025** school year, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.
   - ➔ *Ms. Quinn noted that the change is to an early dismissal day on the Friday prior to Memorial Day, as well as changes to accommodate staff flex PD requirements.*

5. Motion to approve the **English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum** for the 2024-2025 school year to ensure compliance with State Standards, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.

6. Motion to approve the **Math Curriculum** for the 2024-2025 school year to ensure compliance with State Standards, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.

7. Motion to approve the **Marzano Evaluation Model** for Certificated Instructional Staff observations and the **Marzano School Leadership Evaluation Model** for Administrator observations for the 2024-2025 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent.

8. Motion to approve the **Second Reading** of Policy Alert 233:

   0141 - Board Member Number and Term - Policy
   0141.1 - Board Member Number and Term – Sending District - Policy
   0141.2 - Board Member Number and Term – Receiving District - Policy
   0164.6 - Remote Public Board Meetings During a Declared Emergency - Policy (M) (ABOLISHED)
   2200 - Curriculum Content - Policy (M)
   3160 - Physical Examination - Policy & Regulation (M)
   4160 - Physical Examination - Policy & Regulation (M)
   5200 - Attendance - Regulation (M)
   5337 - Service Animals - Policy (M)
   5350 - Student Suicide Prevention Policy (M)

7231 - Gifts From Vendors - Policy (M) (ABOLISHED)
8420 - Emergency and Crisis Situations Policy (M)
8467 - Firearms and Weapons Policy & Regulation (M)
9181 - Volunteer Athletic Coaches and Co-Curricular Activity Advisors/Assistants - Policy

*On a Motion by Ms. Margolin and seconded by Ms. Watters, the above Education/Policy items were approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 9-0-0 roll call vote.*

**Approval Agenda**
**Chair: Alison Lorentson**
**Personnel Committee - Recommended Action(s)**

1. Motion to approve the **Reduction in Force** per the following resolution:

   WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A:28-9 provides that a board of education may "reduce the number of staff members employed in the district whenever, in the judgment of the board, it is advisable to abolish or reduce any such positions for reasons of economy or because of reduction in the number of pupils or of change in the administrative or supervisory organization of the district or for other good cause;" and

   WHEREAS, for reasons of economy and efficiency, the following existing full-time employee (1.0 FTE) position is recommended for reduction to a part-time employee (.5 FTE) position: Teacher of Health and Physical Education; and

   WHEREAS, based on information provided by the Superintendent, the Mansfield Township Board of Education finds it advisable to reduce the aforementioned position in the District effective immediately, through a reduction in force;

   THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, the following position is hereby reduced to part-time (.5 FTE), effective immediately, as a result of a reduction in force: Teacher of Health and Physical Education, and

   BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent was authorized to provide the necessary notification of reduction, with regret, to Eric Herner, on August 7, 2024 for reasons of economy, and not for performance, as per the contractual terms and conditions in place.

2. Motion to approve the **reassignment of the below instructional staff** for the 2024-2025 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent.

| **Employee** | **2024-25 Assignment** |
|---|---|
| Bennett, Kaylee | Special Ed Teacher - Resource |
| Endrizzi, Kristen | Teacher - Grade 2 |
| Florentine, Robin | Teacher - Movement & RTI |

| | |
|---|---|
| Linus, Lauren | Teacher - G4 |
| Maida, Herminia | Special Ed Teacher - MD |
| Mattison, Kathleen | Teacher - G4 |
| Salvo, Debra | Teacher - PSD |
| Wilson, Gregory | Teacher - G6 Math |

3. Motion to approve the below **Job Descriptions for Confidential Staff**, effective immediately, as recommended by the Superintendent.
    - Confidential School Secretary - 12 months
    - Confidential Assistant to the Superintendent and CST - 12 months
    - Confidential Assistant to the Business Administrator - 12 months
    - Personnel and Technology Coordinator - 12 months
    - Receptionist - 10 months

4. Motion to approve the **assignment of the below non-instructional staff** for the 2024-2025 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent.

| **Employee** | **2024-25 Assignment** |
|---|---|
| Cosme, Mercedes | Confidential School Secretary |
| Heymann, Denise | Confidential Assistant to the Business Administrator |
| Ortiz, Samantha | Receptionist |
| Sliker, Megan | Confidential Assistant to the Superintendent and CST |
| Teets, Jennifer | Personnel and Technology Coordinator |

5. Motion to approve the appointment of **Daniel Andrews** to the position of Custodian with an annual salary of $38,000 (prorated based on start date), effective on or about September 5, 2024, as recommended by the Superintendent.

6. Motion to **rescind**, with regret, the July 18, 2024 staff appointments of the below newly hired instructional staff for reason of financial necessity, as recommended by the Superintendent.
    - Cathleen Koski, Special Education Teacher
    - Rachel Rothrock, Pre-K Teacher
    - Kaitlyn Marsh, Elementary Teacher

7. Motion to approve the appointment of **Rachel Rothrock** to the position of Leave Replacement Special Education Teacher with an annual salary of $63,525 MA/1 (prorated for days worked), effective August 21, 2024 through on or about December 2, 2024, as recommended by the Superintendent.

8. Motion to approve the **Collective Bargaining Agreement** (CBA) between the Mansfield Township BOE and the Mansfield Education Association, effective July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2029, as recommended by the Superintendent.
    ➔ *Ms. Margolin stated that it was a pleasure working with the Association's negotiation team. Ms. Quinn thanked both negotiation teams for a job well done.*

9. Motion to approve a paid **leave of absence for Employee #48708556** under Federal FMLA beginning on or about October 2, 2024 for two calendar weeks, and then intermittently (2-3 days per week) for six calendar weeks thereafter, pending physician certification, as recommended by the Superintendent.

10. Motion to approve an unpaid **leave of absence for Employee #17066036** under Federal FMLA beginning on August 21, 2024 with a return to work date of September 11, 2024, as recommended by the Superintendent.

11. Motion to approve **Abby Melvin** to serve as a Substitute Teacher in the District, effective August 26, 2024, as recommended by the Superintendent.

12. Motion to approve the **Mentoring Plan** for the 2024-2025 school year, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.

*On a Motion by Ms. Lorentson and seconded by Mr. Winand, the above Personnel items were approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 9-0-0 roll call vote, with the exception of Item #8, which was approved with a 8-0-1 roll call vote (Ms. Quinn abstained due to being conflicted as a member of the NJEA through her own employment.)*

**Township Liaison Agenda**
**Township Chair: Linda Watters and Jennifer Rosenblum**
**Township Committee - Recommended Action(s):**

1. No requested action/update as needed.

**Approval Agenda**
**Chair: James Winand**
**Facilities/Finance Committee - Recommended Action(s)**

1. Motion to approve the **payment of bills** for the period of July 19, 2024 through August 18, 2024, as presented, in the amount of $847,036.72.

2. Motion to approve **line item transfers** for the month of July 2024 in the amount of $693,765.72, as presented.

3. Motion to approve a **Shared Services Agreement** between the Boards of Education of Mansfield Township (host) and Franklin Township (joiner) for the provision of Social Worker Services for the 2024-2025 school year, with anticipated revenue of $46,252.80, as recommended by the Superintendent.

4. Motion to approve an agreement between Mansfield Township Board Board of Education and PKF OC Advisory, LLD for the services of a **Forensic Audit**, with an estimated cost to the district of $33,188, as recommended by the Superintendent.

*On a Motion by Mr. Winand and seconded by Ms. Lorentson, the above Facilities/Finance items were approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 9-0-0 roll call vote.*

**Public Comment**

1. *Melissa Buseavich (?) inquired as to if there is a plan to reinstate teaching staff. She also commented on the enormous pressure that would be placed on teachers with larger class sizes due to reduction in force.*

   *Ms. Mai assured the public that our class sizes were not impacted by the reduction, and that we are 100% compliant with student:teacher ratios. We maintain some of the smallest class sizes in the county.*

**New Business -** Members of the Board may introduce any new item or topic of discussion for the Board to consider.

1. *Ms. Quinn informed the Board that she has decided that there is a need for direct contact between the Board and the Forensic Auditors. As such, the Finance Committee will have regular communication with the auditors, including face to face meetings, so that they are actively involved in the process.*

   *Ms. Margolin agreed that it would be good to have real time opportunities to ask questions rather than just hearing the results after the investigation has concluded.*

**Old Business** - Members of the Board may comment on any item or topic that was previously discussed by the Board. - *None*

**Future Board Meeting Dates:**
Thursday, August 15, 2024 - Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 19, 2024 - Regular Meeting

Second Executive Session
*On a motion by Ms. Watters and second by Mr. Rood, the Board of Education adjourned to closed session at 8:35 p.m. to discuss personnel and attorney/client privileged matters. Voice Vote. All Yes.*

**WHEREAS**, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-11, permits the board of education to meet in closed session to discuss certain matters.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Mansfield Township Board of Education adjourns to closed session to discuss:

1. *Personnel Matters*
2. *Matters of Attorney/Client Privilege*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Mansfield Township Board of Education reserves the right to discuss such other matters rendered confidential by law should the need arise; and
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the minutes of this closed session be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists. Action will not be taken.

*On a motion by Ms. Watters and second by Mr. Rood, the Board of Education returned to open session at 9:22 p.m.*
*Voice Vote. All Yes.*

Recommended Action - Adjournment:
*On a motion by Mr. Rood and seconded by Ms. Quinn, the Board of Education adjourned from the Regular Meeting with an 9-0-0 roll call vote at 9:22 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Morris
Acting Board Secretary