



Board of Education - Hunterdon County, NJ

MINUTES

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

Executive Session at 6:30 p.m., Public Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held virtually due to Governor's Executive Order limiting indoor gatherings

1. **Board President J. Viotto called the meeting to order at 6:33pm and read the Public Meeting Notice.**
2. **Roll Call**

Debra Bonomi - present	Califon Borough / Tewksbury Township
Bryan Chapman - present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough
Shelley Crisologo - present	Town of Clinton / Franklin Township / Glen Gardner Borough
Lisa Diederich - present	Union Township
Tara Marie Hintz - arrived 6:38pm	High Bridge Borough / Lebanon Township
Robert Kirchberger - present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough
Rachel McLaughlin - present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough
John Melick - present	Califon Borough / Tewksbury Township
Thomas Roll - present	High Bridge Borough / Lebanon Township
Kimberly Solino - present	Bethlehem Township / Hampton Borough
Roger Straight - arrived 6:38pm	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough
Jessica Viotto - present	Town of Clinton / Franklin Township / Glen Gardner Borough

Also present: J. Bender - Superintendent of Schools, R. Bergacs - Assistant Superintendent, K. Blew - School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, R. Broan - Director of Curriculum, Articulation and Student Achievement, M. Squarcia - Director of School Counseling Services, Z. Baharev - Director of Special Services, G. Vargas-Dellacasa - District Technology Coordinator, M. Smagala - District Communications Coordinator, G. Cottrell - Principal of North Hunterdon High School, R. Peterson - Principal of Voorhees High School, J. Comegno - School Board Attorney, Comegno Law Group P.C., Grace Berger - NHHS student board alternate, Karin Van Weeren - VHS student board representative.

3. **Flag Salute**

4. **Motion by T. Roll and second by S. Crisologo** to adopt the resolution for executive session. **Motion carried unanimously** and the board adjourned to executive session at 6:37pm (T. Hintz and R. Straight were not present for vote).
 - 4.1. **Resolution** read by the School Board President: Whereas, Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 authorizes a public body to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which the School Board discusses topics falling within certain specified exceptions to the requirement for open public meetings; and Whereas, the matters to be discussed fall within one or more of those exceptions, now therefore be it Resolved, that the Board of Education of the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District now adjourns from public session to executive session for the purpose of discussing the following:
 - 4.1.1. Matters falling within the attorney-client privilege
5. **Motion by T. Roll and second by D. Bonomi** to reconvene public session. **Motion carried unanimously** and the board reconvened to public session at 6:59pm (T. Hintz and R. Straight arrived during executive session and were present for vote).

Motion by R. Kirchberger and second by S. Crisologo to move agenda items 14.4 and 14.5 to this point of agenda for separate vote. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Motion by R. McLaughlin and second by D. Bonomi to approve agenda items 14.4 and 14.5. **Motion carried unanimously.**

14.4 Appoint Comegno Law Group, P.C. as the Attorney of Record, to provide General Counsel, Labor/Personnel Counsel and Special Education Counsel at an hourly rate of \$175, as outlined in [Resolution 021621-3](#)

14.5 Appoint Busch Law Group, LLC as Special Counsel, at an hourly rate of \$175, as outlined in [Resolution 021621-5](#)

6. **Motion by S. Crisologo and second by B. Chapman** to approve agenda item 6.1. **Motion carried** with abstentions by J. Melick and R. Straight.
 - 6.1. [Minutes of the January 19, 2021](#) school board meeting
7. **Board Student Representatives' Report -**
 - 7.1. Karin Van Weeren from VHS said she did not have anything new to report except for the continuous snow storms and thanked the administration for the recent snow day.
 - 7.2. Alternate Grace Berger from NHHS commented that NHHS has a blood drive scheduled for February 17. Senior class officers have been meeting with Mr. Petraglia [Director of Student Activities] to discuss Prom with a possible new date in June. She thanked Mr. Petraglia for continuing to work with the senior class throughout the year and the class officers for their commitment to their fellow senior classmates. Ms. Berger also commented that she attended the wellness series hosted monthly by the NH Booster Club and that it was quite informative.
8. **Superintendent of Schools J. Bender commented on the following for the Chief School Administrator's Report:**
 - 8.1. Report on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) - There are zero incidents to report since the last board meeting

8.2. **Motion by T. Hintz and second by T. Roll** to affirm the determinations on the [HIB incidents](#) reported at the January 19, 2021 board meeting. **Motion carried unanimously.**

8.3. [Monthly Reports](#)

J. Bender also provided the following updates:

- As we have been navigating a very active winter weather season, I wanted to provide an update that we currently have two snow days left to use if needed. If we did not have the use of virtual instruction, we would have surpassed our allotted snow days two weeks ago with the blizzard. As of today, the tentative last day of school is Friday, June 11, with graduation remaining on Wednesday, June 16. The school calendar is updated on our websites following each snow day.
 - In regards to holding extra-curricular activities when we have a virtual instruction day due to inclement weather, we will begin to do so if the road conditions will allow. We will reevaluate road conditions mid-morning and make an announcement about whether extra-curricular activities will be held or not. Students will have to find transportation to practices and games, any student who is unable to attend will not be penalized.
- In regards to COVID-19 activity levels, our region did trend back into the yellow Moderate Risk level for the week ending February 6th, however this could be an anomaly due to the blizzard and late reporting of data so we are waiting for the next report to be released to see if the region is indeed trending downward. As we look to bring more students into the building once we stay in the yellow level, we have developed new cohorts that will be soon sent to students, parents and staff. There will be three cohorts with 2/3 of the student population in school for in-person instruction each week; students would have two weeks of in-person instruction followed by one week of virtual instruction. We will review this Thursday's COVID activity level report, if it remains in yellow we will implement our new three cohort model beginning March 1st, this is to give families time to adjust calendars and address any childcare issues created by older siblings returning to school. An announcement will be made Friday morning to confirm that we will be moving to the three cohort model on March 1st. The early dismissal bell schedule and AM and PM Block rotation would remain in place.
- Anti-Bias Initiative Update: We are developing a professional development program for teachers that will clarify our reporting protocols and that will provide teachers with guidance regarding our No Place For Hate initiatives and how to facilitate the conversations created by those initiatives.

9. **J. Viotto commented on the following for the School Board President's Report:**

9.1. March 16, 2021 - regular board meeting - 7:00 p.m. - held virtually or in North Hunterdon High School Main Gym (final location to be posted on district website)

10. [School Board Committee Reports](#)

- [Curriculum, Instruction and Technology Committee](#) - Chair R. McLaughlin said the committee received an update on hybrid instruction and the new cohort designation; student progress and marking period grades were reviewed; social justice update included the Microaggression activity for No Place for Hate initiative was reviewed; committee discussed student mental health; additional language to Regulation 2624 for designating 58 as the lowest score was reviewed and approved by committee; summer programming and assignments

were discussed for equity between schools; and college clearinghouse data was reviewed for Classes 2015-2019. The agenda item on SEMI action plan was not discussed at committee and R. McLaughlin asked K. Blew to provide a description of why it needed approval. K. Blew reviewed that because of the pandemic not all supports/services could be offered to special education students and the action plan is necessary to document those issues.

- T. Roll asked if all virtual instruction was still an option for students. J. Bender confirmed that any student can still choose all virtual instruction and students can change instruction schedule at any time during the year by having the parent email the student's guidance counselor.
- Community Relations and Student Affairs Committee - Chair T. Hintz said the committee did not meet this month.
- Facilities, Finance and Transportation Committee - Chair J. Melick stated the committee reviewed the RFPs received for Legal and Architect Services. Committee discussed the 2021-2022 budget calendar and budget goals, with the Governor's address on February 23 and state aid figures expected on February 25, preliminary budget vote on March 16, and public hearing on April 27. The committee at this time is looking at a net 1.6% increase to the local tax levy as there is banked cap and credit from bond referendum to also utilize; budget increase is needed to offset dwindling excess surplus and decreasing state aid with salaries and benefits being the largest driving factors in the budget. Chapter 44 law implementation for health benefit options for educators is also negatively impacting the budget.
 - R. McLaughlin inquired if the district was expecting retirements or salary breakage. J. Bender stated that there has only been one staff retirement received to date, that information will be available later in the school year.
- Negotiations Committee - Chair J. Viotto said the committee will be meeting later in February.
- Personnel Committee - Chair S. Crisologo stated the committee reviewed the personnel agenda and the job description for Human Resources Assistant, to which they are not recommending any changes.
- Policy and School Security Committee - Chair T. Roll reported that the committee reviewed Regulation 2624 Grading System and approved the additional language to set 58 as the lowest grade. Regulation 1240 Evaluation of Superintendent was discussed again and the committee will await review by new board attorney, J. Comegno, before recommending any changes for board approval. Per suggestion from S. Crisologo, committee recommends not requesting address from students during public comment; policy only asks for municipality of residence and board agenda should be updated to match policy language. R. McLaughlin will take the lead on the Hall of Achievement Ad Hoc Committee.
- New Jersey School Boards Association Update - Delegate T. Hintz attended the last delegate meeting in November 2020 and the main discussion item was school board members resigning from one position to fill another seat on the same board.
- Hunterdon County School Boards Association Update - Delegate R. McLaughlin stated she attended the meeting on January 21, which focused on tracking assessments for student learning and how to strengthen summer projects for

students. She also attended the January 25 Bergen-Essex County School Boards Association meeting at which they provided great strategies for student and parent outreach during the pandemic. She also attended the February 10 NJSBA workshop on Fundamentals of School Board Leadership.

- Hunterdon County Vocational School District Update - Representative R. Kirchberger said that agenda item 14.2 is part of the progression of the relationship with the vocational school district to move forward with new building on North Hunterdon's campus. K. Blew confirmed this item needs approval as part of the HCVSD's grant submission to the state.

11. **Opportunity for Public Comment**

- Maria Grant of Clinton Township inquired: if a budget presentation would be given on March 16, if auditor made a recommendation on how much should be in excess surplus, will administrators be cut due to declining enrollment, what was the criteria used to select new legal and architect services, will action be taken after executive session which should be stated each time, and suggested that the board consider adding a second public comment opportunity.

12. **Motion by R. Kirchberger and second by J. Melick** to approve agenda items 13.1 through 14.10, minus items 14.4 and 14.5 which were already approved earlier in agenda. **Motion carried** with abstentions by D. Bonomi on item 14.10, S. Crisologo on items 14.6 and 14.10, and B. Chapman on item 14.10.

13. **Curriculum, Instruction and Technology**

13.1. [Home instruction](#)

13.2. Fiscal Year 2020 Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) [Action Plan](#) per N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.3(f)

14. **Finance, Facilities and Transportation**

14.1. Acceptance of [donation](#) from Special Olympics New Jersey to Voorhees High School in the amount of a \$7,000 for the United Champion School grant.

14.2. [Resolution 021621-1](#) for the DOE submission of an LRFP amendment to include a long-term lease of property to Hunterdon County Vocational School District

14.3. Appoint a District Architect of Record as outlined in [Resolution 021621-2](#)

~~14.4. Appoint Comegno Law Group, P.C. as the Attorney of Record, to provide General Counsel, Labor/Personnel Counsel and Special Education Counsel at an hourly rate of \$175, as outlined in [Resolution 021621-3](#)~~

~~14.5. Appoint Busch Law Group, LLC as Special Counsel, at an hourly rate of \$175, as outlined in [Resolution 021621-5](#)~~

14.6. Monthly Bills [List](#)

14.7. [Resolution 021621-4](#) Monthly Financial Reports Certification

14.8. [Treasurer's Report](#) submitted for the month ending January 2021

14.9. [Transfer of funds](#) within the 2020-2021 school year budget

14.10. [Staff training and travel requests](#)

15. **Old and New Business**

- T. Hintz asked if we could disseminate information about Dave the Rave's 75th birthday and where to send cards to North Hunterdon's biggest fan.
- R. McLaughlin asked if someone was responding to the emails that were sent to all board members from members of the public. J. Viotto responded she would address.

16. **Motion by S. Crisologo and second by R. McLaughlin** to adopt the resolution for a second executive session. **Motion carried unanimously** and the board adjourned to executive session at 7:46pm.
- 16.1. **Resolution** read by the School Board President: Whereas, Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 authorizes a public body to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which the School Board discusses topics falling within certain specified exceptions to the requirement for open public meetings; and Whereas, the matters to be discussed fall within one or more of those exceptions, now therefore be it Resolved, that the Board of Education of the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District now adjourns from public session to executive session for the purpose of discussing the following:
 - 16.1.1. Personnel matters, recommendations for appointments, separations, changes in salary, changes in assignment, and leaves of absence
 - 16.1.2. Pending and threatened litigation and matters falling within the attorney-client privilege
 - 16.1.3. Executive session minutes January 19, 2021
17. **Motion by T. Hintz and second by T. Roll** to reconvene public session. **Motion carried unanimously** and the board reconvened public session at 8:03pm.
18. **New Business** - None
19. **Motion by R. Kirchberger and second by S. Crisologo** to approve agenda items 19.1 and 19.2. On a roll call vote, **motion carried** with the following abstentions: T. Hintz on items 6.2.3, 6.2.5 and V7.3.4 in personnel agenda; R. McLaughlin and K. Solino on item 7.3 in personnel agenda; and J. Melick and R. Straight on agenda item 19.2.
 - 19.1. Personnel Agenda [P2162021](#)
 - 19.2. Executive session minutes January 19, 2021
20. **Motion by R. Straight and second by T. Hintz** to adjourn. **Motion carried unanimously** and the meeting adjourned at 8:07pm.

Submitted by:

Kathryn Blew

Kathryn Blew, CPA

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary