



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP/VOTING MEETING MINUTES

February 3, 2026

Executive Session - Administration Building - 5:30 p.m.

Public Session - 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 a Facebook livestream. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Parul Khemka, 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 6, 2026 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: Pamela Chirls, Seth Cohen, Fang Gong, Parul Khemka and Abe Klein

Members Absent: Inna Yelisevich

Also in Attendance: Dr. Daniel Fishbein, Jessica Rapp, Dr. Maura Tuite, Mark Stern and Joann Goldberg

Mrs. Chirls 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:

- legal and student matters

Action may be taken upon return to the public session. The full length of the meeting is anticipated to be approximately 90 minutes; and be it

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

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

At 7:00 p.m., Mrs. Khemka reconvened the public meeting.

Superintendent's Report

2027-2028 Academic Calendar

Dr. Fishbein explained the 2027-2028 academic calendar will be added to the February 10 agenda for approval. The calendar was reviewed by the administration, PT Council and all associations. The calendar was built to include three snow days.

Budget Update

Dr. Fishbein explained that the 2026-2027 budget presents significant challenges as state funding and our statutory permitted local increase fail to keep pace with the rising costs of essential services like instruction, technology, maintenance and transportation. While local tax levies are capped at 2 percent, our non-discretionary costs are rising much faster. These include medical and prescription benefits, out-of-district tuition and energy costs.

In addition to these costs, we are navigating a nationwide shortage of both professional and non-certified staff. While we have exhausted internal options to reduce expenses without compromising student services, the pressure remains substantial. Unfortunately, these fiscal realities have already required planning for difficult decisions regarding staffing levels and class sizes.

With a new Governor in office, the state budget address will be delayed. As a result, we will not have final revenue figures until mid-March. Under the assumption of flat state aid, we currently anticipate a \$5 million budget gap. Although we will be eligible for a budgetary adjustment due to the significant increase in health care insurance, that will only help decrease the budget gap, not eliminate it.

Our administration is working diligently to plan for various scenarios while advocating for relief. We will share a more detailed impact analysis as soon as the state aid figures and insurance growth limitations are confirmed.

Dr. Fishbein added that while many districts are facing immediate shortfalls during the 2025-2026 school year, he assured the Livingston community that we remain fiscally sound. Our focus is on the specific budgetary pressures for the upcoming 2026-2027 year to ensure we continue providing the excellence our students deserve and the Livingston community expects.

The board is working on two resolutions about the New Jersey funding formula with the statutory 2 percent property tax levy and about the rising cost of health insurance premiums. A copy of each resolution was shared with the board members and any comments should be emailed to Dr. Fishbein. The resolutions will be brought forth on the February 10 agenda for approval and mailed to the appropriate constituents. Dr. Fishbein and Mrs. Rapp will also share the resolutions with their business organizations.

Mrs. Chirls asked if in addition to the resolutions, if we can coordinate and make a collective statement with other districts who may be going through similar circumstances.

Mrs. Chirls asked how we will communicate this information with the community and Dr. Fishbein responded that they will be able to submit questions to the district via budgetquestions@livingston.org and attend or view upcoming board meetings. A public forum on the budget will also be held in April.

Board Reports

Mrs. Gong thanked everyone for the two hours she spent with Dr. Tuite and the entire DELTA team in training sessions that are steadily moving the district forward.

Mrs. Chirls thanked the LCCD for the Chinese cultural evening held at the high school, adding she appreciates always being included in the event and looks forward to continuing the celebration this weekend.

Mrs. Khemka thanked the high school for providing the space and all who attended the Shivs Third Eye mental health fair.

Mrs. Khemka announced that she took the oath as the NJSBA Board of Directors Alternate for Essex County, where they discussed the advocacy agenda and school funding, which is center stage. The board is doing all they can to advocate for funding for schools and public education through every channel available.

Student Representative's Report

Mr. Klein announced that as part of the United States Semiquincentennial celebration, he is helping Mrs. Feeley launch a "Flat Lancer" project with high school students across the country. A take off on the book "Flat Stanley," students sent out "Flat Lancers" to students in other schools and are asking them to send back pictures of them with their "Flat Lancer" in an effort to connect and unite in celebration for the 250th anniversary. In addition, Livingston students were offered to take a "Flat Lancer" with them on February break and send back pictures from their various locations.

Public Comment

Neal Ashinsky expressed frustration with the district and board for not acting sooner to give the community an opportunity to alleviate some of the district's financial burden. Mr. Ashinsky expressed that with open enrollment and the five year LEA contract, we should have known what the budget gap would look like and taken action last November. Mr. Ashinsky hopes the board will make a change to the upcoming school board election.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

BUSINESS

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

3.1 Changes to Annual Public Meeting Calendar

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the addition of a Voting Meeting on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. The meeting will be held in the large conference room in the Administration Building.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves moving the Tuesday, May 12, 2026 Workshop/Voting Meeting to Wednesday, May 13, 2026. The meeting will be held in the Livingston High School Auditorium.

3.2 Conferences and Overnight Trips

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the conferences and overnight trips as shown on **Attachment A**.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka
 Nays - 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>Martha Cuervo</i>	Teacher of Spanish	Retirement	HMS	June 30, 2026
<i>Sheila Stafford</i>	Library Media Specialist	Retirement	Collins	June 30, 2026
<i>Tara Lockwood</i>	Elementary School Teacher	Retirement	RHE	June 30, 2026
<i>Ellen Fishter</i>	Educational Technology Coach	Retirement	RHE	June 30, 2026
<i>Rafael Pagan</i>	PT IT Support Specialist	Resignation	CO	February 10, 2026

**as amended from a previous agenda*

4.2 Leaves of Absences

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the leaves of absences of:

Name	Location	Position	LOA w/pay and benefits	LOA w/o pay, but with benefits (if applicable)	Extended LOA w/o pay or benefits	Return Date
<i>Michelle Golden*</i>	RHE	TOSD	12/1/2025-1/1/2026	1/2/2026-1/20/2026 & 1/21/2026-4/29/2026**	NA	4/30/2026
<i>Stephen Schaible</i>	LHS	Teacher of Social Studies	NA	1/27/2026-5/5/2026**	5/6/2026-1/24/2027	1/25/2027

**as amended from a previous agenda*

***Designates time counted toward NJFLA/FMLA*

4.3 Appointments

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the applications indicated below (*) for emergent hiring for the following appointments 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>Eryn Goldstein*</i>	LHS	School Counselor	Leave Replacement	M. Duffy	MA	1	\$64,568 (prorated)	11/17/2025-5/29/2026

<i>Gabriella Grill</i>	Collins/MPE	Teacher of Art	Leave Replacement	A. Ferrell	MA	1	\$64,568 (prorated)	1/23/2026-6/5/2026
<i>Sonia Velasquez Perez</i>	Transportation	35-Hr Bus Driver	NA	G. Espinosa	35 HR BD	9	\$41,014 (prorated)	2/2/2026

**as amended from a previous agenda
**salary will remain the same for the 2025-26 SY*

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the appointment of the ABA Discrete Trial TAs and Instructional Aides as listed on **Attachment B**.

4.4 Extra Period Assignments

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the extra period assignments as listed on **Attachment C**.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Mr. Stern congratulated all of the retirees, whose collective years of service is over 100 years, and thanked them for their contributions to the district.

On behalf of the board, Mrs. Khemka wished them all a happy retirement.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka
Nays - 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 - Mrs. Chirls, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong, Mrs. Khemka
Nays - None

Old Business/New Business

There was no old business or new business.


ADJOURNMENT

At 7:26 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Vote all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Jessica Rapp
Board Secretary