

**NORTH CALDWELL BOARD OF EDUCATION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SESSION
GRANDVIEW SCHOOL CAFETERIA
VIA ZOOM MEETING**

<https://ncboe.zoom.us/j/99253877973?pwd=R25ObUZnZzhveHlrL2RxRVlaV3FoUT09>

December 11, 2024

6:00 P.M.

AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 3. COMPLIANCE STATEMENT**

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting has been properly advertised in the designated newspaper and the agenda has been posted at the appropriate locations.
- 4. ROLL CALL**
- 5. BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT**
- 6. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**
 - **Student Safety Data System Report**
 - **Audit Presentation – Elizabeth A. Schick: Lerch, Vinci & Bliss, LLP to present June 30, 2024, audit**
- 7. MOVE TO CONFIDENTIAL SESSION FOR STUDENT MATTER (Approx 6:15 pm)**

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L., the Board will adjourn to closed session to discuss matters pertaining to a student matter. Said matters will be made public upon their disposition.

The Board estimates it will reconvene in Public Session at approximately 6:30pm.
- 8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT (Pursuant to Board Policy 0167 – Public Participation in Board Meetings) During this opportunity to comment, district residents and staff are invited to discuss any area of public concern that may be in respect to the operation of the schools. Board Policy 0167 requires that individuals state their name and address of residence and asks that all remarks be directed to the Board as a whole and not to individuals. (All Zoom guests are required to turn their camera on if participating in public comment) The Board asks that members of the public be courteous and mindful of the rights of other individuals when speaking. Although the Board may not respond to items raised during the public forum, all public comments will be considered and may be discussed tonight under "new business" at this meeting, or at subsequent meetings under "old business," or during a Board committee meeting, if appropriate. Each speaker's statement will be limited to three (3) minutes in duration.

9. **ACTION ITEMS**

• **General Resolutions**

- G1. Approve resolution honoring Board member
- G2. Approve resolution honoring Board member
- G3. Approve facilities use application from NCPE for Community Cares Day
- G4. Approve facilities use application from NCPE for Afterschool Enrichment
- G5. Approve Out of District Tuition Contract

• **Business Resolutions**

- B1. Approve Public and Confidential minutes
- B2. Approve payroll
- B3. Approve Bills and Claims
- B4. Approve Title 1 Tutoring
- B5. Approve the 2024 fiscal year Audit and Management Report
- B6. Approve the Corrective Action Plan for June 30, 2024 Audit
- B7. Approve the Gould Camp Account Change

• **Personnel Resolutions**

- P1. Approve listed staff as a lunch/recess supervisor
- P2. Approve listed professional development
- P3. Approve rescinding listed resolution
- P4. Approve full-time custodian
- P5. Approve part-time custodian
- P6. Approve extension for FMLA for listed staff
- P7. Approve full time school psychologist
- P8. Approve full-time custodian

➤ **INDICATES ADDENDUM**

7. **OLD BUSINESS**

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

9. **ADJOURN TO CONFIDENTIAL SESSION (IF NECESSARY)**

- Legal Attorney-Client Privilege Personnel
- Negotiations School Security/Public Safety Student Matter

The next scheduled public meetings of the Board will be held on:

- **Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 7:30 pm.**

Posting: Board Members, Principals, NCPE Co-Presidents, NCEA Co-Presidents, Caldwell Progress Press Member, Board Office, Schools, and Town Hall.

The Board of Education of the Borough of North Caldwell in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in public session on December 11, 2024 in person at the Grandview School Cafeteria as well as via an online Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Michael Halik, Business Administrator, indicated that in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting had been properly advertised and the agenda had been posted at the appropriate locations.

Roll call by the Business Administrator:

Present: Mrs. Mindy Opper, President
Mrs. Johanna Stroever, Vice-President
Mrs. Sapna Malige
Mr. Eric Finkelstein
Mr. David Ved

Also Present: Dr. Linda Freda, Superintendent
Mr. Michael Halik, Business Administrator / Board Secretary
Mr. Robert Brenneck, Computer Network Systems Technician
Mr. Dennis McKeever, Board Attorney (Present until 7:03 pm)

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Dr. Freda reported that the district had zero reports of violence and vandalism. She introduced Ms. Schick to present the results of the Annual Audit.

AUDITORS REPORT

Ms. Schick from Lerch, Vinci, & Bliss, LLP that serves as the District Auditors, presented the results of the Annual Audit. She stated that the district’s financials as presented were given the highest opinion possible. Ms. Schick had one recommendation for the District and reported that the District is fiscally sound.

The following resolution was called at approximately 6:07 pm.

RESOLVED that in accordance with section 8 of the Open Public Meetings act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975, the Board has the authority to adjourn to closed session to discuss matters pertaining to: Student Matter. Said matters will be made public upon their disposition.

Moved: Mrs. Stroever Seconded: Mrs. Malige
Yes: 5 No: 0

The Board reconvened at 6:37 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Jann Skelton, 17 Spruce Road - Mrs. Skelton presented flowers to Mrs. Opper and Mrs. Stroever and thanked them for their commitment to the students of North Caldwell. Thanked them for making decisions for the betterment of all of the students of North Caldwell and for always thinking of the broader good of the community and doing the right thing

Mrs. Wendy Brosse, 58 Beachmont Terrace - Mrs. Brosse, expressed her dissatisfaction with the planned access driveway off Beachmont Terrace. She urged the Board to seek every possible alternative solution.

Mrs. Alba Pennisi, 7 Soder Road - Mrs. Pennisi asked if the access driveway is necessary and expressed her disappointment with the planned access driveway.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Opper reported that twenty-one (21) people attended the meeting on zoom.

Mrs. Opper made the following statement to the community and fellow Board members:

A Few things I want to say to the community and my fellow Board members as Johanna and I are leaving. First, in reference to making difficult decisions, I want the community to know that when you are in a position like we are, we must make difficult decisions and report the information out to community. I urge people not to assume that just because what has been presented to the community is the final plan, doesn't mean we haven't considered all other options.

I have served on a lot of boards in my life, and I can say that over the last nine years, I have served with many amazing people such as Mary Mokris, Val Buccino, Rob Projansky, and Jann Skelton. A lot of time and effort went into all the decisions we made. Whether it was busing, or the referendum, we learned a lot about each situation as we made difficult decisions. I hope the community will have grace with the new Board of Education members that we as Board of Education members had to have with the community. And that brings me into my list of acknowledgments.

I want to start by thanking my family. My kids were 7, 5, 3 when I joined the Board of Education. It was not their decision. My oldest was in second grade and my youngest wasn't even at Grandview yet. What happens when you are the kid of a parent who is on Board of Education is a few things. The first is you get dragged to a lot of community events, so I want to thank them. My husband, who was also dragged to a lot of community events, because we felt it was important to have a Board of Education presence at cultural events and student activities. Its also challenging when kids say things that aren't nice about your mom to you, and that happens too. It's a repetition of talk that they are hearing

at home. As we move forward and have new people coming on the Board who have young kids in the school district, I hope that we can be mindful of how we talk about Board of Education members, and other leaders in our community, because our kids repeat what we say. Be mindful of how the children of Board of Education members are treated.

Second group I want to talk about are the people who I perceive to be partners in the work that we are doing, the first is the administration, the principals, Mr. Checchetto, Dr. Stefanelli (while he was here), and Mr. Bifulco who has been here for the last year or two. The principals of the school are beloved and the relationships they build with the students, the families, and the teachers are the foundation of what we have in North Caldwell public schools.

The next two people that I would like to acknowledge are Dr. Freda and Mike Halik. I have learned so much from them and I hope everyone in this community realizes how lucky we are to have Dr Freda. In terms of educating our students and holding us to a higher standard, she really understands families, children and the community we live in. Michael Halik has put us in a financial position where we have flexibility to make decisions that we weren't able to make 20 years ago. Twenty years ago there were decisions about the safety of our school that we weren't able to make because we didn't have the financial ability to do that. So, thank you to both of you.

The next is the teachers. My journey started here with Mrs. Agnellino when my oldest was in kindergarten. I cannot say enough about the high caliber of teachers, their commitment to our students and to our families. Much of what the teachers do is behind the scenes. There have been times over the years a teacher might feel underappreciated and undervalued, however I hope that you saw and understood the board and the parents appreciate you immensely. Now that my kids are older, I can tell you that the foundation that you are creating for them in their education is priceless and I thank you.

To the community, it really has been an honor and a learning experience to serve you through a lot of different situations. Whether it was COVID, trying to balance the financial barriers we had in the district, or trying to figure out ways to get your kids home, all of those matters were important and sometimes we made decisions that affected us adversely. We took those decisions seriously and appreciate the trust that you put into us. All the conversations that I had with so many of you, I would joke that my average parent conversation was 45 minutes, and I really valued that time. Especially now that our world is so polarized, I felt very privileged to be able to have conversations with people who have very different perspectives than mine. I try to share my perspectives and try to incorporate all of them into the decisions that we were making. So, thank you very much. Thank you to my Board of Education members here. I have loved serving with you. Johanna Stroever,

we are excited to see what you will do on Town Council, I have an immense amount of gratitude. Thank you.

GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

- G1. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the following resolution honoring **Melinda “Mindy” Opper** for her dedicated years of service to the children of the North Caldwell School District:

RESOLUTION OF THE NORTH CALDWELL BOARD OF EDUCATION
HONORING MELINDA OPPER

WHEREAS, Melinda “Mindy” Opper was a member of the Board of Education of North Caldwell for nine years from 2016 - 2024; and

WHEREAS, through her nine years of hard work and dedication Mindy Opper has made extraordinary contributions to the North Caldwell school system; and

WHEREAS, Mindy has demonstrated effective leadership as President and Vice President of the Board of Education for four years by listening and being open to the ideas of others, achieving consensus, educating the public and demonstrating integrity and respect for our school community; and

WHEREAS, through her passion for this community and our schools, Mindy acted as a liaison to the Essex County School Board Association, as well as to the North Caldwell Partnership for Education Association, (NCPE), the Rec & Advisory Board; the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; and

WHEREAS, during her two years on the Community Relations Committee, Mindy made sure, the community was kept updated on all that was going on in our schools; and

WHEREAS, during her seven years on the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Mindy helped make important enhancements in our schools, especially security and facility enhancements in both Gould and Grandview School; and

WHEREAS, during her eight years on the Transportation Committee, Mindy worked diligently to restore subscription busing and to make sure the children were safe while being transported to and from school; using safe and efficient routes; and

WHEREAS, during her eight years on the Negotiations Committee, Mindy worked to achieve sensible resolutions to difficult labor relations issues while maintaining a positive school climate; and

WHEREAS, during her three years on the Covid Committee, Mindy worked diligently to ensure students attended in-person instruction daily in a safe and secure school environment; and

WHEREAS, The North Caldwell school system, the children of North Caldwell and the entire community have benefited from Mindy’s outstanding leadership and contributions to the board of education; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this board of education and the community express its gratitude to Mindy Opper for her nine years of unselfish service to the school and children of North Caldwell.

Moved:	Mrs. Stroever	Seconded:	Mrs. Malige
Yes:	4	No:	0
		Abstain:	Mrs. Opper

G2. RESOLVED that the Board of Education approve the following resolution honoring **Johanna Stroever** for her dedicated years of service to the children of the North Caldwell School District:

RESOLUTION OF THE NORTH CALDWELL BOARD OF EDUCATION
HONORING JOHANNA STROEVER

WHEREAS, Johanna Stroever was a member of the Board of Education of North Caldwell for four years from 2021 - 2024; and

WHEREAS, through her four years of hard work and dedication Johanna Stroever has made extraordinary contributions to the North Caldwell school system; and

WHEREAS Johanna has demonstrated effective leadership as Vice President of the Board of Education for one year by listening and being open to the ideas of others, achieving consensus, educating the public and demonstrating integrity and respect for our school community; and

WHEREAS, through her passion for this community and our schools, Johanna acted as a liaison to the North Caldwell Partnership for Education Association, (NCPE), as well as to the Mayor, Town Council, Planning Board and Police Department, and the Rec & Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, during her four years on the Policy Committee, Johanna facilitated the creation of sensible and legally compliant Board policies; and

WHEREAS, during her year on the Community Relations Committee, Johanna made sure the community was kept updated on all that was going on in our schools; and

WHEREAS, during her four years on the Curriculum Committee, Johanna oversaw the

development of curriculum in a dynamic environment to ensure that resources needed for learning were available and being used effectively; and

WHEREAS, during her three years on the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Johanna helped make important enhancements in our schools, especially security and facility enhancements in both Gould and Grandview School; and

WHEREAS, The North Caldwell school system, the children of North Caldwell and the entire community have benefited from Johanna’s outstanding leadership and contributions to the board of education; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this board of education and the community express its gratitude to Johanna Stroever for her four years of unselfish service to the school and children of North Caldwell.

Moved:	Mrs. Stroever	Seconded:	Mrs. Malige
Yes:	4	No:	0
		Abstain:	Mrs. Stroever

Dr. Freda then read the following statement:

On behalf of the District, I would like to take this opportunity to express to both Mindy and Johanna our sincere gratitude for their service. We are all aware and acknowledge the sacrifices you have made to serve on this board. Your commitment to attending countless meetings, navigating the challenges that come with overseeing an educational system, and making decisions that sometimes aren’t easy or popular has not gone unnoticed. Regardless of the challenges that the Board faced, you remained focused on what was best for our students and our community. It’s that kind of leadership and service on the Board of Education that has helped shape this district into a place where excellence thrives.

Mindy, throughout your tenure on the Board you have been a true advocate for the students, staff, and families in our community. Your dedication to equity, your focus on educational excellence, and your constant drive for improvement have ensured that North Caldwell remains one of the top school districts in New Jersey. What stands out most is your character. You administered your position as Board president with grace, integrity, extreme intellect, and deep thoughtfulness. You ensured that all opinions were heard, and all options were reviewed to determine which option was in the best interest of our students. Your work has left an indelible mark on our district, and we will carry forward the values you championed, respect for education, dedication to students, and commitment to community. As you leave your position on the Board, know that you leave behind a district that is stronger because of your leadership.

Johanna, serving on the Board of Education is no small task. It requires vision, patience, and a deep commitment to the future of our educational community. Through your service on the Board of Education you have exemplified these qualities, dedicating

Superintendent, approve the following staff as lunch/recess supervisor at a rate of \$30.00 per hour for the 2024-2025 School Year:

<u>Teacher/Lunch/Recess/Study Hall</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>RATE</u>	<u>Total hours</u>	<u>Max # Days</u>	<u>Daily Pay</u>	<u>Total Expected Payment</u>
Perez, Nicole	Lunch Duty	12:30-1:30	\$30.00	1.00	169	\$30.00	\$5,070.00

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroevert

Yes: 5 No: 0

P2. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the Professional Development Workshops/Conferences costs for the following teachers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Workshop</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Brenneck, R.	1/29-1/31	NJASA Techspo	\$ 590.00 Trans \$ 123.14 Hotel \$ <u>436.86</u> \$1,150.00
Eisinger,L.	1/15/2025	AI Technology to Engage and Differentiate Lessons	\$100.00
Halik, M.	1/29-1/31	NJASA Techspo	\$ 590.00 Trans \$ 123.14 Hotel \$ <u>436.86</u> \$1,150.00
Halik, M.	3/6-3/7	NJASBO 2025 Leadership Forum	N/A
Norton, L.	1/27/2025	Best Strategies to Increase Student Success	\$295.00
Shay, K.	1/15/2025	AI Technology to Engage and Differentiate Lessons	\$100.00

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroevert

Yes: 5 No: 0

P3. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, rescind resolution P11 from the November 13, 2024 Board of Education meeting.

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroevert

Yes: 5 No: 0

P4. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve **Nicholas Gonnella** as a full-time custodian at a prorated salary of \$ 50,507.00* (Custodian Step 5) effective December 30, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

** Salary to be updated upon the completion of the NCEA negotiations*

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroever

Yes: 5 No: 0

P5. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve **Michael Gesario** as a part-time hourly custodian at a rate of \$23.50 per hour effective December 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroever

Yes: 5 No: 0

P6. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the extension of Family Medical Leave for **Melissa Kornreich** effective January 3, 2025 to March 18, 2025.

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroever

Yes: 5 No: 0

P7. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve **Victoria Socci** as a School Psychologist at a prorated salary of \$ 64,184.00 (MA 30 Step 1) effective upon approval of emergency certification to June 30, 2025.

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroever

Yes: 5 No: 0

P8. RESOLVED that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve Daniel Loesner at a prorated salary of \$52,539.00 (Custodian Step 7) effective December 30, 2024 to June 30, 2025 pending favorable criminal history review.

Moved: Mrs. Malige Seconded: Mrs. Stroeever

Yes: 5 No: 0

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Johanna Stroeever made the following statement about the staff and administration:

“Many people that I’ve talked to move to North Caldwell for our schools. Being on this Board for almost four years has showed me the quieter, less obvious parts of our schools and what makes them so special for our community, such as:”

The teachers that have spent their entire career here and the learned experience that comes with that.

The supportive environment for students and staff that the teachers and administration have created here.

The teachers that are in tears when they choose to leave our community to be closer to their own family.

The teachers that have a love of teaching a subject matter so infectious that it is contagious for our kids.

The teachers that understand that the social growth and mental health of our kids is as important and complements their academic growth.

The principals and school psychologists that think nothing of making their offices safe spaces for kids struggling with the day to day of being a kid.

The principals that stress kindness and support for each other.

The administration and staff that take pride in giving their very best to the kids.

The teachers and staff that let the parents know that when your child is here, he/she is safe.

The custodial staff that labors tirelessly to keep a safe, clean and happy environment for our kids.

The custodial staff that will make a giant pile of leaves for kids to play in.

The Business Administrator that skillfully and carefully manages important school finances that allow things to flow smoothly on the surface, even if he is juggling a million things behind the scenes.

The Superintendent that brings her wealth of expertise that allows her to wear multiple hats with grace, utmost skill and the utter lack of ego.

The deeply held belief that a rising tide lifts all boats.

The day in and day out work to educate all students and to instill the importance of kindness and decency which seems to be severely lacking in so many places today.

The residents that volunteer their precious time to thoughtfully make decisions for the safety of the students, staff, teachers and the town, exemplifying the opposite of arbitrary and capricious decision-making

Thank you for letting me have a front row seat to all of this.

The following resolution was called at approximately 7:07 pm.

RESOLVED that in accordance with section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975, the Board has the authority to adjourn to closed session to discuss matters pertaining to: Legal, Negotiations and Student Matter. Said matters will be made public upon their disposition.

Moved: Mrs. Stroeve Seconded: Mrs. Malige

Yes: 5 No: 0

As there was no further business to discuss, the Board adjourned at 7:28 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Halik

Michael Halik
Business Administrator / Board Secretary