



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 8, 2021

Public Session - Virtual Meeting Via Zoom and Facebook Live – 7:00 p.m.

A **Workshop/Voting Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education was held on this date in the large conference room in the Administration Building and via Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Board President, Samantha Messer, who announced that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by amendment to notice approved at the Board's reorganization meeting on January 4, 2021 and posted at the Board of Education office and communicated to *The Star Ledger*, *West Essex Tribune*, *TAPinto Livingston* and the Livingston Township Clerk.

Members Present: Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Vineeta Khanna, Ronnie Konner, Samantha Messer and Aditya Desai

Also in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Block, Steven Robinson, Lisa Capone-Steiger, Mark Stern, Susan Burman, Teresa Rehman and Joann Goldberg

Ms. Messer wished everyone a Happy International Women's Day.

There were approximately 200 members of the public and staff watching remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Block thanked the maintenance and transportation staff for making more room in classrooms by removing built in cabinets and moving extra furniture into storage and by reworking the bus routes so that we are ready to go with our spring forward plan.

Dr. Block announced a new law was passed today, Bill A4454, which requires New Jersey school districts to include instruction on diversity and inclusion, which has been a primary focus of our district for grades K-12 both last year and this year.

Dr. Block announced Governor Murphy has a bill on his desk to address the shortage of qualified teachers during the pandemic which we hope will open up hiring opportunities for the district.

Workshop Items

Budget Discussion Featuring Curriculum, Student Services, Technology, Personnel and Facilities

Mr. Stern began by explaining as we look at readiness for students and staff, this work falls into two important phases, which are constant assessment and intervention with students and the curriculum mapping work that we have been doing throughout this pandemic. This work

continues to focus on standards and skill sets and essential questions over specific content areas.

Mr. Stern continued that much of the curriculum mapping work started last summer when we collected data on what students were taught remotely and created curriculum add-on documents so teachers knew what standards needed to be focused on or revisited this year.

Mrs. Steiger explained as they look at readiness for students in September, she will first address what we are currently doing. Right now, in grades K-6, they use regular assessments to assist teachers and principals in making sure students are meeting expectations. If they are not, we have classroom based interventions, done by teachers and interventionists, that occur in small groups during the classroom period and after school on remote only days.

Mrs. Steiger continued that if this intervention is not enough, we also have our Intervention and Referral Services Committee (I&RS) that exists in each building. This committee is led by teacher representatives and the principal or supervisor and is where teachers come to talk about students and receive additional teaching strategies. Goals are written for the student to achieve and data points are collected to determine whether or not the strategies being utilized are making a difference. Students who need additional support may be referred to basic skills intervention or to the child study team. Mrs. Steiger continued that these interventions are rooted in taking a deep look at data to determine skill deficits that might affect current work or provide targeted instruction that we can address skills and create a bridge to meet the next grade level.

Mrs. Steiger continued as we start to approach the summer, we will take a look at students who may not be meeting the expectations on targeted or global skills and will offer support to them through our K-6 summer intervention program. This program will be led by intervention staff and other appropriate staff members in each building throughout the summer. The program will address reading, writing and math. Parents will be notified via a letter from their building principal if there is a need for their child to participate.

Mrs. Steiger continued that as we transition to September, summer intervention data will be collected and shared with the next grade level teachers to determine other in class supports or basic skills and intervention, if warranted.

Mrs. Steiger continued that we are receiving grant money for mental health support and have already started to craft a counselor connection for this summer which will allow counselors and building principals to hold large and small group activities to help students re-enter their schools and to reestablish their peer relationships.

Mr. Robinson added that we were notified by the government about an ESSER grant, which is broken into three parts. The first is the coronavirus relief fund, in the amount of \$418,880, which we will use to purchase student Chromebooks and cases, the second is for learning acceleration funds, in the amount of \$26,882 and the third is for mental health in the amount of \$45,000. The learning acceleration funds will be added to the \$100,000 we already put in the budget for summer programming for students and the mental health funds will be used for the summer guidance program that Mrs. Steiger just spoke about.

With respect to the secondary level, Mrs. Steiger explained teachers are also currently working with students to fill in any holes created in their learning during this time of hybrid and remote by offering classroom interventions and assistance during office hours before and after school. Mrs. Steiger added the I&RS and child study teams are also available at this level to offer additional support, when needed.

Mr. Stern added that secondary level students will also have three different areas to hone their skill sets over the summer. The first is traditional summer school, which serves as a retake for

students who do not meet the standards or expectations of a course. This option is available to all students who have a need. The second is the summer bridge program, which is available to incoming freshmen and those in grades 9 through 12. This program allows students to preview a course at a higher level or to obtain prerequisite skills for a higher level course. Mr. Stern continued that new for the summer of 2021 is the summer crossover program. This program is specific to math, where students would benefit from an opportunity to strengthen skills or preview coursework for the next level in math.

Mrs. Steiger explained she is happy to announce that the budget includes a five day rotation at the elementary level. This will include an extra 11 minutes a day for staff and allows us to convert our existing schedule to a nine 43-minute period day that provides for six specials (art, music, world language, media and two physical education classes) to run within a five day week. Mrs. Steiger provided highlights of how the schedule would run.

Mr. Stern explained we will also have additional support with Great Schools Partnership, an organization who came in to work with us to build district and school based equity teams to develop programming and professional development. At the secondary level, we are working with them to develop a comprehensive advisory program that incorporates this important equity and diversity work with SEL to help us reestablish and promote building cultures and norms and to address issues that are taking place in our school, community and society.

Mr. Robinson asked the board if they had any questions.

Mrs. Chirls asked, at the elementary level, if SEL would be included in the social studies rotation and if there will be any change to the counseling program. Mrs. Steiger responded it will be an interdisciplinary connection, we already have a school counseling program at the elementary level and SEL is sprinkled across each of the content areas.

Mrs. Konner asked if there are more I&RS referrals this year as a result of hybrid and remote learning and if we are looking to expand services going into next year. Mrs. Steiger responded I&RS is vibrant and currently offering a lot of support and that we are looking to see if we have a need to develop some support for after school next year.

Mrs. Konner asked what role parents fill in regard to I&RS and Mrs. Steiger responded that their role is to provide information that supports the team.

Mrs. Konner asked how students would be identified as eligible and what a parent should do if they are concerned about their child. Mrs. Steiger responded if a parent believes a child is struggling, we won't wait until the summer to address the issue. Mrs. Steiger added assessments, report cards and teacher observations are all important factors in deciding to remediate skills before the next grade level.

Mrs. Chirls asked if any of the grant money will be assigned to alleviate the cost of summer programs for parents and Dr. Block responded we are still developing what will be referral or self selected.

Mrs. Konner stated that, at the Garden State Coalition meeting, Senator Ruiz suggested using this one time bump in funds to offer Saturday programs or tutoring programs.

The board engaged in a discussion about enrollment and class size with all of the members suggesting we take a look at lowering the class size guidelines for next year in an effort to address concerns about distancing and to offer more attention to students in each class. Some board members stated they would prefer to sacrifice spending in other areas of the budget to be able to have smaller class sizes across all grade levels.

Mr. Robinson responded he is monitoring enrollment and that he has space to add students without adding sections.

Dr. Block added keeping class sizes reasonable will be a major focus of ours over the summer.

Mrs. Konner asked how much of an increase in enrollment we have had since people are relocating due to the pandemic.

Mrs. Chirls asked what the recommendation would be for new staff needs if the board agreed to a lower class size that takes into consideration six feet distance between students.

Mr. Cohen asked if Mrs. Steiger feels the assessments that are traditionally given are equally effective today in terms of intervention and if she feels like we have enough touch points with these students.

Mrs. Steiger responded that although some parts of assessments are more challenging in this environment, teachers are extremely sophisticated and are on top of students not meeting certain benchmarks.

Mr. Cohen asked if she feels we are staffed appropriately to meet the needs of K-6 interventions and Mrs. Steiger responded she hasn't received information to make her think we are not able to provide intervention when we need and reiterated that we provide lots of layers of intervention on a regular basis.

Mr. Cohen asked if this budget provides us with the potential to offer a full remote option next year.

Mr. Cohen asked if the \$500,000 in the budget is adequate to address unknowns.

Mr. Robinson responded he would think better things are ahead and that we shouldn't experience as many problems next year as we did this year. Mr. Robinson added we still have \$1,000,000 in emergency reserve that can be carried forward.

Mrs. Khanna asked if we have tried to solicit help from local businesses or companies for funding and Mr. Robinson responded we have tried in the past but have never received anywhere near the magnitude of funds she is imagining.

Mrs. Khanna asked who else looks at the student besides the teacher for intervention and Mrs. Steiger responded we have a tremendous amount of assessment data, an I&RS team in each building, supervisors and principals. Mrs. Steiger added she doesn't want to minimize the discretion of the teacher as that person is working with the students all the time.

Mrs. Khanna asked for an explanation for the period of innovation under the five day rotation and Mrs. Steiger responded this will be a period each week to have interdisciplinary work with classes where media specialists, G/T, art and science could all intersect.

Mrs. Rehman reviewed the technology initiatives in the budget explaining the rationale for moving towards a 1:1 Chromebook device as opposed to carts at the younger grade levels. Mrs. Rehman explained it will also be good for us to have a constant refresh cycle to ensure the technology we are bringing into the school is always up to date as well as limit the fluctuations in the budget each year.

Mrs. Rehman continued that under software subscriptions and data analytics, we have made the change to consolidate all purchases within the technology department so we can better evaluate them and look for overlap in services.

Mrs. Chirls asked if we are using Schoology consistently across all schools and Mrs. Rehman responded she would like to see the district move towards one platform in the future but that currently, we have a few different systems at different levels.

Mrs. Konner asked if we had to make any adjustments to the budget for the LHS TV Studio upgrade plan because of COVID and Mrs. Rehman responded it didn't impact what they did this year or will have an impact on next year.

Board Reports

Ms. Messer announced that Charlene Peterson of NJSBA is available to come to the March 15 meeting to discuss how larger boards operate and to answer questions. The board all agreed to having her come to the meeting.

As part of Read Across America, Mrs. Chirls read to students at Burnet Hill, Riker Hill and Hillside.

Mrs. Chirls attended a legislative meeting for NJSBA as well as two county leadership meetings where one of the topics was stress presented by the Mental Health Association of NJ.

After attending the last Sports Council Meeting where they held a conversation about building an additional turf field at the pit or Tevlin field, Mr. Cohen expressed he would like to look at our capital reserve budget and figure out how to fund the project. Mr. Cohen stated it will create an immense number of opportunities for kids to be outside and would like to make it a reality for the community.

As part of Read Across America, Mrs. Khanna read to Burnet Hill, Riker Hill and Hillside.

As part of Read Across America, Mrs. Konner read to Burnet Hill and Hillside.

Public Input on Agenda Items ~ up to 15 minutes

Matthew Koff, 13 Rumson Road, asked why we don't know how many students fit in each classroom based on different distancing measures.

Dr. Block responded we measured our rooms over the summer and are trying to be as creative as possible to move students to bigger spaces. In addition, we are removing standing cabinets and extra furniture to create more room in some spaces.

Tracy Lee, 30 Longacre Drive, asked when the new start and end times for elementary will be available, when they will find out if the 30 minute drop off window will still be available in the fall and when parents will be notified of all the available programming for the summer.

Mrs. Steiger responded she will probably hear in May from the principals about these topics.

VOTING ITEMS

BUSINESS

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

3.1 Change to LBOE Annual Public Meeting Calendar

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education moves the April 26, 2021 Public Hearing/Voting Meeting to Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer
Nayes - None

MISCELLANEOUS

Mrs. Konner moved the following:

5.1 HIB Report

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the findings of HIB cases.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Konner, Ms. Messer
Nayes - None

PREVIEW OF MARCH 15, 2021 VOTING AGENDA

The board previewed the items that are coming up at the March 15 meeting.

- 1. PROGRAM/CURRICULUM**
 - 1.1 Student Teacher**
- 2. STUDENT SERVICES**
 - 2.1 Related Services/Medical Consultants**
- 3. BUSINESS**
 - 3.1 Tentative School District Budget for 2021-2022**
 - 3.2 Payment of Bills**
 - 3.3 Board Secretary Report – January 2021**
 - 3.4 Transfers**
 - 3.5 Settlement Agreement**
- 4. PERSONNEL**
 - 4.1 Resignations**
 - 4.2 Leaves of Absences**
 - 4.3 Appointments**
 - 4.4 Extra Work Pay**
 - 4.5 Contract Adjustments**
 - 4.6 Stipends**
- 5. MISCELLANEOUS**
 - 5.1 HIB Report**
 - 5.2 Suspension Report**

Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes

There was no public comment.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Mrs. Konner asked Dr. Block to address what the quarantining protocols are for after spring break during our next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:00 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven K. Robinson
Board Secretary

March 8, 2021

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