



LIVINGSTON BOARD OF EDUCATION VOTING MEETING MINUTES

February 10, 2026

Executive Session - Administration Building - 6:00 p.m.

Public Session - Administration Building - 7:00 p.m.

A **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 6:00 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, Inna Yelisevich and Abe Klein

Also in Attendance: Dr. Daniel Fishbein, Jessica Rapp, Dr. Maura Tuite, Mark Stern, Susan Burman 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:

- personnel and student matters

Action may be taken upon return to the public session. The full length of the meeting is anticipated to be approximately 60 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 7:05 p.m., Mrs. Khemka reconvened the public meeting.

Superintendent's Report

In response to the caller's questions at our last board meeting, Dr. Fishbein explained that we didn't put forth an extra spending question in November for the 2026-2027 budget because we didn't have enough financial information to develop the question, we were and still are unaware of what our state aid or health benefit adjustment will be and we thought we would be permitted to move the election to April.

Dr. Fishbein added that our insurance broker shops the health insurance plans every year and due to our negative claim history, we are experiencing a significant increase in premium. With budgetary caps without adjustments being 2 percent, increasing energy costs and increasing special education tuition rates, we are anticipating a \$5 million budget gap. We will have a better understanding of the gap when the health insurance adjustment and state aid figures are known.

Dr. Fishbein continued that we inquired about a health savings account and moving the district to a high deductible plan but that would only work for Chapter 78 insurance, not Chapter 44. Chapter 44 insurance is capped at much lower employee contributions and it would be impossible to incentivize enough people to want to make a change to a high deductible plan.

Mrs. Khemka asked for a motion to move resolutions 3.8 and 3.9 to this portion of the meeting. The board members took turns reading each of the resolutions aloud.

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

3.8 Resolution Addressing the Impact of the New Jersey School Funding Formula and Statutory Tax Levy Cap on the 2026-2027 School District Budget and Beyond

WHEREAS, the Livingston Board of Education is committed to providing a thorough and efficient high-quality education to all students, a mandate established by the New Jersey State Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the district's ability to generate necessary local revenue is severely constrained by a statutory 2% property tax levy cap, which does not account for the reality that essential costs—including staff salaries, health benefits, transportation, and special education services—frequently increase at rates far exceeding 2%; and

WHEREAS, for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, Livingston Public Schools received approximately a 3% decrease from the previous year in state aid, despite rising operational costs; and

WHEREAS, Livingston Public Schools has historically faced budget shortfalls - previously approving *Resolution Opposing the Proposed Increases to the School Employees Health Benefits Program* (August 16, 2022) and *Resolution Requesting the State to Make Adjustments to School Funding to Address Budget Constraints for the Current Fiscal Year and Beyond* (February 25, 2025) - necessitating difficult decisions regarding educational programming, class sizes, and professional staffing; and

WHEREAS, the current fiscal landscape forces the district to explore all available internal options to reduce expenses, yet these measures are often insufficient to offset the combined pressure of stagnant aid and the restrictive tax cap without compromising the quality of educational services; and

WHEREAS, health benefit premiums and specialized transportation costs continue to escalate at double-digit rates, with the Livingston Board of Education anticipating a 25% increase in private insurance premiums—which, while significantly lower than the 36% increase imposed by the State Health Benefits Program, still vastly exceeds the rate of inflation and necessitates the diversion of vital resources away from the classroom, from curriculum and instructional programs; and

WHEREAS, the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) and the subsequent S-2 legislation have created a funding environment where suburban districts like Livingston often face significant volatility and unpredictability in state aid allocations; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Livingston Board of Education formally appeals to the Governor of New Jersey and the State Legislature to take the following actions:

1. **Tax Levy Cap Flexibility:** Permanently increase the local tax levy cap from 2% to 4%, or provide automatic adjustments for non-discretionary cost increases such as health benefits, special education, and transportation.
2. **Special Education Funding:** Shift to a funding model based on actual special education enrollment; provide 100% reimbursement for high-cost "Extraordinary Special Education" expenses; and implement a reasonable and predictable cap on annual tuition increases for APSSDs to ensure price stability for sending districts.
3. **Operational Support:** Provide additional categorical aid to support districts experiencing professional staff shortages and inflationary pressures in education-related supplies and technology and use an appropriate inflation index.
4. **Health Benefits Reform:** Pursue legislative avenues to stabilize the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP) and provide districts with more effective tools to manage rising medical costs.
5. **Funding Formula Reform:** Establish a more equitable, predictable funding model that accurately reflects the increasing budgetary pressures on suburban districts, for our long-term success, and include an inflationary index that reflects the actual, current cost of goods and services required to run a high-achieving school district.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Livingston Public Schools will continue to collaborate with state officials, state legislators, and educational advocacy organizations to pursue funding solutions that ensure each student has access to the resources they need to succeed.

PASSED and **ADOPTED** this February 10, 2026, by the Board of Education of Livingston Public Schools.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

3.9 Resolution of the Livingston Board of Education Opposing Substantial Health Benefit Premium Increases

WHEREAS, the Livingston Board of Education ("Board") provides health benefits, including medical, dental, and prescription drug coverage, to its employees and their families; and

WHEREAS, providing affordable, quality health insurance is essential to attracting and retaining qualified teachers and staff, yet the cost of these benefits continues to rise annually; and

WHEREAS, for the 2026-2027 plan year, Horizon has proposed a premium increase of 25%, which is unsustainable and exceeds the district's budgetary growth limitations; and

WHEREAS, such a substantial increase directly forces the Board to divert critical funds from educational programming, classroom instruction, and student support services to cover rising insurance premiums; and

WHEREAS, this budgetary pressure negatively impacts the district's ability to maintain responsible fiscal management and places an undue burden on local taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Board has explored alternative medical plan designs and cost-containment measures, but requires immediate relief from the rising premiums imposed by the carrier;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Livingston Board of Education formally opposes the proposed 25% increase in health benefits premiums for the 2026-2027 plan year;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board urges Horizon to reconsider this substantial rate hike to allow the district to fulfill its primary mission of educating students without compromising financial stability;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Horizon, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the state officials, state legislators, and the NJ Department of Education.

PASSED and ADOPTED this February 10, 2026, by the Board of Education of Livingston Public Schools.

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

Board Reports

Mrs. Gong recognized the district's continued support of an inclusive school community. Over the past two weekends, LCCD reflected that commitment and aligned with our portrait of a graduate, which is helping students contribute to a global community and to celebrate cultural diversity. Mrs. Gong would like to see everyone continue to invite each other to celebrate one another's cultural traditions. Mrs. Gong thanked everyone who worked to make the event successful and wished everyone a prosperous and joyful Year of the Horse.

Student Representative's Report

Mr. Klein stated that a successful course preview day was held last week for students.

Mr. Klein acknowledged the custodial staff for their hard work in dealing with the snow around the school and the flood from a pipe that burst in the building.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Chirls moved the following:

1. Voting Meeting Minutes of January 20, 2026
2. Voting/Workshop Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2026
3. Workshop/Voting Meeting Minutes of February 3, 2026

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

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

Public Comment

Shuk Leung, chair of LCCD and former principal of Livingston Chinese School, on behalf of the LCCD committee, expressed sincere gratitude to the LBOE for their support and to all in the district who helped them set up this successful two day event. This year, over 2,500 attendees were able to enjoy over 60 exhibition tables that included non-profit organizations, charities and township groups, tables with Chinese snacks and drinks and over 300 performers showcasing Chinese cultural performances. Ms. Leung thanked the over 80 volunteers and the LBOE for their partnership on this successful event.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

PROGRAM/CURRICULUM

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

1.1 Student Teachers

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the student teachers as shown on **Attachment A**.

1.2 Field Trips

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the field trips as shown on **Attachment B**.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

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

STUDENT SERVICES

Mr. Cohen moved the following:

2.1 Out of District Placements

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves placement for the academic year 2025-2026 for one (1) Livingston student with disabilities, as classified and recommended by the Child Study Team, in facilities with tuition costs to be determined within the limits established by the New Jersey Board of Education, as shown on **Attachment C**.

2.2 US² Consulting

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the agreement with US² Consulting to provide them with professional development training on *Implicit Bias* at the March 17, 2026 meeting at a cost not to exceed \$1,500.00

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

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

BUSINESS

Mrs. Chirls moved 3.1 to 3.7 and 3.10

3.1 Payment of Bills

Whereas, the Board Secretary has audited certain vendor claims as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:19-2 and Board Policy 6470 and presented them to the Livingston Board of Education with the recommendation they be paid, now therefore be it

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the payment of the following bills in the amounts listed and attach a complete copy of these bills to the minutes of this meeting.

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
10,11,12	Operating Budget (checks 114626-115124)	\$7,571,203.82
20	Operating Budget (checks 114626-115124)	\$295,500.21
60	Cafeteria (checks 60183)	\$268,033.37
	TOTAL	\$8,134,737.40

3.2 Transfers

Whereas, the Superintendent of Schools recommends certain transfers among accounts in the 2025-2026 budget for January pursuant to Board of Education Policy 6422, now therefore be it

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education ratify transfers pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8.1 and N.J.A.C. 6:20-2A.10 as shown on **Attachment D**.

3.3 Overnight Trips

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves *Pietrina Daly*, school nurse, to provide medical assistance to students participating in the DECA State Competition in Atlantic City, New Jersey, from March 3 to 5, 2026.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves *Katie Bach*, school nurse, to provide medical assistance to students participating in the NJ Key Club District Educational Conference (DECON 2026) in Asbury Park, New Jersey, from March 26-28, 2026.

3.4 Academic Calendar - 2027-2028

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the 2027-2028 Academic Calendar as shown on **Attachment E**.

3.5 Update to Financial Depositories and Signatures

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education establish the following bank accounts at Somerset Regal Bank, Livingston, New Jersey and that Somerset Regal Bank is hereby requested, authorized and directed to honor all checks, draft and other orders for the payment of money drawn in the name of the Board of Education in the following accounts when bearing the true or approved facsimile signature(s) indicated:

Somerset Regal Bank		
<u>Account Title and Number</u>	<u>Signature(s)</u>	
Riker Hill Elementary School School Account 0108010612	Brooke Benavides Nicole Tierney Michelle Distasio Jessica Rapp	<i>Any 2</i>

3.6 Resolution Authorizing The Livingston Board of Education To Enter Into The Bergen County New Jersey Cooperative Purchasing Alliance

Whereas, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-11(5) authorizes contracting units to establish a Cooperative Pricing System and to enter into Cooperative Pricing Agreements for its administration; and

Whereas, the County of Bergen, hereinafter referred to as the "Lead Agency" has offered voluntary participation in the New Jersey Cooperative Purchasing Alliance # CK04- a Cooperative Pricing System for the purchase of goods and services;

Whereas, the governing body of the Livingston Board of Education, County of Essex, State of New Jersey duly considered participation in a Cooperative Pricing System for the provision and performance of goods and services;

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved as follows:

TITLE

This RESOLUTION shall be known and may be cited as the Cooperative Pricing Resolution of the Livingston Board of Education.

AUTHORITY

Pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:11-11(5), the Business Administrator is hereby authorized to enter into a Cooperative Pricing Agreement with the Lead Agency.

CONTRACTING UNIT

The Lead Agency shall be responsible for complying with the provisions of the Local Public Contracts Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.) and all other provisions of the revised statutes of the State of New Jersey.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage.

3.7 Annual Appointment

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following appointment for the 2025-2026 school year which are in effect until changed by resolution:

Architect of Record

B|W|S Architects

3.10 Bylaws, Policies and Regulations

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following Bylaws, Policies and Regulations for first reading:

Bylaw #0142.1 - Nepotism (M) (with revisions)
Policy #1220 - Employment of Chief School Administrator (M) (with revisions)
Policy #1552 - Sexual Harassment - Staff (M) (new to district)
Regulation #1552 - Sexual Harassment - Staff (M) (new to district)
Policy #2415.04 - Title I - District-Wide Parent And Family Engagement (M) (with revisions)
Policy #2415.20 - Every Student Succeeds Act Complaints (M) (with revisions)
Regulation #2415.20 - Every Student Succeeds Act Complaints (M) (new to district)
Policy #2415.50 - Title I - School Parent And Family Engagement (M) (new to district)
Policy #2440 - Summer Session (new to district)

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the following policies for second reading and adoption:

Policy #2361 - Acceptable Use of Computer Networks/Computers and Resources (M) (with revisions)
Policy #3321 - Acceptable Use of Computer Networks/Computers and Resources by Teaching Staff Members (new to district)
Policy #4321 - Acceptable Use of Computer Networks/Computers and Resources by Support Staff Members (new to district)
Policy #7522 - School District Technology Devices Provided to Staff Members (new to district)

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education abolishes the following Policies and Regulations at the recommendation of our policy advisor, Strauss Esmay:

Policy #3362 - Sexual Harassment (M)
Regulation #3362 - Sexual Harassment (M)
Policy #4352 - Sexual Harassment (M)
Regulation #4352 - Sexual Harassment (M)

Mr. Cohen seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE - Ayes - Mrs. Chirls (abstain check #114828), Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Gong,
Mrs. Yelisevich, 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
Alexandra Marzulla	Supervisor of World Language K-12	Retirement	LHS/HMS	June 30, 2026
Dean Smith	School Social Worker	Retirement	Collins	June 30, 2026
Deborah Baumgartner	Teacher of Science	Resignation	LHS	April 3, 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
Ann Marie Mansfield*	RHE	Kindergarten Aide	NA	NA	12/1/2025-2/20/2026	2/23/2026
Mongioj, Michael	CO	IT Support Specialist	NA	2/2/2026-4/24/2026**	NA	4/27/2026

**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
Gino Guttj*	B&G	Maintenance	NA	D. DiGeronimo	Maintenance	11	\$69,952 (prorated)	2/9/2026

**as amended from a previous agenda*

***salary will remain the same for the 2025-26 SY*

4.4 Substitutes

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the appointment of the individuals listed below to serve as substitutes on an as-needed basis for the 2025-2026 school year:

Teachers

Eileen Bach

Kailey Blount

Substitute Secretary

Melissa Amber Goodseit

IT Support Substitute

Rafael Pagan

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education approves the individuals listed on **Attachment F** as certified substitutes. These individuals are currently employed by the District. In the event these individuals are called upon to serve as a substitute, they will be compensated an additional \$50/day (\$10/period) for that assignment.

4.5 Extra Period Assignments

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

4.6 Stipends

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the individuals on **Attachment H** for athletic stipends at Livingston High School for the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with the contract between the LBOE and the LEA.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the individuals on **Attachment I** for co-curricular stipends at Livingston High School for the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with the contract between the LBOE and the LEA.

Resolved, that the Livingston Board of Education approves the individuals on **Attachment J** for co-curricular stipends at Heritage Middle School for the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with the contract between the LBOE and the LEA.

4.7 Mentor Fees

Resolved, the Livingston Board of Education amends the individuals on **Attachment K** listed as assigned mentors to receive payment in accordance with the schedule listed.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Mrs. Burman congratulated the two retirees.

Mrs. Khemka thanked them for their years of service and dedication to the district.

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

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business


There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:27 p.m., Mr. Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Chirls seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,



Jessica Rapp
Board Secretary