



**Mountain Lakes School District**  
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[www.mlschools.org](http://www.mlschools.org)

**MOUNTAIN LAKES BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

January 7, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Dr. James Riley

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE 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 meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Mountain Lakes Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Mountain Lakes Municipal Building and sent to the following newspapers: *The Daily Record, The Citizen, and the District Website (www.mlschools.org)*.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Secretary, Dr. Riley will lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance

CERTIFICATION OF ANNUAL ELECTION – REPORT OF BOARD SECRETARY

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education have the Statement of Determination, dated November 18, 2024, of the 2024 School Election as certified by the Morris County Board of Elections made part of the annual organization meeting minutes.

THREE-YEAR TERM (3)

Total Votes

Aruni “Don” Singamkutti Arachchige	1,067
Arundhati Kulkarni	126
Purvika Sheth	246
Write-ins	588

**OATH OF OFFICE**

Board Secretary administers Oath to newly elected Board Member:

Aruni “Don” Singamkutti Arachchige  
Purvika Sheth

**ROLL CALL**

Board Member	Present	Absent
Mrs. Barkauskas	X	
Mr. Chiang, Jr.	X	
Dr. Don	X	
Mrs. Forman	X	
Dr. Hirschfeld		X
Dr. McIntyre	X (arrived 6:12pm)	
Mrs. Parker	X	
Dr. Sheth	X	
Mrs. Hermey	X	

Also present: Dr. Brad Siegel, Dr. James Riley, Mrs. Ivonne Ciresi

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Board President**

Nomination of President:

RESOLVED, to nominate Mrs. Joanne Barkauskas for President.

Dr. Don nominated Mrs. Joanne Barkauskas for office of President

Additional Nominees: None

RESOLVED, to close nomination for President and call for a roll call vote. Discussion or comments.

At this time in the meeting the newly elected President will immediately assume the position.

Roll Call 5-0-1 (A: J. Barkauskas)

**Board Vice President**

Nomination of Vice President:

RESOLVED, to nominate Mrs. Jennifer Parker for Vice President.

Mrs. Forman nominated Mrs. Jennifer Parker for office of Vice President

Additional Nominees: None

RESOLVED, to close nomination for Vice President and call for a roll call vote. Discussion or comments.

Roll Call 5-0-1 (A: J. Parker)

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

STUDENT GOVERNMENT REPORT - None

MOUNTAIN LAKES SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT COMMENT - None

COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE MLEA PRESIDENT - None

- Mr. Alves reviewed:
  - Congrats to BOE leadership

PRESENTATIONS - None

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

- Mrs. Barkauskas
  - Thank you to the Board for your vote and confidence in myself and Mrs. Parker
  - Incredible initiatives are already in place and great work has been done and will continue

SUPERINTENDENT / ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE – None

- B. Siegel
  - Congratulations to the BOE leadership and new Business Administrator
  - A lot of exciting work ahead
  - Thank you for your support

SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- J. Riley
  - Thank you to the Board and school community for the warm welcome

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None

COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON AGENDA ITEMS

COMMUNICATIONS - None

BOONTON TOWNSHIP REPORT - None

COMMITTEE REPORTS - None

LIAISON REPORTS - None

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR / BOARD SECRETARY

## **A. REORGANIZATION**

Motion by Mrs. Forman and seconded by Mr. Chiang for motions #1 - #9

### **1. Code of Ethics for School Board Members**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education adopts the Code of Ethics for School Board members, as recommended by the Superintendent:

A School board member shall abide by the following Code of Ethics for School Board Members: (each member reads one aloud)

- a. I will uphold and enforce all laws, rules and regulations of the State Board of Education, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes shall be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.
- b. I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools that meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing.
- c. I will confine my board action to policy making, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them.
- d. I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run.
- e. I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the board.
- f. I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.
- g. I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. In all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its school.
- h. I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the chief administrative officer.
- i. I will support and protect school personnel in the proper performance of their duties.
- j. I will refer all complaints to the chief administrative officer and will act on the complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

## **2. School Board Recognition Month**

WHEREAS, The New Jersey School Boards Association has declared January 2025 to be School Board Recognition Month, a time when all residents can acknowledge the contributions made by our local school board members; and

WHEREAS, The Mountain Lakes Board of Education is one of 581 local school boards in New Jersey, which sets policies and oversees operations for public school districts; and

WHEREAS, The Mountain Lakes Board of Education embraces the goal of high-quality education for all New Jersey public school students; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's local school boards help determine the educational goals for approximately 1.4 million children in pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's 5,000 local school board members, who receive no remuneration for their services, act as advocates for public school students as they work with administrators, teachers and parents for the betterment of public education; and

WHEREAS, School boards strive to provide the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs; and

WHEREAS, Boards of education provide accountability to the public; they communicate the needs of the school district to the public; and they convey to school administrators the public's expectations for the schools; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey can take pride in its schools, which rank among the nation’s best in key achievement indicators such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, and the preparation for college through advanced placement offerings and SAT assessments; Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Mountain Lakes Board of Education, does hereby recognize the services of local school board members throughout New Jersey as we join communities statewide in observing January 2025 as School Board Recognition Month; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Mountain Lakes Board of Education urges all New Jersey citizens to work with their local boards of education and public school staffs toward the advancement of our children’s education, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**3. Morris County School Boards and New Jersey School Boards**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approves the appointment to Morris County School Boards Association and New Jersey School Boards Association, move that the President be directed to appoint a Delegate and an Alternate to the Morris County School Boards Association and the New Jersey School Boards Association, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**4. Parliamentary Procedures**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education adopt Robert’s Rules of Order as the official parliamentary procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings and appoint the board secretary and the board attorney to act as the parliamentarians for the 2025 calendar year, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**5. Authorized Signatures / Annual Appointments**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education extends the following appointments and authorized signatures for the following accounts for the period of January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, as recommended by the Superintendent:

Board Secretary	Dr. James Riley
Authorized Signatures School Warrants	Board Secretary, Board President, Treasurer
Depositories for School Funds	Provident Bank
District Attorney	Fogarty & Hara, ESQS
District Architect	Di Cara Rubino
Official Newspapers	The Daily Record, The Citizen

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**6. Mountain Lakes School District Calendars\***

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approve the Mountain Lakes School District calendar for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**7. Board of Education Meeting Calendar and Designation of Official Newspapers\***

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approve The Citizen and The Daily Record as the official newspapers of the Board of Education,

WHEREAS, Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Laws of 1975, requires all public bodies covered by said Act, at least once each year, within seven days following the annual organizations or reorganizations meeting of such body, to post and maintain posted throughout the year as set forth in the Act, a schedule of the regular meetings of the public body to be held during the succeeding year;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mountain Lakes Board of Education of the County of Morris and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The schedule of regular meetings of the Mountain Lakes Board of Education as set forth in the schedule annexed hereto be and the same is hereby adopted;
2. The Board Secretary is hereby authorized and directed to prominently post said schedule in at least one public place reserved for such announcements;
3. Said schedule shall be mailed, telephoned, electronically transmitted or hand delivered by the Board Secretary to at least one of the following newspapers: The Citizen and The Daily Record;
4. Said schedule shall be placed on file with the Board Secretary;
5. Special meetings may be held as and when necessary, with notice to be given as provided for in the Act and meetings involving urgent matters may be held as provided for in Section 4b of the Act;
6. In the event that the annexed schedule is hereafter revised, the revised schedule shall be posted, mailed, and filed by the Board Secretary in the manner described hereinabove; and
7. Any person who requests a copy of the within schedule, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**8. Strauss Esmay Policy and Regulation Manual**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approves and adopts the policies and regulations included in the Strauss Esmay Policy and Regulations Manual, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

**9. Doctrine of Necessity**

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq. was enacted by the New Jersey State Legislature to ensure and preserve public confidence in school board members and school administrators and to prove specific ethical standards to guide their conduct; and WHEREAS, questions have arisen regarding how a Board should invoke the Doctrine of Necessity when a quorum of a board of education has conflicts of interest on a matter required to be voted upon; and

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Commission has provided some guidance in Public Advisory Opinion A03-98 (April 1, 1998) but finds that there is a need to repeat and clarify its opinion; and

WHEREAS, the opinion set forth that, when it is necessary for a Board to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity, the Board should state publicly that it is doing so, the reason that such action is necessary and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with the Legislative purpose as set forth in N.J.S.A. 18A:12-22(a) the School Ethics Commission views public disclosure of conflicts of interest to be paramount when it is necessary to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the School Ethics Commission hereby requires Boards of Education that must invoke the Doctrine of Necessity to adopt a resolution setting forth that they are invoking the Doctrine, the reason for doing so and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Boards of Education that invoke the Doctrine are directed to read the resolution at a regularly scheduled public meeting, post it where it posts public notices for thirty (30) days and provide the Commission with a copy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall distribute this Resolution to the county superintendents for distribution to the school districts, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Association of School; Business Officials and the New Jersey Education Association, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS - None

PENDING LEGISLATION - None

COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE PUBLIC

- Mrs. Hermey
  - Been an honor to serve
  - Thank you to BOE and admin for support
  - Meaningful relationship and appreciation b/w Boonton Twp and ML
  
- Anon.
  - School security concerns regarding potential threat preparedness. Specifically concerned with tactical training and physical fitness
  - Proposes review of staffing and training

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 6:42pm was made by Mrs. Forman and seconded by Mr. Chiang.

Roll call vote 7-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

James Riley

School Business Administrator / Board Secretary

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*Δ* Indicates matters not relating to MLHS, the Boonton Township district Representative of the Board of Education will refrain from voting on such matters, pursuant to Board Policy 0141.2.

*\** Indicates a motion/resolution will have supporting documentation

**2024-2025 District Goals**

<b>Goal Statement</b>	<b>Goal Area</b>
1. Establish a system of support for administrators and certified staff members that promotes high quality feedback, instruction, and student learning using the Stronge Effectiveness Performance Evaluation System.	Ensuring the Success of All Staff
2. Assess and develop a plan to upgrade district security systems and practices with a focus on infrastructure, training, resources, and guidance to ensure safety and wellbeing for our students, staff members, and community.	Finance/Infrastructure/Technology Supporting the Whole Child
3. Develop a meaningful collaboration with Rockaway Valley School (Boonton Township) in an effort to align educational programming and other school systems that promote coherence for students, staff members, and families in the region.	Strong Family/School/Community Partnerships
4. Explore opportunities to strengthen and expand students' learning with rigorous, relevant, and engaging STEM education, across PreK-12th grade.	Ensuring the Success of All Students
5. Enhance communication and create channels for meaningful input between/among the district leadership, staff, and community partners to build trust, cohesion, and support for decision-making across the district.	Ensuring the Success of All Staff

**2024-2025 Board Goals**

<b>Board Goal</b>	<b>Committee Support</b>
1. Support the development and improvement of district personnel systems to retain high quality staff members and promote fair, consistent, and effective supervision across the district.	Personnel
2. Endeavor to reach a long-term agreement with Boonton Township School District extending the send-receive relationship for Rockaway Valley School students to attend Mountain Lakes High School.	Full Board, Negotiations
3. Develop a positive and collaborative relationship between the Board of Education and new superintendent to ensure a broad vision and governance plan for the district result in clear, appropriate, and effective decisions.	Full Board
4. Enhance communication and relationships between the Board of Education and Mountain Lakes staff by expanding BOE member attendance at key school programs and events and increasing staff and school highlights at regular BOE meetings.	Full Board
5. Secure and successfully transition a full time Business Administrator/Board Secretary with essential skills, dispositions, and knowledge to meet the diverse fiscal and operational needs of the district.	Finance, Facilities
6. Promote a safe and positive learning environment for all students by supporting the administration and staff with resources related to upgrades in school security and various wellness initiatives.	Facilities, Security