

The Board of Education of the Borough of North Caldwell in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in executive session on January 5, 2021 via an online Zoom Meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Mr. Michael Halik, Business Administrator, indicated that in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting had been properly advertised and the agenda had been posted at the appropriate locations.

In addition, a notice was posted on the Entrances of Grandview Elementary School and on the Board of Education Website, that January 5, 2021, meeting would be done via the Zoom Online Meeting Platform.

Mr. Halik reported on the annual school election which occurred on November 3, 2020, stating Mrs. Sapna Malige received 2,415 votes and Mrs. Jordan Shumofsky received 2,550 votes.

Mr. Halik then held the swearing in of new Board Members followed by the Roll call.

**ROLL CALL BY THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR**

Present:                Mr. Robert Projansky  
                              Mrs. Mindy Opper  
                              Mrs. Jordan Shumofsky  
                              Mrs. Sapna Malige

Also Present:         Dr. Linda Freda, Superintendent  
                              Mr. Michael Halik, Business Administrator / Board Secretary

**ACTION ITEM**

**ORGANIZATIONAL RESOLUTION**

**01. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the use of the Zoom Online Meeting Platform, to conduct the January 5, 2021, Board Meeting in compliance with A-3850 which was signed by Governor Murphy on March 20, 2020 so that Board of Education business can continue, during the State of Emergency for the COVID-19 crisis.

Moved:                Mr. Projansky                Seconded:        Mrs. Shumofsky

Yes:                    4                                No:                    0

Mr. Halik then called for Nominations for President.

**Motion** to nominate Robert Projansky to be approved as President.

Moved:	Mrs. Shumofsky	Seconded:	Mrs. Opper
Yes:	4	No:	0

Once approved, Mr. Projansky, as president, assumed the position of chairperson calling for nominations for Vice-President.

**Motion** to nominate Melinda Opper to be approved as Vice President.

Moved:	Mrs. Shumofsky	Seconded:	Mrs. Malige
Yes:	4	No:	0

### **BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Projansky welcomed everyone back from the holiday break stating there were fifty-six (56) zoom participants.

Mr. Projansky announced the Board would be interviewing for the open Board of Education seat due to Mr. Atlas being elected to Town Council, in executive session later this evening. Mr. Projansky stated he was very excited to have community members interested in the position. He stated notice was given for the position and the Board will interview the four (4) candidates: Johanna F. Stroever, Scott M. Methven, Anthony Prinzo and Eric Finkelstein. The decision will be discussed at the next meeting as the choice cannot be done in private session.

Mr. Projansky congratulated Mrs. Shumofsky on her reelection and Mrs. Malige on her election and said he was looking forward to working together in the upcoming year.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Freda wished everyone a Happy New Year stating she hopes the new year will be a much better one than 2020. She also congratulated Mrs. Shumofsky and Mrs. Malige on their election and stated she was looking forward to working with them.

Dr. Freda then reported there was no harassment, intimidation or bullying to report for the last school year.

**PUBLIC RECOGNITION**

The following comment was e-mailed in by:

Kerry Howe – 7 Rose Avenue

Grace Cordovano – 28 Cambridge Drive

We are sharing this note for the public comment portion of the 1/5/2021 North Caldwell Board of Education ("BOE") meeting, and have noted our comments in the following bullet points:

- First, we'd like to sincerely thank the teachers, administrators, and the Board of Education for the remarkable work that has been done to open our schools during these extraordinarily challenging and unprecedented times.
- We'd also like to thank Mrs. Oppen, Dr. Freda, Mr. Checchetto for their ongoing dialogue on this matter. Such discussions began in late October/ early November as it seemed to become more apparent that the hybrid schedule for the 4th and 5th grade would not be as short lived as we had all hoped. We've exchanged several emails and participated in at least 3 discussions on the matter and look forward to our next discussion to follow up on where we left off on 12/11/2020 and look forward to hearing from you on when that discussion can be held.
- We'd like to extend a special thanks to the 4th and 5th grade teaching teams who are managing the hybrid schedule. We are not educators, but imagine this must be very complicated. Thank you for your efforts in bringing the best possible experience to our children considering the current circumstances, it is genuinely appreciated.
- With respect to the 4th and 5th grade hybrid structure, would the BOE be willing to issue a survey to the parents of the 4th and 5th grade to assess whether the relevant families would be comfortable with the potential changes that may be needed to alleviate grades 4 & 5 from being the only students on a hybrid schedule in the district (should a viable path be developed)?
- Specifically as it relates to the hybrid schedule, we appreciate the time taken on the 12/15/2020 meeting to discuss the challenges associated with bringing 4th and 5th grade back, it would be very much appreciated if the school/ BOE could more specifically articulate (perhaps in a document) the opportunities available to bring

4th and 5th grade in every day and why such opportunities are not considered to be viable. Such topics included : (1) Use of the 6th program that allows for daily instruction for 4th and 5th grades. This would be facilitated with support from teachers that don't currently have a homeroom to take on the classroom and by utilizing the gymnasium and cafeteria (or another suitable space) for additional space. A few thoughts on this topic:

- We heard that implementing a 6th homeroom could lead to a larger class size in the additional section. Is this a definitive result or might the existing classes have an additional student or two to reduce the size of the added section? I realize this may mean that children are not 6 feet apart. However, we also understand (and please do correct if this understanding is mistaken) that the 6 foot distance is required when other measures are not in place (i.e. desk partitions and/or desks facing in the same direction - we believe we have both of these protocols in place), noting that masks are required under any circumstance. Thus, in an effort to make class size more equitable across the grade, perhaps we assess whether the community is comfortable with a 4ft or 5ft or 5.5 ft distance between desks if it allows 1-2 additional children in the classroom while ensuring NJ DOE safety guidelines are respected. Additionally, we may also optimize ventilation efforts with the use of carbon dioxide monitors to assess whether ventilation is at a safe level. Perhaps the community can be canvassed on this idea?
- We understood there are noise limitations in the gymnasium. Is it possible to overcome some limitations with the use of a microphone? Might this still be better than learning via Zoom, the limitations of which may be exacerbated by potential connectivity issues. Perhaps the community can be canvassed on this consideration (if viable)?
- If the gymnasium is deemed not viable with the use of microphones, would any other room work? We understood the music room may pose an obstructed view for some areas of the room. Can this be managed? Might this still be better than Zoom? We understand we haven't seen the obstruction and do not know how big a difficulty it would pose. We would also greatly appreciate the goal to have every learning space mirror the existing classrooms, but just wonder whether an alternate space (while not the ideal standard) might still be more effective than Zoom? Perhaps the community can be canvassed on this consideration?
- If all of the above are in no way possible, would the BOE consider having a virtual study hall, where students would conduct remote learning in a school setting. Such an environment will provide the structure and a consistent routine for the students (understanding it, unfortunately, would not provide the consistency that daily instruction would provide the teachers).

- Would the BOE comment on the depth of the work they've discussed and reviewed as it relates to returning to full in-person learning for the 4th and 5th grade. We don't believe we've heard the views of the broader BOE members on this topic and the potential solutions to achieve in person learning for all. Apologies if we've missed that discourse, but as one reflects on the 12/15/20 BOE meeting there was a discussion amongst the BOE about instituting full remote learning for the district for this week as we return from the holidays where the group discussed prior to voting. We appreciated the genuine concern of the BOE, and would be remiss to note that the 4th and 5th grade spent as many days remote (5) within their first 2 weeks of school. I'm curious as to whether such a discussion has or will be held for the benefit of the 4th and 5th grade students and teachers given the multiple remote days every week for this group.
- If none of the above are viable, is there an idea of when all students will be able to participate in daily in person instruction, assuming no further governmental shutdowns.
- Has the BOE considered creating a Community Advisory Committee to support the tremendous efforts to date to manage through the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Will the BOE share the protocol that will be in place to manage testing efforts as well as standard operating procedures that will be needed/ in place to address both negative and positive test results, should the plan to test in school be approved by the BOE. Further, have such testing efforts been recommended by the NJ DOE or the CDC?

While there is quite a bit of information and many questions posed above, please note this discussion is a genuine effort to support the team that has led the remarkable efforts in getting our kids back to school. The intent is most certainly not to detract from the amazing work that has and is being done, for this we are so very grateful.

Please do let us know how we can be of assistance.

Kind regards,

Kerry Howe and Grace Cordovano

Mr. Projansky thanked the public for their input and responded that 6ft. between students is required and we have no choice in that matter. He said that the discussions are on-going within the Covid Committee on how to get 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in school daily. Even though these conversations may not be held in public, they are happening; we try to provide as many updates as possible.

Mr. Projansky continued noting the situation over the last few weeks has not been optimal to increase the number of students in the buildings as Covid cases have been increasing in our area. Our priority remains getting all students back safely as soon as feasible.

### ORGANIZATIONAL RESOLUTIONS

- O2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education adopt all existing bylaws and policies of the Board and approve existing administrative rules and regulations, subject to revision, for the forthcoming fiscal school year.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky      Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4      No: 0

- O3. RESOLVED** that all meetings of the Board of Education be conducted according to Robert Rules of Order and Board Policy.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky      Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4      No: 0

- O4. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education appoint **Sapna Malige** as Delegate to the New Jersey School Boards Association for one (1) year, beginning immediately and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the policy authorizing the duties of the delegate to the New Jersey School Board Association be approved as follows:

1. Represent the Board at meetings of the New Jersey School Boards Association.
2. Study and report to the Board all proposed State and Federal Legislation of interest and relevance.
3. At the direction of the Board, prepare proposed resolutions for submission to the State School Boards Association.

The policy shall not prohibit or discourage other Board members from active participation in legislative affairs.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky      Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

**O5. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education re-adopt **Code of Ethics**, attached.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

**O6. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the attached list of Committees and Membership for the 2021-2022 school year.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

**O7. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the attached schedule of public and confidential meetings for 2021.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

### GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

**G1. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the school calendar for the 2021-2022 school year.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

**G2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the twelve month calendar for the 2021-2022 school year.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

**G3. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve payment to **Dr. Vicci** in the amount of \$425.00 for a developmental vision assessment for **student #8005341**.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4 No: 0

- G4. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the **tuition contract** with **New Beginnings**, effective for the 2020-2021 school year to commence on January 4, 2021 for the following student:

**Student ID# 8005862**

Tuition: \$42,912.21

Extraordinary Services: \$22,890

Total Contract: \$65,809.21

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Opper

Yes: 4 No: 0

- G5. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve modification to the transportation contract with Caldwell West Caldwell for student **ID#8005492**, attending The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School, to include an Aide when necessary, at \$55.00 per day.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Opper

Yes: 4 No: 0

### **BUSINESS RESOLUTIONS**

- B1. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the **Public & Confidential Minutes of December 15, 2020**.

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Opper

Yes: 3 No: 0

Abstain: Mrs. Malige

- B2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the following **Payroll(s)**:

**December 23, 2020 \$352,661.92**

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky Seconded: Mrs. Opper

Yes: 4 No: 0

- B3. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the following **Hand Check Register(s)**:

<b>December 21, 2020</b>	<b>\$49,098.62</b>
<b>December 22, 2020</b>	<b>\$ 72.00</b>

Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky      Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4      No: 0

- B4. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approve the following **Bills and Claims**:

<b>January 5, 2021</b>	<b>\$315,734.82</b>
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Moved: Mrs. Shumofsky      Seconded: Mrs. Oppen

Yes: 4      No: 0

### **PERSONNEL RESOLUTIONS**

- P1. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accept, with regret, the resignation of Matthew J. Atlas, effective December 31, 2020.

Moved: Mrs. Oppen      Seconded: Mrs. Shumofsky

Yes: 4      No: 0

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Bill Maranz, from the town recreation department, e-mailed inquiring about using the district's indoor facilities. Mr. Halik stated the district previously suspended all facility use but wanted to see if the Board still felt the same. Mrs. Oppen then responded that students aren't in every day and her concern is an increased risk from having additional people in the buildings during Covid. She stated we had seventy-nine (79) cases of Covid in December in North Caldwell so she has concerns about changing course.

Mrs. Shumofsky stated that she felt now was not the time to open the school facilities as the risk is unnecessary especially since we still can't get the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in every day.

Mr. Projansky stated he would like to be a good neighbor but now was not the time to increase people in our buildings. Mrs. Malige echoed the Board's feelings and said she did not feel comfortable having people in our buildings.

Mr. Halik said he would reach out to Mr. Maranz for the Board.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The preschool tuition rate was discussed noting the neighboring towns are charging between \$3,400 and \$3,500. Our current fee for 2019-2020 is \$3,800 and the Board felt since many of our residents are struggling due to COVID-19, the Board's final consensus was to not increase the fee for one year. The Board will reevaluate tuition next year.

The Covid Committee provided an update to the Board on the possibility of testing for Covid in our schools. They spoke to the survey of the community that indicated 62% wanted on site screening. However, it appears that many parents want to be present (53% every time/56% present first time their kids are tested) which would create more people in the buildings at a time where we are looking to minimize people in our facilities. The Board consensus was that testing would not be feasible at this time due to these challenges. Additionally, there were concerns that false positivity could cause disruption as we would be shutting classrooms down. It was suggested the COVID Committee look into off site testing.

Mrs. Opper reminded everyone of the required fourteen (14) day quarantine if you traveled out of state over the break.

The Board adjourned to Executive Session at 8:15 p.m.

**RESOLVED**, that in accordance with section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975, the Board has the authority to adjourn to closed session to discuss matters pertaining to: a Personnel/Legal/ Open Board Seat interviews and negotiations. Said matters will be made public upon their disposition.

As there was no further business to discuss, the Board adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael W. Halik

Business Administrator / Board Secretary

