

PENDING BOARD APPROVAL

BOARD OF EDUCATION
(Official)

October 1, 2020
Elizabeth, New Jersey

A special meeting of the Board of Education was called on October 1, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. on a virtual online platform.

Board President Diane Barbosa presented the following statement at 6:20 p.m.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is a special meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting using an online platform was sent to The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on September 29, 2020. In addition, this notice is posted on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of 500 North Broad Street, and pursuant to this act, a copy has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

There will be an online public portion for citizens to address the Board. Participants for the public portion must register online up to the start of the meeting so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The public participation form states the name, email, and phone number of the person who wants to comment. Members of the public who prefer not to or do not have the means to participate using the online platform may continue to participate by emailing statements relative to agenda items and/or educational matters to the Secretary of the Board at kennedha@epsnj.org. All statements received will be read into the record during the meeting’s public comment portion. All emails must be submitted and received by the Secretary of the Board up to the start of the meeting and, as is always the case, must include the public member’s full name for the record. Each statement submitted by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes. Emails received but not read after the 60 minute duration will be spread in full in the Official Board Minutes of this meeting.”

Present: Charlene Bathelus, Maria Carvalho, Iliana Chevres, Nathalie Hernandez, Jerry Jacobs, Rosa Moreno-Ortega, Stanley Neron, Stephanie Pestana, Diane Barbosa – 9

Absent: None

Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Co-General Counsel Jonathan Williams, Esq. of DeCotiis, Fitzpatrick & Cole, LLP and members of the community were on the online platform.

Mrs. Barbosa welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for taking the time for tonight’s meeting. Mrs. Barbosa stated that this special meeting was very appropriate for the Board to meet with the Superintendent, Chief Medical Officer, City Health Officer, administration and our team to discuss ongoing aspects that we have to prepare for, perfect, and fine tune. Mrs. Barbosa welcomed everyone in the Elizabeth Public School learning community to our 2020-2021 school year. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the start of this school year is unlike any we have ever experienced before and hopefully will be something that we will never have to experience again. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the reopening of our schools both from the remote perspective to the start of the school year and the eventual in-person reopening of our schools that we will work very hard for will prove to be a tremendous act. Mrs. Barbosa stated that it will require all of us to work together, support one another, and absolutely uplift one another. Mrs. Barbosa stated that tonight is a meeting that brings us closer to decisions that help us to assess the best safety measures for our staff, personnel, and our students.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that the public speaking will be first and then the Board will go into private session to discuss personnel matters. Mrs. Barbosa stated that there is an expectation that we will reach a decision about updates to our reopening plan and to personnel matters for Monday. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we do expect that our administration and the Board will convey those details as early as tomorrow. Mrs. Barbosa stated that tonight we will hear data and recommendations from all sources and aspects and a formal communication will come tomorrow to members of our district, community, and our personnel.

Board President Diane Barbosa presented the following public participation statement.

“At this time, the meeting is open for public comment online to those who have registered with the online participation form prior to this session. I shall call individuals to participate based on the order of the sign-in. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes. No individual is able to yield their time to another individual. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually. The following rules for public participation shall apply: time limits will be strictly enforced, no personal attacks on individuals, no vulgar or indecent language, a person may address the board no more than once during a single meeting, speakers should refrain from naming individuals, and comments or questions posed during public participation will not be debated. As a reminder, this is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.

If the 60 minute public comment period expires before all registered online participants have been called, remaining participants can email their statements to the Secretary of the Board at kennedha@epsnj.org and they will be spread in full in the Official Minutes of this meeting. The Secretary of the Board will read into the record all emails that have been submitted up to the start of the meeting. Each statement submitted by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration.”

Mrs. Barbosa stated that she will call upon the participants in the order in which they registered online to speak.

Mrs. Barbosa called twice upon the first public participant, Kason Little, to address the Board. Kason Little did not respond.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, Maria Lorenz, to address the Board.

Maria Lorenz spoke about free speech.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for her comments and called upon the next public participant, Christina Moreira, to address the Board.

Christina Moreira spoke about technical issues, P-EBT (Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer) benefits, and the reduced number of high school graduation credits.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for her comments.

Mrs. Barbosa called twice upon the next public participant, Sana Ghani, to address the Board. Sana Ghani did not respond.

Mrs. Barbosa called twice upon the next public participant, Andrea Hernandez, to address the Board. Andrea Hernandez did not respond.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, Danielle Fienberg, to address the Board.

Danielle Fienberg spoke about free speech and IEPs.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for her comments.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that there were no other public participants registered to address the Board.

Mr. Kennedy stated that he did not receive any emails for the public comment portion of the meeting.

Mrs. Barbosa closed the public portion of the meeting.

The President requests a motion to go into Private Session to consider matters exempt under the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically for discussion of personnel, contracts, and legal matters. The Board will reconvene in public and may add to the agenda.

A motion was made by Mr. Jacobs, seconded by Mrs. Carvalho, to go into private session at 6:45 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Hernandez, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mmes. Pestana, Barbosa – 9

Negative: None

Ms. Bathelus excused herself from the meeting at 10:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Jacobs, seconded by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, to reconvene in public session at 10:50 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Hernandez, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mmes. Pestana, Barbosa – 8

Negative: None

Mrs. Barbosa thanked the Board, Superintendent, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Munoz, and City Health Officer Mark Colicchio and stated that there was discussion, questions, examinations, understanding, and statistical data. Mrs. Barbosa stated that today was very appropriate and very needed as we continually work to progress our schools to a sense of in-person. Mrs. Barbosa thanked all our teachers and stated that we are moving into our second month of school and virtual is not easy. Mrs. Barbosa stated that our teachers, our parents, and our students are always trying to do the best that they can. Mrs. Barbosa thanked all of the people that always reach out with their concerns because we do bring them back. Mrs. Barbosa stated that even as far as our virtual learning and fine tuning our virtual examples on a daily basis, modifications of PowerSchool, modification of Saavas being on the front page, and all these fine tunings are happening on a daily basis. Mrs. Barbosa stated that communicating with your teacher and principal comes back to our team where they always try to make this virtual learning easier for our students and parents and trying to make it easier for our teachers. Mrs. Barbosa thanked all our staff from custodians to our food service that are continually preparing meals for our students so that no student is left behind and left hungry.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked all the teachers, parents, guardians, babysitters, big brothers, and big sisters who supported in this E-learning experience. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that this is a new experience for us and thanked the teachers, teacher assistants, custodians, security officers, all the staff, administration, and principals for helping us to try to make the best decision for our future. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked Board President Barbosa for her leadership during this time and stated that she is the person who puts us at the same table. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked the Board members for supporting the district. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked the community and our students for listening and keeping up doing what is best for you.

Mrs. Carvalho stated that Mrs. Moreno-Ortega said it all.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked everyone and stated that we continue on with the basic knowledge that we have with keeping the health and safety of everyone involved and never forgetting the education of our students.

On a motion by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, seconded by Mrs. Carvalho, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Hernandez, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mmes. Pestana, Barbosa – 8

Negative: None

Harold E. Kennedy, Jr.
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary