BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY MINUTES INDEX MAY 8, 2023

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RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

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BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY MEETING MINUTES MAY 8, 2023 REGULAR SESSION 5:45 P.M. EXECUTIVE SESSION 5:52 P.M. RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER REGULAR SESSION 7:02 P.M. RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

- I. Regular Session Call to Order 5:45 p.m.
- II. Salute to the Flag

III Roll Call

Present: Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. Light (left 9:58pm), Ms. McKeon,

Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White, Ms. Brooks, Mr.

Markarian, Ms. Fox. Board Counsel Matthew Giacobbe

Absent: None

IV. Executive Session – 5:52 p.m.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Bernards Township Board of Education shall meet in closed session to discuss item(s) a, b, f, g and h below which falls within an exception of our open meeting policy and permits the Board to have a private discussion, since it deals with specific exceptions contained in N.J.S.A.10:4-12b. Matters rendered confidential by Federal Law, State Law, or Court Rule:

- a. Individual privacy
- b. Collective bargaining agreements
- c. Purchase or lease of real property if public interest could be adversely affected
- d. Investment of public funds if public interest could be adversely affected
- e. Tactics or techniques utilized in protecting public safety and property
- f. Pending or anticipated litigation
- g. Attorney client privilege
- h. Personnel employment matters affecting a specific prospective or current employee

On motion by Mr. Molinari seconded by Ms. Light and approved by all present, the Board recessed into executive session at 5:52p.m.

Any discussion held by the Board, which need not remain confidential, will be made public as soon as practical. Minutes of the private session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists. All appropriate persons, who may be discussed in private session, have been adequately notified.

On motion by Ms. Light seconded by Mr. Molinari and approved by all present, the Board closed executive session at 6:43p.m.

V. Reconvene Regular Session – Call to Order – 7:02 p.m.

VI. Statement of Public Notice

This is a regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Bernards Township. Notice of the time and place of this meeting was provided and copies of that resolution were forwarded to the official newspapers as designated by the Board of Education and to the Township Clerk and a copy of the notice was posted on the bulletin board of the Board of Education Offices in accordance with P.L. 1975 Chapter 231A.

For those members of the public who are unable to attend our meeting in-person, a livestream link of the meeting is posted on the district website, www.bernardsboe.com.

We very much welcome input from the public. There are two times during regular meetings that the public is invited to speak. One time is early in the meeting before the Board votes, when you may speak about any item that is listed on tonight's agenda. Towards the end of the meeting, there is another public forum to address any matter of public concern related to the schools.

When you approach the microphone, please state your name and address. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three (3) minutes duration. No participant may speak more than once during a given public comment session; the first public comment session will be limited to 30 minutes and the second will be unlimited. In order to run efficient meetings and to allow maximum opportunity for members of the public to speak, the Board reserves the right to set a different time limit for individual comments and the overall time limit for the public comment portions of the agenda. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer, no participant may address or question Board members individually.

As a courtesy to those individuals unable to attend our meetings in person, public comment may be made remotely through Zoom. Interested individuals should navigate to the district webpage, www.bernardsboe.com, and select "Board of Education" followed by "Public Comment" to review specific instructions, or click here.

Public comments made in-person will be processed first, then comments via Zoom. No public comments will be accepted before 7PM or after item XX. Public Comment of the agenda ends.

Please understand that public comment portions of our agendas are not structured as question and answer sessions, but rather they are offered as opportunities to share your thoughts with the Board. The Board/Administration will respond to public comments to the extent possible. Any Board responses to public comments will generally be addressed during Board Forum, or during committee reports. However, all comments are considered and will be investigated and addressed as appropriate.

Please be courteous and mindful of the rights of others when speaking. Comments may not be abusive, obscene, threatening or irrelevant. Please understand that students and employees have specific legal and privacy protections. The Board is not permitted to respond in public to comments about students and employees. Please also understand that the Board will not be responsible for the content of comments made by members of the public. Members of the public are cautioned that they are speaking at their own risk and any personally directed statements they make may subject them to legal liability to the effected individual.

If it is necessary for the Board to go into executive session at the end of the meeting, we will provide an estimated length of time for the session and whether any action is anticipated to be taken upon returning to public session.

VII. **Student Representative** – Petra Deffenbaugh

Ms. Deffenbaugh discussed the happenings at Ridge High School that include current AP testing and the NJSLA exams coming up next week. Ms. Deffenbaugh discussed the upcoming Culture Day, events by the Ridge Veterans Club, Big Sibling Club and that stress relief kits are available in the media center and other fundraisers and activities. Ms. Deffenbaugh also discussed the recent successes of the Ridge High School sports teams and congratulated them.

Ms. Deffenbaugh noted that this time of year tends to be stressful to the students and to please remind the students that they have support.

VIII. Board President Comments

President Molinari acknowledged Teacher Appreciation Week and thanked the teachers.

IX. Public Hearing 2022-23 Budget

1) **2023-24 School Budget Presentation** – Jim Rollo, Business Administrator/Board Secretary and Nick Markarian, Superintendent

Superintendent Markarian discussed the goals for the 2023-24 Budget that included maintaining all programs and services, supporting district goals and the strategic plan and to minimize tax increases.

Business Administrator Rollo presented the district's proposed budget for the 2023-24 school year. Mr. Rollo provided a budget expenditure snapshot for FY 23-24 versus FY 22-23. Mr Rollo detailed the general operating, the top five year over year increase drivers, operating deductions, capital projects and reserve deposits, federal grant budget expense drivers and debt service budget expense drivers.

Business Administrator Rollo provided a year to year revenue comparison and discussed major factors in the budget, detailed the fund balance, capital projects and the capital reserve for construction, noted the increase in state aid and that the service levy remained flat

Business Administrator Rollo discussed the capital, maintenance and emergency reserve accounts, sustaining programs and services and the per pupil spending in the classroom. Mr. Rollo provided an 11 year tax history noting the zero dollar increase in the tax levy and the banked cap analysis.

Superintendent Markarian provided curriculum highlights and new opportunities for the 2023-24 budget in relation to curriculum and the SLEO III officers, enrollment trends in the township noting a slight increase and that the district anticipates obtaining updated projections from the demographer in the fall. Mr. Markarian discussed the personnel portion of the budget noting that it is the largest portion of the budget, positions within the district and funding goals for new positions in 2023-24. Mr. Markarian discussed the impact of personnel sectioning and the consistent monitoring needed during the summer to prepare for the beginning of the school year. Mr. Markarian discussed the goals for the administrative staffing.

Superintendent Markarian thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting.

To view the presentation click <u>here</u>.

2) Board Forum on Budget

Board members asked for clarification on some of the budget line items.

Mr. Salmon asked for more detail with regard to facilities maintenance and administrative cost reductions. Business Administrator Rollo provided a further explanation and it was noted that services were not decreased to reduce costs.

Ms. White requested verification that the budget included 11 Assistant Principal positions for 2023-2024. Mr. Amin asked about the outlook of administrative positions going forward. Superintendent Markarian noted that there were 11 Assistant Principal positions in the 2023-24 budget but that the demographer's report would be an important factor into future budgets staffing models for administrative and other positions. Mr. Amin

asked questions regarding various positions within the district and how they are factored into the budget.

Ms. McKeon discussed the programs and services in the district in relation to Assistant Principals, class sizes and staffing being a part of those services and programs.

Mr. Rascio discussed the importance of teacher positions being maintained and compensated accordingly. Superintendent Markarian discussed the position control roster used to determine teacher staffing needs.

Ms. Light discussed the importance of reducing the cost-curve within the district and thanked Business Administrator Rollo and Superintendent Markarian for their hard work in reducing costs to avoid an increase in school taxes for next year.

President Molinari noted his support of the recommendations by Superintendent Markarian stating that the Board gave a goal for the district and that that goal was met.

3) Public Comment on Budget

Comments from the public included support for another Assistant Principal at the middle school. Mr. Thorpe, President of the Bernards Township Administrators Association made a comment thanking the teachers, parents and community members for their support, and expressed a desire to provide administrative input in future years budgets. Mr. Thorp expressed appreciation to the board for their hard work.

4) Close Public Hearing on Budget

Having concluded both Board and public comment, Board President Molinari closed the public hearing on the budget.

X. Superintendent's Report

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- 1) The Board of Education does hereby approve the overnight field trip for the **Ridge High School Wrestling Team** to attend the Virginia Duals Wrestling Tournament in Hampton, Virginia on January 11 January 13, 2024.
- 2) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby affirm receipt of the **HIB Report** dated May 8, 2023.
- 3) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following **School Bus Evacuation Drills** for the 2022-23 school year:

School:	Date(s):
Mount Prospect School	4/27/2023
Cedar Hill School	5/2/2023

On motion by Mr. Salmon seconded by Ms. Light Items #1-3 were approved by the following roll call vote:

"Ayes" - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. Light, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White

"Noes" - None "Abstain" - None

Superintendent Markarian provided further information into report items. Mr. Markarian thanked Coach Dragon for his attendance at the meeting.

XI. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Comments from the public included the textbook recommendation that was rejected at the previous board meeting and a question as to what the Assistant Principal/ Athletic Director position will look like at William Annin Middle School.

XII. Approval of Minutes

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following minutes:

April 24, 2023 – Executive Minutes April 24, 2023 – Regular Session Minutes

On motion by Ms. White seconded by Mr. Salmon the foregoing were approved by the following roll call vote:

"Ayes" - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. Light, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White

"Noes" - None "Abstain" - None

XIII. Finance Committee Report

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- 1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve a list of disbursements dated May 8, 2023 consisting of warrants in the amount of \$6,024,376.18.
- 2) WHEREAS, the Superintendent and Business Administrator prepared this 2023-2024 budget on forms prescribed by the State Department of Education and

submitted it along with required supporting documentation to the Executive County Superintendent, and

WHEREAS, the Executive County Superintendent reviewed and approved the budget, and

WHEREAS, the proposed budget includes sufficient funds to provide curriculum and instruction which will enable all students to achieve the Core Curriculum Content Standards, and is in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A and N.J.A.C. Title 6 and 6A

RESOLVED, the Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve and adopt the following school district budget for the 2023-2024 school year for purposes of establishing the tax levy:

	<u>CURRENT</u> EXPENSE FUND	SPECIAL REVENUES	<u>DEBT</u> <u>SERVICE</u>	TOTAL
2023-2024 Total				
Expenditures	\$114,886,211	\$2,273,161	\$6,482,513	\$123,641,885
Less: Anticipated Revenues	\$23,571,347	\$2,273,161	\$1,367,512	\$27,212,020
Taxes to be Raised:	<u>\$91,314,864</u>	<u>\$0</u>	\$5,115,00 <u>1</u>	\$96,429,865

And be it RESOLVED, that there should be raised for General Funds \$91,314,864 the ensuing school year 2023-2024.

3) BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations of the 2023-2024 school budget is \$1,017,614 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Capital Reserve Account for future approved projects approved by Board of Education.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations of the 2023-2024 school budget is \$552,829 for the transfer to the debt service fund for the repayment of district issued debt.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations of the 2023-2024 school budget is \$44,100 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Maintenance Reserve Account for future use by Board of Education approval.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations of the 2023-2024 school budget is \$88,000 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Emergency Reserve Account for future use by Board of Education approval.

4) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the schedule of **municipal tax levy** for the 2023-2024 school year:

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION 2023-2024 TAX LEVY SCHEDULE

	General Funds:	D	ebt Services:	Т	Cotal Payment
July	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.08	\$	8,035,822.08
August	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.08	\$	8,035,822.08
September	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.08	\$	8,035,822.08
October	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.08	\$	8,035,822.08
November	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.08	\$	8,035,822.08
December	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.60	\$	8,035,822.60
Sub Total:	\$45,657,432.0000	<u>\$2,</u>	557,501.0000	_\$43	8,214,933.0000
January	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.00	\$	8,035,822.00
February	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.00	\$	8,035,822.00
March	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.00	\$	8,035,822.00
April	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.00	\$	8,035,822.00
May	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.00	\$	8,035,822.00
June	\$7,609,572.0000	\$	426,250.00	\$	8,035,822.00
Sub Total:	\$ 45,657,432.00	\$	<u>2,557,500.00</u>	\$	48,214,932.00
2023-2024 Levy:	\$ 91,314,864.00	\$	5,115,001.00	\$	96,429,865.00

5) WHEREAS, there exists a need for the retention of Counsel to the Board of Education,

and WHEREAS, funds are available for this purpose, and

WHEREAS, contracts for "Professional Services" under Local Public Contracts Law (N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-5) require an award by the Board of Education by resolution at a public meeting.

The Board Secretary is hereby authorized and directed to execute an agreement with:

Matthew J. Giacobbe, Esq. of Cleary Giacobbe Alfieri Jacobs, LLC to provide legal services to the Board of Education effective May 8, 2023 through the 2023-24 School Year at a fee of \$175.00 per hour and \$90.00 for all Law Clerks and Paralegals.

This contract is awarded without competitive bidding as a "Professional Service" under the provisions of the Local Contracts Law.

6) WHEREAS, there exists a need for the retention of Special Education Counsel to the Board of Education,

and WHEREAS, funds are available for this purpose, and

WHEREAS, contracts for "Professional Services" under Local Public Contracts Law (N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-5) require an award by the Board of Education by resolution at a public meeting.

The Board Secretary is hereby authorized and directed to execute an agreement with:

Schenck, Price, Smith & King, LLP to serve as Special Education Counsel to the Board of Education effective May 8, 2023 through the 2023-24 School Year for the following fees: Hourly rate of One Hundred Seventy-Five dollars (\$175.00) for partners and counsel, One Hundred Seventy dollars (\$170.00) for Senior Associates and One Hundred Sixty-Five Dollars (\$165.00) for Junior Associates. Any work by law clerks and paralegals shall be billed at the hourly rate of One Hundred Thirty-Five Dollars (\$135.00).

This contract is awarded without competitive bidding as a "Professional Service" under the provisions of the Local Contracts Law.

7) The Bernards Township Board of Education received bids for the Exterior Repointing and Wall Repairs at Ridge High School project on Thursday, April 27, 2023 at 2:00pm. Bids were received from the following companies:

Contractor:	Base Bid:	<u>UP-01</u>
A-1 Construction	\$479,000	\$97,000
Arista Builders and Designers	\$248,000	\$200
Northeast Roof Maintenance, Inc	\$397,873	\$75
Pax Mundus Enterprise, LLC	\$689,000	\$89,000
Spartan Construction, Inc.	\$369,000	\$60
Madina Restoration, Inc.	\$249,876	\$40

Whereas, Arista Builders and Designers Inc. is the lowest responsible bidder, the Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby award the contract to Arista Builders and Designers, Inc. as the lowest responsible bidder contingent upon attorney review and execution of a mutually agreeable contract.

On motion by Ms. Light seconded by Ms. McKeon Items #1-7 were approved by the following roll call vote:

"Ayes" - Mr. Amin (No #2 Only), Ms. Csipak (No #2 Only), Ms. Hira, Ms. Light, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White

"Noes" - Mr. Amin (#2 only); Ms. Csipak (#2 only)

Ms. Light provided a summary of the finance agenda items.

XIV. Personnel Committee Report

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following personnel items upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools:

- 1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby accept the resignation of **Heather Kovacs** Instructional Aide Cedar Hill School effective June 16, 2023.
- 2) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby accept the resignation of **Jennifer Nicholson** Assistant to the Business Administrator effective June 30, 2023.
- 3) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby accept the resignation of **Laura Phillips** Art Teacher Ridge High School effective June 30, 2023.
- 4) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following **Change in Assignments** for the 2022-23 school year:

Staff Member:	From:	<u>To:</u>
James Kean	District HVAC Technician at a salary of \$100,000 effective May 8, 2023 through June 30, 2023. Salary prorated to reflect dates worked.	District HVAC Technician at a salary of \$100,000 effective May 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023. Salary prorated to reflect dates worked.

- 5) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve **Frank DiGiovanni** District Network Administrator at a salary of \$92,000 effective May 23, 2023 through June 30, 2023. Salary to be prorated to reflect start date.
- 6) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve **Brianna Richard** Instructional Aide CBAP Program Mount Prospect School at a salary of Step 2 \$25.18 per hour 7.5 hours per day effective May 9, 2023 through June 16, 2023.
- 7) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following **Extra-Sections** for the 2022-23 school year:

Staff Member:	Extra Section:	<u>Salary:</u>
Jennifer D'Armiento	REVISED Special Education RR	\$1,168.00 per month

[&]quot;Abstain" - None

	Physics RHS 3/1/23-6/30/23	
Marisa Marcus	REVISED Special Education RR Biology RHS 3/1/23-6/30/23	\$1,168.00 per month
Brian Scott	REVISED Special Education Physics ICS RHS 3/1/23-6/30/23	\$1,168.00 per month
Nicole Simms	REVISED Special Education RR Physics RHS 3/1/23-6/30/23	\$1,168.00 per month
Michaela Stoudemayer	REVISED Special Education RR Biology RHS 3/1/23-6/30/23	\$1,168.00 per month

8) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby appoint the following **Substitute Teachers** at a salary of \$125.00 per diem and **Substitute Nurses** at a salary of \$250.00 per diem 2022-23 school year. Additionally, all Substitute Teachers and Substitute Nurses who complete the NJ Mandated Training through Global Compliance Network will receive one half day pay prorated at \$62.50 per diem for Substitute Teachers and \$125.00 for Substitute Nurses for the 2022-23 school year:

Ritu Singh	Sophia Baurkot
Arnold Stul	Christina Beaudry
Gerard Porreca	Nazira Shaikh
Kurt Coutu	Avery MacDonell

9) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby appoint the following **Certificated Staff FTE, Step & Salary** for the 2023-24 school year:

Last Name:	First Name:	FTE:	23-24 Step:	23-24 Salary:
Ambrozy	Kelly	1.00	21 BA+30 (1000)	\$94,424.00
Blackwell	Tom	1.00	23 MA+30 (1000)	\$105,638.00
Blanford	Allyson	1.00	23 MA+30 (1000)	\$105,638.00
McAteer	Stacey	1.00	10 BA	\$61,505.00
Rovelli	Francis	1.00	12 MA	\$71,398.00

Rychecky	Cara	1.05	15 MA+30	\$86,234.40
Winters	Jennifer	1.00	23 MA+30 (500)	\$105,138.00

On motion by Ms. White seconded by Ms. Light Items #1-9 were approved by the following roll call vote:

"Ayes" - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. Light, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari,

Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White

"Noes" - None

"Abstain" - None

Superintendent Markarian noted item #2.

XV. Policy Committee Report

No report.

XVI. Curriculum Committee Report

No report.

XVII. Wellness Committee Report

Report: Committee meeting of April 27, 2023

Ms. White provided a report from the April 27, 2023 Wellness Committee Meeting. Topics at the meeting included the Trends in Mental Health Report, and a Social and Emotional Learning programming update for both Mount Prospect School and William Annin Middle School.

XVIII. Facilities & Operations Committee Report

No report.

XIX. Liaison Committee Reports

Ms. Csipak provided a report from the Municipal Alliance meeting. Topics at the meeting included the upcoming annual 5k Twilight Challenge, Charter Day, substance abuse survey results that will be presented at a future Board of Education meeting and other upcoming events.

Mr. Rascio discussed work based learning for Bernards Township Special Needs Students and thanked the local businesses that participate in the program.

XX. Public Comment

Comments from the public included the topics of the Sociology textbook that was rejected at the prior board meeting, an expression of trust for the educators of the Bernards Township School District, support for teachers in the district, the importance of the Board working collaboratively with staff members, a student comment about the Sociology curriculum, a comment from a former Board member regarding the process for determining approval of proposed textbooks and the importance of trust and confidence in the staff, concerns about staffing questions and book approval hurting the district and property values, Board resolution of conflict, the need for conversation on topics that are controversial, safety and security in the school district in relation to the SLEO III Officers, a thank you to Mr. Ciempola who is retiring as Principal at Cedar Hill School and congratulations to the students who recently performed in Newsies.

Superintendent Markarian made mention of the HIB cases in the district and explained the need for the middle school administration to take on the coordination of middle school athletics.

XXI. Board Forum

Ms. White thanked the students that participated in the Board Meeting along with staff, teachers and administrators noting their value to the district.

Ms. Deffenbaugh discussed an additional club at Ridge High School and addressed the Sociology textbook.

Ms. McKeon discussed the Sociology textbook and stated that there is interest in revisiting the first book presented for the program. Mr. Salmon confirmed that the next steps in approving a textbook was discussed at a recent Curriculum Meeting and provided some insight into the process the Board is using.

Mr. Rascio noted the value in opinions and passion and discussed various ways to support teachers and students in the district.

Ms. Light thanked everyone for their points of view and encouraged people to speak up and express their points of view.

Ms. Hira discussed the perceived lack of trust between the teachers and the Board members.

Ms. McKeon discussed different opinions of members and decisions that have been made in relation to recent changes in Board dynamics and encouraged people to continue to speak out and address concerns with the Board.

Ms. Deffenbaugh noted that people on the stage and in the audience both care deeply for the education in Bernards Township and commented on how Culture Day was very uplifting at Ridge High School.

XXII. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Light and seconded by Mr. Rascio and approved by all present, the meeting was adjourned at 10:01p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James Rollo Board Secretary