

*CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION*

*Closter, New Jersey*

*MINUTES  
WORK SESSION*

*May 14, 2020  
5:00 PM*

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The Board meeting was called to order by Mr. Lambert at 5:02 PM

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Bhagat, Ms. Cross, Ms. Kothari, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Lee, Mr. Linn (arrived at 5:04 PM), Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Lambert

The following Board members were absent:

None

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 to the community his report:

- Virtual learning days continue, we are ever focused on supporting our students academically and emotionally. The faculty and staff are working very diligently to continue education for our students. As of today, the district has lent 81 computers to students. He understands that virtual learning is not the full educational experience that students would normally receive in-person at Hillside School or Tenakill Middle School; however, our teachers are teaching the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, and we will continue to monitor student progress toward those standards through the end of the school year.

- On Tuesday, May 12, 2020, Mr. McHale had a virtual conversation with the Superintendent session. There were 50 people in attendance. He shared information about our virtual learning days, shared results of the second survey on virtual learning days, and provided some information on our planning for the end-of-year, Extended School Year programs for students with special needs, and grading for the third trimester. He also shared that we have not yet received any guidance from the NJDOE about requirements for opening school buildings in September. The presentation is posted on the district website's main page, with the heading Conversations with the Superintendent May 12 – Presentation. At the meeting, a few parents shared feedback that they would like students to have more live Zoom classes (with fewer students, if possible), for the Zoom sessions to be used for teachers to teach content, and asked if there could be another survey that would be sent by each teacher to get feedback just from his/her class parents. A parent requested also that the survey be offered in multiple languages. (The recent survey was administered using Google Forms, which can be translated by the end-user using Google Translate.) A few other parents shared that they were not seeking additional work, were more concerned with the emotional/mental health of students, and asked how students would be “caught up” when they return in September. He shared that teachers will be formally and informally assessing students to determine which grade-level standards they may need help mastering, and assistance would be provided. Parents were appreciative of what teachers were providing and suggested that it might lighten their load if grade levels shared the responsibility of planning and creating pre-recorded lessons. Some grade levels, but not all, are already doing this. I will continue to work with our administrators, faculty, and staff toward providing the best program for students while using both asynchronous and synchronous learning.
- On May 9, 2020, the NJDOE and Colonel Callahan, State Director of Emergency Management, provided direction to school districts that graduations and moving-up ceremonies could take place only in a virtual format. They said there could be no parades or drive-by ceremonies. Yesterday, Governor Murphy made an announcement that was contrary to the previous guidance. The NJDOE asked that districts wait to make final plans for graduations until they provide clarification. We are planning virtual ceremonies and if a drive-by experience is allowed, we will consider that too!
- The 2020 Census is underway. Information is added on the district webpage, under the heading Census 2020, about the importance of every Closter resident completing the survey.
- Tenakill Middle School and Hillside Elementary Schools are in various stages of the

process for students to collect their personal items from lockers and classrooms. We started first with Tenakill because the student lockers are more easily accessible than going into classrooms. Middle School students have been coming in since Monday, one student per grade level, in fifteen-minute intervals. The process has been going smoothly. At Hillside, teachers and staff are working on placing the contents of students' desks into labeled bags. Once this process is completed, parents will be able to sign up for the collection of the items. Thank you to everyone for making this process as manageable as possible.

- On May 11, 2020, the NJDOE released the CARES Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund allocations to districts. Closter Public Schools are eligible to receive \$76,499. We have to allocate \$1,010 to Acton Academy, as we serve as the pass-through for that non-public school. There are identified allowable uses for the funds. In order to have a schoolwide impact, Mr. McHale would like to direct these funds to provide a supplemental instruction program, preferably in the fall, to address the academic needs of any students who need assistance in meeting grade-level standards. Further, he plans on using some of the funds to purchase additional hardware to be better prepared for a return to virtual learning if the virus becomes widespread again. This use of the CARE funds will have the greatest impact on most students in the district. Once the CARES application is completed, he will share it with the Board of Education.

### BOARD OPERATIONS

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein to approve Motions A-C. Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

Mr. Lambert explained Motion B as to why the board is opposing the bill.

Mr. McHale addressed Motion C. The Department of Education mandated all districts to update and submit the virtual learning plan with some required information.

Ms. Kothari asked if other districts are also sending their resolution opposing the bill, and Mr. McHale responded that almost all, if not all districts are doing this.

Mr. Linn thinks that sending it individually rather than collectively has a better impact.

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

NAYS: None

A. Motion to approve the April 30, 2020 minutes.

B. **RESOLUTION - Opposing Senate Bill 2392/Assembly Bill 3969**

**Legislation Affecting Transmission of Property Tax Revenue to School Districts**

**WHEREAS**, Senate Bill 2392 and Assembly Bill 3969, currently pending in the state Legislature, would authorize the Department of Community Affairs to permit municipalities to delay or alter the transmission of property tax revenue to school districts during gubernatorial-declared emergencies; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey's public schools are highly dependent on property tax revenue to support education programs; and

**WHEREAS**, on average, local property taxes constitute close to 60% of public school revenue, with the percentage even greater in a significant number of districts; and

**WHEREAS**, delaying or altering the transmission of property tax revenue from municipalities would result in a financial crisis for school districts, seriously disrupting the educational process; and

**WHEREAS**, although public school buildings are closed during the current health emergency, the education of our students is taking place through remote instruction and, therefore, continued timely transmission of all property tax revenue due to the school district is critical for the educational process to continue without interruption; and

**WHEREAS**, under our state's current structure, municipalities are designated as the authorities to collect property taxes, but those taxes are levied for specific purposes—e.g., municipal, school, county, fire district—and these obligations must continue to be met; and

**WHEREAS**, municipal governing bodies are empowered under current law to borrow in order to ensure that full payments to school districts are made;

**WHEREAS**, the Closter Board of Education recognizes the impact of the current public health emergency on the state and local governments, as well as local school districts, but believes that this legislation would only worsen the situation for our communities; and

**WHEREAS**, while S-2392/A-3969 would require a municipality to pay a percentage of the revenue due to a school district based on consultation between the state Departments of Community Affairs and Education, the amount of taxes collected at the time and the financial condition of the municipality and school district, it does not address subsequent payment to the school district to make up the full shortfall amount; and

**WHEREAS**, as currently written, S-2392/A-3969, which is designed to ease a financial burden on municipalities, would place a severe strain on school districts and the students and families that they serve.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Closter Board of Education urges the State Legislature and Governor to oppose S-2392/A-3969; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that this resolution be delivered to Governor Philip D. Murphy, State Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and the 39th Legislative District's representatives in the state Senate and General Assembly; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the New Jersey School Boards Association.

C. **APPROVAL - Virtual Instruction**

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor has declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency, and ordered all schools closed for in-person instruction; and

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislature has revised N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9 to permit the use of virtual instruction to establish compliance with the 180 school day requirement during a public health emergency, subject to Board approval of a virtual [or remote] instruction program; and

WHEREAS, the District's Virtual Learning Day Contingency Plan to meet the 180 school day requirement was submitted to the Department of Education on March 20, 2020, and implemented since the District's closure on March 16, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on May 4, 2020, Governor Murphy announced that all New Jersey school buildings would remain closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of the school year 2019-2020; and

WHEREAS, on May 5, 2020, Commissioner of Education, Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., required all school districts to update their public-health related school closure plan;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board hereby approves the District's updated Virtual Learning Day Contingency Plan to meet the 180 school day requirement, to be submitted to the Bergen County Department of Education Office, attached hereto as Appendix A.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein 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. 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.*

There were no public comments.

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

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

**Chairperson Ms. Bhagat, Mr. Linn, Ms. Cross**

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Kothari to approve Motions A-B.  
Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

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

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Staff Conferences**

Motion to approve the following staff conferences:

Staff Member/s: Amy Kenny-Whritenour  
Conference: NYSCATE - Take Your Remote Teaching to the Next Level  
Location: N/A (Virtual Conference)  
Date: 5/20/20  
Cost to Board: \$99.00

B. **APPROVAL - Consortium Memorandum of Agreement - NVRHS**

Motion to approve the Title IIA, III, III-Immigrant, and IV-Part A Consortium Memorandum of Agreement between the Northern Valley Regional High School Board of Education, as Lead Applicant, and the Closter Public Schools for the 2020-2021 school year

FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE

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

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein to approve Motions A - E.  
Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

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

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from April 30, 2020, to May 12, 2020, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$1,026,376.30
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 3,518.11
TOTAL	\$1,029,894.41

B. **APPROVAL – Tax Levy Payment Schedule – SY 2020-2021**

Motion to approve the tax levy payment schedule in support of the 2020-2021 school year budget:

<u>Payment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>General Fund Amount</u>	<u>Debt Service Amount</u>	<u>Tax Payment Amount</u>
1	July 10, 2020	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ 147,690.00	\$ 1,857,462.92
2	August 9, 2020	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
3	September 10, 2020	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
4	October 10, 2020	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
5	November 11, 2020	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
6	December 10, 2020	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
7	January 10, 2021	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ 147,690.00	\$ 1,857,462.92
8	February 10, 2021	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
9	March 10, 2021	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
10	April 10, 2021	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
11	May 11, 2021	\$ 1,709,772.92	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.92
12	June 10, 2021	\$ 1,709,772.88	\$ -	\$ 1,709,772.88
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 20,517,275.00</b>	<b>\$ 295,380.00</b>	<b>\$ 20,812,655.00</b>

- C. **APPROVAL – Professional Service Agreement – Fixed Assets Update**  
 Motion to approve the renewal of a professional service agreement with AM Consultants for completion of an update of the district’s Fixed Assets Inventory as of June 30, 2020, as required for the annual audit, in the amount of \$900.00.
- D. **APPROVAL – Purchase of Chromebooks**  
 Motion to approve the purchase of 102 Chromebooks from CDW-G in the amount of \$36,384.00 through the Ed Services Commission of NJ contract #18/19-03.
- E. **APPROVAL - Asset Disposal**  
 Motion to approve the disposal of equipment, tag #10030; old intercom system.

**PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
***Chairperson Ms. Lee, Mr. Lambert***

Moved by Mr. Linn, seconded by Ms. Cross to approve Motions A and B.  
 Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

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

NAYS: None

- A. **APPROVAL - SY 2020 - 2021 Personnel**  
 Motion to approve, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, the following personnel for SY 2020-2021\*\*, attached hereto as Appendices B - E.

Non-Tenured Teachers  
 Tenured Teachers  
 Secretarial Staff  
 Custodial and Maintenance Staff

\*\*Salary & Step Pending Negotiations

- B. **APPROVAL - 2020 - 2021 Personnel Reduction in Force (RIF)**  
 Motion to approve, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, the reduction in force of the following personnel for SY 2020-2021:

- William Grippo, Maintenance, elimination of position for reasons of economy.
- Courtney Carmichael, Ed.D., Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction/Elementary Assistant Principal, position reduced to 0.60 FTE for reasons of economy.



### BOARD COMMITTEES

Curriculum Committee - Ms. Bhagat shared that the committee is looking for a date to meet.  
Personnel Committee - Mr. Lambert shared that the committee met to discuss some of the personnel-related matters for SY 2020-2021

### OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Villanueva reminded the Board to complete the Self Evaluation as well as the Superintendent Evaluation.

### PUBLIC DISCUSSION

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

- Ms. Amaya would like a follow-up from the board in terms of the letter she sent regarding the Pre-K tuition. She was hoping that the board would work with the family to make another adjustment for May.
  - Mr. Lambert responded that the board has already voted on the adjustment that is offered to the families in our pre-k program.
  - Ms. Finkelstein also clarified that the reprieve is a recognition of the fact that there are some changes in the way instruction is delivered.
- Ms. Reyes has the same concerns related to the Pre-K program. She feels that it is not fair to expect the family to pay the full tuition when it is difficult for 3 or 4-year-olds to sit and participate in virtual learning.
  - Ms. Lee responded that the way the reprieve was provided is similar to giving monthly discounts for the period virtual learning is taking place.
- Mr. Kuafman has the same concerns related to the Pre-K program and he also thinks that the district should address the state. He is requesting some kind of relief.
- Ms. Adler wanted to know if the district has a plan for the moving on ceremony and the clap-out.
  - Mr. McHale responded that we are getting mixed messages from the DOE, Office of Emergency Management. Ceremonies can only be done virtually but the Governor announces that drive-by events are also allowed. The Attorney General's Office will also provide guidelines. Currently the plan is to have a virtual ceremony and possibly an in-person celebration once it is allowed.
- Ms. Bader wanted to know how far the students and instruction are in terms of meeting the standards while on virtual learning. She also wants to know if there are any plans to address any gaps.
  - Mr. McHale responded that the teachers are teaching following the NJ Student Learning Standards. He acknowledged that there will be some challenges but our teachers will be assessing students' readiness for next grade levels, any gaps will be filled through remediation and differentiation of instruction. We are also planning on using the Cares Act money to provide a program in the summer or fall.
- Ms. Sinclair -- she is relocating to Closter and would like to send her child to our pre-k program. She wanted to know where she could get the information.

- Mr. McHale responded that she can get in touch with Ms. Eichenlaub.
- Ms. Kang wants to thank Mr. McHale for summarizing the discussion at the conversations with the Superintendent. She is wondering if it's possible to send another survey and also wants to know if there is a way that a committee can be created for scheduling and possibly allow community members to participate and have input. She followed up her question that if there's a possibility of alternating days, can parents opt out just to do online instruction.
  - Mr. McHale responded that he is open to that suggestion, but he stressed out that it is the school's responsibility to provide education, and having too many voices in this decision is not how a school typically operates. He said that the district is trying to be responsive to all feedback provided.
  - Mr. McHale responded to the follow-up question that he is waiting for guidelines from the DOE.
- Ms. Schwartz - Feel Good Friday - changed, mandatory, wondering if the district can reconsider to not make it mandatory.
  - Mr. McHale responded that Feel Good Friday allows students to participate in their special classes or activities provided by counselors for mental health and wellness. Students can still select the activities they want to participate in but they need to submit some pictures/evidence of participation.

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

CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)

Moved by Mr. Linn, seconded by Ms. Micera to approve the following Closed Session Motion. Motion was approved by a voice vote of the Board:

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

NAYS: None

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education will adjourn to a Closed Session to discuss the following:

(If required)

The matters so discussed will be disclosed to the public as soon as and to the extent that such disclosure can be made without adversely affecting the public.

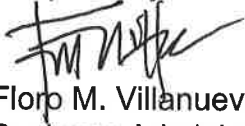
The Board went into Closed Session at 5:56 PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 6:30 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Ms. Finkelstein to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 PM.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

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