



## **LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION AND LIVINGSTON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL FIVE-ON-FIVE MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, April 11, 2022

Hybrid Meeting in Heritage Middle School Cafeteria - 7:00 p.m.

A **Five-on-Five Meeting** of the Livingston Board of Education and Livingston Township Council was held on this date in the Heritage Middle School Cafeteria and via Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by the Board President, Seth Cohen, 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, 2022 and posted at the Board of Education office and communicated to *The Star Ledger*, *West Essex Tribune*, *TAPinto Livingston* and the Livingston Township Clerk.

LBOE Members: Jenissa Arnette, Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Vineeta Khanna and Samantha Messer

Township Council: Council Member Alfred Anthony, Council Member Rudy Fernandez, Council Member Shawn Klein, Mayor Edward Meinhardt and Deputy Mayor Michael Vieira

Also in Attendance:

From the Township: Barry Lewis Jr., Russ Jones, Jarrid Kantor and Carolyn Mazzucco  
From LPS: Dr. Matthew Block, Michael Davison and Joann Goldberg

There were approximately ten members of the public and staff in person and approximately 56 members of the public and staff watching remotely through the webinar and via a Facebook Live Stream.

### **Workshop Items**

#### 1. Livingston/Ukraine Connection

Mayor Meinhardt introduced Natalia Sawka, a former Livingston High School graduate and current Livingston resident who spoke about growing up in Ukraine. Mrs. Sawka is calling on Livingston residents and the public school district to help her family's efforts to support the educational needs of Ukrainian children through donations through the website [friendsofchervonohrad.com](http://friendsofchervonohrad.com).

Mrs. Sawka further explained schools are only offered remotely and Ukrainian children are in need of tablets. She is working with the Chervonohrad City Council to get a list of needs and would like to be the connection mechanism between our two communities.

Mayor Meinhardt suggested the Board of Education and Township work to do something collaboratively to help. The council will be passing a proclamation at their first meeting in May to

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make Livingston and Chervonohrad sister cities and will also be flying the Ukrainian flag as a show of solidarity.

Mr. Cohen added the Board will have a conversation to see how they can contribute.

Mrs. Sawka continued the best way to help would be to visit the website and make a monetary donation so they can purchase the tablets through Amazon Poland. The tablets need to have an operating system and voltage that is compatible in Ukraine. In addition, she will look to add an Amazon wish list link on their website so people can purchase items directly through Amazon Poland. For anyone who would like to volunteer or donate supplies, they can reach out to her through the website.

## 2. School Traffic Safety

Dr. Block began by explaining the ongoing traffic challenges at the high school and Mount Pleasant Complex are due a large number of people arriving at the building at the same time, which causes traffic congestion around the schools. Dr. Block continued we are open to exploring different traffic patterns and reinforcing messages with parents.

Chief Marcheutz explained he has spent countless hours in his career discussing traffic and knows the department can alleviate some issues when they are physically present but the resources aren't there to sustain that every day. Chief Marcheutz explained they are having a difficult time finding crossing guards right now and if they don't have enough crossing guards to cover a post, then a police officer has to cover, which takes that person away from helping to move traffic along at the schools. The Chief added the Mount Pleasant Complex is the most difficult and would require a long term solution such as a change to the infrastructure.

Chief Marcheutz continued that post pandemic, more kids are being driven to school which doesn't help with traffic congestion and suggested surveying parents to see why.

Ms. Messer suggested we have staggered start times by grade level at the elementary and middle schools but Dr. Block responded that would be difficult to do because of bussing and suggested the possibility of opening doors earlier.

Ms. Arnette stated she thinks more people are driving their kids to school because there is a lack of crossing guards.

Council Member Fernandez added this is an ongoing and evolving issue and appreciates the work everyone does, including the Safety Committee, who periodically review these issues.

The Chief suggested we not only continue to look for short term solutions but also work on some long term infrastructure solutions such as making a new lane or putting in a new driveway somewhere on the Mount Pleasant property.

Mrs. Khanna asked if we could change the timing of the traffic light on Broadlawn and Chief Marcheutz explained it is on a State road and although they have contacted them about it in the past, through their own studies, they are resistant to making a change.

## 3. Crossing Guard Recruiting & Compensation

Chief Marcheutz explained they are challenged with recruiting crossing guards because after COVID, a lot of them decided not to return to work. The Chief and Mayor made a plea for anyone watching the meeting to fill out an application to be either a regular assigned crossing guard or a substitute. Chief Marcheutz also announced that beginning September 1, they are providing an increase in the rate of pay for crossing guards.

Chief Marcheutz also announced the Livingston Police Department is selling t-shirts to raise money for autism awareness.

4. LTV

Mr. Lewis would like to begin a dialogue with Mr. Davison about how we can utilize, fund and support LTV. Mr. Lewis will contact Mr. Davison so they can sit down and discuss opportunities on how to share resources and expenses for LTV.

5. Opportunities for Increased Shared Services

The group discussed additional opportunities for shared services between the two groups.

Mrs. Chirls and the Mayor stated they look forward to working together on programming that can help students inside and outside of school through LMAC now that the State is funding grants again. Their first in-person meeting is in May.

Council Member Fernandez added we are already doing a lot of work together and that the relationship between the Council and Board of Education and administration in being able to talk about things and work on solutions to problems benefits the entire town.

Mr. Cohen suggested exploring the ability to create shared purchasing.

Mrs. Chirls suggested having more frequent conversations about upcoming housing development projects in light of the recent demographic study that the district had completed. Mr. Lewis will work with Mr. Davison and Dr. Block to schedule time to review potential upcoming housing projects.

6. Update on Proposed District Turf Field

Mr. Davison explained that we submitted the general permit application to the NJDEP at the end of January for their review, we attended a Planning Board Meeting for a courtesy review of the project, we submitted all of the paperwork to the NJ Department of Education that is under review, the board approved the tentative budget, which includes a withdrawal from capital reserve to fund the project and we recently engaged a company to perform an Environmental Impact Assessment and plan for them to provide a presentation of their findings at our May 24 meeting. Mr. Davison added barring any delays in the State review process, we anticipate going out to bid in June and awarding the project in early July.

When Mr. Cohen asked about community usage of the field, Mr. Davison responded that once the field has been built and is ready for use, per our policy, the district's use will take priority and then the Township will have the opportunity to utilize the field.

Council Member Fernandez asked how the town will be able to use the field when not being used by the school if it is gated and locked and Mr. Davison responded that a gate is being constructed to secure the area of the field and although it will be lockable, it will not necessarily be locked.

Mayor Meinhardt added they do share the Madonna field with the schools and look forward to being able to share this new field as well.

## 7. District Update on Strategic Planning Process

Dr. Block explained we have started a new Strategic Planning process to take us from 2022 to 2027 by enlisting an educational consultant firm to help us with the coordination. To date, we have completed a district data collection through a survey of the community, created a digital repository of information, held sessions with the core team to review the purpose and identify shared values, worked on a vision statement, began to look at what we are doing well and where the gaps are and have created goals based on this information. Dr. Block added in January, they held a roundtable session and invited additional members of the community with expertise in mental health and technology and innovation. They will continue to meet through May and anticipate presenting the plan to the community at a Board of Education meeting in May or June.

In addition, for September, Dr. Block explained they are working on a visual representation of what we call a portrait of a Livingston High School graduate that will be a visual embodiment of students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Students will be asked to create this portrait from information we provide to them.

Dr. Block concluded that when presented, the Strategic Plan will be organized into five groups: teaching and learning, safety and wellness, leadership and governance, community and culture and finance and facilities.

Dr. Block continued that our recent demographic study contained valuable information as we look towards the future. The demographer explained that the study showed a lot of mobility into the district, which means people are moving to Livingston to come to our schools. Dr. Block added an increase in population will affect us in the future in terms of our space which is why it is important to get together with Mr. Lewis and discuss upcoming development projects.

Council Member Klein added they have had a lot of development as part of the affordable housing settlement and that process will start again in 2025 so we may need to continue doing these types of studies in the future to keep on top of how things are changing.

Mr. Cohen added it is important to develop a true line of communication between both parties on this issue and Mayor Meinhardt agreed, stating it should stay as a future 5:5 topic and that Mr. Lewis should hold regular meetings with the district administration to review.

## 8. Topics for Future 5:5 Meetings

- Affordable housing coming up in 2025
- Current and future uses of the Monmouth Court Campus
- If there is a Safety Committee Meeting, report back to everyone updates about traffic and safety

### **Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes**

Justin Alpert, 56 Amherst, expressed that we should be investing in school infrastructure and plan to make responsible investments to support healthy growth in Livingston. Mr. Alpert suggested conversations about future construction projects start earlier since they have a direct impact on our schools.

Dayna O'Toole, 36 Mount Pleasant Parkway, is concerned about the proposed NJ State Board of Education curriculum for the 2022-2023 school year regarding the topic of sexual health and gender identity for five to seven year old children. Mrs. O'Toole asked that we reconsider implementing these lesson plans.

Rachel Kemelman, 29 Norman Court, expressed full support and agreement with Mrs. O'Toole, and urged us to review what is age appropriate content for elementary age children.

Michelle Aubee, 8 Chadwick Road, agreed with the comments made by Mrs. O'Toole and Mrs. Kemelman.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:35 p.m., Ms. Messer made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Khanna seconded the motion.

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

**Respectfully submitted,**



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

