

PARK RIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Date: February 11, 2025

Public Started: 7:00 P.M.

Public Ended: 8:55 P.M.

High School Little Theater

I. Roll Call

C. Amitrano	R. Fisher	J. Pierotti	N. Agoos	R. Browne	D. Bradler
X	X	X	X	X	X

Also Present:

R. Gamper R. Wright A. Zartarian

II. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President, David Bradler.

III. Open Public Meetings Statement was read by Board President, David Bradler.

This is to advise the general public and to instruct that it be recorded in the minutes that in compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, entitled the "Open Public Meetings Act," the Park Ridge Board of Education on January 28, 2025, caused to be posted at the Office of the Board of Education located at 85 Pascack Road, Park Ridge, New Jersey and on January 28, 2025, sent to The Record, 1 Garret Mountain Plaza, P.O. Box 471, Woodland Park, NJ 07424-0471 and The Ridgewood News, 41 Oak Street, Ridgewood, NJ 07450-3805 and on January 28, 2025, delivered to the Office of the Municipal Clerk of Park Ridge and the Park Ridge Public Library a meeting notice setting forth the time, date and location of this meeting.

IV. Interviews with Board Candidates (public session)

The Board conducted interviews for the replacement of a Board member.

Mr. Fisher introduced a resolution (Resolution #1) Pursuant to Policy 0143 outlining the process for Board Member election and appointment. The resolution was voted on and failed as follows:

M:	RF	S:	CA		
CA	RF	JP	NA	RB	DB
Y	Y	N	N	N	N

Mr. Fisher asked for a motion to adjourn but was not recognized by the Board President.

Mr. Bradler stated that Board trustees are volunteers and do not receive compensation. He outlined the process for the interviews. All interviews will be done in public. There will be six

questions asked which were developed by the New Jersey School Board's Association (NJSBA). Every candidate will get the same questions. Candidates can stay when their turn is done. After the interviews, the Board will have an open session for public comment. He asked that the public be respectful and to have their phones silenced or turned off. The interview order was determined based on the time stamped on emails received.

The questions that were asked were as follows:

Q1 - How would you define the primary responsibilities of a school board member, and what draws you to this role?

Q2 - In your view, what are the key issues currently facing our schools, and how do you envision the board addressing these challenges?

Q3 - Can you share any past experiences, personal qualities, or skills that have equipped you for the role of a school board member?

Q4 - Serving on a board often involves collaborating with a team of individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and opinions. Could you provide an example of a time you worked successfully in such a team environment?

Q5 - What is your understanding of the time commitment, training requirements, ethics disclosures, and background checks necessary for school board membership?

Q6 - Are there any questions you have for us?

The first candidate was Mr. Shelton Hollers

Ms. Browne asked the first question. Mr. Hollers responded that it was to promote transparency with decisions, be fiscally responsible and make sure the schools are well run.

Mr. Pierotti asked the second question. Mr. Hollers replied that the Board has turned into a war zone. He believes the position needs to be nonpolitical. He felt it was important to keep the children and staff safe, and to ensure staff are properly compensated.

Mr. Fisher declined to ask any questions, indicating that he did not have any say in the process and did not agree with the format.

Mr. Bradler asked the third question. Mr. Hollers responded that he has been involved with Professional development for 25 years. He has also served on a non-profit Board for two years. He presently has three children in the school district.

Ms. Agoos asked the fourth question. He stated that his position on the nonprofit Board gave him exposure to working with people with different opinions. It was important to listen to everyone's opinion and try to find mutual ground.

Mr. Amitrano declined to ask any questions indicating that since the Board president developed them, he could ask them.

Mr. Bradler asked the fifth question. Mr. Hollers stated that he would make himself available as needed and do whatever it takes to get things done.

Mr. Hollers was then asked by Mr. Bradler if he had any questions for the Board. He asked how the process would work. Mr. Bradler responded that after the interviews were completed, the Board would adjourn to private session, deliberate and come back out to vote.

The second candidate was Ms. Kerry Shelby. Her questions were asked in the same order and same individuals as the preceding candidate.

Q#1 – Ms. Shelby stated that she was is a parent with a child at East Brook. She also works as a teacher in another school system. She is familiar with the troubles that schools face and aware of their challenges such as budgets, grounds, and curriculum. She felt she would be an asset when it came to looking at educational aspects.

Q #2 – Ms. Shelby stated that a recent United States analysis of school success was very sobering. While NJ is doing better than most States, there is still a need to be diligent. A need to keep their eye on the target. They need to focus on diverse learning needs and social and emotional wellness.

Q# 3 –Ms. Shelby indicated that this would be a new experience for her. She has spent 15 years providing consulting services for the deaf and acted as a liaison between staff, students and families. She would focus on the needs of students being met, including the budget.

Q#4 – Ms. Shelby indicated that collaboration for her takes place every day. It is important to listen to the stakeholders, parents and community. Take everyone’s concerns into consideration unemotionally and do what is best.

Q#5 – Ms. Shelby indicated that she worked during the day but was flexible in the evenings. She would make sure to allocate time to be available and do whatever is required. She has already had a background check as a teacher.

Q#6- She had no questions for the Board

Mr. Fisher made another motion to Adjourn. A vote took place and failed as follows:

M: RF S: CA
CA RF JP NA RB DB
Y Y N N N N

The Third Candidate was Dr. Thomas Monahan

Q#1 –Dr. Monahan indicated that the primary responsibility is to ensure that the schools are operating within the budget of the town but allow for the best quality education. He felt this was achieved through courses, extracurricular activities and sports. There also needs to be services for students who fall behind and for those who accelerate. He wanted to be a conduit between the people of Park Ridge and those who run the schools. He is a firm believer in education. It is important to him and his family. He worked in pharma for 50 years. He was privileged to be part of developing vaccines. He would like to give back to the community where he has lived for 37 years. He felt now was the time.

Q #2 – Dr. Monahan stated that one of the key issues was that students are falling behind in Math and Science. He said not everyone gets a medal. School teaches you to be competitive. It is important to do it in such a way that children are not threatened. Technology changes rapidly, and you need to make sure you do not fall behind. Molecular bio changes in a short period. Teachers need to stay current and incentivize students. He currently volunteers at the Bergen Academies. They are doing some amazing things and students are learning critical thinking.

Q #3 – Mr. Monahan cited his past experience in Big Pharma. He has a master's and a PHD. He has been in positions of authority at work as part of a group and directed people. He has worked on project teams where different skill sets were needed. It was important to work together on a common goal. He would add his skill set to the current Board makeup. You have to check your ego at the door and be there for the children and ensure they get the education they deserve. It is the School Board's responsibility to develop programs that spark that.

Q #4 –Mr. Monahan stated that he was the Director of Quality Control and had to be the final signature before release to the public. There were always deviations and pressure to release. He had to sit and work with people. Everyone is aiming at the same goal but coming from different directions. There are divisions due to political ideologies. It is important to respect others' beliefs and have mutual respect. They may not agree but look at the goal to do the best for students.

Q #5 – Mr. Monahan commented that he has already had a Background check and was fingerprinted at Bergen Academies. He also has the luxury of more leisure time than a few years ago. He indicated that this is something he is choosing to do. He finds it stimulating.

Q #6 – He asked the Board what are you looking for in someone to sit on Board. He was not going to be just a yes person. Mr. Bradler stated that they are a diverse group and are looking to come to a consensus for the benefit of the students.

The Fourth candidate was Ms. Rosanna Mkhitarian

Q #1 – Ms. Mkhitarian responded that she loves kids and wants to do her part to participate in the community.

Q #2 – She asked to skip this question.

Q #3 – Ms. Mkhitarian indicated that her past experiences have prepared her for this role. She indicated that she has worked with kids before.

Q #4 – Ms. Mkhitarian indicated that she has worked with groups who do not always agree. She gave an example of homework where some parents believe more homework is good and others do not. It is important to try and understand the rules always and have your own opinion. She would engage in the discussion and go with the majority.

Q #5 – When asked about her time commitment, she indicated that she would be able to fulfill the time commitments.

Q #6 – She had no questions for the Board.

The fifth and final candidate was Josephine Hunt

Q #1 – For credential, Ms. Hunt stated that she has been in education for a long time, with over 20 years of teaching. She has three children who have or are going through the system. She would like to give back to the community. She is in a Master’s program for Educational leadership. She indicated that the program has been very eye opening. She is also doing a lot of community work. She would like to work as a bridge between teachers and parents. She believes in transparency and communication and feels that involving all stakeholders is better for the students.

Q #2 – One of the key areas she believes is social and emotional health. She stated that students have a lot of stress. Behavioral programs help to alleviate that stress. It improves success for them in schools. She currently works for Closter Board of Education and that is what they have been implementing.

Q #3 –She described herself as a natural teacher and felt the career found her. She felt her experience as an educator would be important as a Board member. She listed being a good listener as one of the important qualities for the job. She felt it was important to hear a person’s message.

Q #4 – She responded that collaboration happens routinely in her job. Teams of teachers get together and provide different perspectives. She indicated that it is important to communicate in a respectful way. Compromises will arise and new ways can form.

Q #5 – When asked about her time commitment, she indicated that she currently attends the Closter BOE meetings as part of her class. All three of her children are in college. She indicated that she is really excited about the prospect of being on the Board and would be willing to put in the time and do what is needed. She did indicate that as a teacher, she would not be able to vote on certain decisions.

Q#6 – No Questions for the Board.

V. Hearing of Citizens

Ms. Brickman – Thanked the Board for doing this. She made a statement about respect. She hopes that the Board can show more respect at their meetings. The town does not want to see Board members fighting with each other and asked them to conduct themselves with proper decorum. She stated that this is a small town and word gets around fast. Everyone knows everyone. The Board should be here for kids in town. They should not be using the kids as steppingstones. Parents don’t want politics on the Board. Social and emotional well-being is a huge part of education. She felt members should not be on the board if they did not understand that and should step down. She stated that she recently sent a letter to the Board in support of Mr. Shelton Hollers as a candidate. He received thousands of votes and is a good person. She felt the Board needs adults who are not looking to use their position as a steppingstone.

VI. Adjournment to Private Session

Private Closed Session was read by President Bradler

The Park Ridge Board of Education will adjourn into private session to discuss item(s), which fall within specific exceptions contained in N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b.

Be it resolved that the Board will now go into private session to discuss matters rendered confidential due to the nature of pending or anticipated litigation, attorney client privilege and personnel – employment matters affecting a specific, prospective or current employee privilege. Any discussion held by the Board, which need not remain confidential, will be made public as soon as practical. Minutes of the private session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists. All appropriate persons, who may be discussed in private session, have been adequately notified (RICED – in accordance with Policy #0162, Notice of Board Meetings by the Board Secretary/Business Administrator).

Motion, second and vote to enter into private session at 8:11 pm.

M: RB S:JP
CA RF JP NA RB DB
P P Y Y Y Y

The Regular Session of the Board of Education was recalled at 8:54.

M: RF S: CA
CA RF JP NA RB DB
Y Y Y Y Y Y

Mr. Bradler thanked everyone who came and hoped to see all the candidates run in November.

VII. Meeting Resolution

Mr. Bradler read a resolution appointing Thomas Monahan

WHEREAS, a vacancy was created on January 27, 2025 when Mr. Bucco resigned as a member of the Park Ridge Board of Education (the Board) and;

WHEREAS, the Board is interested in filling said vacancy with a qualified member of the community and;

WHEREAS, the Board has conducted interviews with interested candidates to fill said position;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Park Ridge Board of Education hereby appoints Mr. Thomas Monahan, to serve as a member of the Board of Education effective upon completion of a criminal history background check and fingerprinting, for a term prescribed by law.

M: CA S: RB
CA RF JP NA RB DB
Y Y Y Y Y Abs

VIII. Adjournment – 8:55 pm

M: RF S: CA
CA RF JP NA RB DB
Y Y Y Y Y Y

Robert Wright
Business Administrator/Board Secretary