

SOUTH PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

125 Jackson Avenue
South Plainfield, NJ 07080
Telephone: 908-754-4620

Committee of the Whole Meeting – Wednesday, July 19, 2017 – 6:00 P.M.

South Plainfield High School

200 Lake Street

South Plainfield, NJ 07080

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Seesselberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. SALUTE TO FLAG

III. ROLL CALL- James J. Damato

Interim Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Present: Mrs. Anesh, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Cassio, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Giannakis, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Seesselberg

Mrs. Glover arrived at 6:50 p.m.

Absent: Mr. Farinella

Also Present: Noreen Lishak, Superintendent; Ms. Mary Malyska, Assistant Superintendent; James Damato, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; Joseph Roselle, Legal Counsel

IV. BOARD PRESIDENT

South Plainfield Public Schools Mission Statement:

Students are the focus of the South Plainfield Public Schools. We will provide a dynamic, rigorous, relevant and technology-enriched curriculum, guided by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Our mission is to develop life-long learners who are prepared to succeed in a global and diverse society. We are resolved to educate the whole child, instilling the desire within our students to question and to become divergent thinkers who can achieve their fullest potential.

In accordance with the terms of the Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was posted in all school buildings, the Administration Building, Borough Clerk's office, Police Headquarters, Public Library, four newspapers, and W.C.T.C. on January 5, 2017.

Please be advised:

- There is no smoking on school grounds - inside or outside - at any time.
- Please silence all electronic devices.
- Pursuant to District Policy #0167, each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes' duration and no participant may speak more than once on the same topic.

V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. Presentation of HIB Report for Period 2 – January 1, 2017 – June 16, 2017

South Plainfield High School – There were 15 HIBs reported with eight confirmed cases. They were reported by either staff, parent or student and investigated by Angela Green.

Middle School – There were ten HIBs reported with six confirmed cases. They were reported by either staff, student or parent and investigated by Mrs. Strayhorn-Walton.

Grant School – There were four cases reported with one confirmed case. The confirmed case was reported by student and parent and investigated by Ms. Wu.

Franklin School – There were two cases reported and zero confirmed. They were investigated by Mr. Errico and Ms. Szeliga.

Kennedy School – There was one case reported and zero confirmed. It was reported by staff and investigated by Ms. Szeliga.

Riley School – There was one case reported and zero confirmed. It was reported by staff and investigated by Ms. Mosely.

Roosevelt School had one case reported and one case confirmed. It was reported by the parent and investigated by Ms. Mosely.

2. Presentation of District Report of Violence and Vandalism for Period 2 – January 1, 2017 – June 16, 2017

Dr. Lishak said that she also has to report to the Board and the Public our second report period for the EVVR, which is our Electronic Violence and Vandalism Report. Total for incidents that occurred within the cafeteria was two and they were reported from South Plainfield Middle School. Within the classroom, there was one reported at Grant, one reported at Roosevelt, two reported at the Middle School, eight reported in the High School, with a total of 12. In the corridors, we had two reported at SPHS, others inside the school we had one reported at Grant, one reported at Roosevelt, four reported at the high school with a total of six. On

the school grounds we had one reported at Roosevelt, one reported at the High School. Two total for the year. None reported on bus, none reported on the building exterior, none reported in the locker room. Others outside, one reported at Roosevelt, one reported at the High School for a total of two. None reported for off-site school-sponsored functions. None reported in the school entranceway, off school grounds, HIB only, we have one reported at Roosevelt, one reported at the Roosevelt Administration building, one reported at the Middle School and one reported at the High School, we also have none listed for off-site programs that is a total of four for the year on our EVVR reported to the State.

Dr. Lishak said that we are very busy preparing for the opening of the school year. She said she knows the students aren't very happy to hear this but we are heading quickly to September. She said she wants to remind parents and students to visit the district website for the summer assignments for grades K-12. This information can be found on the front page of the district website.

Congratulations to Sydney Wilson, a fourth grader at Roosevelt Elementary School. Her drawing was selected from a number of student submissions and sent to the County Office of the Executive Superintendent as part of the Middlesex County Student Art Display.

All fourth grade re-registration packets must be completed and returned to the Office of Enrollment in the Administration Building prior to the start of the school year so that your fifth grader can attend Grant School.

If you have any issues or items to discuss and need to reach out to a guidance counselor, the guidance hours are listed on the district website for all parents in Grant, Middle and the High School. If you have any issues or concerns you need to speak with the guidance counselor, please make an appointment.

We are getting ready for our athletic season. High School football practice will begin on August 7th. All other high school sports practices will begin on August 14th. Middle School football practice will begin on August 21st. All other Middle School sports practices will begin the first day of school, September 6th. Scrimmage games will be scheduled six days after the first practice.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLVED, pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 *et. seq.*) that the Board meets in closed session at this time to discuss confidential matters pertaining to: (select one or more)

1. a matter rendered confidential by federal or state law
2. a matter in which release of information would impair the right to receive government funds

3. material the disclosure of which constitutes an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy
4. a collective bargaining agreement and/or negotiations related to it
5. a matter involving the purchase, lease, or acquisition of real property with public funds
6. protection of public safety and property and/or investigations of possible violations or violations of law
7. pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiation and/or matters of attorney-client privilege
8. specific prospective or current employees unless all who could be adversely affected request an open session.
9. deliberation after a public hearing that could result in a civil penalty or other loss

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the matters discussed in closed session shall be made public as soon as the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

MOTION: SECOND: VOTE: 8-0

VII. AGENDA ADDITIONS AND/OR DELETIONS

1. Public Comments on Agenda Items Only

MOTION: SECOND: VOTE:

VIII. CURRICULUM/STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Curriculum Update – Administration

Ms. Malyska said that the Curriculum Committee met on July 11th. They went over the student activity report for this past school year. They were able to review all of the attendance procedures and goals for each of the clubs at the high school. There are currently 33 clubs for students to join, which is a great thing. They reviewed the physical education and health curriculum guides, which are on the agenda for tonight. Additional curriculum writing will continue throughout the summer. All of our teachers have been coming into district to write and Ms. Malyska thanked them for the efforts that they are putting forth. The supervisors are out in the district making sure that everyone is on track and everything is going along very well. Just to let families know, anyone who is taking Algebra II, Algebra I or Geometry as a credit recovery option this summer, PARCC is being offered July 31st through August 11th. We've reached out to all of the families but she just wanted to make sure the district is aware.

DISCUSSION

IX. FINANCE

Finance Update – Administration

Mr. Damato said we have issued our temporary financing for the bond referendum and that is on the agenda for tonight. The permanent financing will be done in January. Everything else is on track as far as we can tell with the referendum projects.

DISCUSSION

X BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Buildings & Grounds Update – Administration

Mr. Damato said that we are in the process of replacing the Middle School gym floor. That project is about 40-50% complete. We are also in the process of installing Phase I of the new STEM lab and the new television studio at the high school. Phase II of those projects will be done in the following fiscal year. The bids for the paving projects will be coming back on the 28th and the Board of Education has asked me to notice a special meeting for the 31st of July to award those bids. That meeting will take place on July 31st in the Administration Building at 10:00 a.m. It's only for the purpose of awarding two bids so it will be a very short meeting but everyone is welcome to attend. Mr. Damato said that he and the Superintendent had preliminary discussions about creating a little better eating and seating alternative for the high school cafeteria for seniors only. He asked Dr. Lishak to address that briefly. That's one of the things that she is very excited about.

Dr. Lishak said that she, Mr. Damato, along with Mr. Wiggins, will be up at the high school again tomorrow morning. They'll be taking a look at a space directly outside cafeteria A. They hope to put up some privacy panels, putting some seating out there and eventually have a barbecue. They would like to make something that is more attractive to our seniors so that they will remain in the school during their lunch break. Over the past year, we changed up our menu and it's become more appealing to our students in district. We are offering them Wi-Fi outside, which is another opportunity to meet the needs of our students. We are looking forward to having a space that is specifically for seniors to make them a little special in their last year.

Mr. Damato said that concludes his report.

DISCUSSION

Mrs. Boyle asked about the paving timeline. Mr. Damato said that if all goes perfectly well, the paving should be done before the opening of school, with the exception of some striping that may have to get done on a Saturday after school opens. But we are going to have to keep our fingers crossed. We don't know, at this point, if we are going to get bids, how many bids, what the conditions or problems might be that are associated with

those bids. There are a lot of question marks that we have to work out over the next couple of weeks. But if everything goes perfectly according to plan, we should be okay for September with the paving projects done.

XI. PRESENTATION OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy
Public Relations
Shared Services

Mrs. Boyle reported that Shared Services met on June 22nd. They discussed Safety Town. She said she knows that a lot of parents were concerned because they felt that Safety Town wasn't going to continue but they did it in the PAL building in the new gym area. She said that everybody was happy about that.

Mrs. Boyle said that they also talked about the gas. She knows that at one point they did talk about that as a shared service. They have to redo their whole entire fuel machines that do the gas. They have to figure out how to do cards, so that can be discussed again down the road.

Also, as a shared service they are working with our board attorney and the borough's attorney on doing an insurance indemnification holding harmless the use of our fields.

Special Education

Mrs. Glover said that she expects, as our new administrator has just joined us on Monday, to have a meeting in August and to have a report for special education next month.

Transportation

Traffic Liaison
SEPAC Liaison
Legislative Liaison

Mrs. Boyle said that the National School Boards Association continues to ask everybody to e-mail their letters of opposition to the US Senate Health Care Reform Legislation. It would impact on our school based Medicaid service and the imposition of the Cadillac Excise Tax and the health care insurance premiums that would apply to school districts and other public entities.

There are several bills that are before the legislators. One is School District Food Donations. They are looking for a way to recycle food waste as a way to give to non-profit organizations.

The College Readiness Commission will consist of 18 members including the

Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of Education, the Executive Director of Higher Education, student assistant authority and 11 members from various associations representing the K-12 and higher education communities. These would be on issues related to enhancing student preparation for postsecondary education and raising the awareness of student and parents on the admission requirements and other issues associated with postsecondary education.

Students on Navel property is a bill that deals really with Earl Naval Base and the students that are on the naval base would have to enroll in the school that covers that naval base.

Again, they are still working on guidelines for transgender students.

There is a bill from Farm to School coordinating council. They are working on students who are going from Farm to School to ensure that the NJSBA supports that.

School Safety Specialist supports the legislations which would codify one of the recommendations of the NJ School Security Task Force.

Educating Student Athletes on Opioid abuse requires the New Jersey Commissioner of Education to develop an educational fact sheet for students, both involved in athletics and not involved in athletics.

For the students in the Gifted and Talented program, they are doing an identification of the English Language Learners for gifted and talented programs.

Board of Education candidates, when filing their nominating petition, would have to affirm that they have not been convicted of any crimes that would disqualify them from being a board member.

They are still working on special education legal decisions.

Head Injury Safety Programs enhancements are being worked on.

Nourishing Young Minds Initiative is looking for funds that would be used by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Education to help pay for children for their food and nutrition programs.

Sending District Voting Rights broadens the voting rights of the sending district who are eligible for membership on a receiving district board of education. Mrs. Boyle said that was a huge issue.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike English, 123 Lee Place, said that he was sorry that he missed part of Mr. Damato's

presentation. He asked Mr. Damato if we are taking out short term notes. Mr. Damato responded to say that we already took out six month notes and the interest rate is about 1.4%.

Mr. English asked if future meetings are going to be on specific nights or are they just going to be discussed at Board of Education meetings.

Mr. Seesselberg said that he was going to discuss this at the August meeting but they plan on reporting the progress back to the community. He said that they only received the timeline this week as to what the architect thinks will happen so once it's a little more detailed, they plan on reporting back to the community in a structure way as to how the projects are going.

Mr. English said thank you very much. He then said that the only other things he has to discuss is the order of the meeting. Currently, you have the Call to Order, Roll Call, Mission Statement, and then, for the most part, you go into executive session. If the people are here in the public, they have to wait anywhere from a half an hour to two hours plus. In the recent past, the executive session was done after all of the committee reports were done and people were allowed to comment on those committee reports. They were able to comment on what they thought was important or what they thought should be changed on the committee reports. Now, it is so difficult for people who work, as all of you do, to wait out here for two hours before you come back in and then you start the rest of the meeting where the public can be involved. Mr. English asked that you rethink this order so that the public can be involved in every facet of the agenda before they have to wait two hours for an executive meeting. HE said that when he was on the board, executive meetings were always last. Then, if something needed approval, we would come in and approve it but we made sure the public had the right and the opportunity to hear everything that was going on, that they could hear about and to comment on those things before the board went into executive session. I would ask you to re-think how you have it done because right now this is somewhat disingenuous to the public. Thank you very much.

Mr. Seesselberg said that we will take that under advisement and talk about it at a future date.

Pio Penissi, 1401 Cherry Street, said that he wanted to talk a little bit about policy 9210.

Mr. Seesselberg said that they have to un-table that to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. Penissi said that this is public comments about anything so he can talk about un-tabling it. He said that he read about it in TAP and he has seen the arguments for and against. He said that he really tries to look at both ends and he just doesn't see any negative toward this policy at all. He said he knows one of the reasons given were that you are preventing people who want to volunteer from volunteering. He doesn't see it as

that because you are not excluding members of the Board from being on a committee, whether it's booster club or PTO, you are not excluding them and if you were he said he'd be talking differently right now. As a member of the Board and being on the booster club and so forth, you do need that help but when you mix the Board on the Executive Board there's a lot of problems that arise from that. He knows that it's not illegal, he did call School Boards up because he knows they referenced a lot and he did talk to actually the School Boards person who is in charge of the district and he said he asked them about the policy and he knew that it wasn't illegal and she said it isn't. He asked her if she would recommend it and she said absolutely not. They would recommend having something like this, they wouldn't recommend that a board member is part of an executive board because when you are part of an executive board, you open up avenues that other people don't have but you can never take the hat off as a board members. So if you are able to have free access to a building because of your responsibilities as a booster club president or whatever, you are not taking your board hat off. The teachers, the staff, the administrators still see you as a board member. Whether they tell you it is okay or not, trust me, they don't like it. Mr. Pennisi said that he was an administrator. He didn't enjoy board members walking around. They can come to me but can't be walking around. You are treated differently. He said he doesn't care if you announce that you shouldn't be, you are treated differently. There is just too much liability, too much ethical problems with doing that. You can get everything done as member of those and he's seen and he's sure all of you who are board members, you know, the ones who volunteer in other things too, as parents. And you know that just being a member of some club or whatever, there are people there who work a lot harder on things then somebody on the executive board so you are not eliminating that what you are doing is protecting the integrity of the board position and that position.

Mr. Pennisi said that another argument that he heard that he read was that there wouldn't be people that would want the position but believe me, there are people who want it. They just don't want it while it's filled. They would rather try it and it's always good to get people involved. Mr. Pennisi highly recommends that you un-table the policy and you approve it because he sees no harm to anybody with this, only a lot of protection for everybody. Protection for the Board Members, protection for the Staff, administration, no worry about conflicts, no worry about finances or anything like that. Nobody is telling anyone not to volunteer. They are just saying that you are a board member. You are part of the Board of Education. There is a lot of responsibilities and there is a lot of things that go along with when you just walk into a building. You have to take those away. You just have to. Mr. Pennisi said he wants to support it for un-tabling it and getting it done.

Mr. Biribin, said he knows that you are talking about concerns regarding positions and Board Members and ethics and things of the like. He knows that there is an opinion that has come down and it does not violate any act if the board member wants to serve as the president of the local parent teachers PTA or PTO in the same district. There are certain limits to what they can do or can't do and it is very clearly spelled out in that ethical opinion. He suggests you take a look at it because the three sections talks about NJSA 18A:12-24C, F and G and it gives you guidelines on what they can do or can't do

financially and what they can represent, what they cannot do and just should not automatically wish to strike people from getting the particular. It's not an ethical problem, they've ruled that it's within ethics for a person on a board to hold that type of position and he suggested that the board look at the act and look at the exceptions and be guided accordingly. Thank you.

XIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mrs. Glover said that she noticed that the agenda is a little bit different then it usually is for the COW. There isn't a presentation of a committee report available for curriculum or finance. She asked if that is something that we discussed to take out of our agenda that if the committee chair chooses to give a report, it's not available here tonight to do so.

Dr. Lishak said that she has noticed that in the last few meetings that it's been set up the same way. Dr. Lishak said that she will ask about that.

Mrs. Boyle said that since the policies aren't un-tabled yet can we discuss those now or do we wait for the regular public meeting. Mr. Zitomer said that we are under board member comments so the Board can discuss anything.

Mrs. Boyle said that she would like to make comments about the policy 9210 that is tabled right now. This policy was not brought to the entire board, it was only brought to the policy committee. It was never discussed by the entire board so now you have four members who had knowledge of certain things with this policy that the entire board didn't have. That's an ethics issue in itself. Mrs. Miller, who is the chair of the policy committee was adamantly opposed to this. At the last meeting was the fact that the board attorney worked with three board members to formulate this policy and initiate it. It still did not come to the entire board for discussion.

Mr. Roselle said that he just wants to clarify that the board attorney did not work with three board members.

Mrs. Boyle said that you worked with the Superintendent who brought forth.

Mr. Roselle said, correct, the board attorney works with the superintendent and the Board President not individual board members.

Mrs. Boyle said that it was individual board members...

Mr. Roselle said that he also wants to clarify that the Board can talk. Any board member can talk about the process for the policy to be brought up and discussed. If we are talking about the merits of the policy, that is the discussion when it is up for a vote or when it is brought off the table but he also just cautioned that any board member who is affected by the policy should refrain from discussing it. Whether they do or not, it's up to them but it could be an ethical implication.

Mrs. Boyle said that there are a lot of ethical complications here. She said they've been threatened with this at Meet the Candidates Night, again in January and again in the past several months. She said you are violating my constitutional rights to choose what organization she can be a part of and what leadership role she would decide to take. Mrs. Boyle said that we did a strategic plan in 2014 and we had six of our current board members on the board at the time. Four board members were part of that. The formulations of the strategic plan was to make a self-welcoming environment, emotionally, physically and intellectually, while maintaining an atmosphere in inclusion, acceptance and mutual respect. Goal five, we as a school district recognize the importance of the engagement of the entire community and will improve communications and engagement between the school district and the community. We had students, we had parents, we wanted to expand the communication and outreach to our community members and the organizations to attend district school events, increase active participation in school, parent organizations and activities. Utilize and integrate community organizations, resources and individuals in the school community. Nowhere did it say that board members should not be on a PTA, PTO and if this policy is stating that then along in the policy should be that a board member can't be up in the TV room, a board member can't be in the guidance department hanging out, they can't be walking around the schools. So that should include every board member, not just PTO's and PTA's. Mrs. Boyle said you talked about a band aid being ripped off, is that how to present this policy? It should be a band aid ripped off? Mrs. Boyle asked Mrs. Glover, what was contentious about this policy? She said that when she was running almost three years ago she had two board members attack her and her family. They tried to get her removed for campaign violations from that valet. There are constantly attacks on staff members, on people and on supervisors. Board members had a Facebook, they encouraged the staff and teachers to join that Facebook. Administrators felt intimidated. They felt that if they didn't join that Facebook that you would go after them. You have to include all of this within this policy. At our county planning meeting the other night, School Boards definitely do not agree with this policy. Strauss Esmay does not agree with this policy. They talked about it, they talked about the fact of why the board would prevent somebody, even if you are a board member, from being a member of another organization and taking an active leadership role.

Mrs. Boyle said, again, we never had a first and second reading in one evening. This was deceptive in her opinion. There were no policies for the public to look at. They were in a binder. Nobody knew that they were in a binder to look at and we've never done that. Past practice is that policies have always been attached to the first reading on an agenda for everybody to look at and then if the public had questions they could come back the following meeting and ask their questions about the policies. This would also affect the music boosters. On the music booster we have all but two parents that are seniors. They will be leaving the music boosters at the end of the year. Mrs. Anesh would not have the availability to be part of that executive board even though she's been involved and understands the concept of the organization. Again, that is a violation of her constitutional rights that you are telling her that she can't be a part of that organization.

These are not part of the school. These are parent organizations such as the athletic booster club and yes, a lot of us have volunteered for years, even when our children are no longer there. Again, no one has the right, including the board, to dictate and tell anyone how, when and what capacity they can volunteer in any of the parent organizations. You talked about not having board members who work for a vendor in our district. We should expand to include that, yet, May 9th of 2012, there was reference to a complaint filed with the State and instead of Mr. Giannakis recusing himself, and he said he wanted to know who that person was because he wanted to talk to them. In April of 2017 we had a board member threaten board members that if they didn't pay for their school board convention that that person was going to make it public. Well, I'm making it public. Every board member had paid for that. So, again, this is never going to end. The state school attorney wanted to know when this is all going to end. It is constantly going to go on. Originally, you wanted to have a policy that would make every organization in South Plainfield, that did fundraising for our students, show their financials. You wanted the superintendent to be part of that review for all of these organizations but you decided not to do it because you would piss off the public. The policy committee didn't even pass that on. That ended. What organization in this town would ever want to show their financials to the board so that you can scrutinize. Did they actually use the money that they fundraised for? Again, as Mr. Biribin stated, the State of NJ Ethics Commission has already posted that it is not a violation for school board members to be a PTO president. Mrs. Boyle said that Dr. Lishak had asked that there be compromise and harmony so that this ends. This not only affects the board, it affects Dr. Lishak, it affects Mr. Damato. It is unfortunate but we must stand up for our civil rights to be free from governor coercion and the Board of Education attempts to force us to violate our consciences, we must witness to the truth.

Mr. Seesselberg asked for a motion to un-table the policies from the previous meeting.

The following vote is to un-table all of the policies except for 9210.

MOTION: Mr. Giannakis SECOND: Mrs. Glover VOTE: 8-0

The following vote is to un-table policy 9210

MOTION: Mr. Giannakis SECOND: Mrs. Glover VOTE: 5-3
Mrs. Anesh, Mrs. Boyle and Mrs. Miller said that they should wait to un-table policy 9210 until there has been further discussion by the Board.

XIV. AGENDA APPROVAL

RESOLVED, that the agenda for the regular public meeting on July 19, 2017, as may have been modified, is hereby approved.

MOTION: Mr. Giannakis SECOND: Mrs. Glover VOTE: 8-0

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business of the Board, there was a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Giannakis SECOND: Mrs. Miller VOTE: 8-0

Respectfully submitted,

James J. Damato
Interim Business Administrator/Board Secretary