

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HELD ON OCTOBER 15, 2014**

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Mays Landing, New Jersey
Board Office Conference Room

The Special Meeting of the Hamilton Township Board of Education was called to order at 7:12 p.m. in the Board Office Conference Room at the Davies Middle School by Dr. Anne Erickson, President.

**Call
To
Order**

Dr. Erickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Pledge of
Allegiance**

ANNUAL NOTICE OF MEETING

This meeting is being held in compliance with the Sunshine Law, having been advertised in the Press of Atlantic City and a notice posted with the Township Clerk on the Bulletin Board at the following locations: Mizpah Social Services Center, Mizpah Post Office, Mays Landing Post Office, Atlantic County Library as well as all the schools of the district.

The following members answered roll call: Mr. Eric Aiken, Mrs. Stephanie Buchanan, Mrs. Peggy Capone, Mrs. Amelia Francis, Mrs. Kim Melton, and Dr. Anne Erickson

**Roll
Call**

Members Absent: Mr. Greg Ciambrone
Mr. John Sacchinelli

Also present: Ms. Charlene Zoerb, NJSBA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

BOARD SELF-EVALUATION

Ms. Zoerb reviewed the Board scores and values outlined on two charts. The first chart compared the Board scores with the recommended NJSBA values. The second chart compared individual board member scores to the full Board scores. Ms. Zoerb pointed out the strong points; which were policy and staff relations. She also pointed out the weak points; which were Board operations and Board/Superintendent relations.

Ms. Zoerb noted that the board has an opportunity to come together and work as a team and improve

the scores for next year. She also noted that each Member has to commit to working as a team in order to become a better Board.

Mr. Cassidy arrived at 7:26 p.m.

Ms. Zoerb reviewed the Board scores for Board Operations; which ranged from 1.0 to 3.0 with an average of 1.8.

Mrs. Capone suggested that each Member should state what they see on the Board. She noted that there have been attitudes from the first day and a lot of it is directed towards her. Mrs. Capone stated that issues have gotten worse over the years and the Board is ignoring them. She noted that Dr. Erickson suggested taking part in NJSBA workshops and learn what it is to be an **effective** Board Member. (Amended as per motion December 2, 2014 Board Meeting)

Mrs. Buchanan noted that she was excited to join the Board in January, but she could feel the tension immediately. She noted that at times she felt like she could not give her opinion.

Mr. Aiken noted that everyone is entitled to their opinion and sometimes you have to agree to disagree. He noted that it is fine to attend workshops and bring information back to the Board, but Members should not be considered ineffective if they do not attend NJSBA workshops.

Mrs. Francis noted that she feels NJSBA workshops are intended to inform Board Members and not influence them. She stated that the workshops are professional development for Board Members and it is not how often you go, its about getting information.

Dr. Erickson noted that everyone does have their own opinion, but some people do not let things go. She noted that Board Members should look at the district policies.

Ms. Zoerb noted that the Board has to be able to reach consensus. She noted that Board Members

may think they are individuals, but the Board needs to work as a team.

Ms. Zoerb reviewed the scores for Board Performance and the comments made by the Board Members.

Mrs. Capone noted that, during contract negotiations, the union knew what the Board was going to offer before the negotiation meeting. She also noted that some Board Members cannot make decisions and stick with them; they blame other Board Members for their decisions.

Mrs. Francis noted that there does not appear to be enough confidentiality on the Board. She noted that it is difficult to speak your mind if you do not know that the information will be kept confidential. Mrs. Francis also noted that Board Members have to be able to consider different opinions and take if from there.

Mrs. Buchanan agreed that a lack of confidentiality may prevent someone from giving their opinion. Dr. Erickson noted that name calling is another preventer.

Ms. Zoerb noted that executive session conversations are very important and allow the Board Members to speak their opinions. Dr. Cappelluti asked about executive session minutes being discussed and corrected in public session. Ms. Zoerb noted that executive session minutes are usually not that specific.

Mr. Aiken noted that he feels the Board performance is a reflection of the leadership and that information is not always communicated to all Members of the Board. He noted that the Board would have a stronger performance level if the leadership was better.

Dr. Erickson stated that she does distribute information to Board Members in a timely manner and she does not communicate with Board Members who may be disrespectful or disregard the information being sent. Ms. Zoerb noted that it

all comes back to a lack of trust and communication.

Mrs. Capone noted that she makes suggestions and then nothing happens or changes. She noted it is good to have conversation but when advice is not followed it causes issues to occur.

Mr. Cassidy exited the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Ms. Zoerb reviewed the scores for Board/Superintendent Relationship and the Board Member comments. She noted that there are nine Board Members and everyone should work towards a good relationship with the Superintendent.

Mrs. Melton noted that she was not sure why the Board is doing the self-evaluation since the next board meeting will be just like the last one. She asked Ms. Zoerb what the Board could do.

Ms. Zoerb noted that she was on a dysfunctional board at one point. She stated that the Board was able to turn it around, but it took all of the Members to do it. Ms. Zoerb urged the Board to look at the major themes in the evaluation which were trust, confidentiality and communication.

Mrs. Capone noted that there have been board Members who have tried to express ideas at committee meetings and the discussions never make it out of committee. She also noted that the Board recently voted to approve expenses that were not in the original budget. Mrs. Capone stated that one of the board goals is to meet State standards and the district should be pursuing that goal. She noted that a Board Member should not be **providing strategies** to reach the goal; **it should come from the administration.** (Amended as per board member request 12/2/14)

Dr. Cappelluti stated that Mrs. Capone was talking about tutoring, and she noted that tutoring was cut when the Board reduced the previously approved tax levy. She noted that other options are being explored.

Ms. Zoerb noted that board Members have different issues to wrestle with, but the relationship with the Superintendent is important. She stated that the Board sets the vision, goals and policy, and then holds the Superintendent responsible to meet those goals and ideas.

Mrs. Francis noted that everyone should take Mrs. Melton's comments under suggestion and see what each Member can do to make a change. She noted that she does not like being associated with a negative board.

Ms. Zoerb noted that everyone needs to move forward and make a commitment to be a better Board.

Dr. Erickson asked Ms. Zoerb to review normal procedures and topics that should be discussed concerning HIB reporting. Ms. Zoerb noted that NJSBA has HIB information on its website and to check with the legal department for more detailed information.

Dr. Cappelluti noted that she gives a monthly report to the Board but this issue is not a regular HIB incident. Ms. Zoerb noted that the Board can ask if policy was followed. She stated that the role of the Board is to make sure proper procedures are followed.

Dr. Erickson noted that questions were asked and Dr. Cappelluti was not able to answer all of them. Ms. Zoerb noted that this comes back to a trust issue with the Superintendent again. She stated that the Board entrusts the Superintendent with making sure policies are followed. She noted that the staff in the buildings are responsible for the safety of the students.

Dr. Erickson asked if it is reasonable to ask for a narrative summary of an incident. Ms. Zoerb responded that as long as the request is in line with policy and HIB reporting.

Ms. Zoerb noted that if a Board Member receives

any information regarding an HIB claim he or she should report it to the Superintendent. She noted that the follow up from the Board Member would be to ask if all Board policies were followed. Ms. Zoerb noted that the Board has the right to know that all policies and procedures were followed, but it must also allow time for the Superintendent to verify what happened.

Mrs. Francis asked if it was unreasonable for the Board to ask for a timeline without specifics. Ms. Zoerb noted it would be acceptable as long as it falls within policy and HIB reporting.

Ms. Zoerb noted that the Superintendent is responsible for an HIB investigation, not the Board. She noted that the Superintendent would bring any necessary information back to the Board. Ms. Zoerb noted that the Superintendent would look at school district policy and personnel, and defer any issues or questions to the board solicitor.

Mrs. Melton noted that Dr. Cappelluti attempts to rely on Mr. Goldstein but other Board Members would rather talk to NJSBA. Ms. Zoerb noted that many Boards rely on NJSBA because the attorneys there have seen all of the cases in the State. She noted that the NJSBA attorneys have seen cases that board attorneys may have never seen before.

Mr. Aiken asked if Board Members could receive a copy of the board evaluation. Ms. Zoerb responded yes, but wants Mr. Goldstein to redact some of the comments first. She also asked the Board Members not to share the evaluation with anyone.

Mrs. Capone noted that the Board Members not in attendance should not receive a copy of the evaluation. Ms. Zoerb noted that she would send a copy to any Board Members that request it.

Ms. Zoerb spoke briefly on the upcoming NJSBA annual workshop taking place in Atlantic City.

Ms. Zoerb exited the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

Dr. Erickson noted there was discussion at the last Board meeting concerning board Member attendance. She asked if the Board wanted to discuss it now. Mrs. Capone noted that the Board should have all of the board Member attendance first.

Mrs. Buchanan exited the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Motion by Mrs. Melton, seconded by Mr. Aiken, to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote: Two in favor: Mr. Aiken and Mrs. Melton. Nay: Mrs. Capone, Mrs. Francis and Dr. Erickson. (2-3-0)

The Board Member's argued over whether or not to discuss the topic. Mr. Aiken proceeded to call the remaining Board Members a bunch of clowns. Mr. Aiken asked if the Board's plan is to throw Mrs. Melton off of the Board.

(Amended as per board member request 12/2/14)

Mrs. Francis noted that the Board should move forward with a hearing and be done with the issue. Dr. Cappelluti noted that the first step in the policy is for the President and the Board Member to meet and discuss the absences.

Mrs. Melton noted she was out of the country and asked what absences are excused. Dr. Erickson stated that Mr. Goldstein informed the Board that the Board has to decide which absences are excused.

The Board had a heated discussion on why this was an issue and what absences would be excused.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mrs. Capone, seconded by Mr. Aiken, to adjourn the meeting.

Mays Landing, NJ
October 15, 2014

Voice Vote: All in favor. (5-0-0)

The Hamilton Township Board of Education meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Daniel Smith
Board Secretary