

APPROVED
Bd. Mtg. 2-20-25

BOARD OF EDUCATION
REORGANIZATION MEETING
(Official)

January 7, 2025
Elizabeth, New Jersey

The members of the Board of Education met for the purpose of reorganization on Tuesday, January 7, 2025

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr. welcomed everyone to the Reorganization Meeting of the Elizabeth Board of Education.

Colors were presented during the Flag Ceremony by members of Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. Health and Public Safety Academy Marine Corps Junior R.O.T.C.

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr. led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Star Bangled Banner by Francis Scott Key was played.

Reverend Dr. Wanda Lundy pastor of Siloam Hope First Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth did the Invocation.

Re-elected Board Member, Charlene Bathelus was sworn in for a new term by the Honorable Judge James Wilson.

Re-elected Board Member, Iliana Chevres was sworn in for a new term by City of Elizabeth, City Council President, Carlos Cedeno.

Re-elected Board Member, Stephanie Goncalves Pestana was sworn in for a new term by the Honorable Judge Jubilo L. Alfonso.

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr. read the following statement at 6:45 p.m.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is the annual reorganization meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting was sent to The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on December 16, 2024. In addition, this notice is posted on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of the Mitchell Building, 500 North Broad Street, and pursuant to this act, a copy has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

There will be a public portion for citizens to address the Board. Participants for the public portion must sign in prior to the start of the meeting so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The public participation form states the name, address, telephone number of the person and the reason the person wants to comment. Each participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes.

Present: Diane Barbosa, Charlene Bathelus, Maria Carvalho, Iliana Chevres, Jerry Jacobs, (joined the meeting at 7:06) Rosa Moreno-Ortega, Stanley Neron, Stephanie Goncalves Pestana,
– 8

Absent: Mr. Rivera-1

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Jennifer Cedeno, Assistant Superintendent for Schools Judy Finch-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Schools, Rafael Cortes Jr., Deputy Counsel Heather Savage Ford, Comptroller Rajeev Malhotra, and members of the public were in attendance.

Mr. Kennedy called for nominations for Board President.

Ms. Bathelus nominated Mr. Stanley J. Neron for President.

A motion was made by Mrs. Carvalho, seconded by Mrs. Barbosa, that nominations be closed.

The motion to close nominations was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron – 8

Negative: None

The following vote was taken on the election of Mr. Neron for President.

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron – 8

Negative: None

Mr. Kennedy announced that Mr. Neron having received the required number of votes was now declared President

Mr. Neron began his remarks by wishing everyone a Happy New Year and giving God all the thanks and praise for the opportunity to embark on this journey for 2025, and what an amazing year it will be. Many blessings to you and your families. I want to start off by thanking my predecessor in this role who just passed me the gavel. She set some big shoes to fill, as she had a wonderful year, let's give her a big round of applause. Mr. Neron continued by saying that he

respect's women leadership and women are phenomenal at being leaders. Charlene you were an amazing leader, and you set such a shining example for all the young women of the District. Mr. Neron thanked his fellow Board members for wearing purple as this will be the color of the year as green was the 2023-2024 color and great things happened under that color. Before beginning more remarks, Mr. Neron wanted to recognize the dignitaries in the audience:

- Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage
- State Senator Joseph Cryan
- Assemblywoman Annette Quijano
- Chairman of the Union County Commissioners Lourdes Leon
- Union County Commissioner Sergio Granados
- Elizabeth City Councilman for the Fourth Ward and City Council President – Carlos Cedeno
- Elizabeth City Councilwoman at Large Patricia Perkins-Auguste
- Elizabeth City Councilman at Large Manny Grova Jr.
- Elizabeth City Councilman for the First Ward Carlos Torres
- Honorable Judge James Wilson
- Honorable Judge Jubilo Alfano
- Councilman Berg Leneus of East Orange

Mr. Neron thanked all the staff members, principals, educators, family and friends as well as our Administrators for being here tonight. He continued by saying that we need to reflect on the incredible opportunity to share and shape the future of education in our community. It is not only a meeting but a call to action. It is time to dream big, and commit ourselves to a bright future. Despite all you may believe is going to happen, we are here to hold it down and make sure we succeed and win. When thinking about this moment I could not help but consider the color purple. It is a hue that symbolizes all that we are striving to achieve. Purple is the color of royalty and that reminds us that the students are the crown jewels of the District. They are our legacy and our biggest investment, and they will carry forward all that we build today. The color purple also represents creativity and wisdom, two pillars of a thriving School System. It challenges us to think outside the box to innovate and prepare our students not only for the world as it is but also as the world as it could be: Another world is possible. It reminds us that every lesson taught, and every program initiated must empower students to imagine new possibilities and solutions. Purple is the color of unity blending the calm and serenity of blue with the passionate energy of red. All of this in this room are of diverse backgrounds (Mr. Neron went through greetings in several languages). We are united in one mission: to create a district that uplifts, inspires and nurtures every child. As we look to the future, let us set clear priorities prioritizing equity, ensuring every child regardless of background has access to the resources needed for them to thrive. Let us commit to academic excellence, equipping our students to succeed in a competitive and evolving world. Let us strengthen the bonds between school and community-Community is going to be a major focus this year. We are going to make sure we are out there, bringing the school and education to them. It is not just about the classroom, but it is also about the village that surrounds it and supports it. Tonight let us carry the spirit of purple in our hearts. Let us be bold, creative, wise, and united. The future ahead of us is filled with challenges, yes, we know that but also filled with immense opportunities. Together we can ensure that our district is a beacon of hope, innovation, and excellence for all. God Bless you all and may we all have an amazing 2025.

Mr. Neron announced that the next order of business was the election of the Vice President. He then called for nominations for Vice President.

Mrs. Goncalves Pestana nominated Mrs. Maria Carvalho for Vice President.

A motion was made by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, seconded by Mrs. Carvalho, that nominations be closed.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron – 8

Negative: None

The following vote was taken on the election of Mrs. Carvalho for Vice President.

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron – 8

Negative: None

Mrs. Carvalho having received the required number of votes was declared Vice President.

Mr. Neron congratulated Mrs. Carvalho on her election as vice president and turned the floor over to her.

Mrs. Carvalho began her comments by stating “it seems like we have done this before” alluding to the fact that she had served as Vice President during Mr. Neron’s first term as President. As I stand here today, I am deeply grateful for the trust placed in me by my fellow Board Members by allowing me to serve as Vice-President. Tonight, I begin my 10th year as a Board Member and as I take a moment to reflect on how far we’ve come and the incredible work that he has done to reach this point. I am thankful to work alongside President Neron and all the other Board members as we embark on a new chapter here in 2025. Together we have achieved so much, and I know we will continue to work tirelessly to build upon our success. When I began this journey in 2015, my commitment was to serve the children, the educators and their families with dedication and integrity. That commitment remains unwavering. We face new challenges, but our purpose remains the same to ensure every student has access to the best quality education possible, to support our educators and to foster an environment where all our students thrive. As we move forward, I look forward to continuing our work together with renewed energy and passion. The future is bright, and I am honored to be part of this remarkable team as we make a lasting impact on the lives of our students.

Mr. Neron congratulated re-elected Board member Charlene Bathelus on her re-election and asked her if she would like to say a few words.

Good evening, everyone, elected officials, esteemed guests, my colleagues, and members of the Elizabeth Community. As I begin my fifth term as a Board of Education Member, I am filled with a great sense of gratitude and humility. Five (5) has always been a special number to me, a symbol of balance and growth, and as I sit here reflecting on this journey, I see those very things weaving into my

years of service. I began this journey in my mid-to-late twenties, I was eager to serve, but unsure of the path ahead, yet deeply committed to making a difference. Now as I approach a new decade in life, I look back with a heartful of gratitude for the lessons learned, challenges overcome, and countless opportunities to grow not as a leader but as an individual.

To the families of Elizabeth, thank you for trusting us with your most precious gift, your children. Your partnership has been invaluable, and your voices strengthen my mission. I remain steadfast in my advocacy for equity, opportunity, and a brighter future for all. To my colleagues serving besides you has been an honor, serving twice as Board president and as a collaborator.

I have learned leadership is not about titles but is service, humility, and a shared commitment to progress. Together we have faced many trials, but celebrated many victories and I am grateful for the journey we have shared together.

On a personal note, I could not be here without the unwavering support of my family and friends. To my Mom, my brothers, Pete and Allan and my beautiful and sassy niece Nila, your love and encouragement has carried me through so many difficult moments, and I am forever grateful for your presence in my life. I want to thank God for blessings old and new, my faith has been my anchor, keeping me grounded on every step of this journey. Even the difficult times have been a blessing in disguise. Serving this community has been my calling and my passion, but also my greatest teacher.

As I look to the future I am filled with hope and excited for what lies ahead. Together, we will push boundaries, continue to dream big and build a legacy of opportunity and excellence. For the students and families of Elizabeth, thank you for this privilege to walk this path with you to grow and serve you. It has been an honor.

Mr. Neron congratulated re-elected Board member Illiana Chevres on her re-election and asked her if she would like to say a few words.

Mrs. Chevres thanked everyone that was in attendance this evening. We always hear behind every great woman there is a great man. It can be a partner, a father or a great friend. However, it is my belief that behind every elected official there is a great family and support system that is always helping us in our mission of helping others. Thank you to my entire family and my support system for all your help and unconditional love in the things everyone sees as well as things that are soon. Thank you to Tony, Ana Mary, Jamar, Tommy, and Jose. I love you all. I know you are the ones pushing me to do my best, because in the end it is not about us, but rather for the community in which we live, as we want it to be the best place to live.

I want to thank all the political officials that were here tonight led by our mayor, Chris Bollwage and City Council President Carlois Cedeno. To the members of the Elizabeth Public Schools Administration led by our Superintendent, thank you for all your work and dedication shows us your love for our students. Congratulations to our new Board President and Vice President, Maria Carvalho. I'm so happy for both of you and I look forward to continuing to work together for the benefit of our School District and our community in general. To my fellow running mates, Ms. Bathelus and Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, congratulations for the beginning of a new term, it is honor to share my journey with you. Thank you for your many years of dedication to our community, especially to our students. To all my fellow Board members, I am here to continue to work for the benefit of our children and families. I know as a team we will accomplish many great things together.

In closing I want to thank the residents of the City of Elizabeth for providing me with this great opportunity. I will continue to advocate for our community, especially for those who don't have a

voice, and to provide equal opportunities for students and members of the community to obtain a quality education.

Mr. Neron thanked Mrs. Chevres for her comments.

Mr. Neron congratulated re-elected Board member Stephanie Goncalves Pestana on her re-election and asked her if she would like to say a few words.

Good evening, I am honored to have this opportunity to serve on the Board for another three years. I would just like to thank some of the people who made this possible.

To my family, thank you for your endless support. I am so blessed to have you all and appreciate the encouragement and sacrifices you have made along the way to allow me to fulfill my passion of serving my community.

To my family, thank you for your support, trust, and friendship. Over the years, we have met challenges both big and small to provide efficient and effective governance to Elizabeth Public Schools. Our diligent work has helped ensure the necessary resources were available to provide Elizabeth students with a high-quality education while allowing our District to hire and retain outstanding teachers, administrators and support staff. I look forward to continuing this vital work and will directly contribute to the growth and prosperity of our community.

To the people of Elizabeth, thank you once again for entrusting me with the opportunity to serve on this Board. I am proud to be part of this amazing team, and it is a blessing to give back to the community that has given so much to me. We must continue to work together to ensure the children of Elizabeth grow into caring and responsible adults who help advance our wonderful city.

Thank you, all once more and Happy New Year. I hope 2025 will be healthy, happy, and rewarding for us all.

Mr. Neron thanked Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Chevres, and Mrs. Goncalves Pestana for their remarks. In addition, he thanked Reverend Lundy for her prayers earlier on in the evening. Moreover, he thanked all those in the audience who had believed in and supported this Board.

Mr. Neron presented the following two resolutions as the next order(s) of business.

Resolution – Appointment of Co-General Counsel

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Carvalho, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron -8

Negative: None

The firms of Kologi, Simitz Counselors at Law and LaCorte, Bundy, Varady and Kinsella, Attorneys at Law were appointed Co- General Counsel. Mr. Simitz of Kologi Simitz was asked to take his seat on the dais.

Resolution – Introduction of Rules of Governance

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Chevres, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron -8

Negative: None

Mr. Neron presented the following public participation statement. Citizens may address the Board.

“At this time, the microphones are open for public comment to those who have signed in prior to this session. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes. No individual is able to yield their time to another individual. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board Members individually. Each speaker shall comply in all respects with Board Policy 9322 (copies were provided next to the sign-in sheet)”.

The following rules shall apply:

1. Time limits will be strictly enforced.
2. No personal attacks on individuals or naming of individuals.
3. No vulgar or indecent language.
4. A person may address the Board no more than once during a single meeting.
5. Comments will not be debated.

Any person in violation of the Policy will be warned, and their comments terminated if needed. If such violation continues, this individual may be escorted from the meeting.

“As a reminder this is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.

Mr. Neron called upon the first participant Christina Moreira to address the Board.

Mrs. Moreira spoke about Special Education.

Mr. Neron thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Neron called on the next participant, Maria Lorenz, to address the Board.

Mrs. Lorenz spoke about Special Education.

Mr. Neron thanked her for her comments

Since there were no other citizens signed up to address the Board, Mr. Neron closed this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Neron deferred until the next Board Meeting the appointments to the standing committees of the Elizabeth Board of Education. However, Mr. Neron appointed Board Member, Rosa Moreno Ortega as Elizabeth's representative to the New Jersey School Board's Association. In addition, Board Member Mr. Jerry Jacobs was appointed as Elizabeth's representative to the Union County Educational Services Commission.

Resolution – Official Results of the School Board Election

A motion was made by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega seconded by Ms. Bathelus, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Designation of Official Media Services

A motion was made by Mrs. Carvalho, seconded by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote: The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Designation of Depositories for School Funds

A motion was made by Mrs. Carvalho, seconded by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Insurance/Health Benefit Consultant

A motion was made by Mrs. Barbosa, seconded by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Auditors:

A motion was made by Mrs. Carvalho, seconded by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Chief Medical Inspector

A motion was made by Mrs. Carvalho and seconded by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8
Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Medical Inspectors

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Barbosa, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8
Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Treasurer of School Moneys

A motion was made by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, seconded by Ms. Bathelus, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8
Negative: None

Resolution – Schedule of Board Meetings

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron– 8
Negative: None

Resolution – Qualifying and Appointing Public Relations Firm – Strategic Message Management.

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Barbosa, that the above resolutions be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron –8
Negative: None

Before closing the meeting, President Neron asked if any Board Members had any further comments. Ms. Bathelus congratulated Mr. Neron and Mrs. Carvalho on their election as President and Vice-President Respectively.

Mr. Neron wanted to thank all the families in the audience, especially his parents and wife as well as his son who was not in attendance. He stated that this is why he was involved was to advocate and fight for the families of Elizabeth. Moreover, he said the Board is also a family and when he was scheduling this meeting, a Board Member said she had a special day on this date, so Happy Birthday to Mrs. Moreno-Ortega. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega graciously accepted the birthday wishes and continued her remarks by congratulating past president Bathelus on her very successful term as president. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega said she believes that Mr. Neron will do a great job as he has such a passion for education. Also Mrs. Carvalho, whom she has known for many years, will continue her great work in our city. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega also complimented Mrs. Chevres and Mrs. Goncalves Pestana for all the work they have done throughout the community.

Mr. Jacobs congratulated Mr. Neron and Mrs. Carvalho on their new roles and he is looking forward to an exciting year ahead.

Mr. Neron thanked everyone and reminded people that Family is first. He then called for a motion to adjourn.

On a motion by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Barbosa, the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Barbosa, Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Neron -8

Negative: None

Harold E. Kennedy Jr.

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary