



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Executive Session - Administration Building - 6:15 p.m.

Public Session - Hybrid Meeting - Administration Building - 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 6:17 p.m. by Vineeta Khanna, Board President, who announced that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by amendment to notice approved at the Board's reorganization meeting on January 3, 2023 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, Parul Khemka and Jeffrey Xu

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

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

Executive Session

Whereas, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-11, permits the Board of Education to meet in closed session to discuss certain matters; now, therefore be it

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education adjourns to closed session to discuss:

- Student Matter

Action may be taken upon return to the public session. The full length of the meeting is anticipated to be approximately 45 minutes and be it

Further Resolved, the minutes of this closed session be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Ms. Arnette seconded the motion.

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

At 7:11 p.m., Mrs. Khanna reconvened the public meeting.

There were approximately 55 members of the public and staff watching in person and remotely through the webinar and a Facebook Live Stream.

Superintendent's Report

1. Calendar Discussion 2024-2025

Dr. Block reviewed the academic calendar for the 2024-2025 school year. The calendar allows for 182 student school days, has a start date of September 3, provides for days off to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Winter Recess, MLK Jr. Day, Lunar New Year, Eid, Memorial Day and Juneteenth. The calendar also includes a week off for February break and week off in April for Spring Recess, which coincides with Passover, Good Friday and Easter. The calendar incorporates one full day and four half days of professional development days throughout the year for staff. The last day of school is scheduled for June 26, 2025.

Mr. Cohen expressed concern about holding elementary conferences in February since it is the shortest month of the year and there is already a week off. Dr. Block stated he can look at moving them back to January.

Mrs. Chirls expressed that she does not agree with only having elementary conferences once a year and suggested going back to the twice a year model to give parents the opportunity to meet with their children's teacher in the beginning of the school year and again for a follow up in the spring.

Mrs. Khanna agreed with Mr. Cohen and Mrs. Chirls' points of view.

Dr. Block explained he sent a letter to parents asking them to contact their principal if they wanted to hold a spring conference and out of 2,500 students, only 13 responded that they would want them. Dr. Block added that teachers make accommodations for parents to meet or communicate with them organically, without the scheduled conferences and that parents can reach out anytime to request a conference.

Mrs. Khanna asked Dr. Block to take a look at other options for holding professional development days because partial days can be challenging for working parents.

Mr. Cohen suggested they continue the calendar conversation at the March 20 meeting and vote on it at one of the April meetings.

2. Budget Discussion

Dr. Block began by explaining that the budget is a financial blueprint for the next school year and that once the board votes on the general blueprint and tax levy to fund the budget, there are still decisions and changes that can be made to some degree based on the needs and wants that arise from the district.

Dr. Block reviewed the investments this budget makes in mental health supports, curriculum and instruction, human resources, special education, facilities and security. Dr. Block highlighted that our investment in human resources allows us to keep our class sizes low.

Mr. Davison explained there is a slight change to the general current expense from the last meeting due to some changes in the health insurance adjustment and revision in the ratables so that the tax impact has increased slightly to \$141 for the year based on the average assessed home of \$700,000.

The full presentation is available on our website.

Mrs. Chirls asked for an explanation on the waivers.

Mr. Davison explained the State allows for a 2% tax levy cap but also allows districts to use an enrollment waiver, if you have an enrollment increase, and a health adjustment waiver if the State Health Benefits go up by a certain amount.

Mr. Davison continued that in this budget, we could have gone up 5.3% if we used all of the waivers but wanted to be receptive to the impact on the taxpayer. We were able to reduce that amount by using additional State aid to end up at 2.53%. Mr. Davison continued that any unused enrollment or health adjustments roll into future banked cap.

Mrs. Chirls asked what happens when we don't generate the almost \$5 million in surplus in future years and Mr. Davison explained we would have to utilize our banked cap, look into bringing in more revenue, cut back on expenses/programs or raise taxes.

Mrs. Chirls questioned whether we should cut some expenses now, ahead of the tentative budget going to the county, to protect staff in the future. Mrs. Chirls asked what could be cut.

A few board members asked about posting the dollar amounts associated with the budgeted items online for the public. It was decided to post the information after the tentative budget is approved by the board on Monday.

There were additional questions about vacant positions and sixth period assignments, hiring permanent substitutes for each building and a confirmation that any ROD grants we might receive are not part of the 2023-2024 budget.

Mr. Davison asked the board members if they are comfortable moving ahead with the vote on the tentative budget on March 20 and they all stated they were with the exception of Mrs. Chirls, who stated she is concerned about reducing expenses so that we don't use so much surplus.

Board Reports

Mrs. Chirls and Ms. Arnette attended the AP Art Show at the high school and congratulated the students who participated.

Mrs. Chirls congratulated the cast and crew of *Chicago* that was performed at the high school this past weekend.

Student Representative's Report

Mr. Xu stated he also saw *Chicago* and offered his congratulations to the cast and crew and to the board for sponsoring the theater arts program.

Mr. Xu asked why Google Chat was blocked on his computer today and Mrs. Rehman responded that Google Chat was opened for high school students during remote learning so students and staff could communicate while at home; however, it was being misused so they need to block it going forward. Mrs. Rehman suggested Mr. Xu speak with Mrs. Rosenzweig.

Public Input on Agenda Items ~ up to 15 minutes

Jennifer Rothenberg, 19 Putnam Road, given the half days presented for professional development and all of the other holidays added into this calendar, suggested modifying February break to a long weekend. This would also allow the school year to end a little earlier. Mrs. Rothenberg also stated that the extra half days for professional development is difficult for working parents.

Starr Preston, 184 East Mt. Pleasant Ave, agrees with the previous speaker and would rather see elementary conferences moved to January. Ms. Preston added that having all that time off in February decreases time for teaching and programs that would be held during Black History Month.

J.D. Zipkin, 14 Fordham Road, stated holding parent/teacher conferences improves communication between parents and teachers. Mr. Zipkin continued systematically ensuring every student's parents get that time with their teacher allows for better equity.

Libby Barak, 51 Elmwood Drive, agreed with Mr. Zipkin and added that the conferences are a place to come up with a plan to discuss the individual needs of your child(ren).

Natalie Tsur, West Essex Tribune, asked about the rewriting of the Social Studies curriculum.

Dr. Block responded that he heard tonight that February might not be the ideal time to schedule those elementary conferences and will consult with the principals to make sure they are agreeable before he makes the change to January.

Dr. Block added that he understands half days are challenging for families but that we do want to maximize time to provide professional development to staff and will take a look at that, too.

Dr. Block continued we will take a look at our communications to ensure people know what is happening and where.

Dr. Block continued that times have changed and because there are many additional ways for parents and teachers to communicate, formal conferences are no longer the optimal way to set up that communication. Dr. Block continued that effective communication, as often as possible and as needed, is what is optimal for parent/teacher communication.

Mrs. Khanna added we are in the process of setting up a Welcome to Livingston Committee with the Township that will have school representation so that newcomers to the community will have the opportunity to connect with their school.

Mrs. Khanna reiterated that parents should know they can always reach out to teachers to request a one-on-one conference whether we offer formal ones or not.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

STUDENT SERVICES

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

2.1 Related Services/Medical Consultants

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following consultants that will be utilized to provide related services for the 2022-2023 school year:

Psychiatric

GenPsych \$250.00/assessment

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

BUSINESS

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

3.1 Change to Annual Public Meeting Calendar

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves changing the Tuesday, March 21, 2023 meeting to Monday, March 20, 2023 and to include the adoption of the Tentative Budget for School Year 2023-2024.

Ms. Arnette seconded the motion.

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

PERSONNEL

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

4.1 Resignations & Retirements

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education accepts the resignations of:

Name	Position	Reason	Location	Last Day of Employment
<i>Marianne Cullen</i>	School Nurse	Resignation	MPE	May 5, 2023
<i>Joan Reilly</i>	Payroll/Benefits Coordinator	Resignation	CO	May 9, 2023

Mrs. Khemka seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Ms. Arnette, Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Khanna, Mrs. Khemka
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.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

The board reviewed items on the upcoming voting meeting agenda.

PREVIEW OF MARCH 20, 2023 VOTING AGENDA

1. PROGRAM/CURRICULUM

1.1 Student Teacher

1.2 Field Trips

3. BUSINESS

3.1 Adoption of the Tentative Budget for School Year 2023-2024

3.2 Appropriation of Surplus

3.3 Adjustment for Enrollment

3.4 Capital Reserve Account Withdrawal

3.5 Maximum Travel

3.6 Travel and Related Expense Reimbursement

3.7 Payment of Bills

3.8 Board Secretary Report – January 2023

3.9 Transfers

3.10 Conferences and Overnight Trips

3.11 Approval of Academic Calendar

3.12 Approval of Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

3.13 Final Board Secretary Reports

3.14 Acceptance: Additional Funds for Nonpublic Auxiliary and Handicapped Aid (Chapter 192/193)

4. PERSONNEL (forthcoming)

4.1 Resignations & Retirements

4.2 Leaves of Absences

4.3 Appointments

4.4 Appointment of Interim School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

4.5 Substitutes

4.6 Extra Work Pay

4.7 Stipends

4.8 Mentor Fees

4.9 ESEA Grant

4.10 ESSER Grant

Mr. Cohen reiterated that we will be moving 3.11, the approval of the academic calendar to a discussion item on March 20 and a vote in April.

Public Comment ~ up to 15 minutes

Monica Lojano, 30 Bryant Drive, is a parent of a middle school student and would like to see parent/teacher conferences at the middle and high school level.

J.D. Zipkin, 14 Fordham Road, understands what Dr. Block is saying and isn't requesting we go back to old world parent/teacher conferences only that we have accountable, effective and deliberate communication.

Old Business

Mrs. Chirls asked about Dr. Block's meeting with the Township Manager.

Dr. Block explained he met with the Township Manager and Assistant Township Manager and there is a desire on their part to get a meeting together but did not have any agenda topics.

Mrs. Chirls and Mr. Cohen are on the Town Liaison Committee so will reach out to Dr. Block with topics they would like to discuss.

New Business

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:10 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Davison", written over a horizontal line.

**Michael Davison
Board Secretary**