

Mansfield Township Board of Education



October 17, 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	Arrived at 7:03 pm	X

Others in Attendance

Ms. Diana Mai, Superintendent,
 Ms. Kelly Morris, Acting Business Administrator/Board Secretary,
 Ms. Noreen Matias, Director of Curriculum and Instruction,
 Amanda Castrogiovanni, Esq. - Board Attorney from Busch Law
 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. *Attorney/Client Privileged Matters*

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 Mr. Winand, the Board of Education returned to open session at 7:37 p.m.
Voice Vote. All Yes.*

Call to Order - *Ms. Quinn opened the public BOE meeting at 7:37 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 thanked Donna McPhillips for 36 years of service to the district as her retirement announcement is on tonight's agenda.*
- *Richard Corcoran from PKF O'Connor Davies shared a preliminary report of findings from the forensic investigation.*

Ms. Mai first gave an introductory statement to inform the public that personnel matters cannot be discussed or shared in public so as to ensure that the rights of all employees are protected, but that management of district funds will be discussed as a public matter. She also shared that this is a preliminary report, but the investigation is still ongoing.

Mr. Corcoran shared his background of over 20 years of experience in government forensic investigations. He stated that this is a preliminary report, and that he expects to return with a full report at the November or December meeting. He reviewed a high level overview of the timeline of events of the investigation from July 2024 to present and

acknowledged his appreciation of receiving unfettered access to information and full cooperation from both the district staff and CDK Systems (our accounting software vendor) before sharing preliminary findings.

Mr. Corcoran noted that the district's purchase order system had not been used as intended, which resulted in a situation of not accurately knowing where the district financial obligations stood at any point in time. Therefore, information shared with the Board and the public was not timely or reliable, which resulted in problematic decision making by the Board because members did not have accurate information. He further explained with examples. He noted that the District has run on a tight budget for many years, and while this alone is not problematic, it then became necessary to use fund balance to cover overspending, which depleted the district's savings.

He also stated that there is no evidence of any missing or stolen money; rather, the district faced a budget deficit for the 2024-25 school year.

Mr. Corcoran shared that the Superintendent and Acting Business Administrator have addressed process concerns and made budget corrections to ensure that the district is now operating effectively.

He shared that there are other serious financial concerns, but those can not be discussed in public at this time. A final report of findings will be issued to the Board when the investigation is completed.

Ms. Lorentson asked if there is anything that the members of the Board should have done differently, or could do differently moving forward, to learn about financial problems sooner. Mr. Corcoran responded that they are volunteers who must trust their paid professionals. When accurate information was not provided timely, the Board was misled and could not make appropriate decisions.

Superintendent's Report - Diana Mai

- *Ms. Mai reported that there were two founded HIB cases in September, and that both discipline and restorative practices were implemented as a result.*
- *Ms. Mai thanked the Mansfield and Tri County Fire Departments for visiting our school for Fire Prevention Week. Both had firetrucks and firefighters on site, and the students were excited! She thanked the Mansfield Township Education Association for providing lunch for the firefighters and staff, and she shared that we will partner with the Mansfield Fire Department in their annual Toys 4 Tots drive this year.*
- *Ms. Mai thanked the Warren County Education Association for a successful movie night on October 11th where they showed "Hocus Pocus" outside. It was wonderful to see kids and adults socializing together.*
- *For Respect Week, our 6th grade Peer Leaders and Safety Patrols did a great job serving as role models to lead an assembly for all students where they talked about respecting one's self, others, the school, the bus, and the community in general.*

Administrators' Reports

Director of Curriculum & Instruction

- *Ms. Matias clarified the NJSLA Grade 5 Science assessment data presented in September to note that the State level data supplied to the District by LinkIt contained an error for the total pass rate at the State level. However, our district data was accurate as presented. Updated results are posted on the District website.*

Communications and Petitions (If required) – None**Public Comment** - Agenda Items Only - None**Consent Agenda - Recommended Action(s)****Board Member: Linda Watters****Approval of Minutes and Reports**

1. Motion to approve the open and closed session **minutes** of the September 19, 2024 Regular meeting.
2. Motion to approve the open and closed session **minutes** of the October 7, 2024 Special Meeting.
3. Motion to approve the below staff requests for **Professional Development/Travel**, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Employee	Event	Date(s)	District Cost
Kelly Morris	NJASBO: Ethics and the BA Whippany, NJ	Dec. 10, 2024 8am to 2pm	Fee: \$145
Noreen Matias	N.J. DOE School Safety Specialist Certification Course Galloway, NJ	Oct. 15, 2024 Oct. 22, 2024 Oct. 29, 2024 Nov. 4, 2024	Fee: \$0 Mileage: \$511.36

4. Motion to receive/approve the **HIB Report Cases**, if any.

On a Motion by Ms. Watters and seconded by Ms. Lorentson, the Consent Agenda was approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 8-0-0 roll call vote.

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

1. Motion to approve the Mansfield Township School District **Nursing Services Plan** for the 2024-2025 school year, as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.

2. Motion to approve the **disposal** of the below obsolete curricular materials for health education as presented, as recommended by the Superintendent.
 - Totally Awesome Health - Macmillan/McGraw-Hill ISBN 0-02-280436-6/4
 - Teen Health, ISBN 0-07-823935-4

On a Motion by Ms. Margolin and seconded by Ms. Quinn, the above Education/Policy Items were approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 8-0-0 roll call vote.

Approval Agenda

Chair: Alison Lorentson

Personnel Committee - Recommended Action(s)

1. Motion to approve the revised **Job Descriptions** as listed below, as recommended by the Superintendent.
 - Special Education Paraprofessional
 - Principal
2. Motion to approve the appointment of the below **Extracurricular Advisor /Coordinators** for the 2024-2025 school year, to be paid in accordance with the active MTEA Collective Bargaining Agreement, as recommended by the Superintendent.
 - Yearbook: Tori Piccione and Jessica Eresmann
3. Motion to approve the resignation for reason of retirement of **Donna McPhillips**, Kindergarten Teacher, with sincere gratitude for 36 years of service to the Mansfield Township School District, effective June 30, 2025, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Mr. Lemp and Ms. Watters added their gratitude to Mrs. McPhillips for her many years of service.
4. Motion to approve the appointment of **Kelly Morris** to the position of Assistant/Acting School Business Administrator at an annual salary of \$130,000.00, prorated based on an effective date of November 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, as approved by the Warren County Executive Superintendent of Schools and as recommended by the Superintendent.

Ms. Quinn thanked Ms. Morris for staying with us and continuing to help navigate the current financial situation.
5. Motion to approve the appointment of **Julian Alicia** to the position of Paraprofessional at salary step Associate/Step 1, effective on or about October 18, 2024, as recommended by the Superintendent.
6. Motion to approve **Olivia Soucie**, Education Student at Raritan Valley Community College, to conduct field observations at the Mansfield Township Elementary School during the Fall 2024 semester, as recommended by the Superintendent.
7. Motion to appoint the below Substitute Teachers as presented, effective immediately, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Jordanna Corbett	Pending paperwork completion
Nicole Davis	Pending paperwork completion
Jessilynn Marhevka	Pending paperwork completion

8. Motion to approve the appointment of the below **Provisional Teacher Mentors** for the 2024-2025 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Mentor	Provisional Teacher	Class Assignment
Erin Sassamann	Rachel Rothrock	Grade 4 (MLR)/PSD

On a Motion by Ms. Lorentson and seconded by Ms. Quinn, the above Personnel Items were approved by the Mansfield Township Board of Education with a 8-0-0 roll call vote.

Township Liaison Agenda

Township Chair: Linda Watters and Jennifer Rosenblum

Township Committee - Recommended Action(s):

Ms. Watters shared that the township is researching options for using solar power in the future, and they have asked the District for electric bills as they collect data. The District provided the information requested and looks forward to learning more.

Approval Agenda

Chair: James Winand

Facilities/Finance Committee - Recommended Action(s)

1. Motion to approve the **payment of bills** for the period of September 20, 2024 through October 17, 2024, as presented, in the amount of \$1,079,495.24.
2. Motion to acknowledge that there are **no line item transfers** for the month of September 2024.
3. Motion to approve the 2024-2025 Mansfield Township School District **Comprehensive Maintenance Plan and M-1 Report**, as presented, and to authorize its submission to the County Office, as recommended by the Superintendent.
4. Motion to approve the annual Mansfield Township School District's **Indoor Air Quality Program Plan** for the 2024-2025 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent.
5. Motion to approve the submission of the Mansfield Township School District's **Integrated Pest Management Plan** for the 2024-2025 school year, and to post and distribute corresponding documents for public access, 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 8-0-0 roll call vote.

Public Comment

Public comments are invited on matters pertaining to the district 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. *Lori Bravo asked who, in general, is responsible for the purchase order system of a school district. Ms. Mai responded that it can vary depending on the size of the district, but that it is standard for the Business Office to oversee purchasing. She shared that our District Goal #4 focuses on internal controls for business operations, and that the goal has been substantially met at this time.*
2. *Salena Donaldson asked if more information could be shared about the Nursing Services Plan and the updated job descriptions that are on the agenda for approval. Ms. Mai shared that the Principal job description has been updated because we are presently hiring a new principal, and that the county required an updated paraprofessional job description. She also explained that the Nursing Services Plan is created by the School Nurse annually to be tailored to the needs of students in the building.*
3. *Richard Stewart asked if the Check Registers from July onward are available on the school website and expressed concerns with transparency. Ms. Morris shared that she was not aware that the District had provided them publically in the past, but that she will promptly update the site to include them.*
4. *Jess Marhevka asked about hiring new staff when teaching positions are being cut. She expressed concern for class sizes at 18-19 students as the norm rather than 14-15 as in the past. She also shared that she believes the District needs a media specialist and a third full-time physical education teacher. Ms. Mai shared that certain positions are required by statute, which is why hiring a Business Administrator is necessary. She also shared that class sizes of 18-19 are still a low number that is well below county averages and state requirements.*

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

Ms. Watters asked if the stipend for the yearbook advisors was still in place, and Ms. Mai verified that it is.

Ms. Watters also asked if our teachers apply for PEP/FAST grants through the MEA. Salena Donaldson, the teacher who leads this program for the MEA, shared that grant opportunities are available and staff may apply.

Ms. Watters asked about the progress of the new reading program (Schoolwide). Ms. Mai shared that Ms. Matias arranged for several teachers to visit another district to learn more about implementation and delivery. They then returned to turn-key to staff at the October professional development day.

Ms. Rosenblum asked if the district had applied for free preschool in the past. Ms. Mai shared that the district is working toward applying in the next round, which is expected to be in July 2025 with a program start date no sooner than January 2026. To that end, a committee has been formed, and discussions with Centenary University to host a satellite campus for PK-3 certification classes in our building have been productive. Ms. Watters asked if our school had space for expanded preschool, and Ms. Mai verified that space was available.

Mr. Kemp noted a safety concern along Port Murray Road near “Big Toy” and asked that a speed bump and fencing be considered.

Old Business - Members of the Board may comment on any item or topic that was previously discussed by the Board.

Ms. Quinn shared that they had applied for Preschool Expansion Grant funding previously, but the Board did not move forward after being told that the program was not financially sustainable by past administration.

Future Board Meeting Dates:

Thursday, November 21, 2024 - Regular Meeting

Thursday, December 19, 2024 - Regular Meeting

Recommended Action - Adjournment:

On a motion by Ms. Watters and seconded by Ms. Quinn, the Board of Education adjourned from the Regular Meeting with an 8-0-0 roll call vote at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Morris
Acting Board Secretary