

FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 1, 2021
MINUTES

The **Virtual** District Board Regular Meeting of the Flemington-Raritan Regional Board of Education was called to order in conformance with the "Sunshine Law" by the Board President **via Zoom** at 6:03 p.m.

Member(s) Present Virtually

Jessica Abbott Laurie Markowski
Pamela Baker Susan Mitcheltree
Valerie Bart Melanie Rosengarden
Jeffrey Cain Tim Bart
Marianne Kenny

Attorney Present

Alicia D’Anella

On the motion of Ms Abbott, seconded by Ms. Mitcheltree, the Board adopted the following resolution to meet Virtually in Executive Session at 6:04 p.m. viva voce.

Sunshine Resolution

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act authorizes Boards of Education to meet in executive session under certain circumstances;

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act requires the Board to adopt a resolution at a public meeting to go into private session;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Flemington-Raritan School District Board of Education that it is necessary to meet in executive session to discuss certain items involving:

- Matters of personal confidentiality rights, including but not limited to, staff and/or student discipline matters, and specifically: _____
- Matters in which the release of information would impair the right to receive government funds, and specifically: _____
- Matters which, if publicly disclosed, would constitute an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy, and specifically: _____
- Matters concerning negotiations, and specifically: _____
- Matters involving the purchase of real property and/or the investment of public funds, and specifically: _____
- Matters involving the real tactics and techniques utilized in protecting the safety and property of the public, and specifically: _____
- Matters involving anticipated or pending litigation, including matters of attorney-client privilege, and specifically: **Legal advice on Board policy**
- Matters involving personnel issues, including but not limited to, the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of performance, promotion or discipline of any public officer or employee, and specifically: _____
- Matters involving quasi-judicial deliberations, and specifically: _____

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any discussion held by the Board which need not remain confidential will be made public as soon as feasible. The minutes of the executive session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board ~~will~~/~~will not~~ return to open session to conduct business at the conclusion of the executive session.

The Board returned to virtual public session at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Voorhees took a roll call upon their return.

Dr. McGann thanked the Board for their work on Policy 1648.

CITIZENS ADDRESS THE BOARD

Mr. Bart read the following statement regarding public comment pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(a), the Open Public Meetings Act. Members of the public are invited to address the Board according to the Board’s policy and bylaws. Please be aware that this portion is your opportunity to comment, and is not a forum for the Board to respond to your comments. However, the Board will certainly give all comments appropriate consideration.

Mr. Bart set the session to 30 minutes with 3 minutes for each person, using raised hands in the zoom program.

Public Comment email from Katelyn & Ben Jampel. Ms. Abbott read a letter from a parent of a Special Education Disabled student that has concerns the day is not long enough to provide education and also asked questions about virtual instruction. The parent's appreciate the work the school is doing but they want more information for special education. Dr. McGann responded to the parent.

Kathleen Barbee, nurse, resident, feels it's time to bring more students back and feels it can be done safely. She expressed concerns with morning screening and also noted, decreasing spacing will mean more students will be affected during contract tracing.

Sarah Stangota, Raritan Township, shared that her son does not want to go to school. She shared her disappointment in the delay of returning students to school. She said virtual instruction was very difficult and insufficient. She noted concerns with students' emotional health. She thanked the administrators and teachers for their work.

Rahul Bansal, Raritan Township, thanked the administrators and the teachers for the work they are doing. He encouraged the Board to respond to student needs. He suggested the Board have a 2 year plan to handle the next steps. He wants the Board to open full time in person now.

Susan Reznak, Raritan Township, very happy with the teachers. Her children need to be in school. She asked the Board to change the policy and bring the children back to school for the full day. The students need normalcy. She said the proper mitigation factors can be provided for a safe return to school.

Nicole Piccoli, Raritan Township, asked about when students change classes how do we keep them 3 feet apart? She also is concerned with the students losing their teachers. She feels the Board is rushing and would prefer to start full time in the fall. She noted starting in the fall will also allow teachers time to get vaccinated.

Jackie Breese, shared 2 concerns, what will the virtual schedule look like? She is concerned that her child may lose the teacher. What are classes going to look like? She is concerned with the amount of students that will have to quarantine.

Jennifer Temple, asked what the class will look like? She hopes to get her questions answered.

Julia Colvin, her children are all virtual and the teacher is doing a great job. She is concerned that if we simulcast will all students get the same support? She would like her questions answered. She added it seems it is being very rushed. She would like a fall return.

Mrs. Petersen, Raritan Township, parent, supports opening full time. She said we have excellent teachers but is concerned with the amount of education the students are retaining. She feels the children should be in school full time for education and emotional needs.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The next meeting(s) will be March 18, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION(S) FOR APPROVAL:

Dr. McGann shared that she supports the revision of Policy 1648. She shared the most recent area case rates. She shared that the school doctor supports the revision as did our school nurse, Ms. Barbee. Ms. Voorhees read the policy revisions. Ms. Rosengarden moved the item and shared the work of the committee. She feels it was a very difficult decision. Ms. Abbott seconded the motion and feels all relevant guidance supports the revision. She noted parents still have a choice.

The Policy item(s) were approved under one motion made by Ms. Rosengarden, seconded by Ms. Abbott.

1. Approval was given to adopt the following revised policy, as attached:

1. P 1648 - Restart and Recovery Plan (M)

Dr. Kenny read the following statement:

“I want to explain my vote. I am a mom and have been a caring volunteer board member for 9 years and my heart feels so much compassion for the struggle this pandemic is causing with our children, their families, and our school educator community. I am also a pharmacist and have been closely following the many aspects of the virus. So please know that my vote is something I have heavily weighed and take very seriously. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is the lead public health agency, whose mission is to “collaborate to create the expertise, information, and tools that people and communities need to protect their health – through health promotion, prevention of disease, injury and disability, and preparedness for new health threats.” Their strategy for prevention of COVID-19 in their most recent framework publication, includes social distancing at a minimum of 6 feet. *“Physical distancing (at least 6 feet) should be maximized to the greatest extent possible. To ensure physical distancing, schools should establish policies and implement structural interventions to promote physical distance of at least 6 feet between people.”*

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/FINAL-0321420_B_K-12_Mitigation_Toolkit508.pdf

The 6 feet parameter is based on fluid transmission studies of heavier respiratory droplets as well as aerosolized particles from people talking, sneezing, and being within this zone. Our local health department also agrees with the CDC framework. Infection prevention involves multiple things simultaneously. The goal is to stem the spread of the virus. In the last 3 months the number of Americans who died of COVID-19 has doubled as well as the decline in life expectancy due to the virus. The American Medical Association (AMA), the American Hospital Association (AHA), as well as the American Nurses Association (ANA) are the leaders in healthcare and have been on the front lines of this health crisis. In their joint statement last week, they urge all of us to remain vigilant in taking precautions to limit the spread, especially with the new more contagious variants circulating within the US “now is not the time to let our guard down and scale back the measures that we know will work to prevent further illness and deaths.” They are supportive of the CDC guidance of 6 feet minimum.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/ama-statements/ama-aha-ana-urge-continued-vigilance-us-exceeds-500000-covid-19-deaths>

In the publication provided for pediatric healthcare providers, the CDC summarized the true number and rate of cases in children in the US is not known due to the lack of widespread testing and the prioritization of testing for adults and those with severe illness. Recent evidence suggests that compared to adults children likely have similar viral loads in their nasopharynx, similar secondary infection rates, and can spread virus to others. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pediatric-hcp.html> By changing this policy, we are removing two critical mitigation strategy layers put forth in the CDC framework - the 6 feet minimum social distance measure and keeping within the same cohort of people. I am voting no to changing this policy at this time for these reasons.”

Mr. Bart shared that the Board has followed guidance from Dr. McGann, Administrators and State & Federal guidance. He thanked our administrative team. He noted the district has been open on a hybrid schedule. He noted that he supports the reopening on March 22nd and is asking the Board to support Dr. McGann’s recommendation. He added that the Board has been discussing the evolving issue the entire time. He thanked Dr. McGann and Counsel for their work. Dr. McGann stated that she respects Dr. Kenny’s decision. She added that it is not an easy decision. She has gathered a great deal of information. She understands it is a tough decision, however, she is confident that we can open safely. She will continue to share information with our parents. Dr. McGann thanked the Board. Mr. Bart asked parents to remain vigilant and if they had any questions to please reach out to the schools. He reminded the parents to complete the health assessments.

Aye:	Ms. Abbott	Ms. Markowski	Nay:	Dr. Kenny	Abstain: 0
	Ms. Baker	Ms. Mitcheltree			
	Mrs. Bart	Ms. Rosengarden			
	Mr. Cain	Mr. Bart			

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Abbott noted she received the following emails:

A parent email asking that presentations of covid data include learning loss & social/emotional impacts of the pandemic. Also suggested different ways to present data.

A parent email asking if the policy committee meeting could be open to the public.

A parent email submitting the same petition we saw before our last public board meeting.

8 parent emails supporting adjusting our spacing policy and moving students to a more full-time schedule.

3 parent emails supporting remaining with our current 6-foot spacing policy and hybrid program.

An email from a teacher with concerns regarding the start date of 3/22 and its effect on A/B scheduling.

An email from a teacher asking that we maintain our 6-foot spacing policy and hybrid program.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Bart reviewed committee meeting dates.

NEW BUSINESS

None

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Mr. Bart set the session to 30 minutes with 3 minutes for each person, using raised hands.

Lilian Colpas, thank you for policy revisions, it gives her hope for the students. She noted she does not feel this is a rush. She noted parents can still have the option to remain virtual. She feels the decision made was a good one.

Mr. Bart noted the Policy did pass 8 to 1.

Jennifer Temple, Raritan Township, expressed concern that we still do not know how this change affects those that remain virtual.

Mr. Bart noted that it is not our intent to ignore those that remain virtual. Dr. McGann agreed. She suggested that parents should reach out to the building Principals.

Caitlyn Ryan Persche, Raritan Township, parent, fully supports the plan as approved. She expressed concern for the teacher's getting vaccines and asked the Board and Administrators to support the teachers to get through this process. She also noted the teacher should not be asked to do simulcast in K-4, there are too many challenges with elementary students. She also asked teachers to think about virtual learners in a simulcast setting.

Mr. Bart noted that the Board and Municipal leaders support was helpful in pushing vaccines to be available for the teachers.

ADJOURN

On the motion of Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Cain the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m. viva voce.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Voorhees
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

2021 Board Meetings

March 8 & 22

April 15 & 26

May 3 - Reorganization of the District/Public Hearing/Work Session/Regular Meeting

May 17

June 7 & 21

July 26

August 23

September 13 & 27

October 11 & 25

November 8 & 22

December 13