

CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Closter, New Jersey

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

August 11, 2020 - 7:30 PM

The Board meeting was called to order by Mr. Lambert at 7:31 PM.

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein,
Mr. Lambert

The following Board members were absent:

Mr. Linn

Also present:

Mr. McHale and Mr. Villanueva

NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT - Read by the President:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Secretary to the Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting by having the date, time, and place thereof, posted at each school building within the district, the Board of Education office, the Office of the Borough Clerk, and transmitted to *The Record* and *Northern Valley Suburbanite* newspapers.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Mr. McHale shared with the Board and the community his report:

The Closter Public School District is planning to reopen schools on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, according to the Closter Reopening Plan. We have added a section to the district webpage, Return to School 2020, which has the Closter reopening plan, a Frequently Asked Questions Document, the video of a Zoom Q&A session held on August 6, 2020, and the state guidance document entitled, *The Road Back*.

Our reopening plan includes two options: hybrid or fully virtual. We will be using a phase-in model to ensure the safety and health of students and staff. Phase I will be from September 8 through October 16, 2020. During Phase I, students in the hybrid model will attend school for at least two four-hour days of instruction in person at school each week. Students will be assigned to an A schedule (Monday/Wednesday) or B Schedule (Tuesday/Thursday). Fridays will alternate A/B by week, with the Monday/Wednesday group having in person instruction one Friday and the Tuesday/Thursday group having in person instruction on

the next Friday. Students will be assigned to their A or B cohort so that families with more than one student and families with students in both schools will have in-person instruction on the same days. During Phase I, students in the fully virtual model will attend school using Zoom. Students will receive approximately 2.5 - 3.5 hours per day of direct/interactive instruction (synchronous), and approximately 1.5 hours per day of independent work (asynchronous). I encourage everyone to review the documents on the webpage.

The deadline for parents to submit their choice of hybrid or fully virtual learning was Sunday, August 9, 2020, at noon. We thank everyone who responded by the deadline. There are still about 70 students who did not select one of the two options. The school secretaries are reaching out to those families by telephone this week. Of the responses we have received, 63% of students have chosen the hybrid option and 37% of students have chosen the fully virtual option. The school and district administrators are working on creating class assignments. They will notify parents and students on or before August 25, 2020, of their class assignments and which days students in the hybrid model will attend school. As of this evening, we cannot accept any more requests for changing back and forth from the choice parents have selected. The next opportunity for changing between hybrid and fully virtual will be for the second trimester which begins on December 9, 2020. The administrators will communicate with parents in November about how the process for switching options will work. The principals and I will be communicating with families regularly in the 27 days until school starts. Please be sure to check email and the district website for all updates.

We look forward to the return of our teachers and full staff on September 2, 2020. The teachers and staff will have professional development and time to collaborate as they plan for the return of students, either in-person or virtually.

As summer winds down, He hopes that everyone enjoys the warm weather and once again reminded students to continue reading and practicing math facts every day.

Mr. Lambert wanted to thank Mr. McHale, Mr. Villanueva, administrative staff and teachers for all the work that has been completed to prepare for the upcoming school year.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein to open the meeting to the public.

There were no public comments.

Statements made by individual participants are limited to a duration of three (3) minutes unless otherwise announced at the beginning of the discussion. The Board urges large groups to select one person to represent them. The Board reminds those individuals who take the opportunity to speak to please step up, identify themselves by name and address, and to limit their comments to items listed on the agenda.

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Bhagat to resume the regular order of business.

BOARD OPERATIONS

Moved by Ms. Bhagat, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein to approve Motion A.

Motion was approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein,
Mr. Lambert

NAYS: None

A. APPROVAL - Minutes

Motion to approve July 16, 2020 minutes.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

Chairpersons Ms. Bhagat, Mr. Linn, Ms. Cross

Ms. Cross asked about the cost of the Rutgers courses in Motion A. Mr. McHale explained the cost is contractual. Teachers will pay for the course, which needs to be approved by the board in order for them to move on the salary guide. Some courses are paid by the district, but the contractual amount is no more than \$1,000.00 over 3 years.

Ms. Kothari asked about Motion C. Mr. McHale explained every year the board needs to approve the K-8 curriculum. The Northern Valley Curriculum Center along with our teachers work on the curriculum for the school year. This summer minor revisions were done in the area of Social Studies. Key information such as LGBTQ and persons with disabilities who have made contributions in history were included in the curriculum. Financial Literacy Standards in K-8 Curriculum was also updated.

Ms. Finkelstein asked about the priority standards. Mr. McHale explained the priority standards are the guidelines the state considers a priority for each grade level. Meaning these are the standards which are only taught during the current grade level. Dr. Carmichael will work with the teachers when the school year begins and generate documents for each grade level, stating these are the priorities standards which will be taught to all students whether they are taking hybrid classes or all virtual classes; all students will receive the same curriculum standards.

Moved by Ms. Cross, seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - D

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein,
Mr. Lambert

NAYS: None

A. APPROVAL - Staff Coursework

Motion to approve the following courses for 2020-2021 as recommended to the Superintendent by the Principals:

Staff Member: Eileen Kennedy
Course No./Title: 15:290:583 Biological Bases of Behavior
Institution: Rutgers University - Online coursework
Credits: 3

Staff Member: Eileen Kennedy
Course No./Title: 15:291:511 Introduction to Assessment
Institution: Rutgers University - Online coursework
Credits: 3

B. APPROVAL - Professional Development

Motion to approve the following professional development for the 2020-2021 school year:

Staff Member: Alyssa Levy
Workshop: Summer Institute Food for Thought - NJIDA (Online)
Date(s): August 17, 2020
Cost to Board: \$120.00

C. APPROVAL - Updated NVCC Curriculum Guides

Motion to approve the updated NVCC Curriculum Guides (K-8 Core Content) for the 2020-2021 school year.

D. APPROVAL - Mentoring Plan for 2020-2021 School Year

Motion to approve the Mentoring Plan for the 2020-2021 School Year.

FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE

Chairperson Ms. Kwon, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Finkelstein

Mr. Lambert asked Mr. Villanueva regarding Motion C reduction of state aid. Mr Villanueva confirmed that it was. This special meeting was called in order for us to comply with the requirement to submit the plan before Friday. The recommendation with the finance committee and Superintendent is to use emergency reserve to make up for the reduction of state aid.

Mr McHale advised the public this was a challenging time for everyone. School districts are told to purchase PPE's which are needed in order to make accommodations and modifications on how we operate. This comes at a cost. The State Department of Education reduced the aid we would have received by \$100,000.00. The district needs to replace that loss otherwise we will not be able to deliver instruction as planned.

Ms. Kothari asked about Motion D, if this was a contract we renew every year. Mr. McHale advised we work with West Bergen Mental Health to provide assessments of our students who are in need of services if

needed. We are approving it for the amount if it is needed. Mr. McHale asked Mr. Villanueva if we have used them in the past. Mr. Villanueva confirmed the district has used them in the past.

Moved by Ms. Kwon, seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A-D.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Lambert

NAYS: None

A. APPROVAL - Monthly Financials and Certification

Motion to approve the following items as required, pursuant to NJSA 18A:17-9 and NJAC 6:20-2.13, as per Appendix A attached:

- a. Preliminary Board Secretary and School Treasurer Financial Reports for June 2020.
- b. Preliminary Board of Education's Monthly Certification of Budgetary Major Account /Fund status for June 2020.
- c. Preliminary Transfer of funds for June 2020.

B. APPROVAL - Monthly Bills

Motion to approve payment of bills from July 16, 2020 to July 30, 2020 in the amount of:

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| General Fund (Fund 10) | \$620,818.94 |
| Special Revenue (Fund 20) | \$ 18,881.04 |
| Total | \$639,699.98 |

C. APPROVAL – Revision of SY 20-21 Budget to Reflect Change in State Aid Award

WHEREAS, on July 10, 2020, the Closter Board of Education received notice from the New Jersey Department of Education on the revised State Aid award for School Year 2020-2021 and saw a reduction of \$99,485;

WHEREAS, the Closter Board of Education must adopt a plan to address the state aid reduction no later than August 14, 2020;

WHEREAS, State Aid reductions may be addressed through:

- 1. Use unassigned general fund surplus to maintain budgeted appropriations; or
- 2. Request Commissioner approval to withdraw from emergency reserve; or
- 3. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-14.2(d), withdraw from maintenance reserve to cover budgeted required maintenance costs; or
- 4. Reduce appropriations for 2020-21; or
- 5. A combination of 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Closter Board of Education approves the plan to withdraw \$99,485 from Emergency Reserve as direct result of the reduction of State Aid, the increase in expenditures due to COVID prevention measures and requirements that must be put into place, and the adverse effect it will have for the district to be able to provide a thorough and efficient education.

D. **APPROVAL – West Bergen Mental Health Contract for 2020-2021 School Year**

Motion to approve the West Bergen Mental Health Contract for Assessments and School Clearances for 2020-2021 school year, with rates as follows.

- Assessment completed by psychologist, LCSW or LPC: \$157.00
- Assessment completed by Advanced Practice Nurse, Board Certified in Behavioral Health: \$210.00
- Assessment completed by a psychiatrist: \$329.00

PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chairpersons Ms. Lee, Mr. Lambert

Mr McHale advised the public that the district is still searching for Substitute teachers. If anyone is interested to please visit our school website and apply through applitrack. Substitutes must hold a substitute certification or a teaching certificate. Mr. McHale also announced that we are proud to offer Ms. Britney Anderson on a tenure track for a teacher at Tenakill Middle School's Physical and Health Education replacing Ms. Paula Cummings who is retiring. Mr. McHale advised the board the rescindment of appointment of Susan Desimini who was going to be a leave replacement teacher.

Mr. Lambert spoke about Motion B regarding the ratification of Closter Education Association. We are happy to vote for the agreement with CEA and would like to thank both parties involved in making a beneficial mutual agreement.

Moved by Ms. Lee, seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A-I.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Lambert

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Substitute Teachers/Paraprofessionals**

Motion to approve the following substitute teachers and paraprofessional for the 2020-2021 school year:

Substitute Teachers

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Certification(if applicable)</u> |
|--------------------|--|
| Sarah B Struass | NJ Teaching Certification |
| Mary Wrightson | NJ Substitute Certification |

Substitute Paraprofessionals

Lauren Cooper

Paraprofessional Substitute ONLY

B. Ratification of Agreement with the Closter Education Association

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education hereby ratifies and approves the collective bargaining agreement between the Board and the Closter Education Association for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The Board hereby authorizes and directs the Board President and the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to execute the collective bargaining agreement referenced above, as well as any other documents necessary to effectuate the collective bargaining agreement.

C. APPROVAL - Mentors for 2 Provisionally-Licensed Teachers for the 2020-2021 School Year

Motion to approve Mentors for Provisionally-Licensed Teachers. Teachers to be paid from provisionally-licensed teachers' salaries at end of mentorship.

- Jennifer Levy - Mentor to Sarah Comstock
- Kate Maher - Mentor to Rosemarie Villani

D. APPROVAL - Physical Education/Health Teacher Tenure-Track Position

Motion to approve Brittany Anderson as an Physical Education/Health Teacher for the 2020-2021 school year, pending a criminal history background check. Salary is \$60,874.00, plus benefits (MA, Step 2).

E. APPROVAL – Summer Custodial Assistants

Motion to approve, upon recommendation of the Business Administrator the employment of the following 2020 Summer Custodial Assistants; not to exceed 7.5 hrs/day, effective August 12, 2020 through August 21, 2020:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Hr/rate</u> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Victor Estrada | 2 | \$12.25 |

F. APPROVAL - Rescindment of Appointment

Motion to rescind the appointment of Susan Desimini as leave replacement teacher for Grade 1 from September 2, 2020, through April 16, 2021.

G. APPROVAL – Realtime Training

Motion to approve, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following teachers for Realtime training on August 21, 2020, for three hours at a rate of \$50.00/hour per teacher:

HES: Joanne Iyo, Mary Lotito, Lisa Pantaleo, Kimberly Ramm, Nick Shapiro, Kristin Talty
TMS: Leigh Bomzer, Karen Caruso, Erica Cho, Amy Kenny, Judith Lagomarsino

H. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence Replacement**

Motion to approve Rosemarie Villani as leave replacement teacher for Grade 1 from September 2, 2020, through April 16, 2021. Salary will be \$200 per day on days 1 through 10; then beginning on day 11 (Sept. 18, 2020), BA Step 0, \$49,544.00 pro-rated, ending on April 16, 2021.

I. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence Replacement**

Motion to approve Amanda Eastman as leave replacement teacher for Grade 1 from September 2, 2020, through December 23, 2020. Salary will be \$200 per day on days 1 through 10; then beginning on day 11 (Sept. 18, 2020), MA Step 0, \$58,074.00 pro-rated, ending on December 23, 2020.

POLICY COMMITTEE

Chairpersons Ms. Micera. Ms. Kothari

Mr. McHale advised that these policies were discussed at the last meeting. No changes were made but are necessary. We need to submit our state plan for reopening and must include the policies outlined in the agenda.

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Bhagat to approve Motion A.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Lambert

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL – Policies - Second Reading**

Motion to approve the second reading of the following policies; per attached Appendices B-F

- Policy #1250 Visitors
- Policy #3510 Operation and Maintenance of Plant
- Policy #3541.33 Transportation Safety
- Policy #5141.2 Illness
- Policy #5141.3 Health Examinations and Immunizations

BOARD COMMITTEES

Ms. Bhagat reported that the Curriculum Committee met on August 3rd to discuss the Return to School Plan. Parents were invited to choose Hybrid or Full Virtual Learning. Mr. McHale shared the updated documents from the Northern Valley Curriculum Center. Mr. McHale also advised the plans for orientation of the newly hired teachers and long term subs, along with plans for professional development on September 2nd and 3rd which will include expectations for hybrid and virtual learning along with health and safety protocols. A session called Migrating Psychological Impact in a time of Crisis will be part of the sessions which addresses the mental health of teachers and students during a time of crisis.

Ms. Kwon reported that the Finance Committee met on August 6th and discussed the status of the 19/20 surplus which is healthy. The committee also discussed the budget for 2020/2021 which as discussed earlier needs the use of the emergency reserve due to the reduction of state aid. We have Extraordinary aid

which came in higher than last year. This will help special education tuition, custodial and nurses supplies which are needed this year.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Villanueva reminded the board to complete their mandatory training.

Ms. Lee asked with regards to the hand sanitizers ordered if the district made sure they do not contain methanol. Mr. McHale advised we checked with the vendors and suppliers and confirmed they do not contain methanol. Mr. McHale also wanted to thank Mr. Chappel, the maintenance and custodial staff for their work. Not only have they worked to maintain the buildings they are also installing hand sanitizers dispenser both at entry doors and every classroom. Putting stickers on the floor for students to maintain social distancing. Also removing and storing furniture.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Moved by Ms. Kwon, seconded by Ms. Micera to open the meeting to public discussion.

Libby Charon asked if there will be any consideration to switch back the start times between the two school buildings. Mr. McHale responded that during phase one we're going to be observing how everything is working. Collectively as a school and community everyone agreed that the first date that things would change would be October 16th so that it's not just happening haphazardly. Everyone will be looking how to accommodate more students to come everyday. If the times are not working well then we would certainly consider switching them. A few parents have asked for them to be switched. Mr. Mchale advised the times were chosen with input from both parents and administrators and thinking about how we could best provide coverage for students. Pick up at the middle school happens much more quickly than at Hillside and if this routine is not working then we will change it.

Ms. Hagit Harlov asked since more than a third of the students are not coming back to in-person learning and staying virtual does that mean there is a possibility of giving the in-person students more hours to come in person. Mr. McHale advised, unfortunately we would need at least 60% of the students to choose all virtual learning in order for us to do that because we still have the same amount of staff and we still have the same number of students and we don't want those virtual classes to become so large that it becomes ineffective for the students and difficult to manage. Mr. McHale stated the district will see how the program is working and what we can do moving forward after October 16.

Moved by Ms. Bhagat, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein to close the meeting to public discussion.

CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)

No Closed Session

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Bhagat to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.
Business Administrator/Board Secretary