

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of the Tuesday, August 18, 2015 7:00 P.M. Workshop and Business Meeting

These minutes have not been formally approved and are subject to change or modification.

The Montgomery Township Board of Education held a Workshop and Business Meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

A. The Montgomery Township Board of Education held a workshop and business meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2015 in the Board of Education office large conference room.

B. Roll Call - The following Board members were present: Sandra Donnay, Dharmesh Doshi, Humberto Goldoni, Nicholas Hladick, Judy Humza, Adelle Kirk-Csontos, Amy Miller and Christine Witt

Absent: Dale Huff

Also Present: Nancy Gartenberg, Superintendent
Annette M. Wells, Business Administrator/
Board Secretary
Nicole Petrone, Assistant Business Administrator/Assistant
Board Secretary

C. EXECUTIVE SESSION – A motion was made by Ms. Humza and seconded by Mr. Goldoni that the board adopt a resolution to go into executive session at 7:02 p.m.

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231 of the Laws of 1975 provides that a public body may exclude the public from that portion of a meeting of which the public body discusses certain matters for which confidentiality is required as permitted in Section 7B of the act.

RESOLVED, by the Board of Education of the Township of Montgomery in the County of Somerset and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. Items related to personnel and student and employee disciplinary matters will be discussed.
2. The matters discussed in executive session shall be disclosed to the public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Upon call of the roll, the motion carried with a unanimous vote recorded.

D. RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION – The Board returned from Executive Session at 7:30 p.m.

- E. President Kirk-Csontos then read the following Statement of Open Meeting and Public Participation – In accordance with the State’s Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing notice of meeting on January 7, 2015 and August 13, 2015. Notice was provided to Board of Education Members, Montgomery Township Clerk, Rocky Hill Borough Clerk, Public Library, Township Posting, School Postings, PTSA Officers, Courier News, Princeton Packet, Trenton Times, and The Star Ledger.
- F. President Kirk-Csontos then led everyone in the Salute to the Flag.
- G. President Kirk-Csontos welcomed all to the workshop and business meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Ms. Gartenberg stated that new hire training had begun. The district has around 60 new hires; many of whom are experienced. Additionally, the district website and individual school websites have been updated with school events for the upcoming school year.

Convocation will be held on September 1st for all district staff. Schools will open September 8th for students. September 11th will be the first Cougar’s football game of the year. Back to school nights will also begin in September.

It has been a very productive summer with a large offering of professional development to the staff. The SOAR program has also done wonderfully this summer in offering many programs to students. Programs included academics as well as extracurricular clubs.

COMMITTEE/REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Representative Reports

Student Representative Report

No Report

MTEA Report

No Report

Board Member Delegate/Representative Reports (SCSBA, PTSA, Legislative, NJSBA, Ed. Services Commission, etc.)

Ms. Donnay reported that the Municipal Alliance Committee will be meeting the second Monday in September.

Board Committee Reports

Assessment, Curriculum and Instruction Committee Report

Mr. Doshi reported that the ACI did not meet in August. The next meeting will be held September 11, 2015.

Operations, Facilities and Finance Committee Report

Mr. Goldoni reported that the committee met on August 14th and discussed the following items:

- Monthly financial reports - The first month of the year looks in line with expectations. We should continue to look at areas where spending can be cut to account for unbudgeted needs.
- The Director of Buildings and Grounds provided the committee with a summary of all summer projects. Projects and summer cleaning are going well. The district will continue to complete any outstanding projects over school closings.
- The fiscal year 2014-2015 audit is under way and going well. We are expecting a final report in October.
- Referendum - Once we receive a response from the Department of Education, we will be able to move forward.
- The committee received a report that athletic participation counts were down in the prior year, thus affecting the total amount of participation fees collected. The committee will continue to look at the activity fees and participation levels of clubs as well as athletics.

Human Resources and Negotiations Committee Report

Ms. Kirk-Csontos reported that the committee met August 17th. The committee discussed the following items:

- Hiring of a new Vice Principal for OHES. An interim Vice Principal will be in place until the new Vice Principal can start.
- New hire orientation
- Changes to the sick bank policy to align with state law
- Leave of absences
- Convocation September 1st

The next committee meeting will be held September 3rd.

Mr. Goldoni shared that he encourages other Board members to attend convocation as it is a great event that truly shows the spirit of the board.

Policy Committee Report

Ms. Donnay reported that the policy committee met on July 23rd. During the meeting they discussed the policy regarding Class Rank. A first reading of the policy and the proposed changes is on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

Ms. Donnay stated that the committee discussed a policy regarding board member and student dating. After discussion, the committee felt that a specific policy was not required as New Jersey Law and the New Jersey Department of Education code of ethics both address this issue.

Ms. Donnay also reported that the committee discussed the student drug use and drug free workplace policies. The administration will be reviewing these policies. The committee will meet again on August 21st.

Ms. Kirk-Csontos stated that the use of the term "calculate" seems confusing in the Class Rank Policy.

Ms. Donnay responded that the committee discussed that word usage, but they could reconsider it.

Ms. Witt responded that the committee felt the wording "for students" was the clarifier.

Ms. Kirk-Csontos asked if the school profile and handbook had been updated to reflect this change.

Mr. Hladick questioned what would happen if we did not provide the federal agencies who requested the class rank with it.

Ms. Gartenberg responded that they had updated the handbook. In the current year, the High School will remove the entire section about class rank from their profile as well. Ms. Gartenberg also explained that some federal agencies require this ranking for admissions. If the school did not supply the ranking, the student's application would not be considered. Ms. Gartenberg further explained that the guidance department would be asked to reach out to the families of students that were applying to such federal agencies to explain that their class rank would need to be provided.

External Affairs/Communications Committee Report

Mr. Hladick reported that the committee had met on August 12. During the meeting the committee discussed the referendum timeline as well as how board members should be involved in referendum engagements. The committee discussed having board members attend back-to-school nights, community events and other presentations. The committee would be preparing talking points that would be distributed to all the board members. The committee was also looking to have drawings of the referendum and specific information on the tax impact to share at their public events. The next meeting is scheduled for August 19th.

Mr. Goldoni commented that he thought the intent of the committee was supposed to be more than just advertising the referendum. He thought that it was supposed to be about all district communication. He requested that the committee remember this and perhaps could develop a charter like other committees have done.

Mr. Hladick responded that the past meeting just spotlighted future efforts toward the referendum.

Ms. Gartenberg noted that all other school communications have been expanded greatly and are continually enhanced.

President's Report

No Report

NEW BUSINESS FROM BOARD/PUBLIC

Mr. Alan Wirsul reported that two of his emails from the prior month were not included in the correspondence. Mr. Wirsul noted that his question regarding class sizes had not been addressed. Mr. Wirsul also commented that he believed senior administrators should not be allowed to hold jobs outside of their district job. He requested that Ms. Gartenberg look into this matter.

Mr. Anthony Milano commented that he was upset that no one cared that a board member was dating a student. He felt that the board member had flaunted this for 18 months. There is a policy against teachers dating students but not about board members. He requested that this be reconsidered. He asked Ms. Kirk-Csontos and Mr. Fogarty, Board Attorney, to respond to whether or not they were aware or had approved that the board member was having a relationship with a student, had attended the senior class trip and had attended the prom. He commented that our focus should be on looking out for our students.

Ms. Phyllis Bursh questioned if the committee had investigated whether other districts provide class rank to the federal agencies as well. Ms. Bursh further questioned what would happen if the district only provided class rank to federal agencies when the student gave their consent.

Ms. Kirk-Csontos responded to Mr. Wirsul to please refer to the minutes from the July meeting in which she responded to him that the district is following the class size policy. However, if he has a specific concern, please share it with the Board.

Ms. Kirk-Csontos continued to address Mr. Milano's comments in stating that she is unsure how to respond to the information he shared. She stated that she was not consulted nor was she aware or nor did she approve any of the situations he questioned. She stated that she did not think it was necessarily her business or job to do so. She responded to Mr. Milano that if he believed there was an issue that he could address it to the Ethics Board or the Somerset prosecutor's office.

Mr. Fogarty responded to Mr. Milano that no matter came before the full board regarding these issues.

Ms. Donnay stated that the policy committee did not say that they were sanctioning improper conduct but rather that they believed there were proper channels already in place to address such issues.

Ms. Kirk-Csontos responded to Ms. Bursh stating that she did not want to discuss any specific student's issues. However, the district was providing class rank only to federal agencies that required us to do so. It is not the district's policy to release class rank. If the district did not supply this information, it would keep the students' applications from being considered.

Ms. Gartenberg further responded to Ms. Bursh that the district had reached out to federal agencies regarding this and were told that without the class rank the student would not be considered for admission. Ms. Gartenberg stated that she would continue to request guidance counselors work with families of students applying to these federal agencies to make them aware of the issue.

Mr. Hladick asked Mr. Fogarty whether or not he believed any laws had been broken in reference to the board member having a relationship with a student as presented by Mr. Milano.

Mr. Fogarty responded that he did not want to offer his opinion on a hypothetical situation but that Mr. Hladick should refer to the board member ethic handbook.

Mr. Fogarty commented that he believed the policy committee had it right when they stated that a policy was not required as New Jersey law and the code of ethics already addressed this issue.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Miller and seconded by Ms. Humza to approve the following minutes:

July 21, 2015 Executive Session Meeting

Upon call of the question, the motion carried with seven members voting in favor and Ms. Donnay abstaining.

A motion was made by Mr. Doshi and seconded by Ms. Humza to approve the following minutes:

July 21, 2015 Workshop and Business Meeting

Upon call of the question, the motion carried unanimously.

ACCEPTANCE OF CORRESPONDENCE

A motion was made by Ms. Humza and seconded by Ms. Miller to approve the acceptance of the correspondence as follows:

1. Email dated 7/21/2015 from C. Cudmore regarding support for superintendent
2. Email dated 7/22/2015 from A. Wirsul regarding executive session minutes
3. Email dated 7/22/2015 from A. Wirsul regarding "Note from Annie"
4. Email dated 7/23/2015 from A. Wirsul regarding board meeting observations
5. Email dated 7/31/2015 from T. Tagliareni regarding personnel
6. Email dated 8/9/2015 from J. Grant regarding an invitation

Upon call of the question, the motion carried with seven members voting in favor and Ms. Donnay abstaining.

ACTION AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Paul Blodgett commented that he believes the board and district goals were not commensurate with the excellence of the district. He stated that he felt the community should have been asked to collaborate and that the goals should include a measurement of attainability.

Mr. Wirsul questioned why on action item 3.9 there were no dollar values.

Ms. Bursh commented that she felt the board and district goals were more regulations. She also stated that she felt executive sessions should not be kept strictly to the agendas set for them.

Ms. Minkou Chenette stated that she felt the goals need to be set for a common ground to continue to work together.

Ms. Kirk-Csontos responded that Board goals came out of the annual planning session in June and reflected the thoughts of all members present. Ms. Kirk-Csontos added that the district goals are overarching. Ms. Gartenberg and the administrative team are working on detailed action plans.

Mr. Hladick and Ms. Miller expressed their disappointment with the goals. They felt some thoughts from the session were not included on the list.

Ms. Donnay stated that she had not attended the session but felt the goals should also include closing the achievement gap.

Mr. Hladick expanded on the reasons why he did not support the district goals.

Ms. Wells explained in response to Mr. Wirsul's comment that action item 3.9 is approving the use of state contracts for the school year but does not address a specific purchase being made. If the district is above bid threshold those purchase would be approved separately on future agendas.

1.0 ADMINISTRATIVE

A motion was made by Mr. Hladick and seconded by Ms. Miller to separate items 1.3 and 1.4 from the other action items.

Upon call of the roll, the motion carried with a unanimous vote recorded.

A motion was made by Mr. Hladick and seconded by Ms. Miller to approve agenda items 1.1 and 1.2 as follows:

1.1 Routine Monthly Report – Accept the following report:

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) Report

1.2 Policy First Reading – Accept the following policy as a first reading:

5430 Class Rank

Upon call of the roll, the motion carried with a unanimous vote recorded.

A motion was made by Mr. Hladick and seconded by Ms. Miller to table agenda item 1.3 as follows:

1.3 2015-2016 Board Goals – Approve the 2015-2016 Board Goals:

Goal 1: To engender support for the referendum in collaboration with our administration through effective communication with our community and our stakeholders.

- Take individual BOE member accountability for understanding all aspects of the referendum, including objectives, process, projects and financial impact
- Ensure active participation by all BOE members in school/community events and opportunities to communicate about the referendum
- Develop communications plan and calendar to share referendum information with as many stakeholders as possible
- Create easy to understand communication tools for BOE member use and public distribution (FAQs, key talking points, etc.)

Goal 2: To continue to build Board collaboration by actively participating in ongoing professional development, workshops and trainings.

- Explore utilizing our reorganization meeting as a vehicle for training to foster teamwork and an understanding of board members' role and responsibilities
- Encourage BOE attendance at important non-mandated training sessions such as the NJSBA Conference and Negotiations

Goal 3: To improve Board operations by implementing the following protocols for all Board members:

- Respond in timely way to emails regarding meetings and information requests from administrators and BOE President
- Review BOE Workshop and Action meeting agendas and send questions in advance to the appropriate administrators and/or Board President (no later than 24 hours prior to public meeting)
- Review all Committee Meeting notes when distributed and reach out to the appropriate Committee Chair for clarification (no later than 24 hours prior to public meeting)
- Conclude all closed sessions with a reminder of the need for confidentiality
- Confine closed session to agenda items only
- Police ourselves in being accountable; once the board arrives at a decision, the Board should act and speak as a whole

Upon call of the roll, the motion carried with six members voting in favor and Mr. Doshi and Mr. Goldoni voting against.

A motion was made by Mr. Hladick and seconded by Ms. Miller to table agenda item 1.4 as follows:

1.4 2015-2016 District Goals – Approve the 2015-2016 District Goals:

Goal 1: To identify and effectively utilize specific communication protocols with parents, staff and community members that are consistent in message.

Goal 2: To review, evaluate and assess current programs and staffing structures to determine gaps/needs.

Goal 3: To identify and implement social emotional learning programming district wide.

Upon call of the roll, the motion was defeated with Mr. Doshi, Mr. Goldoni, Mr. Hladick and Ms. Miller in favor and Ms. Donnay, Ms. Humza, Ms. Kirk-Csontos and Ms. Witt, against.

A motion was made by Ms. Humza and seconded by Ms. Witt to vote on agenda item 1.4.

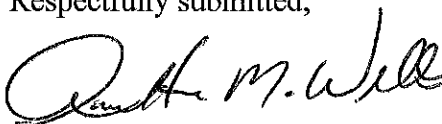
Mr. Hladick continued to discuss his displeasure with the district goals.

Mr. Goldoni left the meeting at 10:31 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion made by Ms. Humza and seconded by Ms. Witt that the meeting be adjourned at 10:33 p.m. Upon call of the question, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annette M. Wells". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Annette M. Wells
School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary