

BOARD OF EDUCATION
(Official)

July 31, 2014
Elizabeth, New Jersey

A special meeting of the Board of Education was called on July 31, 2014 at 7:00 p.m., in the Multi Purpose Room, Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education, 544 Pennsylvania Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Board President Tony Monteiro presented the following statement at 7:45 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 was sent to The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on Monday, July 28, 2014. 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.”

“I wish to extend a warm welcome to everyone present to this July 31, 2014 meeting of the Board of Education. We are here to govern, provide management oversight, and make policy for the district. The Superintendent manages the district. This is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

“This meeting is being recorded and will become part of the Elizabeth Board of Education permanent record. In order that the recording will adequately reflect the proceedings, please refrain from talking while others are speaking. I also ask that you silence the sound on your electronic devices. Since it is legally mandated that these proceedings be accurately recorded, I may have to ask for order periodically should noise begin to interfere with our recording capabilities. I am pleased that you have taken time this evening to join us. Thank you for your interest in the Elizabeth Public Schools.”

“There will be a public portion for citizens to address the board. Participants for the public portion must sign in one hour prior to the advertised start of the meeting so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The sign-in sheet states the name, address, telephone number and reason that the person wants to comment, whether it is an agenda item or a general education comment.”

Present: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 9

Absent: None

Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Schools Rafael Cortes, Assistant Superintendent for Schools Linda Seniszyn, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Jennifer Ceden, Supervising General Counsel/Board Attorney Marvin Lehman, Comptroller William Greene, and members of the public were in attendance.

Mr. González gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Ethics

Core Beliefs and Commitments

Mr. Monteiro presented the following public participation statement.

“At this time, the microphones are open for public comment to those who have signed in prior to this session. I shall call individuals to the microphones 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 sixty 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 participants 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.”

Since there were no citizens signed in to address the Board, Mr. Monteiro declared this portion of the public meeting closed.

Personnel Report – Reappointments, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. Perreira, seconded by Mr. Trujillo, that the report be accepted.

Ms. Bathelus stated for the record that she met with Superintendent Hugelmeyer this week in regard to the diversity of the staff members in our district. Ms. Bathelus stated that she wants the Board to be aware of that and to be open to us hiring from different ethnicity groups throughout the year. Ms. Bathelus stated that she is okay with reappointing and hiring a lot of people who are recommended in the Personnel Report but she also wants us to be mindful that there are many people of different ethnic groups who are qualified for many of these higher positions such as vice principals, principals, and administrators. Ms. Bathelus stated that she wants to have this on record.

Mr. Trujillo commented how glad is he that we are hiring some teachers and stated that he has always been a big proponent of hiring teachers. Mr. Trujillo stated that teachers are a special breed of people and that it is a tough job and it really is a calling. Mr. Trujillo stated that during these tough economic times when it isn’t always easy to keep the investment in the classroom it shows that we are committed. Mr. Trujillo stated that we would like to be hiring a lot more teachers if possible but that isn’t our reality. Mr. Trujillo stated that the fact that we are trying to hire and fill the needs in the classroom shows that that this Board continues to be committed to the classroom first and foremost. Mr. Trujillo thanked the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, and administrators for their hard work.

Mr. Trujillo stated that there are a lot of personnel who may or may not be moved today and he gets a lot of phone calls from people who don’t want to move and change is always tough. Mr. Trujillo stated that as Board members it isn’t our place to decide where people go and that we take the recommendations of the Superintendent. Mr. Trujillo stated that we trust when we hire the Superintendent that person is going to make the best decisions for the classroom and sometimes they are tough decisions. Mr. Trujillo stated that he knows how the staff feels having to be moved and start all over in a new building but he has seen it enough times to know that teachers are very resilient and once they get in there and have new students they start to love those children as much as they loved the children last year. Mr. Trujillo stated that the good teachers make those children better people. Mr. Trujillo stated that he wishes everyone who may or may not be transferred today the best of luck in their new assignment.

Mr. Monteiro stated that we are very proud of the diversity here on this Board clearly by who serves and is on the dais. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are incredibly respectful of our entire staff here at the Elizabeth Public Schools. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Superintendent has done and continues to do a wonderful job in the selecting of the administration and the staffing here. Mr. Monteiro stated that it clearly reflects the diversity of our neighborhoods and our City and we are always very sensitive of that. Mr. Monteiro stated that this Board is a case in point example of that diversity.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo (abstain- L.K.), González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Abstain: Ms. Bathelus – 1

Negative: None

Authorizations Report – Authorization to Enter Into Partnership, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. Trujillo, seconded by Mr. González, that the report be accepted.

Mr. Trujillo stated that we authorize so many people to use our facilities which he supports because he thinks it is great that we are able to provide these services to the community at large. Mr. Trujillo stated that it is after all the community's facilities and we are just the stewards of them. Mr. Trujillo stated that what he would like to do, being good stewards, is to have the Properties Committee meet because he has been getting a lot of complaints especially about our fields being left in disarray. Mr. Trujillo stated that this is something we had discussed before and we were able to meet with some of these groups and explain what was expected of them. Mr. Trujillo stated that it's reverted back to them not adhering to what we expect of them and maybe we could meet with a few of these groups in the Properties Committee. Mr. Trujillo stated that he would appreciate if he could be invited to that committee because it is something that he would like to address and have that conversation again to make sure everyone understands that we love to let them use the facilities and help them but at the end of the day we have a responsibility to make sure they are maintained well and kept well and respected.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that in this report there is a student who is going to be taking an independent study course at the end of the summer. Mr. Rodriguez commended the student and the teachers for allowing him to take this course and get ahead in the summer.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that our teachers are going to be trained on September 5th at the Ritz Theater. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina thanked them for allowing us to use to this facility and stated that it is a great opportunity for all of our teachers to have training together.

Mr. Monteiro stated that we are authorizing the use of the facility of the Ritz Theater and it is going to be at no cost to the taxpayers of the City of Elizabeth. Mr. Monteiro stated that the Castro Family, Maurice Castro of the Ritz Theater, is providing the theater to the Elizabeth Board of Education at no cost for that day. Mr. Monteiro stated that this is a professional development day for our teachers and asked Superintendent Hugelmeyer to explain the training.

Superintendent Hugelmeyer stated that Dr. Pedro Noguera who is a leader on a national level, researcher advocate for children, and a tremendous advocate for urban school districts is going to be our guest speaker on September 5th. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we have the opportunity to have all of our teachers of the Elizabeth School District participate in this professional development offered by Dr. Noguera. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that in the past we had the opportunity to have turn-key training for our teachers but we felt that it was critical that all teachers be exposed to the powerful message of Dr. Noguera in an effort to be able to create our next level of work and to address the importance of Equity, Expectations and Excellence in our district. Mrs. Hugelmeyer echoed the sentiments of our Board and thanked Mr. Castro for affording our district the opportunity to use the Ritz Theater because we will have 2,000 teachers joining us on September 5th and have the opportunity of listening to Dr. Noguera on the issue of equity and excellence.

Mr. Monteiro stated that the City of Elizabeth Mayor's Office has requested for the Elizabeth Board of Education, if possible, to provide five school buses at no cost for the 350th

Anniversary Re-Enactment of the Battles of Elizabeth on October 19, 2014 to transport 200 re-enactors in full battle garb from Liberty Hall Museum to Union Square in Elizabeth to prepare for the battle of Union Square.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 9

Negative: None

The first reading was done of the following revised regulation and exhibit:

4151/4251(X-B) Exhibit Medical Certificate

6142.10 Regulation Acceptable Use of Technology – Electronic Mobile Devices

The President requests a motion to go into Private Session to consider matters exempt under the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically for municipal correspondence, and discussion of personnel, specifically interviews and M.B. The Board will reconvene in public to take formal action.

A motion was made by Mr. Fajardo, seconded by Mr. Trujillo, to go into private session at 8:05 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. Fajardo, González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 9

Negative: None

The Board reconvened in public at 11:45 p.m.

Mr. Fajardo excused himself from the meeting at 11:50 p.m.

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Principal – Joia Lynn Dickenson

The resolution was read by Mr. Neron.

A motion was made by Mr. Neron, seconded by Mr. Perreira, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Principal – Antonio DiFonzo

The resolution was read by Mr. Perreira.

A motion was made by Mr. Perreira, seconded by Mr. Trujillo, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Vice Principal – Jenny Costa Reguinho

The resolution was read by Mr. Trujillo.

A motion was made by Mr. Trujillo, seconded by Mr. Perreira, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Vice Principal – Donald Dulorie

The resolution was read by Ms. Bathelus.

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mr. Perreira, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 7

Abstain: Mr. Neron – 1

Negative: None

Resolution – Appointment of Interim Vice Principal – Megan Marx

The resolution was read by Mr. González.

A motion was made by Mr. González, seconded by Mr. Trujillo, that the resolution be adopted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

Supplemental Personnel Report – Transfers

A motion was made by Mr. Perreira, seconded by Mr. Trujillo, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira (abstain- G.D., S.G.), Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

Second Supplemental Personnel Report – Resignation, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. Perreira, seconded by Mr. Trujillo, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

Mr. Trujillo stated that originally when we started this meeting Ms. Bathelus mentioned that she had a conversation with the Superintendent that she wanted on the record about the importance of diversity throughout the district and the ability to find talent and give people the opportunity. Mr. Trujillo stated that going through all the recommendations the Superintendent showed how many people applied for each position and it has been a practice in the past to paper interview people first and narrow it down and then make your decision and recommendation. Mr. Trujillo stated that he cannot find a more diverse group than the group which was just appointed tonight and it is across the board with well-rounded professional people. Mr. Trujillo stated that for him, personally, it's a great feeling because being here seven years he has been able to watch a lot of their careers. Mr. Trujillo stated that it is very exciting because ten years from now when we've been the Number One Urban School District in the Country he is going to be somewhere patting himself on the back because he was here and he said yes. Mr. Trujillo thanked them for having the courage to take on this challenge and wished them all the best of luck. Mr. Trujillo

stated that it is beautiful when you look around this room there is an incredible amount of diversity and it is exactly what Elizabeth is. Mr. Trujillo stated that Elizabeth is a beautiful town where a lot of great people come to work, live, and play every day. Mr. Trujillo stated that they are going to make it that much better and he is very excited for them.

Mr. Neron congratulated our fabulous group of administrators that we appointed this evening. Mr. Neron stated that he wanted to remind them to keep our children and families first here in our community and with that we will fulfill the promise with our high schools and schools. Mr. Neron stated that not only will we be the Number One School District in the urban districts but we'll be the Number One School District throughout the State of New Jersey and we can be a beacon of hope and light throughout this country to show them the excellence that does come out of Elizabeth. Mr. Neron stated that they have a lot to share and please make it a contagious spirit to the youth, the children, and the staff more importantly because they are going to set the tone in the schools for excellence. Mr. Neron commended them on their appointment and the work they have ahead and the work they have already done. Mr. Neron thanked them for taking on that initiative and stated that it is not easy and we have a long, arduous task ahead and they are here to support them in every step of the way and remember it's our children first.

Mr. Pereira congratulated everyone who was appointed tonight and stated that they are definitely going to be the leaders of our many schools across the district. Mr. Perreira stated that teaching is a calling and requires a lot of passion and dedication from the individual. Mr. Perreira stated that he hopes the new administrators hold the people who are going to be part of their team accountable in the same way and the same regard as they hold themselves accountable. Mr. Perreira stated that they are here to support them and we have never been shy about making sure that all that we have here is the best and nothing but the best and that is what he is going to hope and expect from them. Mr. Perreira thanked them for being here and stated that he looks forward to working with them.

Mr. Monteiro thanked the new appointees because they have earned the right to sit in those seats and to the positions they have risen to and for all their years of hard work, passion, dedication, and enthusiasm. Mr. Monteiro stated that to sit amongst those who are in the room today, Mr. Cortes, Mrs. Ceden, Mrs. Senisyn, and our great leader Mrs. Hugelmeyer, you have a fantastic team. Mr. Monteiro stated that he wants to thank them because they earned the seats that they have been appointed to tonight. Mr. Monteiro stated that we have great expectations of each one and they have the full commitment and support of the Board in all that they are going to do in the months ahead in transforming this to the best school system in the State and the country soon after.

Mr. Trujillo stated that he would like to reiterate what he said earlier and have the Properties Committee to take up the use of facilities that we have been having. Mr. Trujillo stated that he has been getting a lot of complaints about the condition that they are being left. Mr. Trujillo stated that he doesn't not want to offer the facilities to various groups and he thinks it is great and at the end of the day it is the community's facilities. Mr. Trujillo stated that he does think it is our responsibility to be good stewards and make sure the people that we do allow to use them respect them and leave them in the condition that they find them. Mr. Trujillo stated that if he could be invited to the Properties Committee maybe we could start meeting again with some of the groups. Mr. Trujillo stated that we met with some of the groups in the past and had great results and maybe going back and getting reacquainted with some, meeting with some of the new groups, and maybe meet with some that we weren't able to meet with previously because of scheduling. Mr. Trujillo stated that we could start meeting with some of the groups and letting them know our expectations and our willingness to work with them and perhaps we could really solve this issue.

Mr. Monteiro stated that he agrees with Mr. Trujillo and asked Mr. Kennedy to set a meeting for early September to start meeting with some of the groups. Mr. Monteiro stated that

now we have to start to partner with these groups recognizing that we are in this difficult budget time and now we have to somehow find a way to broker the cost of facilities between both of us.

Mr. Trujillo stated that it would be his pleasure to work on this.

Mrs. Castillo-Ospina invited everyone in the community to a parade on Sunday, August 3, 2014. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina stated that it is being held by a non-profit organization Colombianos Sin Fronteras to celebrate Colombian Independence Day and will begin at City Hall at 1:00 p.m. and end on Morris Avenue. Mrs. Castillo-Ospina invited the whole community and fellow Board members to please join her in this celebration.

Mr. Monteiro thanked the new principals and vice principals and congratulated them. Mr. Monteiro recognized his colleagues and stated that the members on this school board do not get paid to serve and they give up a great deal of time away from their families and their personal lives and businesses to be here. Mr. Monteiro stated that this is a special meeting tonight aside from our regularly scheduled meetings and we are going to have another one in two weeks and then another one a week after that. Mr. Monteiro stated that we have taken it upon ourselves to find value in doing a meeting like tonight and to the credit of this board who wants to actually meet the candidates and interview and get to know them it is a credit to each and every one of the Board members who serve with their passion. Mr. Monteiro stated that many times we don't always agree and we don't always see things the same way but as a team we find a way to get things done and to build those bridges and tear down those walls. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are looking to do that more with the City and we battle with the City and we don't want to, we want to find a way to build those bridges because we want to make this the greatest City. Mr. Monteiro stated that we are all vested here, we all have an interest here, and we would like to see it pull together and together we can do that.

Mr. Monteiro stated that another component that we have done well is we have brought pride back to see kids being proud to go to the schools here and to see bumper stickers with proud students of Elizabeth schools. Mr. Monteiro stated that the missing component is parents and we have to find a way to engage them into the school system and engage them into what we are doing here and have them believe it. Mr. Monteiro stated that the new administrators have their work cut out for them already but we have to find a way to get the parents to believe what we are doing in this City and bring everyone together. Mr. Monteiro thanked his fellow Board members for being here tonight and for all that they sacrifice to be here.

On a motion by Mr. Trujillo, seconded by Mr. Perreira, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 a.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Neron, Perreira, Rodriguez, Trujillo, Monteiro – 8

Negative: None

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