

BOARD OF EDUCATION
(Official)

March 18, 2021
Elizabeth, New Jersey

The regular agenda meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on March 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. The Meeting was previously noticed to be held in the Multipurpose Room of Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education School No. 51, 544 Pennsylvania Ave., Elizabeth, New Jersey 07208. However, in light of the public health emergency caused by coronavirus and the Governor's Executive Order reducing the allowed capacity for indoor gatherings, the Elizabeth Board of Education will conduct the meeting remotely using on-line platform technology without providing a physical meeting place.

Board President Jerry Jacobs presented the following statement at 6:34 p.m.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is a regular agenda 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 March 16, 2021. 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 and email 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 time limit will be strictly enforced and audio transmission will be terminated at the end of three minutes. 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: Nathalie Alcaide-Hernandez, Diane Barbosa, Charlene Bathelus, Maria Carvalho, Iliana Chevres, Rosa Moreno-Ortega, Stanley Neron, Stephanie Pestana (arr. 7:00 p.m.), Jerry Jacobs – 9

Absent: None

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

Pledge of Allegiance
National Anthem

Mr. Jacobs stated that this is Women's History Month and gave heartfelt words honoring each of the women Board members including Vice President Rosa Moreno-Ortega, Diane Barbosa, Charlene Bathelus, Maria Carvalho, Iliana Chevres, Nathalie Alcaide-Hernandez, Stephanie Pestana, and Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked Mr. Jacobs. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega wished Superintendent Hugelmeyer and her colleagues a happy Women's History Month and stated that each one of us has a passion for education. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked every woman who is at home at this time and every woman who supports our district including mothers, stepmothers, and grandmothers. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that we have to empower the women and the contribution each of us makes in this great society.

Mrs. Carvalho thanked Mr. Jacobs for his kind words and thanked her colleagues for their support all year. Mrs. Carvalho thanked Superintendent Hugelmeyer for allowing her and the female Board members to be able to be interviewed by and speak to two young high school ladies.

Mr. Neron thanked Mr. Jacobs for his salutations to the women of the Board and Superintendent. Mr. Neron stated that we salute all our administrators, teachers, mothers, and all the women in our City and we stand with you and behind your backs. Mr. Neron stated that women nurture the world and children and they raise our home and make sure our children have a good foundation. Mr. Neron stated that the work that women do every day is immeasurable and thanked them.

Mr. Jacobs thanked all the women in our community and society. Mr. Jacobs stated that we all know one thing and that we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for a woman. Mr. Jacobs stated that the importance of women in our society is paramount.

Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Reopening Plan Together Guidebook 2.0 with guidelines, resources, and best practices for the safe reopening of the Elizabeth Public Schools in Covid-19 conditions. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the following message from the Superintendent:

“This has been the most challenging year I have ever experienced as an educator. But I am grateful for the team at EPS that has been working tirelessly on our reopening plans in the face of ever-changing health conditions and conflicting data and information. This plan has been developed with a constant focus on how to best serve our students. This document will help provide guidance to our principals as they develop the site-specific logistical plans, and we will continue to update the reopening plan based on CDC, New Jersey Department of Health, and New Jersey Department of Education guidelines. Our ultimate goal is to ensure our schools open safely and responsibly and to continue to provide a healthy learning environment for each and every student.

It will be critical that we continue to monitor the CDC, NJDOH, and NJDOE directives to update plans so we can ensure the opening of schools provides a safe and healthy environment for students and staff. We will continue to plan and collaborate with teachers who have taken on new roles as virtual teachers using new tools, resources and online pedagogy. Our reopening focus will support our district promise of providing an innovative and personalized learning environment that ensures every child achieves excellence and those efforts will continue in all settings. We will also be continuing efforts to integrate more culturally relevant curriculum within and across grade levels to ensure diverse perspectives are included in literature and history. One of the greatest concerns during school closures has been the impact on students' emotional well-being. We will amplify our efforts to ensure students feel connected, valued and have opportunities to learn collaboratively. Our students with unique learning needs, as well as with IEPs, 504s and English learners will continue to be provided with the necessary differentiated supports to foster their individual success.

While we may need to limit parents' physical presence on campus, our goal will be to continue to partner with parents for their child's education. We will continue to communicate regularly with our families and staff regarding our plans and changing health and safety protocols. We want our parents to be as informed as possible when making the decision that is right for their children and family.”

Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing an article about education in NJ Advance Media for NJ.com which stated that yesterday Governor Murphy urged more New Jersey schools to return to in-person learning. Mrs. Hugelmeyer quoted Governor Murphy, “Now is the time for all of our schools to meaningfully move forward with a return to in-person instruction, whether it be full-time or with a hybrid schedule.” Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide and stated that Mayor J. Christian Bollwage has made provisions for all returning classroom teachers to be vaccinated. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a

PowerPoint slide and stated that on February 19, 2021, the New Jersey Department of Health issued guidance that unequivocally allowed a mandatory vaccine requirement to return to the workplace. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that this mandate is subject to well defined limited exemptions when the basis is presented. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance that allows employers to require its employees to be vaccinated against Covid-19. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that as with many laws, an employee may be entitled to an exemption, which this District will absolutely consider. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that she would like to make it very clear that the EEOC has also stated that asking whether an employee has been vaccinated is not a disability-related question and as such, it is not a violation of privacy rights. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the guidelines issued by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development are consistent with those of the EEOC and CDC. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the State, as a matter of policy, is encouraging the safe return of workers.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint presentation showing the pledge to reopen our schools responsibly and stated that we recognize the importance of returning students to our schools for in-person instruction, as well as the overarching need to protect the health and safety of our students and team members. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we expect that Covid-19 will be present, to some degree, in our community throughout the school year and our district is prepared to respond in the event that we experience a Covid-19 exposure. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that education, just like healthcare and food provision, is essential to our community, and as such, the reopening of our schools for in-person instruction with strict safety protocols will be prioritized. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the safety of our team members is also a critical priority in school reopening guidance and decisions. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we have highlighted key staff safety measures in a stand-alone section that summarizes safety measures set forth throughout this document to protect staff and students. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that our schools will need to maintain flexibility in the delivery of educational instruction based on health data. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that schools will be prepared with the support of the district to switch between distance learning and in-person instruction, and vice versa, with little notice. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that schools reopening for in-person instruction will also be ready to provide virtual learning for students who may need to isolate or quarantine, as well as students who are medically fragile or who have a household member who is medically fragile.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the guiding principles for reopening schools safely. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the guiding principles these core values have guided the work of the Elizabeth Board of Education, superintendent, administrators, and teachers to ensure a smooth and safe 2020-21 school year for each and every student. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the guiding principles include exceeding minimum expectations to place health and safety first for our students and team members, providing high quality education to all students, ensuring families have flexibility and choice in the instructional models, and delivering accurate and timely communication to team members and families as needed and keeping all stakeholders informed throughout the school year. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the Reopening Together Plan for in-person learning selection for PreK-12 families. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we recognize the importance of returning students to our schools for in-person instruction, as well as the overarching need to protect the health and safety of our students and team members. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that on March 22nd we welcome our Autism program back in our schools. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that as we continue to monitor our health data, we are optimistic that we will be able to begin bringing PreK, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade students back in on Monday, April 19th. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that in addition, we are hopeful that additional students will begin to return on April 26th. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that throughout this difficult year, the district has made its decision based on science and the best available and latest health data. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we will continue to do so. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we monitor those metrics daily and adjust accordingly. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we will continue to do so as well. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that to properly schedule each student, the district requests that families complete the survey no later than March 24th to indicate your learning preference for your children. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that you only need to complete one survey per family. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that all schools will continue to operate on a modified half-day schedule with PreK-8 from 8:20 a.m. to 12:39 p.m. and high school from 7:30 a.m. to 12:22 p.m. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the options for in-person learning and virtual learning. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that parents may choose in-person learning or 100% virtual learning. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the option for in-person learning is two days a week, either

Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday with alternating Wednesdays. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the other option is for 100% virtual learning. Mrs. Hugelmeier explained that in order to comply the classrooms have a maximum number of students in accordance with social distancing. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that if a choice is not made by March 24th, then the student will be scheduled by the child's school. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the parent survey form and questions to be answered.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing what to expect when returning to school and explained what needs to be done at home and what will be done when arriving at school. Mrs. Hugelmeier explained the established protocols if a temperature of more than 100° is detected. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that if your family is considering travel at this time or planning a trip, please review the information from the CDC. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we appreciate your support in reducing exposure to students and team members. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide about the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and protocols and what to expect when returning to school. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that for hand hygiene we will teach, model, practice, and monitor handwashing, particularly for lower grade levels; we have developed routines to ensure students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon arrival to campus, after using the restroom, after playing outside and returning to the classroom; we have posted signage in high visibility areas to remind students and staff of proper techniques for handwashing and covering of coughs and sneezes and other prevention measures; we have ensured adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, tissues, face coverings and hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent ethyl alcohol for staff and students who can safely use hand sanitizer; we have suspended use of drinking fountains and we are encouraging the use of reusable water bottles; we have minimized the sharing of supplies and equipment among staff and students to the extent feasible; when items must be shared, clean and disinfect items between uses; and we have minimized staff and students' contact with high-touch surfaces for example, propping open building or room doors, particularly at arrival and departure times. Mrs. Hugelmeier explained the protocols for physical distancing including that we will train students on protocols for physical distancing for both indoor and outdoor spaces; all schools and offices have signage reminding students and team members about physical distancing in prominent locations throughout each school; we will allow only necessary visitors in our schools and limit the number of students and staff who come into contact with them; and we will ensure team members maintain six feet or more of distance from one another and any visitors at our schools. Mrs. Hugelmeier explained the physical distancing for arrival and departure times and that we will minimize close contact between students, team members, families, and the broader community at arrival and departure through the following methods including that we are utilizing as many entrances and exits as can be supervised appropriately to decrease crowding at entry and exit points; all drivers need to remain in their vehicles, to the extent possible, when dropping off or picking up students; when in-person drop-off or pick-up is needed, only a single parent or caregiver should stand outside of the facility to pick up or drop off the child; all spaces have been marked six feet apart for adults waiting outside to drop off or pick up students; all adults are required upon entering schools for in-person pick-up or drop-off to wear a face covering; and we will have the proper supervision to disperse student gatherings during school arrival and departure. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide and explained the physical distancing for grades preschool through eighth grade; high school; all schools; and non-classroom settings. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide and stated the requirements for face masks for teachers, staff, and students. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the requirements for additional safety measures for teachers and other staff including school events, equipment for front office staff, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for special education instructors, aides, and healthcare personnel.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the maintenance and operations for safety equipment and stated that the Elizabeth Public Schools is committed to securing additional safety equipment to maintain the cleanliness of buildings including, but not limited to, hand sanitizing stations, PPE for staff, touchless thermometers and electrostatic sprayers and portable UV cleaners. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that other considerations include at least daily, and more frequently clean and disinfect frequently touched hard surfaces including tables, desks, chairs, door handles, light switches, phones, copy/fax machines, bathroom surfaces including toilets, countertops, faucets, and playground equipment and shared objects such as toys, games, art supplies, and books pursuant to CDC guidance; we are using cleaning products that are approved for use against Covid-19 on the Environmental Protection Agency approved list; drinking fountains have been suspended and students should bring their own water bottles;

bathrooms will be cleaned and stocked with soap throughout the day; disinfecting wipes and/or disinfecting sprays will be provided in every classroom; HVAC systems have been serviced and inspected across the district to ensure proper operation and circulation of outside air; upgrading from a 3-ply to a 4-ply filter, exceeding current requirements; and HVAC schedules will be set to run at least one hour before and after occupied hours. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that all the ventilation systems will be checked for proper operation. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the goal is to provide as much outdoor air as possible, prevent high ventilation rates that may spread the pathogen further from the human host and minimizing or diluting the recirculated air as much as possible. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that in order to achieve or goals we will increase the percentage of outdoor air as much as possible to dilute the recirculated air and minimizing the recirculated air; evaluate the using of filters with a higher MERV rating increasing the level of filtration when the equipment can handle it; run the equipment always in occupied mode to provide more changes of air by when the students show up; run the UVs at a slower speed to prevent/limit the projection of any possible pathogens in the air; have additional filters at hand so that if necessary, we do additional filter changes; lower the setting of the systems controlled by a Carbon Dioxide On-Demand Sensor to force them to increase the amount of outdoor air; and evaluate the addition of needlepoint bipolar ionization devices to our HVAC equipment to inactivate/kill the virus in the air and improve our filtration of particles in suspension in the room air. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that all classrooms will be provided with air purifiers that have a HEPA filter and most classrooms will be outfitted with two air purifiers that have a HEPA filter.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide about transportation and what to expect upon returning to school. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated the boarding and disembarking requirements include all families will need to screen students for Covid-19 symptoms before they board the school bus; drivers will stand at the entrance to the bus during student loading to perform a temperature check with touchless thermometers; students not meeting screening requirements will not be permitted to board the bus; we are ensuring at least six feet of distance between the bus/van driver and students when seated; we are using physical partitions or visual cues including floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate to students where they should not sit or stand near the bus operator; we are maximizing physical distancing between students on the bus by limiting available seats to the extent practicable such as every other row available for seating; students should practice physical distancing while waiting on buses at school bus stops; and students from the same family and/or the same classroom should be instructed to sit together whenever possible to minimize exposure to new contacts. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that buses are being thoroughly cleaned and disinfected daily and after transporting students with electrostatic sprayers; bus drivers are provided with disinfectant wipes and disposable gloves to support disinfection of frequently touched surfaces during the day; drivers will perform disinfecting wipe down of high touch points following each run; and drivers have been directed to increase ventilation on buses/vans by opening any operable windows, to the greatest extent possible, unless doing so poses a safety or health risk for current or subsequent occupants. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that due to the CDC requirements on buses, students and drivers will be required to wear face coverings; we are requiring bus drivers and students wear face coverings at all times while awaiting and riding on buses; and we have provided bus drivers with extra face coverings for students who lose or forget to bring their face coverings.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the federal breakfast and lunch program. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that all Elizabeth Public School students may receive free meals regardless of status and parents are able to pick up the Grab-n-Go meals at the nearest location to their home. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the Grab-n-Go program is from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. and gave the PreK-12 locations and schedule.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the Covid-19 protocols and notification and explained the requirements for students. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide and explained the Covid-19 Assessment Form that must be completed by the parent or guardian no later than 9:00 p.m. on the night before the child is attending school and if a child develops symptoms overnight, then please contact the school. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the Covid-19 testing and reporting requirements including indications for testing, positive test results, and negative test results. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide and explained the requirements for the response to suspected or confirmed cases, close contacts, return to school after testing with positive test results, and negative test results. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing a chart and explained the steps to take in

response to confirmed or suspected Covid-19 cases and close contacts. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing a chart and explained the steps to take in response to negative test results and return to in-person school or work. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide and explained the isolation and quarantine guidelines while awaiting and after receiving Covid-19 test results and a flowchart for the Covid-19 school symptom screening for students. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that remote learning is available for students who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction, or who are isolating or quarantining because of exposure to Covid-19, students who live in a household with anybody who is medically fragile, and students whose parents elected for virtual learning.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing what to expect when returning to school for athletics and stated that in keeping with its pledge to providing as complete a spring season as possible, the NJSIAA's schedule for the spring of 2021 offers the opportunity for the same number of games to be played as during a conventional season, while also providing the opportunity for statewide championships. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that start dates were pushed back to minimize overlap with sports. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the Elizabeth Athletic Department is committed to providing the necessary materials and guidance to promote behaviors that reduce the spread of Covid-19, such as social distancing, frequent hand washing, and the use of face coverings. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we will ensure that our coaches and athletes comply with all guidelines issued by the Governor's office, the CDC, NJDOH, and the EPS health officials while participating in practices and NJSIAA interscholastic competition. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that through a partnership with Hudl Technology, the Elizabeth Athletic Department is now able to livestream events from the Dunn Sports Center and EHS Frank Cicarell Academy to our district YouTube channel. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we look forward to expanding our partnership to include livestreaming events from the Winter and Spring held at Williams Field and Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Academy. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the 2020-2021 athletics include basketball, bowling, swimming, indoor track, volleyball, wrestling, baseball, softball, golf, tennis, and outdoor track.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing what to expect when returning to school for in-person learning and explained a model for the weekly schedule. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we are required to provide a distance between students as set by the CDC requirements and as a result the classroom capacity is reduced for the number of students per class. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that students have been divided into two groups, Group A and Group B and presented a calendar for April, May, and June showing the days of in-person learning for each group. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that all schools will continue to operate on a modified half-day schedule with PreK-8 from 8:20 a.m. to 12:39 p.m. and high school from 7:30 a.m. to 12:22 p.m. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the proposed dates for schools reopening and stated that the in-person learning for the autism program will begin on March 22nd; Egenolf, Headstart, and Wonder World for PreK will return to in-person learning on April 12th; PreK – 3 and grade 9 will return to in-person learning on April 19th; and grades 4-8 and 10-12 will return to in-person learning on April 26th. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that dates are subject to change. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing the social media website and app information and stated that information will be posted on our district website, www.epsnj.org and social media. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that this concluded her presentation on the Reopening Together Plan. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that later this evening she will present updates to the New Jersey Department of Education information released today regarding standardized testing.

Mr. Jacobs thanked Mrs. Hugelmeier for the information. Mr. Jacobs stated that our children, our community, our parents, and our teachers have been waiting for this day for a very long time. Mr. Jacobs stated that President Biden has been keeping his word by under promising and over delivering. Mr. Jacobs stated that we, as Board members, have been patiently waiting and we are so grateful that the Mayor has allotted vaccines for our teaching staff and all of our employees at EPS. Mr. Jacobs stated that we are hoping they take advantage of this opportunity because we wouldn't want to lose any of the vaccines because that is how it has been going. Mr. Jacobs stated that if we don't use it, we will lose it. Mr. Jacobs stated that this is a great opportunity for a district of our size because we have seen so many other districts that are smaller that have been able to open. Mr. Jacobs stated that now with this exciting news about things that the Mayor and Superintendent have been working on our children and our community are going to have the opportunity to go back to school before the end of the year. Mr. Jacobs stated that we all know how important it is to these children and these children have been suffering. Mr. Jacobs stated that this is

our opportunity now to finally get them back to where they belong which is in school. Mr. Jacobs stated that is the most important thing. Mr. Jacobs stated that all of us as adults were not in this position and not denied an in-person education. Mr. Jacobs stated that our children have patiently gone through this last year in the struggles of remote learning. Mr. Jacobs stated that now to have the opportunity to return to school is a great thing, not just for him as a parent or Board member, but for our community. Mr. Jacobs stated that we can't thank the Mayor enough to make sure all of our staff is going to be protected and healthy and that is the most important thing. Mr. Jacobs stated that was the guiding principle in the reopening plan to make sure our staff would be safe as well. Mr. Jacobs stated that we have been ravaged by this pandemic but now we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and now we know that our children are going back. Mr. Jacobs stated that we see that we are going back to work and the economy is opening up again. Mr. Jacobs stated that these are the things that need to happen and it is so imperative and he can't say enough about that. Mr. Jacobs stated that he can't tell you the sense of relief that he has that these vaccines are going to be allotted to our staff, our teachers, our janitors, and to all of our staff. Mr. Jacobs stated that we have had so many meetings in the last three months on this very topic of reopening. Mr. Jacobs stated that Board member Chevres is the chairperson of the Reopening Committee and we have been so diligent that we would be ready for this time for students to go back to school. Mr. Jacobs stated that Board member Barbosa has been on this and if it were up to her, she would vaccinate everyone and he would be right there next to her because we all feel this way. Mr. Jacobs stated that we need to get our kids back and that he can't tell you the amount of time and effort that they have spent over the past year on this. Mr. Jacobs stated that it is so clear about what the Superintendent mentioned last year at this time during our meeting when we had to close. Mr. Jacobs stated that we spent countless hours trying to get our children back into school because this is the most important thing. Mr. Jacobs stated that we all came on the Board of Education so that our children can get the best possible education.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that his words certainly describe all of the hard work and the effort of this Board and our team to be able to prepare for this announcement. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that it is important to summarize how we prepared to reopen and review with our community all of the critical steps that we have taken. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we met with our EEA President John Griffin on March 1st to secure his support for our plan and, in her opinion, that was a good conversation in terms of what was happening on March 22nd, April 19th, and how we were doing a slow phase-in return of our students. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that she has been in constant contact throughout this pandemic with the City's Health Officer and the district's physicians. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we have met and communicated with state and federal health and education officials as well as our state and federal government elected officials throughout the course of this time. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we have met with our Mayor, our Governor, our First Lady, U.S. Senators, State Senators, State Legislators, County Commissioners, and City Councilmembers. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that First Lady Tammy Murphy visited our Dunn Sports Center. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we have been in constant communication with all of our stakeholders. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that it is going to require patience and flexibility and we are taking all of the appropriate steps to welcome our students back to their classrooms. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that she would like to clarify that we are not stating that the vaccine is a mandate. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we want to stress that point that it is an opportunity that is being provided by our district and by our Mayor because so many of our team members have been struggling to secure those appointments. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that what we have been receiving messages about the frustration where they are logging on to multiple sites to try and secure an appointment. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that this is the reason why we are providing the opportunity and it ensures the safe return of our team members and our students to our schools. Mrs. Hugelmeyer thanked Mr. Jacobs for allowing her to share this important message with our community.

Mr. Jacobs thanked Mrs. Hugelmeyer for clarifying this issue. Mr. Jacobs stated that it can't be lost on the importance that our staff has the ability to get vaccinated. Mr. Jacobs stated that is why we are so grateful that the Mayor has made sure that our staff are going to be safe. Mr. Jacobs stated that in his conversations with the Mayor he indicated that no one wants to get the kids back to school more than him. Mr. Jacobs stated that so does everyone else on this Board and everyone in administration because we know that is our purpose. Mr. Jacobs stated that you are only as good as the purpose you designed to do.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked the Superintendent for the presentation and stated that it exceeds her expectation as a Board member, mother, community member, and educator. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked every person in our district who participated in the Reopening Plan and all those who have worked tirelessly for these days. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that for our community, our Reopening Plan is 100% aligned with the CDC guidelines. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked Superintendent Hugelmeyer for the clarification about vaccination and stated that every district in New Jersey asks these specific questions about vaccinations to collect data. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega asked when the parents need to complete the survey. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that information is on the Elizabeth Public School website if they have any questions. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked the Mayor and stated that she appreciates his great work. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that as a teacher she knows how important it is to have the vaccination program for teachers and each staff member. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she appreciates the great work done by the Superintendent and her staff on this Reopening Plan.

Mr. Neron saluted the great work of our Superintendent and staff. Mr. Neron stated that the Superintendent has an amazing team that works around the clock and, as Mr. Jacobs said, you can't imagine the number of hours that have been put in since March 2020 until today, March 18, 2021 working on this around the clock. Mr. Neron stated that one key thing that he wanted to emphasize that is so important is that every single person on this Board cares and he can't continue to re-emphasize enough is how much we care. Mr. Neron stated that this has not only impacted school children but has impacted every single home. Mr. Neron saluted our Mayor because of the empathy he has for our community, he mourns when you mourn, and he has been extremely empathetic and understanding. Mr. Neron stated that our Mayor has done his very best to try and solve and figure this out and nobody can figure this out and he is constantly at work trying to figure this out. Mr. Neron stated that our Mayor has done great work to access and secure vaccines for our educators is simply amazing and thanked him. Mr. Neron stated that it is necessary and needed and is something that every mayor throughout the state should be trying to do and he believes they are and are trying to do their very best to do so. Mr. Neron stated that more importantly, we just heard an amazing presentation on what it would take if we followed the rulebook of what the CDC proper protocols look like, what Covid guidelines require, and what minimizing risks look like and nobody can care as much as you, the parents and children. Mr. Neron stated that we can't care more for your children than you care for your children. Mr. Neron stated that he doesn't say that from an insensitive point of view but from the point of view that you must care more than anybody and you must make sure that you minimize the risk in your homes. Mr. Neron stated that we can do all that we can do in the school system but if you're not following the protocol in your home and we are talking to every single citizen and if the citizens are not following the protocols in their homes, then the spread will continue no matter what we do to minimize the risk. Mr. Neron stated that when you walk into a school building coronavirus doesn't automatically disappear. Mr. Neron stated that we can minimize the risk and do all that we have to do but you have to care more than we do and that it's in all of our hands as a community to minimize the risks and take these protocols seriously. Mr. Neron stated that it may sound stringent and it may sound extreme but for the time being we are going to have to dot all our "i"s and cross all our "t"s to make sure our most precious commodities of our community are safe and that is our children. Mr. Neron stated that he can't implore you enough to understand that from the way we care for our children at home to transporting them to schools that nobody can transport them better to school than you can. Mr. Neron stated that we are going to do everything we can but we need the entire community and we need the help of everyone to make this successful. Mr. Neron stated that when you look at the CDC guidelines when it comes to transportation, our City would be under utter chaos if we had to put hundreds and hundreds of buses out in the streets to transport the kids to school. Mr. Neron stated that we have to work together to figure this out so that it is not chaos and that we are properly getting our students to school and we are following an orderly manner in how to get kids into the school buildings. Mr. Neron stated that this does not just rely on school principals, security guards, and bus drivers but requires the entire school community. Mr. Neron thanked everyone for their patience and stated that our children have been patient, our teachers have been patient, our parents have been patient, and our community has been patient with the state of the pandemic and what's next. Mr. Neron stated that there are many stakeholders at the table and from various capacities from the federal government all the way down to the local government that have had to try and figure out a plan. Mr. Neron stated that we want to thank you for your patience and stated that there is more to come

and together we will make this happen and we will succeed. Mr. Neron stated that there are tons of hope at the end of the tunnel and the light is very bright.

Mrs. Carvalho stated that for a year to date we have been preparing on a daily, weekly, monthly basis to bring our children back. Mrs. Carvalho stated that we all know that there was a piece missing and that the piece was this vaccine. Mrs. Carvalho stated that this is a gift that we have been given at EPS. Mrs. Carvalho stated that anyone who sat at their computer and tried to get an appointment for their grandmother, their mother, their father, their sister, or their brother knows how difficult it is to sit and wait to try and register a family member to get this vaccine. Mrs. Carvalho stated that this is a light at the end of the tunnel for us and we will be able to reopen our schools and be able to bring our children back in a safe and healthy way. Mrs. Carvalho stated that we will be able to be safe. Mrs. Carvalho stated that for the last year our custodians, our warehouse workers, our food service workers, and our security guards have come to work and they have seen all of the work that has been put into our schools to bring our students back. Mrs. Carvalho stated that the one piece which is our vaccines is given to us and don't waste it because we can't come back safely without these vaccines rolling out. Mrs. Carvalho thanked our Mayor, our Superintendent and her staff and stated that she knows that it is day in and day out and they have lost countless hours of sleep to make this happen. Mrs. Carvalho stated that there is light at the end of the tunnel and a year from today we are going to be in an even better situation. Mrs. Carvalho stated that we have to work together to make this work and thanked everyone for their patience. Mrs. Carvalho thanked everyone for working to make this happen.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that sitting through this and listening to the countless hours that go into A to Z and when we closed schools we were thinking about when we were going to reopen. Mrs. Barbosa stated that here we are a year later and we are at that point. Mrs. Barbosa stated that one big highlight is the ability to allocate these vaccines. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she can't stress enough, being in the field she is in, the minimal amount of vaccinations that are out there. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she understands the amount of pressure there is on City officials and on the State and we just can't get enough out there. Mrs. Barbosa stated that when she heard this finally has been allocated, that was her last piece. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she was thinking that was what we needed to do for our staff to make it easily available because she knows how difficult it is. Mrs. Barbosa stated that for the upcoming weeks, we will get there and the shipments are coming out but right now allocating vaccines is very difficult. Mrs. Barbosa stated that when you are being handed the vaccine and the ability to be able to make an appointment that is a blessing. Mrs. Barbosa thanked the team that made this happen and stated that as a Board we were asking how we are going to make this happen and here it is the last missing piece. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the students are coming back and we are opening our doors again. Mrs. Barbosa stated that our special needs children are coming back in less than a week and we are going to follow all the CDC guidelines and protocols. Mrs. Barbosa stated that everything is outlined and the logistics are continually being worked on. Mrs. Barbosa thanked them for all the hard work and stated to the teachers and staff that if they intend to get vaccinated and have not been vaccinated yet, here is your chance. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she is very proud to be sitting on this Board and be able to say that we are giving an opportunity to you. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she is ready to work together and continue to work together on this Reopening Plan. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the next few weeks will be something new with new protocols, new way of living, new way of going to school, new way with modifications in learning. Mrs. Barbosa stated that like we have done it all, we closed it together and we will reopen together.

Mrs. Pestana thanked Superintendent Hugelmeier and her team for the endless hours that went into this Reopening Plan. Mrs. Pestana stated that this has been a long year that we have been out of in-person education. Mrs. Pestana stated that this is the end of the tunnel and it is looking bright. Mrs. Pestana stated that these vaccines that were handed to us is truly the missing piece of the puzzle. Mrs. Pestana stated that we are truly wanting our children to come back to a safe and healthy environment and thanked the Superintendent for covering that in each piece of the presentation. Mrs. Pestana stated to the students that they are coming back to in-person education and thanked the parents and community for their patience. Mrs. Pestana thanked everyone for the hard work that went into this.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega asked Mrs. Hugelmeyer to clarify about uniforms for students.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that this topic was very important for our Board and she remembers drafting a letter for our parents many months ago stating that they did not have to worry about purchasing uniforms. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that she knew that was a tremendous concern that our parents had and her response was to please not worry about purchasing uniforms. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that is our message today and all of this is going to be communicated to our parents through the virtual parent meetings that we are going to have as well as in the letters that we are going to send home. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we are not expecting our parents to have to make an unnecessary purchase for just three months of school. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that we have amazing principals and vice principals that are leading our schools and she can assure you that all of our administrators will be very supportive of our families. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the uniform requirement is being waived. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that she is not going to put that unnecessary expense as a requirement for our families.

Mr. Jacobs thanked Superintendent Hugelmeyer and stated that last year we did change the policy to ensure that our parents didn't have to worry about the undo expense of having to purchase uniforms since we are in the pandemic. Mr. Jacobs stated that he is truly appreciative to Superintendent Hugelmeyer and her staff. Mr. Jacobs stated that he knows our schools are ready and that he visited a majority of our schools in the last three months, not to make sure people were doing their jobs but to make sure everything was ok and it is. Mr. Jacobs stated that our schools are ready to go, our children are ready to be back, and he is so excited that we are finally at this point and at this opportunity. Mr. Jacobs thanked Superintendent Hugelmeyer and all the staff for their efforts to make this happen.

Mr. Jacobs presented the following public participation statement.

“At this time, the meeting is open for public comment 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 time limit will be strictly enforced and audio transmission will be terminated at the end of three minutes. 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.”

Mr. Jacobs called upon the first public participant, John Griffin, to address the Board.

John Griffin, EEA President, spoke about concerns and problems with the reopening of schools.

Mr. Jacobs thanked him for his comments and called upon the next public participant, Maria Lorenz, to address the Board.

Maria Lorenz spoke about the Special Education PTA and the lack of response to public speakers.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Maria Perez, to address the Board. Maria Perez did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Keena Kincaid, to address the Board. Keena Kincaid did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Andrea Torres, to address the Board.

Andrea Torres, student, asked for students not to wear uniforms when they return to school.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Diana Vivanco, to address the Board. Diana Vivanco did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Erika Ruiz, to address the Board. Erika Ruiz did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Priscilla Martinez, to address the Board. Priscilla Martinez did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Lynda Dellipoali to address the Board. Lynda Dellipoali did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Fatima Singleton, to address the Board.

Fatima Singleton stated that it has been a year since the pandemic started and prayed for the lives we have lost all over the world. Mrs. Singleton thanked the Mayor for securing vaccines and the Governor for the help he has given our district. Mrs. Singleton spoke about uniforms for students.

Mr. Jacobs called upon Lynda Dellipoali who was on the online platform.

Lynda Dellipoali asked about the safety of high-risk children and high-risk parents when the students return to school.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Linda Soldo, to address the Board. Linda Soldo did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Melba Henao, to address the Board. Melba Henao did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Michelle Santos, to address the Board.

Michelle Santos spoke about a roundtable for special needs and stated that she is happy that schools are opening for the autism program.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Kapri Germain, to address the Board. Kapri Germain did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Luisa Morales, to address the Board. Luisa Morales did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Angie Cuellar, to address the Board. Angie Cuellar did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Kelly Cordero, to address the Board. Kelly Cordero did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Grace Felix, to address the Board. Grace Felix did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Carmen Bruno, to address the Board. Carmen Bruno did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Kattia Fernandes, to address the Board. Kattia Fernandes did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Laura Rico, to address the Board.

Laura Rico stated that she had concerns about school uniforms. Mrs. Rico thanked the Mayor for the vaccines for staff and thanked everyone for reopening the schools.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Karla Rivera, to address the Board. Karla Rivera did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Danielle Fienberg, to address the Board.

Danielle Fienberg spoke about special education, student uniforms, and concerns with the reopening of the schools.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments and called upon the next public participant, Gladys Villata, to address the Board.

Gladys Villata stated that she has concerns for children who have been falling behind.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Ilca DaSilva, to address the Board. Ilca DaSilva did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Antoinette Mitchell-Brown, to address the Board. Antoinette Mitchell-Brown did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Julianna Marulanda, to address the Board. Julianna Marulanda did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Diana Garces, to address the Board.

Diana Garces thanked them for reopening the schools and spoke about student uniforms. Mrs. Garces stated that children including those with special needs are struggling.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Sandra Zapata, to address the Board. Sandra Zapata did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Kevin Kelly, to address the Board. Kevin Kelly did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Lee Pereira, to address the Board. Lee Pereira did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Jazelle Mejias, to address the Board. Jazelle Mejias did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Judith Mankowski, to address the Board.

Judith Mankowski spoke about the problems with poor air filtration and the HVAC systems in our buildings.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Dolores Ricks, to address the Board. Dolores Ricks did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon Melba Henoa who was on the online platform.

Melba Henoa stated that she hasn't heard anything after speaking at the last meeting and spoke about special education.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called upon Julianna Marulanda who was on the online platform.

Julianna Marulanda stated that teachers and all staff should be able to have the vaccine before schools reopen.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Denis Osby, to address the Board. Denis Osby did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon Antoinette Mitchell-Brown who was on the online platform.

Antoinette Mitchell-Brown stated that she has concerns about children returning to schools and spoke about the poor ventilation systems in the older buildings.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments and called upon the next public participant, Emmanuel Rincon, to address the Board.

Emmanuel Rincon spoke about the abrupt return to school on Monday for the autistic program and concerns about the staff returning on Monday who may not have vaccines.

Mr. Jacobs thanked him for his comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Grysel Montserrat, to address the Board. Grysel Montserrat did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Kason Little, to address the Board.

Kason Little spoke about the concerns and problems in the plan to reopen the schools.

Mr. Jacobs thanked him for his comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Priscilla Sanchez, to address the Board. Priscilla Sanchez did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Silvana Aparicio, to address the Board. Silvana Aparicio did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon the next public participant, Wendy Maravi, to address the Board.

Wendy Maravi spoke about her concerns with the plan to reopen the schools.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Tom Coyle, to address the Board. Tom Coyle did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called twice upon the next public participant, Maria Velazquez, to address the Board. Maria Velazquez did not respond.

Mr. Jacobs called upon Lee Pereira who was on the online platform.

Lee Pereira spoke about concerns with the plan to reopen the schools, special education, and the lack of communication with parents. Mrs. Pereira requested classes in sign language for students in PreK and up.

Mr. Jacobs thanked her for her comments.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the public speaking portion of the meeting is at the limit of sixty minutes and the emails received will be spread in full in the Official Minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Melissa Llano:

“I am a CDA at school 51. I have 2 school aged children that attend EPS, (an 8year old on the spectrum and a 6year old) and 1 toddler. Before we all went virtual in November, I was given the accommodation to work from home 2 days a week, then we all got sent home. Being virtual this past school year has been difficult for us all, as you know. I can honestly say we are very excited to get back to school. Unfortunately, I will be returning to the building (with no students) and my own children will be home weeks before *they* get to return. The reason I requested the accommodation in the first place was due to childcare issues. As you are aware, CDA's must live in Elizabeth, so while I'm in the building, my children are still virtual until April 12th. Who is with my children? Ten days. That's how many days I will need to scramble or take off from work to provide childcare because of the short notice. Ten days. That may not seem like a lot, but when you have no more options, its a lot of days. The fact that teachers can stay home until the students return seems understandable, but why do you not consider the same for the CDA's? And are we still required to be in the building until 3:05 when for the past 3 + months, we have been able to connect to our parents from home. What will we be doing differently in the classroom that we can't do from home until the students return? I am desperate to get a vaccine, but I can't get an appointment, as I'm sure many of your team members are feeling the same frustration. Why hasn't a vaccine center been set up for EPS employees? Coming to the classroom to prepare and set up is required. I understand that. My issue is the time frame. We have been given less than a week to find appropriate childcare. Being back in the classroom is the ultimate goal for so many of us, my own children included. I thank you and appreciate all your hard work

during these unprecedented times. We have done great work with the cards that have been dealt, and I can only hope we continue to do what is right!”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Nicole Gebhart:

“I am writing to you this evening to express my concerns about the plan to reopen. I believe that if you can address these concerns then most of the staff would feel comfortable to return to our schools.

1) Teacher Vaccinations

Will Elizabeth Board of Education be vaccinating its teachers similar to other districts (e.g. Jersey City, Newark...)? With limited access to vaccines today this is the top concern for teachers.

2) School Ventilation

Have the ventilation systems in all the schools been refurbished and brought up to the CCD suggested levels in order to prevent the spread of this virus and its variants? If so, can any documentations of these renovations be shared with the union and parents?

3) Process and Procedures

What procedures will be in place if a child becomes sick at school or a classroom member has a confirmed case of Covid-19? Previously there was a deep clean day in the hybrid schedule on Wednesday’s but from what I have been told that no longer exists. How will the schools disinfect the area between hybrid groups?

4) Hybrid Teaching

I also have many concerns regarding teaching a hybrid classroom. Will charging stations be installed for the children in the classrooms so that they can charge and participate in online instruction while remaining socially distant? The student laptops do not last the entire school day without charging. I think it would be impossible to teach both in class students and online students if they were not all participating with laptops. The old buildings don’t have enough electrical outlets to charge computers and remain socially distant.

5) Communication

Last but definitely not least, I truly believe if staff felt as though they were informed and part of the process everyone would feel excited to be returning to our schools. A better communication plan would be incredibly appreciated by all.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Suhail Campos:

“Good evening! Hope this email find you well. Yesterday, we all received the news of the dates that we will be returning back to work. For many teachers this puts us in a bind. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity as a parent for my own children to finish off the school year virtually. Since I will be going back to school, my own children will be home virtually learning without supervision from an adult. Personally, I feel it is still unsafe for my own children to return school. Now, I will be going into a school which I truly believe is very unsafe and unsanitary. I have a class of 32 kindergarteners who may all be going back. Even if we cut the class in half there will be 16 children in a tiny classroom with 3 teachers, plus an ESL teacher that comes in daily, along with the special teachers. There will not be any social distancing in this class which directly goes against the CDC guidelines and the laws set in place by New Jersey. It is impossible to expect that any of the guidelines will be followed based on the sizing of my room and the typical dynamic of a kindergarten class, their desks aren’t even 3 ft apart and there are no plexiglasses. We will all be on top of each other which is incredibly absurd and illogical. I still do not understand how other districts are able to provide teachers and students extra safety measures but Elizabeth continues to refuse any form of security during this pandemic. Even before Covid happened, I was the one who would clean my classroom and my student’s bathroom, since the custodians in my school do not properly clean well or sanitize anything. I do not think that my classroom has even been mopped in years by a custodian. I typically am not the teacher to complain. However, Covid has brought this situation to a new level. Covid is still very high and prominent in Elizabeth but we are being asked to come back in such unsafe conditions. I have even had parents confide in me of them having Covid, which further proves how unsafe the community is due to the pandemic. It is terrifying to know that I will be dealing with parents and children who may potentially have the virus, I will be putting my own safety at risk and the people in my classroom will be at risk (teachers and students included). My fear is getting sick and bringing this virus back to my own family. I feel as if it is my duty as an active community member in Elizabeth to inform you

on how I feel, and on the behalf of teachers who have the same concern about this unsafe return. I hope to see changes in the school and in my classroom before we all return on April 12th. Thank you for your time and hearing my concerns.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Ellen Glynn:

“I am writing to express my concerns with the reopening of the Elizabeth public schools. Throughout this year we have heard that the district is following science so my question is why stop now? We are still in the midst of a pandemic. Our numbers are still high, higher than the fall when the decision to remain closed was made. Concerns over air filters and ventilation are still here, the staff and public have not received information regarding this or remedies taken. It’s hard to feel safe and comfortable without full transparency. It was noted that staff can now get the COVID vaccine but as everyone is aware it has been difficult for many to find appointments. We are not fully protected. I understand everyone’s longing for ‘normalcy’ but rushing to open does not make this happen and is only going to create more sickness and stress for everyone. I ask you to consider remaining remote for remainder of this school year for the safety of our school community. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Lauren Gonzalez:

“Good evening Superintendent Hugelmeier, President Jacobs and all Board of Education Commissioners. My name is Lauren Gonzalez. I am a parent of 3 children who attend school in Elizabeth. I am certain that many of our questions will be answered through your revised reopening plan and presentation, however I am hoping that additional pertinent information regarding the logistics of day to day operations will be addressed.

To date, I am unaware how the board has facilitated parent discussions regarding the reopening of our district. It is my hope that after the revised reopening plan is presented, that the board will indeed engage parental stakeholders in roundtable discussions, so that community members, board members, and educators may work cohesively to facilitate smooth transitions for our learners.

In the interim, I ask that you kindly address the following area of concern if it is not already published in the reopening plan. As a parent, it is my observation that substitute teachers are scarce during remote instruction as well as during live instruction prior to covid related closures. As you know the lack of class coverage subsequently causes teachers to split classes, cancel classes, or increase their student capacity. How will the board ensure that adequate class coverage will be available daily when school returns to in person instruction; particularly when teachers will be expected to quarantine or unexpectedly become ill? I look forward to working together and I appreciate your time.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from William Oliwa:

“I’m writing to express my concern about the reopening plan. Many issues are at play, proper ventilation in older buildings, access to clean PPE and cleaning supplies, logistical difficulties of hybrid learning. However, my biggest concern is the staff’s access to the vaccine. Many of the Prek-3 staff is older and will now have to start working with the general public. Securing the vaccine has proven incredibly challenging. Other districts have secured the vaccine for its staff even as they put them in harm’s way. Why has our district not prioritized our teachers enough to offer this? The only explanation is that teachers are not a priority in Elizabeth education.

Understand that if you devalue teachers, you are in fact jeopardizing the entire educational structure that empowers the Board of Education.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from a parent:

“Good Evening Madam Superintendent and Board Commissioners, My name is Ann and I would like to express some concerns as a parent of two EPS students. I would like to open by commending the job of teachers and staff at my children’s school. They have been working very hard to ensure their academic success. Virtual learning has been tough on everyone. I also understand how difficult it is to plan a reopening for 30,000 students, however, as a parent, I do not feel there was any input asked of parents. I have some questions and concerns I hope may be answered by the time this letter is read.

I have the following questions in regard to reopening. First, when is the set date for Pre-k to 3rd grade students to return? As of now there are several dates being rumored to be the opening. What is the schedule? What is being done to ensure my child's health and safety? Finally, will uniforms be required? As a parent of TWO children in the same school, with the given plan, ONE child will not be able to return to school. Is there a plan for the return for 4th and 5th grade students? How can siblings in the same school watch as one eagerly goes back to school and the other with no plan for return? I recognize this isn't the board's issue but how is this supposed to work for parents? This plan seems trite and ill conceived at the moment. What indication is this of September?

Parents and staff need more than a week to plan child care, drop offs and pickups. This should be a building by building plan that works for each unique building. Not a district wide blanketed opening, or else this could have adverse effects for not only health and safety, but for attendance as well.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I hope this board will take some things into consideration.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from James Rodriguez:

“I am a parent, business owner and a tax-paying resident of Elizabeth, New Jersey. I am incredibly disappointed and equally concerned that I am hearing about the reopening of our schools through rumors. As a parent, homeowner and concerned citizen of Elizabeth, I demand to be notified and included in life-changing decisions that affect my family and community.

I unequivocally disagree with the reopening of our schools at this time. It is premature at best, especially since Elizabeth is considered a "Red Zone." We have a large number of people coming to Elizabeth to get vaccinated and tested that may be increasing the spread of the Coronavirus. Bringing more staff into town creates more opportunities to spread the virus. At this time, vaccines are not available to everyone and appointments are hard to get.

Children are super-spreaders with little to no symptoms. Although the effects of Covid-19 on children is still unknown, it has been determined that there are significant medical issues after infection.

Rearranging our schedules for 2 ½ months (that can be changed at any time) in my opinion is not worth it. Students will be on a half day, staggered schedule which provides no consistency for them. They will still be learning their lessons in a classroom, on their laptops, with masks on, 6 feet apart, without socializing, without eating, without much movement. How is this any better than their current learning environment at home? Why would any responsible parent subject their child to such complicated learning conditions? That isn't normal. That isn't a "new normal." That is borderline abuse.

What safety measure has the district and City of Elizabeth put in place to ensure a healthy (physically and mentally) learning environment for our children? How can you assure the safety of students, staff and community? Can you prove that you are following CDC guidelines? Can you prove that all schools have new, air filters with at least an 8 MERV rating? And will the schools be sanitized with safe and effective EPA registered sanitizing products, not concentrated cleaners like Fabuloso?

What protocols do you have in place if there is an infection? NJ Motor Vehicles shut down when there was 1 infection. Will you shut down too, or keep it a secret? You can't. And, frankly, you don't care. I know this because you have not cared to ask the tax-paying residents and parents how we feel about it?! It appears, WE don't matter - and sadly, our KIDS don't either. How many more lives do you want to lose on your watch?”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Carol Digirolamo:

“As a member of the Elizabeth teaching staff, I am concerned about the reopening of schools not only for myself but for the safety for my students & their families. There are many issues that I have not seen addressed as of now.

Earlier it was inferred that the EBOE was going to provide vaccine for its employees, what happened to that idea?

Will medical certificates be honored as prescribed by the Doctor?

Will teacher who want to be vaccinated but unable to get an appointment, be forced to return to school?

If a teacher reacts negatively to the vaccine will they need to take sick day, or will it be covered under COVID rules?

If a student tests positive, then the teacher becomes infected, do they have to use sick days?

What is the protocol if a teacher tests positive? Will he or she be forced to use sick days?
Can quarantine or slightly ill teachers will have the option to teach from home?
For those who are waiting for the vaccine, will time be given for the vaccine to become effective before entering school?
What will class size be capped?
Will teachers be provided with enough supplies so students will not have to share?
What will the bathroom protocols be for the children? Especially for the young ones cannot wait in line while janitors are in the bathroom cleaning it between use.
Will children who come with no masks be given one and if not, will they be sent home?
What is in place for the students who register a fever upon entering the building?
Will plexiglass dividers be provided for the classrooms?
If children leave their computers at home how will they participate in the day's lessons?
What will the protocol be if a child comes to school ill?
If a child becomes infected, will all siblings classes be put under quarantine?
Will the nurse have a well office and sick office to keep students separated?
Will there be consequences for parents who consistently send their children to school with symptoms?
What will be the protocol for children who test positive for the class and the school?
Will schedules be adjusted to accommodate time to pack up and exit the building at the end of the day?
Will there be staggered arrival & departure?
What is in place for parent pick up to avoid crowds & possible transmission?
Who will be cleaning the rooms each day?
Is there proof of upgraded filters and cleaning of ventilation?
Will there be air purifiers for classrooms where there are not windows or where windows do not open?
What supplies will be provided to the janitors to make sure the classrooms are up to the CDC guidelines?
What supplies will be provided to the janitors to make sure the bathrooms are up to the CDC guidelines?
Is the hand sanitizer provided be up to CDC standards & how often will they be refilled?
These are just a few of my concerns. I hope that there will be answers & that you will make decisions based on science taking in consider what is best for your staff, students & their families.”

Since there were no other participants for public speaking and no other emails received, Mr. Jacobs closed this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Jacobs asked if any Board members had questions or comments.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she heard the community. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega responded to one member of the community that we can respectfully disagree. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that it is okay that you disagree with us but we need to respectfully disagree. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that the person needs to sit down with their community and work for the betterment of our students. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that as a member of the community, as a teacher, and as a member of this Board of Education she cannot be silent when she sees some of the public comments in a not respectful way. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that you can say that you respectfully disagree with a decision and that is fine. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she wanted to remind some of our community members that it is not okay to disrespect a member of our Elizabeth Public Schools. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that to hear some of the community members tonight hurt her feelings because you can respectfully disagree with us but you cannot forget everyone is working hard. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that the Reopening Plan is meant to help and we need our students inside the schools. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she hopes as a community that one day they can sit down and hear their points of view but she doesn't like when they personally attack one of our Elizabeth Public School employees.

Mr. Neron thanked members of the public for speaking out and giving us feedback because feedback is important during this time. Mr. Neron stated that we have to take heed to the feedback that we heard and he is sure as a Board we will come together and consistently try to improve what is being done. Mr. Neron stated that in lieu of what our Vice President just said, respect is something that is earned and we have to consistently respect each other. Mr. Neron stated that we are all going to have our differences

and different opinions and many listening may not agree with what the federal government is doing, what the state government is doing, what the local government is doing, what engagement looks like to you or what engagement looks like to us. Mr. Neron stated that we are working very hard as a district to begin to engage the community and that is not something that we are oblivious to and we have been working very hard at. Mr. Neron stated that he knows that you cannot have many chefs in the kitchen and you can only have a select few leaders. Mr. Neron stated that everybody can't lead and it's not that they don't have the capability to lead but we have to work in a concerted effort. Mr. Neron stated that some things will work and some things won't. Mr. Neron stated that tomorrow is not guaranteed for anybody and there are no guarantees because that is just life. Mr. Neron stated that we can say we are opening in three months and in three months, the CDC, the state, or the government puts out regulations that things have changed and then we are back to square one. Mr. Neron stated that is what happened to us back in last March where we thought this could end in April, this could end in May, this could end in June, then July, and it kept changing and changing. Mr. Neron stated that he empathizes with everybody who is having a tough time about this because this is extremely difficult. Mr. Neron stated that there is nobody who has a PhD in what we are going through. Mr. Neron stated to our professional staff, teachers, and union, that he wants to implore that we come with a spirit of wanting to work together. Mr. Neron stated that he wants to emphasize to our teachers to get the vaccine for those who want to get it and everybody has a right to do what they want. Mr. Neron stated that we want to be sure that we minimize risks and this is something that we have fought very hard to get and it is not easy to come by. Mr. Neron stated that you all know, the community knows, and the world knows that people are trying to get the vaccine. Mr. Neron stated that to secure it for our professional staff is a huge accomplishment and we hope our staff will take advantage of it if you see fit for your life, for your family, and for your professional career. Mr. Neron stated that if you want to do this, the door is open if you choose to do so. Mr. Neron stated that we have to move in the spirit of coming up with a way to figure this out. Mr. Neron stated that John F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Mr. Neron stated that he says ask not what education can do for you but what you can do for education. Mr. Neron stated that is what we are struggling with right now and we are trying to figure this education thing out and we need all hands-on deck. Mr. Neron stated that you complain that you're not being engaged and want to be engaged. Mr. Neron stated that we have a very large district of 29,000 students and 4,000 employees and a City of over 120,000 people. Mr. Neron stated that is a lot of people to get input from and we need to hear it for certain but we need to move in a concerted effort to get our kids back in school. Mr. Neron stated that you have a choice and we are not dictators and we are not saying this is what you must do. Mr. Neron stated that we have to work together as a community and as a family in a concerted effort. Mr. Neron stated that he hopes we can all take heed to what everyone has said tonight and not only what we heard from our community but what we heard from our leadership here to work as a unit.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that she applauds the efforts and she was looking through a couple of articles and sees various districts around us opening every single day. Mrs. Barbosa saluted our team for allowing us, such a large district, to follow in the footsteps and try to bring all of our kids back. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she always salutes the parents that call and wants to salute not only our children but our teachers and staff that are working. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we have our students who are struggling and we hear the concerns about them struggling. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we have our teachers, and a lot of teachers don't call, and she is going to bring focus to our special needs teachers. Mrs. Barbosa stated that a parent brought it up that when you are trying to work with a nonverbal child, it is so hard for the child and it is so hard for the teacher. Mrs. Barbosa stated that coming back to the respect issue, we need to stop and understand the level of respect that everyone deserves. Mrs. Barbosa stated that everyone has their position in life and as a parent you have your passion and your love to support your children and she respects you. Mrs. Barbosa stated that as a teacher trying to teach my child how to say a word, she respects you. Mrs. Barbosa stated that our special ed department has put in much hard work, our child study team has been coming in evaluating our children through the pandemic and have been in our school buildings. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she salutes our regular ed, high school teachers, and gym teachers and now we just need you to come back. Mrs. Barbosa stated that now we need to bring this home and we need to try to bring some normalcy for our children. Mrs. Barbosa thanked all the levels of this process from virtual to now we are going back to in-person and thanked everyone.

Mr. Jacobs thanked them for their comments.

Mr. Jacobs stated that we will go tab by tab to review the agenda and each board member may ask questions.

Minutes of the Meetings of February 18 and 25, 2021
Secretary/Treasurer's Report for the Month of January 2021

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Personnel Report
Supplemental Personnel Report

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer requested Chief of Operations Francisco Cuesta give a summary of the report.

Chief of Operations Francisco Cuesta gave a synopsis of the report.

Tuition Report

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Superintendent's Report – Considerations
Superintendent's Report – Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Investigative Results

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Authorizations Report

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Mrs. Barbosa asked about the change to the calendar.

Mr. Kennedy explained the correction for the Primary Election Date.

Finance and Accounting Report – Authorization to Pay Vouchers, etc.

Supplemental Finance and Accounting Report – Transfer of Funds

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Award of Contracts Report
Supplemental Award of Contracts Report

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Miscellaneous Communication – None

Claims List

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions.

Resolution – Autism Awareness Month
Resolution – National Library Week
Resolution – Requisition for Taxes
Resolution – U.C.E.S.C. Environmental Safety Program for 2021-2022
Resolution – Consent for Transfer of Liquor License
Resolution – Settlement of Workers' Compensation Claim (2017-4075) – K.C.
Resolution – Settlement of Workers' Compensation Claim (2017-19740) – K.C.
Resolution – Maximum Travel Expenditures for 2021-2022
Resolution – Appointing NuEnergen LLC - Energy Management
Resolution – Appointing Manor II Electric Inc. for Emergency Generator at School No. 1

Mr. Jacobs asked if there were any questions on the above resolutions.

Mr. Jacobs added the following to the agenda:

Minutes of the Meetings of February 18 and 25, 2021
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Supplemental Personnel Report
Tuition Report
Superintendent's Report – Considerations
Superintendent's Report – Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Investigative Results
Authorizations Report
Finance and Accounting Report – Authorization to Pay Vouchers, etc.
Supplemental Finance and Accounting Report – Transfer of Funds
Award of Contracts Report
Supplemental Award of Contracts Report
Miscellaneous Communication – None
Claims List
Resolution – Autism Awareness Month
Resolution – National Library Week
Resolution – Requisition for Taxes
Resolution – U.C.E.S.C. Environmental Safety Program for 2021-2022
Resolution – Consent for Transfer of Liquor License
Resolution – Settlement of Workers' Compensation Claim (2017-4075) – K.C.
Resolution – Settlement of Workers' Compensation Claim (2017-19740) – K.C.
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Resolution – Appointing Manor II Electric Inc. for Emergency Generator at School No. 1

Mr. Jacobs asked if the Board members had any comments.

Board President Jerry Jacobs requested 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 take formal action.

A motion was made by Ms. Bathelus, seconded by Mrs. Alcaide-Hernandez, to go into private session at 9:50 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

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

Negative: None

A motion was made by Mrs. Pestana, seconded by Mrs. Barbosa, to reconvene in public session at 11:40 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

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

Negative: None

Mr. Jacobs added the following to the agenda:

Resolution – Adoption of Tentative Budget for 2021-2022
Resolution – Appointment of Insurance Brokers

On a motion by Mrs. Alcaide-Hernandez, seconded by Mrs. Pestana, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

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

Negative: None

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