



## **LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, January 4, 2022

Hybrid Meeting at Administration Building – 7:00 p.m.

A **Reorganization 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 7:01 p.m. by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary, Michael Davison, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, 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: Jenissa Arnette, Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Vineeta Khanna, Samantha Messer and Ethan Hirsch

Also in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Block, Michael Davison, Lisa Capone-Steiger, Mark Stern, Susan Burman and Joann Goldberg

There were approximately six members of the public and staff in person and approximately 240 members of the public and staff watching remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

Andrew Hayes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Davison read the election results:

### **Election Results – November 2, 2021**

(Officially certified by the Board of Elections)

For three year term (vote for two) on the Board of Education

Pamela Chirls - 5,623  
Jenissa Arnette - 4,533  
James Calderon - 3,102

### **Swearing in of New Board Members**

Mr. Davison administered the oath of office to Pamela Chirls for a three-year term as a Board Member.

Mr. Davison administered the oath of office to Jenissa Arnette for a three-year term as a Board Member.

## **Election of President**

Mr. Davison called for nominations for the position of President of the Board.

Ms. Messer nominated Mr. Cohen.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations for the position of President, nominations were closed.

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

## **Board President Takes Chair**

Mr. Cohen took the chair as President.

## **Election of Vice President**

Mr. Cohen called for nominations for the position of Vice President of the Board.

Mr. Cohen nominated Mrs. Khanna.

There being no further nominations for the position of Vice President, nominations were closed.

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

## **President/Vice President Comments**

Mr. Seth welcomed Ms. Arnette and she stated she is very excited to serve the community.

Mrs. Khanna thanked Mrs. Konner and Mr. Robinson for their service to the board and district, welcomed Mr. Davison to the table, thanked Mr. Cohen for the nomination, thanked Ms. Messer for her leadership through the second year of the pandemic and congratulated Mrs. Chirls and Ms. Arnette on the election.

Mrs. Khanna continued that policy, perspective, passion and possibilities define a public office position and she looks forward to working with the rest of the board to keep moving ahead and furthering their board goals of transparent communication, well thought out strategic planning, professional development and effective governing of our school district.

Mr. Cohen began by acknowledging Mr. Shen and Mrs. Konner, former board members who joined the meeting in person and virtually and to members of the Town Council who attended virtually. Mr. Cohen continued by expressing gratitude to the members of Livingston's police, fire, public works and health departments for their work in supporting the district and keeping the schools safe. Mr. Cohen thanked the members of the Physicians Advisory Board for making time to answer questions and for providing guidance and support to the district in its decision making. Mr. Cohen thanked Ms. Messer for her leadership over the last year, Mrs. Chirls on her reelection and welcomed Ms. Arnette to the board. Mr. Cohen also thanked Dr. Block for his leadership and the LPS administration, faculty, school nurses, custodial and maintenance staff and technology team for being relied upon in ways we've never seen before over the past two years.

Mr. Cohen reflected on the challenges the board has recently faced as a result of the pandemic as well as societal issues adding through all their conversations and debates, and in thinking about where they have been aligned and where they have not, it is clear to him the disagreements are

centered on the path of how we'll get to where we want to go; however, they have always agreed on the destination.

Mr. Cohen expressed confidence that he and his fellow board members universally want children to learn to succeed, to know friendship and love and to have a chance to become the best version of themselves and that his first wish for 2022 is for the board to start with that destination in mind. Mr. Cohen expressed that no matter the topic or the debate, he hopes they never lose sight that they all want to achieve the same goal. Mr. Cohen's second wish is to keep the idea of going together as part of how they operate.

Mr. Cohen concluded that achieving both the short and long term goals for the district will require all five board members to share their own perspectives, to listen to each other carefully and to conduct productive conversations with stakeholders.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Block welcomed Mr. Cohen as President and Mrs. Khanna as Vice President, thanked Ms. Messer for leading us through last year, congratulated Ms. Arnette and Mrs. Chirls on the election and welcomed Mr. Davison, our new Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

Dr. Block explained he was glad to be able to open schools today and appreciated the flexibility from the community and board to have students off yesterday. Dr. Block continued he is proud of our team as those who are in take on extra duties to keep schools open while we endure a significant shortage of staff. Dr. Block thanked the nurses for serving students each day while also handling the burden of contact tracing. Dr. Block asked parents with quarantine questions to contact nurses but to be patient with their response times as they are inundated with calls and contact tracing.

Dr. Block continued that he will be making a recommendation to the board to change the calendar to allow for yesterday's emergency staff day to become a professional development day and for February 1 to become a half day for students, as well as a no homework day. Dr. Block acknowledged February 1 is Lunar New Year and apologized for the need to make the switch, that it is a one time occurrence and that we fully intend to keep the holiday on the calendar in the future. Students who are missing school for Lunar New Year will only miss a half a day.

Dr. Block continued that although staffing is tenuous, he met with the Livingston Physician's panel and they all agree that as long as we have the staffing, schools are the safest place for students to be and he intends to stay open as long as possible. Dr. Block added we are holding to our safety protocols, increasing space where we can, having students and staff wear masks, wiping down surfaces and continuing with proper maintenance of our ventilation systems. Dr. Block added that even with all these protocols in place, parents need to be ready in case we need to pivot.

Dr. Block added he understands the desire for a remote learning option; however, the Department of Education has definitely told us that districts are not able to offer remote learning as an option unless there is an outbreak or inability to staff. We are able to promote a remote option to those who are required to quarantine as a result of Covid and only for a defined period of time.

Mrs. Chirls asked if it is possible to write to the Department of Education to ask if we could use a snow day as an instructional day instead of taking Lunar New Year away. Mrs. Chirls suggested the letter include how active our community and high school club have been around the recent passage of the AAPI bill and that we also have the support of Assemblywoman Mila Jasey. Dr. Block agreed it was worth looking into writing a letter.

Mrs. Chirls asked with varying practices on quarantining from school to school and the inability to space out at the high school especially during lunch, what do we say to parents who are

uncomfortable? Mrs. Chirls asked who parents should call with questions or concerns and if Zoom links are provided to students who are quarantined.

Dr. Block responded there are hundreds of different scenarios and variables that come into play with rules for quarantining but there shouldn't be any discrepancies because all contact tracers follow the same guidelines. If parents have questions or concerns, they need to speak with the nurse who is doing the contact tracing but he asked that parents be patient in getting an answer because they are very busy. Dr. Block continued that a Zoom link will be provided to students who have to stay home and quarantine and that we opened several new spaces around the high school today for lunch.

Mrs. Khanna asked if we are taking any more measures in the buildings in terms of ventilation or filters and Dr. Block responded we are making sure our safety measures are in place which include following the recommendation on different masking, opening up additional spaces, eating in smaller groups and opening some windows.

Ms. Arnette asked how students whose families are in isolation get the link and Dr. Block responded they need to reach out to the nurse and let them know the situation but to give them some time to respond and get those links out.

Ms. Messer asked if we intend to make closures based on buildings or will it be district wide and Dr. Block responded we will wait for guidance from the Board of Health before making that decision but there could be a scenario where one building might be remote while others are not.

### **Board Member Code of Ethics**

The board members each took a turn reading through the ten items listed in the Code of Ethics. It is a requirement of the board to review and sign an acknowledgement of the Code of Ethics each year.

### **Public Input on Agenda Items ~ up to 15 minutes**

Jing Gao, 9 Marisa Court, asked if we could use a snow day instead of giving up Lunar New Year and asked the board to consider having Lunar New Year as a separate holiday each year instead of combining it with a professional development day in the future.

Hua Li, 47 Crossbrook Road, requested the board use the professional development day in April rather than taking Lunar New Year away on February 1 because a large percentage of Asian students will lose a half day of learning. Mrs. Li asked that Lunar New Year be made a holiday on the calendar.

Youjun Liu, 6 Brook Lake Terrace, expressed that Lunar New Year is a very meaningful day for the Asian community and their culture and asked the board to look at other options.

George Shen, 126 East Cedar Street, stated Lunar New Year is important for their kids and we don't want them to think their holiday is replaceable, removable or cancelable. Mr. Shen suggested we do our best to find another option.

Michele Cohen, 15 Woodland Terrace, stated people are hesitant to send their kids to school because safety protocols are not being followed, especially in gym class where students were told today they don't need to wear their masks.

Sunil Kumar, 24 South Cedar Parkway, doesn't understand how some other districts are able to have remote learning but we do not.

James Calderon, 130 Hobart Gap Road, thanked the 3,102 people in Livingston who voted for him, offered congratulations to Mrs. Chirls, Ms. Arnette, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna and Ms. Messer and looks forward to the work they do this year. Mr. Calderon expressed concern about opening school today.

Resha Chandak, 11 Champion Boulevard, requested an online option for a couple of weeks to get through this wave of the virus since many people traveled during the holidays and parents are uncomfortable sending their children to school.

Ronnie Konner, 15 Boulderwood Drive, congratulated Mrs. Chirls on her re-election, extended a warm welcome to Ms. Arnette, thanked Ms. Messer for her service last year, wished Mrs. Khanna and Mr. Cohen good luck as they assume their new leadership roles and welcomed Mr. Davison to the table. Mrs. Konner suggested we use a snow day or April break day so we can reinstate Lunar New Year as a day off. Mrs. Konner also suggested the board address the policy on remote learning options.

Rajani Pandia, 21 West McClellan Avenue, asked that we consider a remote learning option for at least two weeks while we assess the situation.

Tellie George, 4 Millstone Drive, asked that we consider a remote learning option for at least two weeks.

Dr. Block responded he will look at some creative options for Lunar New Year and that we will follow up to ensure all schools are following our safety protocols.

Mrs. Khanna moved the following:

#### **Rules for School Governance**

**Resolved**, the Livingston Board of Education adopts all bylaws, policies and regulations in effect on January 4, 2022 in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1.

Ms. Messer seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Messer moved the following:

#### **Curricula and Textbooks**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education adopts all curricula and textbooks of record on January 4, 2022 in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-1 and 34.1.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**Bylaws, Policies & Regulations**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education approves all bylaws, policies and regulations previously adopted by the Board to date.

Mrs. Khanna seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**Job Descriptions**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education approves all job descriptions previously adopted by the Board to date.

Mrs. Khanna seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**Official Newspapers/Media Outlets**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education designates *The Star Ledger*, *The West Essex Tribune* and *TAPinto Livingston* as official newspapers and media outlets for legal notices and other obligations.

Mrs. Khanna seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Messer moved the following:

**Financial Depositories and Signatures**

**Whereas**, Seth Cohen has been elected president and Vineeta Khanna has been elected vice president of the Board of Education; and

**Whereas**, Michael Davison has been appointed Secretary of the Board; and

**Whereas**, Michael Davison has been appointed Treasurer of School Monies; and now therefore be it

**Resolved**, the Livingston Board of Education establish the following bank accounts at Regal Bank, Livingston, New Jersey and that Regal Bank is hereby requested, authorized and directed to honor all checks, draft and other orders for the payment of money drawn in the name of the Board of Education in the following accounts when bearing the true or approved facsimile signature(s) indicated:

<b>Regal Bank</b>		
<b>Account Title and Number</b>	<b>Signature(s)</b>	
BOE School District of Livingston General Account 0108010471	Board President <b>and</b> Michael Davison <b>and</b> Dr. Matthew Block	
BOE School District of Livingston Referendum 0108010505	Board President <b>and</b> Michael Davison <b>and</b> Dr. Matthew Block	
Livingston Board of Education Payroll Account 0108010463	Board President <b>and</b> Michael Davison	
Livingston Board of Education Payroll Agency Account 0108010414	Board President <b>and</b> Michael Davison	
Burnet Hill Elementary School School Account 0108010547	Sara Bright Jessica Byrne Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Collins Elementary School School Account 0108010562	Michelle Cebula Stefanie Lichtstein Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Harrison Elementary School School Account 0108010539	Daniel Garcia Patricia Fernandez Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Hillside Elementary School School Account 0108010570	Carlos Gramata Gina Ioviero Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Mount Pleasant Elementary School School Account 0108010521	Lorena Dolan Gail Witt Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Riker Hill Elementary School School Account 0108010612	Justin Toomey Deborah Paoella Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Mount Pleasant Middle School School Account 0108010554	Bronawyn O'Leary Gina Covello Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Heritage Middle School School Account 0108010513	Shawn Kelly Andrew Espinoza Kristen Fullam Christina Woytas Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston High School Activity Account 0108010588	Danielle Rosenzweig Michael Kay Dr. Mary K. Pretto Marie Battist-Rock Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston High School Athletic Account 0108010604	Danielle Rosenzweig Michael Kay Dr. Mary K. Pretto Marie Battist-Rock Richard Porfido Michael Davison	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston High School Special Account 0108010596	Danielle Rosenzweig Michael Kay Dr. Mary K. Pretto	<i>Any 2</i>

	Marie Battist-Rock Michael Davison	
Livingston Board of Education Board Secretary's Petty Cash 0108010489	Dr. Matthew Block Michael Davison Patricia Ramos	<i>Any 2</i>
Livingston Board of Education Capital Reserve Fund Account 0108010448	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only  Michael Davison Patricia Ramos	
Livingston Board of Education Unemployment Trust Fund Account 0108010455	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only  Michael Davison Patricia Ramos	
Livingston Board of Education Cafeteria 0108010430	Michael Davison or Patricia Ramos	
Livingston Board of Education FSA 0108010422	Wire Transfers to other Board of Education Accounts Only  Michael Davison Patricia Ramos	

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**Establishment of Annual Public Meeting Calendar**

**Resolved**, the Livingston Board of Education approves the following annual public meeting calendar and executive session meeting calendar for 2022:

<b>January, 2022</b>		<b>July, 2022</b>	
4	<i>Reorganization</i>	12	<i>Voting</i>
18	<i>Voting</i>		
		<b>August, 2022</b>	
		9	<i>Voting</i>
<b>February, 2022</b>			
1	<i>Workshop</i>		
8	<i>Voting</i>	<b>September, 2022</b>	
		6	<i>Workshop</i>
<b>March, 2022</b>		20	<i>Voting</i>
8	<i>Workshop</i>		
15	<i>Voting</i>	<b>October, 2022</b>	
		11	<i>Workshop</i>
<b>April, 2022</b>		18	<i>Voting</i>
5	<i>Workshop</i>		
26	<i>Public Hearing/Voting</i>	<b>November, 2022</b>	
		8	<i>Workshop</i>
<b>May, 2022</b>		22	<i>Voting</i>

10	<i>Exec Session on Personnel</i>		
(Thurs) 12	<i>Workshop/Voting</i>		<b>December, 2022</b>
24	<i>Voting</i>		6 <i>Voting</i>
	<b>June, 2022</b>		<b>January, 2023</b>
7	<i>Workshop</i>		3 <i>Reorganization</i>
21	<i>Voting</i>		

Until further notice, all meetings are to commence on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. in a hybrid format both in person in the large conference room at the Administration Building, 11 Foxcroft Drive, and via Zoom and Facebook livestream, unless otherwise indicated.

Mrs. Khanna seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mrs. Khanna, Ms. Messer, Mr. Cohen  
Nays - None

**BUSINESS**

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**3.1 Board Member Assignments**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the President’s designation of the following committee assignments as shown on **Attachment A**.

**3.2 Annual Appointments**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following appointments for the 2021-2022 school year which are in effect until changed by resolution:

Board Secretary/SBA	Michael Davison
Custodian of Records	Michael Davison
OPRA Representative	Michael Davison
Public Agency Compliance Officer (PACO)	Michael Davison
Qualified Purchasing Agent	Michael Davison
Treasurer	Michael Davison

Ms. Messer seconded the motion.

Mr. Cohen read through the committee assignments and the board voted on *Attachment A* with the revisions noted at the meeting. Additionally, Mr. Cohen asked that we find out what our role and responsibilities are on the Essex Regional Educational Services Commission so that assignment will be left as “TBD” until we have that information.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mrs. Khanna, Ms. Messer, Mr. Cohen  
Nays - None

**PERSONNEL**

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**4.1 Appointment**

**Resolved**, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the application indicated below (\*) for emergent hiring for the following appointment under the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:16-1 et. seq., N.J.S.A. 18A:39.17 et. seq.; N.J.S.A. 18A:6-4.13 et. seq. All appointments are contingent upon reference checks in accordance with P.L. 2018, c.5.

Name	Location	Title	Tenure Track/LOA or LT Replacement	Replacing	Guide	Step	Salary	Effective Date
<i>Daniel Quackenbush</i>	LHS	Teacher of Business Ed.	First Year Tenure Track	M. Wohltmann	MA+32	13	\$97,308 (prorated)	2/14/2022 or upon release of current contract

Mrs. Khanna seconded the motion.

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

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

**5.1 HIB Report**

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

Ms. Messer seconded the motion.

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

**Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes**

Jin Gao, 9 Marisa Court, followed up that Holmdel, West Windsor-Plainsboro, Edison, Marlboro and Millburn all have Lunar New Year as an official holiday and permanent day off on their school calendars.

Melanie Wurtele, 2 Bear Brook Court, thanked Dr. Block and the board for the tough decisions they had to make this past week and the administrators and teachers who work hard for our kids each day.

Elizabeth Weiss, 8 Village Drive, requested we offer students a virtual option for a few weeks and is concerned about students being instructed to take masks off during gym class. Mrs. Weiss asked if that will be changing over the next few weeks or if students could have an option to remain in a classroom where masking practices are being followed.

Debbie Rosenthal, One Locust Place, asked if we have had conversations with the Recreation Department because they are not as stringent with their masking guidelines.

Dr. Block responded he will look into the wearing of masks during our physical education classes and that we don't know what the recreational sports protocols are but we can look into speaking with them.

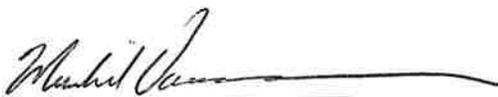
### **Adjournment**

At 8:45 p.m., Ms. Messer made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mrs. Khanna, Ms. Messer, Mr. Cohen  
Nays - None

**Respectfully submitted,**



**Michael Davison**  
**Board Secretary**

January 4, 2022