

**FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION  
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION  
SEPTEMBER 12, 2009  
MINUTES**

The Strategic Planning Session of the Flemington-Raritan Regional Board of Education was called to order in conformance with the "Sunshine Law" by John Yankowski at 8:05 a.m. in the room D111 at the J. P. Case Middle School.

**Members Present**

Julie Bell*	Michael Bonieski
Dennis Copeland	Janine Foreman*
Laurie Markowski	Doris McGivney
Joseph Zarish	John Yankowski

**Members Absent**

Patrick Larmore

Ms. Bell arrived at 8:11 a.m.

Ms. Foreman arrived at 8:21 a.m.

Also present: Gregory Nolan, Daniel Bland, Stephanie Hope and Diane Morris of New Jersey School Boards Association.

**Strategic Board Planning Session**

Diane Morris began the morning by summarizing the topics from last night's meeting. She referred to the handouts as tools. Ms. Morris next began a discussion regarding the actions that hinder progress:

- Pressure from the public to adopt alternative priorities
- FREA negotiations and grievance resolution; concerns over adversarial relationships with teachers. turnover in board members, administration and staff
- Personal agendas

Ms. Bell arrived at 8:11 a.m.

Ms. Morris asked what you as an individual can do to help in these situations?

- Listen to community; point out similarities between their goals and the Board's goals.
- Proactive communications
- Consistency in commitment and focus.
- On-going "success reports."
- Provide a report on work done during a planning session at a Board of Education meeting to demonstrate consensus and unity in supporting board goals. The Superintendent must demonstrate his support, commitment and engagement in accomplishing the board's goals.

Ms. Foreman arrived at 8:21 a.m.

The Communication Committee will report out this weekend's activities. Ms. Morris moved on to discuss how we will handle board turnover. She noted that we need to create a plan as we near elections.

Ms. Morris asked board members if they have personal agendas. Mr. Bonieski expressed concern about board members responding to phone calls. Ms. McGivney is committed to the district continuing to be a great district. Ms. Foreman said she has no personal agenda but is still a parent too. She doesn't always agree. Change is difficult but she is committed to the goals. Ms. Markowski is committed to the goals. She looks to the administration to move us forward. Mr. Yankowski has no personal agenda. He has no kids in the district's schools any longer. He is hoping that when he leaves the district, it will be a better place. Mr. Yankowski says he has stepped aside to allow Mr. Nolan to lead the district. He is very pleased with the new leadership and is committed to the goals. Dr. Copeland does have a personal agenda. It is his agenda that high quality schools produce valued communities and respectable home values. He has a vested interest because of his three-year old daughter. He is committed to the goals. Ms. Bell is committed to the goals. She has no personal agenda. She now as a board member without children in the school district, she wants to give back to the community that gave to her children. Ms. Bell believes in the "takes a village" belief and wants to repay her debt.

Mr. Zarish is committed to the goals set last evening. He has no personal agenda. He hopes to make sure that kids in the future are the best they can be.

In summary this entire board is committed to providing quality educational programs to all children.

Ms. Morris began speaking about what board members can and cannot do. She shared an example of one board member emailing the entire board. Ms. Morris noted that you cannot do that. The Board Members need to follow the chain of command. She advised the Board to be careful of emails. They cannot violate the Open Public Meetings Act.

Ms. Morris reminded board members that when staff and parents come to them; they must refer them to the administration. It is not appropriate for them to attempt to address the issue. The Board Members as individuals do not have power or authority. If Board Members attempt to exercise power as individuals, they are violating the Ethics Act. Mr. Bland requested that at board meetings we enforce the chain of command process and not allow a diversion away from the educational goals. A further discussion continued about public discussion and communication.

How do we retrain the public? Mr. Yankowski says it takes time but we shouldn't change the ability of citizens to speak. The conversation continued with what has happened in the past with requesting immediate responses. We need to retrain ourselves at public meetings about how we react at public meetings. Mr. Nolan stated that simple questions that can be easily answered should be answered. If it is a larger issue, we should get their name and tell them we will get back to them. The Board should turn to the Superintendent for direction on how he wishes to respond. Board meetings are to do business and not to have dialogue. However, the citizens need to be dignified and be allowed to say their piece. The Board now needs to begin fresh with Mr. Nolan and begin to shift the process allowing him to "drive the district as our new leader."

Ms. Morris briefly reviewed the "SOP" document. Mr. Nolan noted how open our current board agenda process is. He favors this process. We need to be sure that if board members have questions before a board meeting, they should contact Mr. Nolan before the meeting.

The discussion turned toward how the Board feels about board addendums. The Board decided that there would be no addendums unless there are critical issue exceptions. Mr. Nolan will explain if needed and they will be brought to executive session.

Concerns about the lack of microphones were discussed briefly. A change of board meeting location is taking place to hopefully address this issue. We will evaluate as we experience the new space. The current format and item content on the agenda is appropriate. The board does not want to see changes.

A discussion took place regarding committee minutes. They will still be distributed as they are completed. If requested by the public, Ms. Hope as the public records officer will redact as needed. Ms. Morris reviewed the board self evaluation with the Board as attached.

Mr. Nolan thanked the Board for their honesty. The board concluded with how well this process works. We may want to consider more frequent work sessions. The Board consensus was to have a mid-year and end-of-year board check up meeting. January 15<sup>th</sup> will be the next work session. It will run from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in Room D111 at J. P. Case Middle School.

Mr. Nolan will recapture these public meetings under the Superintendent's Report.

Dr. Copeland thanked Ms. Hope, Mr. Bland and Mr. Nolan for participating in this weekend's meetings

### **ADJOURN**

On motion of Ms. Bell, seconded by Ms. McGivney, the meeting was adjourned, unanimously viva voce, at 10:08 a. m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Hope

**Upcoming Meetings**

September 14

September 21

October 5 - Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse Annual Hearing

October 19- Results of 2009 New Jersey Assessment of Skills & Knowledge Presentation

November 2

November 16

December 7

December 21

January 11, 2010

January 25

February 8

February 22

March 8

March 29

April 12