

**MINUTES**

**for**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**JULY 7, 2022**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Linden, New Jersey**

Dr. Marnie Hazelton  
Superintendent of Schools

Denise Cleary  
Assistant Superintendent

Kathleen A. Gaylord  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary

Dr. Karen Baldwin  
Human Resources Manager

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Linden, New Jersey**

July 7, 2022

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

**SALUTE TO FLAG**

**STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE:**

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided as follows:

On June 30, 2022, adequate notice was sent to the Home News Tribune and the Clerk of the Municipality. On July 5, 2022 adequate notice was sent to the Star Ledger and the Union County Local Source.

**NO SMOKING NOTICE:**

BY STATE LAW, THERE IS NO SMOKING PERMITTED IN THIS BUILDING AT ANY TIME.

**ROLL CALL 7:10 P.M.:**

<b>Board Members</b>		<b>Others</b>	
Mrs. Flemming	P	Dr. Hazelton	A
Ms. Guillaume	P	Mrs. Cleary	A
Mr. Martucci	A	Ms. Gaylord	A
Ms. Pino	P	Dr. Baldwin	A
Ms. Thomas	A	Mrs. Caporale	P
Dr. Berghammer	P	Attorney, Mr. J. Garcia	P
Ms. Cintron	P		
Mr. De La Cruz	P		
Mr. Rivas	P		

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC (agenda items only):

Members of the public desiring to make a public comment may come forward at this time.

Please begin your comments by stating your name and address. Individuals are invited to speak on one topic at a time, and no individual will speak more than once, until all individuals so desiring have spoken once.

The public is reminded that to ensure the efficient and orderly operations of the meeting, members of the public will be limited to speaking on items for three minutes.

Rita DeFonseca  
1033 Essex Avenue

Ms. DeFonseca was a little confused as this section is for comments on agenda items only, however, there's nothing on the agenda to comment on. Mr. Rivas then realized that the public did not have a copy of the Personnel agenda and said that once the board returns from Executive Session, they will allow time for comments on agenda items and the public will receive a paper copy of Personnel. There is one item under Finance however.

At 7:15 p.m., Mr. De La Cruz made a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of the Superintendent's Evaluation and personnel matters, seconded by Ms. Pino.

Roll Call:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mrs. Flemming			X		
Ms. Guillaume			X		
Mr. Martucci			Absent		
Ms. Pino		X	X		
Ms. Thomas			Absent		
Dr. Berghammer			X		
Ms. Cintron			X		
Mr. De La Cruz	X		X		
Mr. Rivas			X		

Motion carried.

At 8:42 p.m., Mr. De La Cruz made a motion to return to Public Session, seconded by Ms. Pino. Voice vote was unanimous.

Mr. Garcia explained that he was going to ask for a motion and second on three amendments so that everyone will understand what will be voted on later tonight. He asked the Board President to move up public comments to before voting so that the public would have the opportunity to comment on agenda items before the board votes.

He asked that item #1 under the Personnel Report be changed as follows:

1. Appoint the following staff member: Pamela Caporale as Acting Business Administrator/Acting Board Secretary effective 6/27/2022 through 9/1/2022 at a Stipend amount of \$5,000.00 for the duration of the appointment.

The second proposed amendment would be to add item #6 as follows:

6. Accept the resignation notice of employee #5478.

The final amendment would be on the Finance Report, and that is to name the auditing company. The board would like to vote on and approve a contract with Suplee Clooney as school auditors.

Dr. Berghammer made a motion to make the above-mentioned amendments to the agenda, seconded by Ms. Pino.

Roll Call:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mrs. Flemming			X		
Ms. Guillaume			X		
Mr. Martucci			Absent		
Ms. Pino		X	X		
Ms. Thomas			Absent		
Dr. Berghammer	X		X		
Ms. Cintron			X		
Mr. De La Cruz			X		
Mr. Rivas			X		

Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Members of the public desiring to make a public comment may come forward at this time.

Please begin your comments by stating your name and address. Individuals are invited to speak on one topic at a time, and no individual will speak more than once, until all individuals so desiring have spoken once.

The public is reminded that to ensure the efficient and orderly operations of the meeting, members of the public will be limited to speaking on items for three minutes.

Mr. Garcia reminded the Board President and the public that this would be the final opportunity for the public to comment tonight and they will be able to comment on both agenda and non-agenda items.

Rita DeFonseca  
1033 Essex Avenue

She is deeply disappointed in some of this board members actions, lack of transparency and its lack of focus on the best interests of our students and staff. She told the board they were voted in to keep the best interests of our children and teachers and staff at the forefront. Hearing that the board purposely voted down highly-qualified candidates that were vetted and have created toxic, hostile, and fear-induced work environment causing mass resignations is deeply appalling and disappointing. She told the board that they should be ashamed. She urged them to have integrity and do what they think is best for our children, staff and community. The board is elected to carry that word, integrity. Politics, in any form, do not have a place in our schools, in our classrooms, and in our Board of Education at all. Do what is right by our teachers and our children. Keep politics out of our schools.

Parents are demanding that by the next board meeting you do the following: we want to know the criteria that you use to vote down Dr. Hazelton's new hire recommendations. Keep all public comments on the taped videos so that the public is aware instead of editing some of those public comments out. Finally, be mindful of the public's time.

The Personnel Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools presents the following motions to the Linden Board of Education for approval. All appointments and reappointments are contingent upon, and may be modified based on student participation and the districts receipt of sufficient State School Aide and other revenue funding.

1. Appoint the following staff member: Pamela Caporale as Acting Business Administrator/Acting Board Secretary effective 6/27/2022 through 9/1/2022 at a Stipend amount of \$5,000.00 for the duration of the appointment.
2. Appoint the following staff member: Jason Andersen as Interim Supervisor of Maintenance effective 7/8/22. Mr. Andersen holds a Facility Management Professional Certificate and has been an employee in the Maintenance Department since 2003. Salary is in accordance with the Supervisor Salary Guide Step 1 \$113,923.
3. Appoint the following as Webmaster for the 2022-2023 School Year.

#	Name	Stipend
1.	Koziol, Jonathan	\$6,710

4. ~~Appoint the following staff as listed:~~

#	Name	Effective Date	Degree	Credited Exp./ Step	Assigned Subj. Area	Bldg./ Dept.	Spec. Prog. Or Budget	Total Annual Salary Rate
<b>NON-CERTIFIED</b>								
1.	Aslin, Keith	9/1/22		13	District Security Officer	LHS	Budget/ R	\$68,166

5. Appoint the following Substitute Secretaries for the 2022-2023 School Year. To be paid at the contractual rate of \$15/hr. Acct. #11-000-221-105-00-001-00.

#	Name
1.	Angelo, Adriana
2.	Buscaino, Denise
3.	Carter-Blocker, Lakhia
4.	Mandela, Monica

6. Accept the resignation notice of employee #5478.

Ms. Cintron made a motion to table item #4, seconded by Dr. Berghammer. Mr. Rivas said it would be tabled until the next meeting so they could get information from the district.

Roll Call:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mrs. Flemming			X		
Ms. Guillaume			X		
Mr. Martucci			Absent		
Ms. Pino			X		
Ms. Thomas			Absent		
Dr. Berghammer		X	X		
Ms. Cintron	X		X		
Mr. De La Cruz			X		
Mr. Rivas			X		

Motion carried.

Mr. Rivas said there are no concerns about this particular position, but information is needed from the district.

Dr. Berghammer then made an amended motion to approve items 1-3 and 5-6, seconded by Mr. De La Cruz.

Roll Call:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mrs. Flemming			X		
Ms. Guillaume			X	#6	
Mr. Martucci			Absent		
Ms. Pino			X		
Ms. Thomas			Absent		
Dr. Berghammer	X		X		
Ms. Cintron			X		
Mr. De La Cruz		X	X		
Mr. Rivas			X		

Motion carried.

The Finance Committee, upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Business Administrator/Board Secretary, present the following motions to the Linden Board of Education for approval:

1. Approve a contract with Suplee Clooney, Westfield, NJ, as School Auditors to perform the 2021/2022 school audit at a cost not to exceed \$48,450.00 based on proposal received June 22, 2022.

Roll Call:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mrs. Flemming	X		X		
Ms. Guillaume			X		
Mr. Martucci			Absent		
Ms. Pino		X	X		
Ms. Thomas			Absent		
Dr. Berghammer			X		
Ms. Cintron			X		
Mr. De La Cruz			X		
Mr. Rivas			X		

Motion carried.

NEW/UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mrs. Flemming said that as a board member, she had no idea about any banners. When she was asked for a name, it was for a scholarship. When everybody comes and stands in front of this podium, to say they are unethical or they're not doing whatever they can for the district, it's very disheartening. To give of yourself, away from your family and your job, to have people be disrespectful and say on one hand you're supposed to watch out for the taxpayers. As stated, they were voted in to do the right thing; and they definitely are. People say there's 100 vacancies, but when you go online, there's 53. She asked why didn't anybody correct that number? Why didn't somebody stand up and say, "I chose those 51 kids"? "I'm gonna take personal responsibility for what I have done and I'm gonna stand up and explain it to the citizens of Linden and those staff members that work here." But, nothing.

She asked if anyone is sharing these positions, because they don't want to just accept anyone. It is their job to look down and supervise the Superintendent, to check on what decisions are being made, and that is what they're doing. She went on to say that if anyone thinks these are the days of twenty years ago where all your friends and family get hired at the public school system, we're hiring qualified people who want to work. "That's it. Who want to work". If anybody has a problem with that, and are angry right now, ask yourself, is there any reason they may have turned down a position? Nine people have been turned down this year. She then asked the Acting Board Secretary how many have been hired this year. When Mrs. Caporale responded that she didn't know, Mrs. Flemming said she didn't expect her to because she's a fill-in. She said they're doing the best job that they can. They were voted in to make the best decisions for the citizens, students and teaching staff. She asked anyone in the City of Linden who thinks they can do a better job, to please volunteer. The board is not allowed to share everything because of privacy concerns. She just wanted everyone to know that they volunteer for the best of what they think. She said "when she hears the same lines being repeated, it makes her stomach sick".

Mr. Rivas asked for calm in the audience and asked for respect while board members are making their comments.

Ms. Guillaume said they all received an email on something and were advised on how to proceed, and they all did the opposite.

She also pointed out that they all have different opinions, different backgrounds, different experiences, but as a whole, they're supposed to come together and work together as a team. They may not like each other, but it is imperative they work collaboratively together, especially in public, because there are kids in the audience, students recording, and they should be an example because they say they want to serve the children. She said they should set an example for the students because they're watching. If they can't be civilized, act friendly and be kind, how do they expect the children to act that way? It's very hard to sit here and say "we serve children".

Mr. Garcia said that they had received a request from someone on the law who is not a lawyer and greatly misinformed as to the law regarding the topic she discussed. The Supreme Court is abundantly clear that their actions were entirely lawful and completely appropriate.

Mr. Rivas said his children were crying after the last meeting because of the actions of people that they knew in their schools and in their community. We need to be friendly with each other. We can agree to disagree. He said their job is to balance administration. This is not anything political. His job is to understand everything on the agenda, ask questions and to have the right conscience to place his vote. Some board members get confused during conversations and ask questions. Meetings get longer because they have to go back and explain from point A to point B.

The board is the governing body of the district and they have to make sure that all the actions of the district are done correctly. He assured the public that they look for the best for the teachers, the schools and for everyone. They have worked hard to provide the best contract that the teachers may have throughout the years. The reality is "we don't fire anybody". He said they may not agree to hire people based on the information processes that have been taking place to do so. It is a public service job that they are doing. He's not here to try to change opinions. The answers that they seek is within the district. They cannot give you answers because they do not run the district day in and day out. They are looking for the best of the best operations for our district. You have a very much majority of board members who are paying attention to every little detail there is on the agenda and they're doing it for the best intentions of the district.

He reminded everyone that this video can be seen by children and many people. Please understand that we are adults and we're better than that.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. De La Cruz made a motion at 9:15 p.m. to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Pino.

Roll Call:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mrs. Flemming			X		
Ms. Guillaume			X		
Mr. Martucci			Absent		
Ms. Pino		X	X		
Ms. Thomas			Absent		
Dr. Berghammer			X		
Ms. Cintron			X		
Mr. De La Cruz	X		X		
Mr. Rivas			X		

Motion carried.

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Pamela B. Caporale  
Acting Business Administrator/Board Secretary