

# *CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION*

*Closter, New Jersey*

*MINUTES*

*WORK SESSION MEETING*

*Tenakill Middle School*

*February 4, 2021 - 7:30 PM*

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The Board meeting was called to order by Ms. Finkelstein at 7:31 PM

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Cross,  
Ms. Finkelstein

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, remote access information, and place thereof, posted at each school building within the district, district website, the Board of Education office, the Office of the Borough Clerk, and transmitted to *The Record* and *Northern Valley Suburbanite* newspapers.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**PRESENTATION OF SY 2019-2020 AUDIT REPORT**

Mr. Higgins from Lerch, Vinci and Higgins, LLP presented to the Board and the community the 2019-2020 Audit Report.

- For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 the district received an unmodified audit opinion which means the financial statements are presented in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.
- There are no recommendations for the fiscal year.
- The District was able to add money into various reserves (Capital, Surplus, Emergency) including \$500,000 tax relief for the SY 21-22 budget.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

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

- Lunar New Year will be celebrated this year on February 12, 2021. Thank you to the Lunar New Year Committee, who met with Ms. Smith, Mr. Tantum, and Mr. McHale this week to discuss the plan. The parent committee members are busy preparing for a fully virtual Lunar New Year assembly this year. They are doing the final edits on a video that will be shown to all students during the school day on February 12th. The video presentation promises to be both entertaining and educational. Thank you again to the Lunar New Year Committee for making this possible!
- The New Jersey Student Learning Assessments for English Language Arts and Mathematics (NJSLA ELA/Math) will be administered to students in grades 3 – 8 during this year's testing window of March 15 - June 11, 2021. The NJSLA for Science will be administered to students in grades 5 and 8 during the same testing window. We are currently planning the schedule of testing for our district and will let parents know specific dates for the assessment. The NJDOE will be providing more guidance sometime between February 22 and March 5, 2021. As soon as we have more information, we will be sharing it with teachers, students, and parents. The state testing is a federal mandate. Miguel Cardona, President Biden's nominee for Secretary of Education has indicated that while testing is essential, he doesn't think bringing students in just to test them doesn't make sense, but that he is open to allowing states to weigh in on how testing is implemented this year so that students' progress is measured. In Closter, we are closely monitoring student progress toward state standards by using the Aimsweb (K-1) and LinkIt (2-8) assessments. The data from these assessments are helping teachers to identify the learning needs of every student so that we can ensure their academic progress.
- The school district will be closed from Monday, February 15, 2021, through Friday, February 19, 2021, for winter break. Schools will reopen on Monday, February 22, 2021.

## PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS

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

*Statements made by individual participants are limited to a duration of three (3) minutes unless otherwise announced at the beginning of the discussion. A maximum of 15 minutes for public input is scheduled as per policy 1120. 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.*

*A Parent asked what were the results of the survey sent to kindergarten parents with regards to five (5) half-days and if the results can be explained with further details; such as percentages of hybrid and how are the spaces being utilized? Mr. McHale stated he and Ms. Smith met today to discuss the results of the survey. They feel it may be possible to have students come in for five (5) half days. Ms. Smith is currently working on it and will share the results with the parents by next week. With regards to the spacing, some classrooms are able to accommodate 13-14 children and a few classrooms can*

accommodate 20 children with safe distancing. Other spaces such as the gym are currently being used for storage of classroom furniture which was removed from classrooms to allow for social distancing. Mr. McHale further discussed he sits on a county committee with other Superintendents and discusses what various districts are doing. He explained that every district has a different enrollment, classroom size, and staffing size. What one district may be able to do another district may not be able to do because of the variables in play.

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

### **BOARD OPERATIONS**

Moved by Dr. Puttannah, seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motion A.

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

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Cross,  
Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

#### **A. APPROVAL - Minutes**

Motion to approve the January 21, 2021 minutes.

### **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson Ms. Lee, Ms. Cross, Dr. Puttannah*

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

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

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Cross,  
Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

#### **A. APPROVAL - Staff Conferences**

Motion to approve the following staff conferences:

Staff Member(s):	Jennifer Annese, Ashley Buckley, Eileen Kennedy, Alyssa Levy Regina Pesce, Lori Scalera
Conference:	Wait...What? Supporting Students with Verbal Working Memory Limitations NJIDA & NJSHA 29th Conference
Location:	Virtual
Date:	March 3 and March 10, 2021
Cost to Board:	\$690.00 (\$115 per person)
Staff Member(s):	Margaret Churchill
Conference:	NJTESOL/NJBE Spring Conference

Location: Virtual  
 Date: May 25-27, 2021  
 Cost to Board: \$270.00

**B. APPROVAL - Staff Courses**

Motion to approve the following staff coursework:

Staff Member: Amy Kenny-Whritenour  
 Course No./Title: EPOL 483 MTC: Learning Technologies  
 Institution: University of Illinois  
 Credits: 4

**FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE**

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

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

*Ms. Kothari asked if the roofing replacement mentioned in Motion D was the same as approved last year? Mr. Villanueva explained it was the same. The district needs to submit to the state a formal resolution with the plans and cost.*

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

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Cross,  
 Ms. Finkelstein  
 NAYS: None

**A. APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from January 22, 2021 to February 4, 2021 in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$362,888.65
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 0.00
Total	\$362,888.65

**B. ACCEPTANCE - SY 2019-20 Audit**

Motion to accept the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and Auditor's Management Report (AMR) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, as audited by Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP.

**C. APPROVAL - Submission of Waiver of Requirements (SEMI Program)**

Whereas, NJAC 6A:23A-5.3 provides that a school district may request a waiver of compliance with respect to the district's participation in the Special Education

Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program for the 2021-2022 school year; and

Whereas, the Closter Board of Education desires to apply for this waiver because it projects having fewer than 40 Medicaid eligible classified students and participation in SEMI would not provide a cost benefit to the district based on the projection of the district's available SEMI reimbursement for the 2021-2022 budget year;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Closter Board of Education hereby authorizes the Chief School Administrator to submit to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools in the County of Bergen an appropriate waiver of the requirements of NJAC 6A:23A-5.3 for the 2021-2022 school year.

D. **APPROVAL - Roof Replacements at Hillside Elementary School**

Whereas, The Board of Education of Closter in the County of Bergen, New Jersey (the "Board"), desires to proceed with a school facilities project consisting generally of:

**ROOF REPLACEMENTS AT HILLSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Whereas, the Board now seeks to take the initial steps in order to proceed with the Project:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF CLOSTER IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, as follows:

Section 1. In accordance with the requirements of Section 6A:26-3 of the New Jersey Administrative Code, the Board hereby approves the Schematic Plans prepared in connection with the Project and the Board further authorizes the submission of same to the Bergen County Superintendent of Schools and the New Jersey Department of Education for approval. This project is designated "Other Capital" and the Board is not seeking state funding.

Section 2. The Board hereby authorizes the amendment to its Long-Range Facilities Plan in order to reflect the proposed Project.

Section 3. The School Administration and such other officers and agents of the Board as are necessary, including the Board attorney, bond counsel and architect, are hereby authorized to perform such other acts, to execute such other documents and to do such other things as are necessary to implement the determinations of the Board set forth in this resolution. Including the submission of Information to the New Jersey Department of Education as applicable to the proposed Project.

Section 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

## PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chairperson Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Linn

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

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

YEAS: Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Cross,  
Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

### A. APPROVAL - Long-Term Leave Replacement - Grade 5

Motion to approve Jennifer Smith as Long-Term Leave Replacement - Grade 5 - starting as soon as possible, pending a criminal history background check, through June 22, 2021. Salary will be \$200 per day on days 1 through 10; then beginning on day 11, MA Step 0, \$59,714 pro-rated.

## BOARD COMMITTEES

*Ms. Kwon mentioned that the Finance Committee met today to discuss the preliminary budget. The committee is working through a small deficit and is waiting on numbers to come in such as state aid, insurance rates, out-of-district tuition, and the Northern Valley consortium. The committee is very confident they will have a balanced budget. They will be looking at this again until it is adopted in March.*

## OLD/NEW BUSINESS

*Mr. Villanueva advised the board they will be receiving an email from the School Board Ethics Committee to complete their personal and financial disclosure statements. This is part of the QSAC review and must be completed.*

*The Board discussed the SY 2021-2022 Calendar. Version one(1) staff report September 1 and students report September 2; Version two (2) staff to report September 2 and 3rd students report September 8, Version (3) staff to report September 2 and 3rd and students to report September 9. This is an observance of the second day of Rosh Hashanah, September 8.*

*Mr. McHale will present to the Association the request to start on August 31 and have students report on September 2. He will then advise the board.*

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

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

*Mr. Villaueva read to the board a thank you from a Kindergarten parent where she thanked the kindergarten team, Ms. Smith, and the administration for their devotion and commitment to the children as well as putting forth their best efforts during this very challenging year.*

*Mr. Villanueva read to the board a question from a first-grade parent who asked about having the first grade students coming in for five(5) half days? Mr. McHale explained that due to the numbers and the social distancing requirements, we are currently unable to accommodate them coming in every day.*

*Mr. Villanueva read to the board a question asking what the PreK class size for the students to come in for 5 days? Mr. McHale explained that the class size for PreK is small which allows them to attend school 5 days a week.*

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Kothari to close the meeting to public discussion.

**CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)**

*No Closed Session*

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Dr. Puttannah to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.

Business Administrator/Board Secretary.