BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

AUDUBON HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2026

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

I. **Call to Order**: In accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act of 1975, the Audubon Board of Education transmitted notice of the meeting, scheduled at 7:00 pm in the Audubon Junior-Senior High School Media Center to the Retrospect newspaper and the Borough Clerk and by postings on the Audubon Public School District website and at the Main and the Pine Street entrances of the Junior-Senior High School.

II. **Roll Call**

SY 2024-2026

___ (To be filled on July 15, 2026) X Mark Gatti X Bill Wilson

SY 2025-2027

X Danielle DiFrancesco X Allison Cox X Andrea Robinson

SY 2026-2028

X Ammie Davis A Stephen Wilson (absent w/ notice) X Sara Kuhlen

SY 2026 Mt. Ephraim Representative

A Michelle Cannaday (absent w/ notice)

Motion by Mrs. DiFrancesco seconded by Mr. Gatti to approve the resolution for the board to enter into a closed Authorizing Executive session at 7:01pm for the following purposes. Motion approved by unanimous roll call (7-0) Members S. Wilson & Cannaday were absent.

III. **Authorizing Executive Session**:

WHEREAS, while the Sen. Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 et seq.) requires all meetings of the **Audubon Board of Education** to be held in public, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) sets forth nine types of matters that may lawfully be discussed in Executive Session," i.e. without the public being permitted to attend; and

WHEREAS, the **Audubon Board of Education** has deemed it necessary to go into closed session to discuss certain matters that are exempted from the Public; and

WHEREAS, the nine exceptions to public meetings set forth in N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) are listed below, and next to each exception is a box within which the number of issues to be privately discussed that fall within that exception shall be written, and after each exception is a space where additional information that will disclose as much information about the decision as possible without undermining the purpose of the exception shall be written.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **Audubon Board of Education** will go into closed session for the following reason(s) as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b):

___X___ Any matter which, by express provision of Federal Law, State Statute, or Rule of Court shall be rendered confidential or excluded from discussion in public;

_____ Any matter in which the release of information would impair a right to receive funds from the federal government;

___X___ Any material the disclosure of which constitutes an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy such as any records, data, reports, recommendations, or other personal material of any educational, training, social service, medical, health, custodial, child protection, rehabilitation, legal defense, welfare, housing, relocation, insurance and similar program or institution operated by a public body pertaining to any specific individual admitted to or served by such institution or program, including but not limited to information relative to the individual's personal and family circumstances, and any material pertaining to admission, discharge, treatment, progress or condition of any individual, unless the individual concerned (or, in the case of a minor or incompetent, his guardian) shall request in writing that the same be disclosed publicly;

_____ Any collective bargaining agreement, or the terms and conditions of which are proposed for inclusion in any collective bargaining agreement, including the negotiation of terms and conditions with employees or representatives of employees of the public body

_____ Any matter involving the purchase lease or acquisition of real property with public funds, the setting of bank rates or investment of public funds where it could adversely affect the public interest if discussion of such matters were disclosed;

_____ Any tactics and techniques utilized in protecting the safety and property of the public provided that their disclosure could impair such protection;

___X___ Any investigations of violations or possible violations of the law;

_____ Any pending or anticipated litigation or negotiation in which the public body is or may become a party. Any matters falling within the attorney-client privilege, to the extent that confidentiality is required in order for the attorney to exercise his ethical duties as a lawyer;

___X___ Any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of the performance, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the public body, unless all individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected request in writing that such matter or matters be discussed at a public; Specifically the evaluation of the Superintendent

_____ Any deliberation of a public body occurring after a public hearing that may result in the imposition of a specific civil penalty upon the responding party or the suspension or loss of a license or permit belonging to the responding party as a result of an act of omission for which the responding party bears responsibility;

WHEREAS, the length of the Executive Session is undetermined; however, the **Audubon Board of Education** will make every attempt to estimate the time of the session prior to convening the session after which the public meeting shall reconvene and the Audubon Board of Education will proceed with business.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the **Audubon Board of Education** will go into Executive Session for only the above-stated reasons;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Audubon Board of Education** hereby declares that its discussion of the aforementioned subject(s) may be made public at a time when the Audubon Board of Education attorney advises that the disclosure of the discussion will not detrimentally affect any right, interest, or duty of the school district or any other entity with respect to said discussion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Board of Education**, for the aforementioned reasons, hereby declares that the public is excluded from the portion of the meeting during which the above discussion shall take place and hereby directs the board secretary to take the appropriate action to effectuate the terms of this resolution.

Motion by Mrs.DiFrancesco seconded by Mrs. Cox to adjourn closed Authorizing Executive session at 8:23pm. Motion approved by unanimous roll call (7-0) Members S. Wilson & Cannaday were absent.

IV. Call Meeting to Order

V. Flag Salute

Board of Education Goals

Through oversight and advocacy in committee meetings, regular monthly meetings, and through a close review of Superintendent recommendations, the Board will

- continue to provide equitable access to a rigorous curriculum while focusing on improving student achievement and decreasing achievement gaps.
- work to maintain a cost-effective budget that provides for educational resources, supports a preventative maintenance program, and encourages & facilitates long-range facility improvements while remaining fiscally responsible.
- foster a safe and positive school climate and culture in order to positively impact student motivation, engagement, and achievement.
- conduct a monthly review of the Superintendent's goals.
- develop a Policy review Calendar.

Board President Davis made a statement regarding the Board meeting on June 10, 2026. Davis stated that certain items could have been handled differently. She stated that during public participation the following issues should have been addressed:

- The public needed to address Superintendent Allen with respect.
- Discussion of Mansion Avenue School should have highlighted the school and all the good aspects being done.
- The visibility between the Principal and Superintendent are different.

Board President Davis has asked for grace and forgiveness.
The above statements will be reported at the July 15, 2026 Board Meeting where the meeting is recorded and can be viewed on You Tube.

VI. GOVERNANCE: Chairperson – TBD; Committee Members – Danielle DiFranceso, Sara Kuhlen, Michelle Cannaday;and Alternate – Andrea Robinson

VII. OPERATIONS: Chairperson – Mark Gatti; Committee Members – Allison Cox, TBD, Stephen Wilson; and Alternate – Ammie Davis

VIII. EDUCATION: Chairperson – Andrea Robinson; Committee Members – Bill Wilson, Danielle DiFrancesco, Sara Kuhlen and Alternate – Michelle Cannaday

IX. HUMAN RESOURCES: Chairperson – Stephen Wilson; Committee Members – Allison Cox, Ammie Davis, Mark Gatti and Alternate - Bill Wilson

X. Public Participation: (Open Discussion)

Bonnie Smeltzer, Mansion Ave School Principal, addressed the Board with a written statement regarding comments that were communicated publicly at the June 10, 2026 Board meeting. Ms. Smeltzer's written statement is attached as part of the minutes.

The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest.

In order to permit the fair and orderly expression of such comment, the Board has set aside two portions of this Board meeting for public comment on any school or school district issue that a member of the public feels may be of interest to the residents of the school district.

For the first portion, public comments are invited on matters pertaining only to the agenda for tonight's meeting. For the second portion, public comments are invited on all matters pertaining to the school district.

Participants should announce their name, address, and any group they may represent, if applicable. The Board reserves the right to limit public discussion. Public discussion of a topic will be limited to fifteen (15) minutes, and individual speakers will be limited to three (3) minutes. No participant may speak more than once on the same topic until all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard. Reference bylaws #0167 of the Audubon Public Schools Board of Education Policy Manual.

The Board uses the public comment period as an opportunity to listen to citizens. Not all issues brought to a Board meeting will be resolved at that particular meeting. Complaints stated or actions requested by the public may be taken under advisement by the Board for investigation, discussion, action, or disposition at a later date or time. The public comment sessions are an opportunity for citizens to share their opinions and remarks with the Board; it is not a question-and-answer session. The Board may or may not respond to public comments at the time they are made and is under no obligation to do so.

The Board does not endorse public comments nor will the Board be held liable for comments made by members of the public. Any individuals who may be the subject of public comments, including district employees, shall retain all rights against defamation and slander according to the laws of New Jersey.

Board Comments:

Board Member Gatti asked if the AI policy can be posted on the website for the public. Gatti commented that the stadium field looked great for the High School Graduation. Gatti requested that Ms. Smeltzer's written statement be part of the minutes.

Board Member Kuhlen addressed the comments made by Ms.Smeltzer and offered an apology to the Mansion Ave staff that she did not speak up and support the staff at that time. Kuhlen commented that hopefully individuals will apply for the open principal position.

Superintendent Allen commented that there will be a Health Benefit change meeting on June 18, 2026 for the staff.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

1. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Wednesday, July 15, 2026 at 6:30 pm in the Audubon Junior-Senior High School Media Center.

2. Motion by Mrs.Cox seconded by Mr. Gatti to adjourn meeting at approximately 8:51pm.

   Motion approved by unanimous roll call (7-0) Members S. Wilson & Canaday were absent.

   Motion to Approve: A. Cox Second: M. Gatti

   Roll Call

X Ammie Davis	A Stephen Wilson	X Sara Kuhlen	A Michelle Cannaday
___	X Mark Gatti	X Bill Wilson	
X Danielle DiFrancesco	X Allison Cox	X Andrea Robinson	

The Audubon Board of Education reserves the right to add and/or delete motions or make changes to motions in this agenda up to the time of the meeting and during the actual meeting.

Deborah J. Roncace

Deborah Roncace
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Good evening. My name is Bonnie Smeltzer, and I am proud to serve as the Principal of Mansion Avenue School.

I appreciate the opportunity to address several perceptions and comments that were communicated publicly at the June 10, 2026 Board of Education meeting and elsewhere, which have thus far gone unaddressed.

First, there was a suggestion that teaching in an elementary school is somehow easier than teaching at the high school level. Having worked at both levels during my career, I can say unequivocally that this perception is false. Educational research consistently demonstrates that the elementary years are the most critical period for identifying and addressing learning gaps. The foundation established during these years determines future academic success. For that reason, our youngest learners deserve some of our strongest and most skilled educators. The work performed by elementary teachers is not easier—it is essential.

There was also a suggestion that serving as the principal of Mansion Avenue School is significantly easier than serving as a high school principal, and that virtually anyone could do the job. I would respectfully disagree.

For the past ten years, I have had the privilege of leading Mansion Avenue School, and I can attest that the role requires a tremendous breadth of responsibility. Unlike larger schools that have multiple administrators sharing leadership duties, I serve as the sole administrator in the building. As a result, I fulfill many of the responsibilities that, in other schools, are divided among several individuals.

As principal, I am responsible for establishing the vision and culture of the school while working collaboratively with students, staff, families, and community partners. I serve as an instructional leader across all academic subjects and grade levels. I oversee discipline and student behavior programs, including our award-winning Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. I help guide the social and emotional development of our students, support counseling services, coordinate state

assessments, oversee intervention programs, develop building schedules, and ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

In addition, I supervise more than twenty student clubs and activities, manage communications with families and the community, lead hiring efforts, coordinate partnerships with community organizations, and ensure the day-to-day operation of the school. These responsibilities require dedication, expertise, and leadership. Simply put, this is not a position that just anyone can do successfully.

There was also a comment suggesting that moving from a high school administrative position to Mansion Avenue School should be viewed as a demotion. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The success of Mansion Avenue School speaks for itself. Through the extraordinary efforts of our teachers, support staff, students, and families, our school has earned recognition at both the state and national levels. We have been recognized by Character.org for implementing Promising Practices and were subsequently named a New Jersey School of Character. Through partnerships with organizations such as Cross County Connection and Safe Routes to School, we earned Bronze, Silver, and most recently Gold recognition for our programs that promote safe walking and biking to school.

We were also designated a Lighthouse School through the Blue Ribbon Schools organization after engaging in a rigorous school improvement process focused on implementing research-based best practices. Most notably, this past fall, Mansion Avenue School was recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education—the highest honor a school can achieve.

These accomplishments are not accidental. They are the result of years of commitment, collaboration, innovation, and excellence from an exceptional staff and community.

Given these achievements, I can say with confidence that throughout educational and leadership circles, an appointment as Principal of Mansion

Avenue School would not be viewed as a demotion. It would be viewed as an opportunity, a privilege, and a testament to the importance of leading a school that has achieved excellence at the highest levels.

I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together, and I remain committed to serving the students, families, and staff of Mansion Avenue School with the same dedication and passion that have guided my work over the past decade as you seek the perfect candidate to take over this position in the fall.

Thank you for your time and consideration.