

**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY
MINUTES INDEX
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
THE ROAD BACK
JULY 8, 2020
REGULAR SESSION 7:16 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING - INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPATE
IN THE VIRTUAL MEETING WILL BE POSTED BY 6:00PM
ON JULY 8, 2020 AT WWW.BERNARDSBOE.COM**

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**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
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MEETING MINUTES
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I. **Regular Session – Call to Order – 7:16 p.m.**

II. **Salute to the Flag**

III. **Roll Call**

Present: Ms. Beckman, Ms. Gray, Ms. Korn, Ms. McKeon, Ms. Richman,
Mr. Salmon, Ms. Schafer, Ms. White, Ms. Wooldridge, Mr. Markarian,
Mr. Siet, Ms. Fox, Board Counsel John Croot

ABSENT: Mr. McLaughlin

IV. **Statement of Public Notice**

This is a special 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 the Open Public Meetings Act.

Due to the public health emergency in the State of New Jersey, as declared in Executive Order 103, the Board will be suspending its normal meeting procedures this evening and conducting a virtual meeting. Directions for accessing the virtual public meeting were posted on the District website: www.bernardsboe.com.

We very much welcome input from the public. Because this is a virtual meeting, public comment will be handled as follows:

Instructions for submitting a public comment starting at 7PM:

- 1) Email to BTConnect@bernardsboe.com or text to (908) 292-3047.
- 2) Use PUBLIC COMMENT as the email subject or start of a text message.

3) Indicate your first and last name and address. ***THIS IS REQUIRED FOR YOUR PUBLIC COMMENT TO BE INCLUDED.***

4) Please keep your comments to a maximum of approximately 3 minutes if read aloud.

No public comments will be accepted after item XII. Board Forum of the agenda begins.

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 may or may not respond to public comments. 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 providing comments. 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 commenting 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.

Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Bernards Township Board of Education hereby approves the suspension of its normal meeting procedures pursuant to By-Law 131, and authorizes this meeting to be conducted as a virtual meeting, as described in the Statement of Public Notice, due to the public health emergency declared in Executive Order 103.

V. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Markarian discussed the logistics of the meeting and thanked the panelists that have taken the time to attend the meeting.

VI. The Road Back, Panel on Health Considerations

Dr. Susan Coffin - Clinical Director of the Division of Infectious Diseases at CHOP

Lucy A. Forgione, MCHES - Bernards Township Health Officer

Dr. John Salaki - President Bernards Township Board of Health

Dr. Matthew Speesler - Bernards Township School District Physician

Rita Zarabara, RN - Bernards Township Nursing Coordinator

Ms. Zarabara, RN, presided over the Road Back portion of the meeting and introduced Dr. Susan Coffin thanking her for her attendance.

Dr. Susan Coffin discussed the deliberative process involved with restarting school. Some of the items that Dr. Coffin wanted to stress were to unite the school plan with the county public health efforts. Schools will need to plan and have alternative plans with regard to reopening. She outlined the specifics stating that they are based on the resources, community in which the district serves and the teachers.

Ms. Zarabara introduced the other members of the panel and outlined the goals for the meeting.

Lucy Forgione, MCHES, Bernards Township Health Officer, discussed the collaborative effort and outlined the COVID-19 Data outlining national, county and district cases of COVID.

Dr. John Salaki, President of the Bernards Township Board of Health, discussed transmission, protective devices and getting society integrated to a new normal and how to avoid spreading the virus to others and keeping the virus confined the best way possible. Dr. Salaki also discussed asymptomatic spread and presentation of the virus in children.

Ms. Zarabara discussed mitigation of the spread of the virus and the specifics pertinent to schools. Dr. Matthew Speesler, Bernards Township School District Physician, discussed social distancing and observing the six foot mark for distancing. Ms. Forgione discussed the six foot distancing and possible new research along with barriers that could help prevent the spread of the virus.

Dr. Salaki discussed cohorting and keeping individuals in one location to minimize the contagion aspects of spreading due to the immobilization and keeping people where they are at along with adequate ventilation of the rooms and other small confined spaces.

Ms. Zarabara brought up the topic of face coverings. Dr. Salaki discussed having students maintain face coverings in the classroom and noted that this may not be possible for students with potential health conditions and disabilities and how that

may impact wearing face coverings. Dr. Salaki also discussed the difference between face masks and face shields.

Ms. Zarabara moved the topic to Daily Health Assessments. Dr. Speesler discussed home assessment rather than school assessment for symptoms of students. Ms. Forgione also discussed accountability at home for both staff and students.

Travel Advisories were discussed along with the fourteen day quarantine and it was stressed that this, again, is about accountability and responsibility of the community.

Ms. Zarabara discussed the response for a positive COVID-19 test at the district level. Dr. Salaki noted that a proper place should be determined within the school facility in which anyone with symptoms could be isolated until they are assessed and the return to school policy. Panel members discussed the return to school policy based on CDC Guidance.

To view the presentation [click here](#).

VII. Public Comment on Health Considerations

Assistant Superintendent Fox read public comments. Topics included face shields and the time that air droplets are in the air. Panel members discussed the topic of face shields versus masks and adequate ventilation systems.

Other comments were with regard to differentiating between flu symptoms and COVID symptoms, classroom interactions and return to school. Panelists responded to the medical questions that were presented by the public.

Superintendent Markarian thanked the panelists and asked the Board Members if they have any questions for the panel. Board Members thanked the panelists for their time and wisdom.

VIII. Return to Instruction Staff and Parent Survey Results

Nick Markarian, Superintendent
Sean Siet, Assistant Superintendent

Superintendent Markarian discussed the results from the staff and parent surveys and how they incorporate into a plan for the school district to reopen.

Assistant Superintendent Siet discussed the results from the staff survey. Mr. Siet discussed working remotely and at the district office and the implications of both.

Superintendent Markarian discussed the parent survey that went out the week of June 29, 2020 stating that 80% are comfortable with sending their students to school and 20% that are not comfortable and the reasons behind those decisions. Other survey measures were with regard to transportation and school activities.

To view the presentation click [here](#).

IX. Curriculum Committee Report

Ms. Richman provided a report from the Curriculum meeting on July 2, 2020. Topics included AP Exams, culturally responsive teaching and learning and plans, considerations and implications for the return to school in September 2020.

X. The Road Back, Schedules Under Consideration

Nick Markarian, Superintendent

Sean Siet, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Kristin Fox, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

Superintendent Markarian discussed the “Road Back” with regard to conditions to learning, leadership and planning and continuity of learning. Mr. Markarian also discussed considerations such as the health and safety of students, instructional models and that it is important to be prepared for changes that might occur as conditions change.

Mr. Markarian discussed the possibilities for the start up of the 2020-21 School Year in September.

Assistant Superintendent Fox discussed the return to classes in a virtual classroom scenario including accountability and resources required.

Superintendent Markarian discussed the hybrid learning plan with regard to distance learning versus blended learning. Mr. Markarian discussed potential schedules based on a blended learning plan and considerations that are being made for those schedules.

Superintendent Markarian discussed other areas that the district is working on currently such as the beginning of the school year, social and emotional learning, childcare, athletics, Vo-Tech and policies and regulations to The Road Back, grading, attendance and academic integrity.

To view the presentation [click here](#).

XI. **Public Comment**

Board members referred to Jerry Ford with regard to transportation prior to public comment. Mr. Salmon asked Mr. Ford to discuss logistics and potential issues with the different scheduling scenarios. Mr. Ford discussed social distancing on busses and the resources and costs associated with following CDC guidelines.

Assistant Superintendent Fox read public comments that had been submitted during the meeting. Due to the amount of public comments that were made the Board of Education Members agreed to limit public comment to fifteen minutes. Public comments included suggestions for virtual learning, reduction of excessive screen time, stress reduction for the students, air quality in the school building, confidentiality of student health information, lunch room schedules, desk barriers, the absence of mental health experts on the panel, concerns for students with special needs, school recess considerations, the potential use of thermal scanners, parent responsibility and accountability, breaks from mask wearing, cleaning concerns with regard to time limitations, state requirements regarding the length of the school day, the European schooling models, school sanitizing stations, the response to a student who tests positive for COVID-19, the need for substitute teachers, internet connectivity issues and the impact on at home learning and the nature of the anti-racism curriculum.

Superintendent Markarian addressed some of the public comments. Mr. Markarian noted that school policies will be placed to answer items such as the school response to a student who tests positive for COVID-19 and instructional time requirements by New Jersey state statutes.

For a transcript of public comments that were sent in to the Board of Education during this meeting please [click here](#).

XII. **Board Forum**

Superintendent Markarian introduced two new administrators. Mr. Markarian thanked Mr. Lazovik for diving into working on the Ridge High School graduation plan.

Board members thanked everyone for putting together the survey results. Mr. Salmon noted that the plan for the return to school has to accommodate one hundred percent enrollment. Mr. Salmon also discussed the cleaning of the buildings and transportation and that they may not be able to accommodate a split session schedule. Mr. Salmon noted the importance of consistency, live instruction and live facetime between students and instructors.

Ms. Beckman discussed how it is difficult to hear people speaking with masks on and that teachers might consider practicing with masks on to ensure students are able to hear them.

Ms. Schafer discussed distance learning.

Superintendent Markarian discussed other school districts and the logistics of their decision with regard to returning the students to school facilities in the fall and the need to have plans in writing to make sure that the district is following protocol for the state and the need for clarification.

Ms. White noted that guidelines and plans are changing and that the District needs to adjust and adapt to information as it is received. Mr. Markarian elaborated on the process for the decision making in relation to the information that is changing on an ongoing basis and the amount of work that is required to implement any plan that the District choose. Mr. Markarian also discussed staffing considerations and cleaning considerations that need to be made to continue certain services at the school.

Ms. Korn noted the importance of mental health and how to mitigate mental health risks.

Board members thanked everyone for their hard work.

XIII. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Beckman and seconded by ms. Wooldridge and approved by all present, the meeting was adjourned at 11:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rod McLaughlin
Board Secretary