



Mountain Lakes School District

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**MOUNTAIN LAKES BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF REORGANIZATION MEETING**

January 5, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm by Mrs. Barkauskas

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Mountain Lakes Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Mountain Lakes Municipal Building and sent to the following newspapers: *The Daily Record, The Citizen, and the District Website (www.mlschools.org)*.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Secretary will lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance

CERTIFICATION OF ANNUAL ELECTION – REPORT OF BOARD SECRETARY

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education has the Statement of Determination, dated November 17, 2025, of the 2025 School Election as certified by the Morris County Board of Elections, made part of the annual organization meeting minutes:

<u>THREE-YEAR TERM (3)</u>	<u>Total Votes</u>
Joanne Barkauskas	1,480
James Hirschfeld	1,422
Lauren Silva McIntyre	1,466
Write-ins	152

OATH OF OFFICE

Board Secretary administers Oath to newly elected Board Member:

Joanne Barkauskas
James Hirschfeld
Lauren Silva McIntyre

ROLL CALL

Board Member	Present	Absent
Mrs. Barkauskas	X	
Mr. Chiang, Jr.		X
Dr. Don	X	
Mrs. Forman	X	
Dr. Hirschfeld	X	
Mr. Johnson		X
Mrs. Kulkarni	X	
Mrs. Parker	X	
Dr. Sheth	X	
Dr. Silva McIntyre	X	

Also present: Dr. Brad Siegel, Mrs. Ivonne Cirese

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Board President

Nomination of President:

RESOLVED, to nominate Mrs. Joanne Barkauskas for President.

Additional Nominees: None

RESOLVED, to close nominations for President and call for a roll call vote.

At this time in the meeting, the newly elected President will immediately assume the position.

Roll Call 7-0-1 (A: J. Barkauskas)

Board Vice President

Nomination of Vice President:

RESOLVED, to nominate Mrs. Jennifer Parker for Vice President.

Additional Nominees: None

RESOLVED, to close nominations for Vice President and call for a roll call vote.

At this time in the meeting, the newly elected Vice President will immediately assume the position.

Roll Call 70701 (A: J. Parker)

Mrs. Barkauskas commented how the work of the Board is a partnership and recognized the great work that the district has done together.

COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE MLEA CO-PRESIDENTS

Rose Dunn commented:

- Happy New Year to the Board
- Congratulations to Mrs. Barkasukas and Mrs. Parker
- Thank you for your partnership, and look we forward to a productive year

EXECUTIVE SESSION

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education enter into Executive Session was made by Mrs. Forman and seconded by Dr. Hirschfeld, that the Board of Education adopt the following resolution.

The motion was approved 8-0-0.

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mountain Lakes Board of Education on this 5th day of January 2026 at 6:46pm as follows:

1. The Board shall recess to closed session in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Law, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b (1), (2), (6), (7) and (8). The general nature of the discussion including matters of personal confidentiality rights, including but not limited to staff and/or student discipline matters, and specifically: privacy, personnel, and legal matters.

2. These matters will be disclosed to the public as soon as the need for confidentiality no longer applies. Although the Board cannot guarantee it, the length of the Executive Session is estimated to be 60 minutes after which the public meeting of the Board shall reconvene and proceed with business. Action may take place.

3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

MOTION to leave executive session at 8:15pm was made by Dr. Hirschfeld and seconded by Dr. Sheth.

The motion was approved 7-0-0 and the Board returned to public session at 8:15pm.

8:19 - Mrs. Parker returned

MOUNTAIN LAKES SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT COMMENT - None

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT - None

COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON AGENDA ITEMS - None

A. REORGANIZATION

Motion by Mrs. Forman and seconded by Dr. Sheth for motions #1 - #8

1. Code of Ethics for School Board Members

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education adopts the Code of Ethics for School Board members, as recommended by the Superintendent:

A School board member shall abide by the following Code of Ethics for School Board Members: (each member reads one aloud)

a. I will uphold and enforce all laws, rules and regulations of the State Board of Education, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes shall be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.

b. I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools that meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing.

- c. I will confine my board action to policy making, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them.
- d. I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run.
- e. I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the board.
- f. I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.
- g. I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. In all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its school.
- h. I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the chief administrative officer.
- i. I will support and protect school personnel in the proper performance of their duties.
- j. I will refer all complaints to the chief administrative officer and will act on the complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

2. School Board Recognition Month

WHEREAS, the New Jersey School Boards Association has declared January 2026 to be School Board Recognition Month, a time when all residents can acknowledge the contributions made by our local school board members; and

WHEREAS, the Mountain Lakes Board of Education is one of 581 local school boards in New Jersey, which sets policies and oversees operations for public school districts; and

WHEREAS, the Mountain Lakes Board of Education embraces the goal of high-quality education for all New Jersey public school students; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's local school boards help determine the educational goals for approximately 1.4 million children in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's 5,000 local school board members, who receive no remuneration for their services, act as advocates for public school students as they work with administrators, teachers and parents for the betterment of public education; and

WHEREAS, School boards strive to provide the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs; and

WHEREAS, Boards of education provide accountability to the public; they communicate the needs of the school district to the public; and they convey to school administrators the public's expectations for the schools; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey can take pride in its schools, which rank among the nation’s best in key achievement indicators such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, and the preparation for college through advanced placement offerings and SAT assessments; Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Mountain Lakes Board of Education, does hereby recognize the services of local school board members throughout New Jersey as we join communities statewide in observing January 2026 as School Board Recognition Month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Mountain Lakes Board of Education urges all New Jersey citizens to work with their local boards of education and public school staff toward the advancement of our children’s education, as recommended by the Superintendent.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

3. Morris County School Boards and New Jersey School Boards

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approves the appointment to Morris County School Boards Association and New Jersey School Boards Association, move that the President be directed to appoint a Delegate and an Alternate to the Morris County School Boards Association and the New Jersey School Boards Association, as recommended by the Superintendent.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

4. Parliamentary Procedures

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education adopt Robert’s Rules of Order as the official parliamentary procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings and appoint the board secretary and the board attorney to act as the parliamentarians for the 2026 calendar year, as recommended by the Superintendent.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

5. Authorized Signatures / Annual Appointments

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education extends the following appointments and authorized signatures for the following accounts for the period of January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026, as recommended by the Superintendent:

Acting Board Secretary	Mrs. Ivonne Ciresi
Authorized Signatures School Warrants	Board President, Treasurer, Steven Robinson
Depositories for School Funds	Provident Bank
District Attorney	Fogarty, Hara, LaPira & Cherry, LLC
District Architect	Di Cara Rubino
Official Newspapers	The Daily Record, The Citizen

District Roll Call 8-0-0

6. Board of Education Meeting Calendar for 2026 and Designation of Official Newspapers*

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approve The Citizen and The Daily Record as the official newspapers of the Board of Education,

WHEREAS, Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Laws of 1975, requires all public bodies covered by said Act, at least once each year, within seven days following the annual organizations or reorganizations meeting of such body, to post and maintain posted throughout the year as set forth in the Act, a schedule of the regular meetings of the public body to be held during the succeeding year;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mountain Lakes Board of Education of the County of Morris and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The schedule of regular meetings of the Mountain Lakes Board of Education as set forth in the schedule annexed hereto be and the same is hereby adopted;
2. The Board Secretary is hereby authorized and directed to prominently post said schedule in at least one public place reserved for such announcements;
3. Said schedule shall be mailed, telephoned, electronically transmitted or hand delivered by the Board Secretary to at least one of the following newspapers: The Citizen and The Daily Record;
4. Said schedule shall be placed on file with the Board Secretary;
5. Special meetings may be held as and when necessary, with notice to be given as provided for in the Act and meetings involving urgent matters may be held as provided for in Section 4b of the Act;
6. In the event that the annexed schedule is hereafter revised, the revised schedule shall be posted, mailed, and filed by the Board Secretary in the manner described hereinabove; and
7. Any person who requests a copy of the within schedule, as recommended by the Superintendent.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

7. Strauss Esmay Policy and Regulation Manual

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mountain Lakes Board of Education approves and adopts the policies and regulations included in the Strauss Esmay Policy and Regulations Manual, as recommended by the Superintendent.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

8. Doctrine of Necessity

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq. was enacted by the New Jersey State Legislature to ensure and preserve public confidence in school board members and school administrators and to prove specific ethical standards to guide their conduct; and WHEREAS, questions have arisen regarding how a Board should invoke the Doctrine of Necessity when a quorum of a board of education has conflicts of interest on a matter required to be voted upon; and

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Commission has provided some guidance in Public Advisory Opinion A03-98 (April 1, 1998) but finds that there is a need to repeat and clarify its opinion; and

WHEREAS, the opinion set forth that, when it is necessary for a Board to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity, the Board should state publicly that it is doing so, the reason that such action is necessary and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with the Legislative purpose as set forth in N.J.S.A. 18A:12-22(a) the School Ethics Commission views public disclosure of conflicts of interest to be paramount when it is necessary to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the School Ethics Commission hereby requires Boards of Education that must invoke the Doctrine of Necessity to adopt a resolution setting forth that they are invoking the Doctrine, the reason for doing so and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Boards of Education that invoke the Doctrine are directed to read the resolution at a regularly scheduled public meeting, post it where it posts public notices for thirty (30) days and provide the Commission with a copy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall distribute this Resolution to the county superintendents for distribution to the school districts, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Association of School; Business Officials and the New Jersey Education Association, as recommended by the Superintendent.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

- Dr. Hirschfeld proposed an ad-hoc committee on student retention
- Board discussion around Committees. Proposal to create an additional committee called Co-Curricular Committee to cover retention, clubs, athletics, etc., that does not get enough attention in Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee. Retention will also be addressed in Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee.
- AI will be addressed in Policy Committee.

PENDING LEGISLATION - None

COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE PUBLIC - None

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 8:46pm was made by Dr. Hirschfeld and seconded by Mrs. Parker.

District Roll Call 8-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Mrs. Ivonne Ciresi
Board Secretary pro tem

A Indicates matters not relating to MLHS, the Boonton Township district Representative of the Board of Education will refrain from voting on such matters, pursuant to Board Policy 0141.2.

** Indicates a motion/resolution will have supporting documentation*

2025-2026 District Goals

Goal Statement	Goal Area
1. Expand students’ active learning in PreK-12 classrooms through effective use of small group instruction, questioning strategies, and problem-solving activities.	Ensuring success of all students Ensuring success of all staff Supporting the whole child
2. Identify, develop, and implement plans to enrich STEM learning in all four schools by enhancing facilities, resources, curricula, and experiences outside of the classroom aligned to a clearly defined district vision.	Ensuring success of all students Ensuring success of all staff Finance / infrastructure / technology Strong family/school/community partnerships
3. Increase horizontal and vertical articulation practices and outcomes among staff members in the Mountain Lakes School District and between staff members of the district and Rockaway Valley School through structured professional collaboration opportunities.	Ensuring success of all students Ensuring success of all staff Strong family/school/community partnerships
4. Review and analyze programs, models, and research related to “social-emotional learning” for the classroom and make a formal recommendation to the Board of Education for the 2026-27 school year.	Ensuring success of all students Ensuring success of all staff Supporting the whole child Strong family/school/community partnerships

2025-2026 Board Goals

Board Goal	Committee Support
1. The Mountain Lakes Board of Education will work collaboratively to promote a culture of safety and security by establishing clear policies, providing ongoing training, and implementing systems that protect the well-being of all stakeholders.	Facilities, Finance, Long Range Planning
2. Through collective efforts as a full Board and in Committees, the Mountain Lakes Board of Education commits to working transparently and equitably to support the growth, success, and well-being of all students and staff members in all four schools in the District.	Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Long Range Planning, Special Education
3. The Mountain Lakes Board of Education will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication by ensuring timely access to key information, including committee meeting minutes and superintendent updates, to support informed decision-making and Board transparency.	Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Facilities, Finance, Long Range Planning, Negotiations, Personnel, Policy, Special Education, Shared Services
4. The Mountain Lakes Board of Education will collectively develop and utilize a long-range facilities plan to enhance the current and future educational, structural, and operational needs of the Mountain Lakes School District.	Facilities, Finance, Long Range Planning