

**SOUTH AMBOY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Business/Public Meeting Minutes**

**January 25, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Open Meeting & immediately go into Executive/Closed Session**

**Public Meeting Agenda begins at 6:30 P.M.**

**Virtual Meeting using AT&T Conferencing (Call toll free 1-866-390-1828. Enter access code 9392521#. To enter the conference, press #)**

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**Mr. Walsh, Board President called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.**

**Mr. Frascella, called the roll:**

Present: Mr. Albarran,, Ms. Conway, Ms. Kasics, Mr. Dragotta, Mrs. Gonzalez, Ms. McLaughlin, Mr. Murphy, Mrs. Taggart, Mr. Walsh

Absent: None

Also Present: Peter Frascella, Board Secretary; Jorge E. Diaz, Superintendent; Mr. Silvestro, Board Attorney; Mr. Mercado, Student Representative

On a motion by Mr. Walsh and seconded by Ms. Conway that the Board adjourned into Closed Session at 6:03 pm. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

**Mr. Frascella read the following Closed Session Notice:**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, pursuant to the Sunshine Act, N.J.S. 10:4-12 and 13, the South Amboy Board of Education will now meet in closed session to discuss items falling under Attorney/Client Privilege, Student Related Matters, Personnel Matters, and negotiations.

The aforesaid subjects are within the exemptions permitted to be discussed in closed session in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-13. Information regarding the Board's closed session discussion will be disclosed to the public as soon as the need for confidentiality no longer exists. The Board will reconvene in public session at the conclusion of the closed session in approximately 30 minutes.

On a motion by Mr. Walsh and seconded by Mr. Albarran that the Board reconvened into the public portion of the meeting at 6:30 pm. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

**Mr. Frascella read the following Public Notice:**

The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of the public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon.

In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law, the South Amboy Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting setting forth the time, date, and location to be submitted for publication to the Home News Tribune and posted at the Board Office, Middle/High School, Elementary School, City Hall, Library and Senior Citizens Center Bulletin Boards at least 48 hours in advance of this meeting. Members of the public who wish to address the Board will be given the opportunity before the Board adjourns for the evening.

**Mr. Walsh led all assembled in the Flag Salute.**

Mr. Walsh called for nominations for Board Vice-President for the 2021 year.

Mrs. Gonzalez nominated Mrs. Taggart for Board Vice-President

Mr. Walsh nominated Ms. Kasics for Board Vice-President.

Hearing no further nominations, a motion was made by Mr. Walsh and seconded by Mrs. Gonzalez to close nominations for Board Vice-President. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Motion was made by Mr. Dragotta, second by Mr. Walsh to elect the Vice-President.

No Board Vice-President was elected by the following roll call:

Kasics:	Albarran, Conway, Dragotta, Kasics, Walsh
Taggart:	Gonzalez, Murphy McLaughlin, Taggart
Abstention:	None
Absent:	None

Mrs. Kasics was elected Board Vice-President for the 2021 Calendar Year.

**Presentation (Dr. Christine Robbins): Special Education - Transition to Adult Services ([Compliance Letter](#))**

**MINUTES**

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

December 21, 2020  
 December 21, 2020  
 January 4, 2021  
[\(Attachment\)](#)

Business-Public Meeting ( <a href="#">Attachment</a> )	
Closed Session/Business Meeting	
Business/Public/Reorganization	Meeting

**EDUCATION & CURRICULUM ITEMS & REPORT (Joan Conway)**

Ms. Conway – Discussed the Curriculum Committee Meeting. She explained the Wingman Program presentation, virtual learning, summer program, the Naviance program, and the outlining of a 5 year plan.

**POLICY ITEMS & REPORT (Rafael Albarran)**

**2. RESOLUTION/RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS ([Resolution](#))**

**3. REVISION/GIFTED AND TALENTED POLICY #6171.2 ([Gifted and Talented Policy #6171.2](#))**

That the Board of Education approves the first reading of the Gifted and Talented Policy #6171.2 as attached and recommended by the Superintendent.

**4. REVISION/PUBLIC AND EXECUTIVE SESSIONS POLICY #9322 ([Policy](#))**

That the Board of Education approves the revision of the Public and Executive Sessions Policy #9322, as attached and recommended by the Superintendent.

**5. FIRST READING/BOARD MEMBER USE OF INTERNET, SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND OTHER FORMS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY # 9271.1 ([Policy](#))**

That the Board of Education approves the first reading of the Board Member Use of Internet, Social Networks, and Other Forms of Electronic Communication Policy #9271.1, as attached and recommended by the Superintendent.

**PERSONNEL (Lynn Kasics)**

**6. ATHLETIC POSITION/2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR**

That the Board of Education approves the appointment of the following individual to Athletic position for the 2020-2021 school year as recommended by the Superintendent. The stipend for the position will be in accordance with the negotiated agreement between the Board of Education and the South Amboy Education Association:

- Site Manager                      Kelsey Schipske

**7. RESIGNATION/JONATHAN POLLOCK**

That the Board of Education approves the resignation of Jonathan Pollock, Middle School Teacher, effective February 19, 2021, as requested and as recommended by the Superintendent.

**BUDGET AND FINANCE ITEMS & REPORT (Shannon Gonzalez)**

**8. EXPENDITURES FOR 12/22/2020-01/25/2021 ([Attachment](#))**

The Board of Education approves the following expenditures for 12/22/20-01/25/21

<b>Bills For</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Regular Bills	603,661.05
12/15/20 Payroll	524,302.36
12/23/20 Payroll	491,407.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,619,370.54</b>
<b>December Agency</b>	<b>630,970.65</b>

**9. ACCEPT THE DECEMBER 2020 ORGANIZATIONAL FUND BALANCES** ([Attachment](#))  
 The Board of Education accepts the attached December 2020 Organizational Fund Balances.

**10. ACCEPT THE DECEMBER 2020 ATHLETIC FUND BALANCES** ([Attachment](#))  
 The Board of Education accepts the attached December 2020 Athletic Fund Balances.

**11. APPROVE TRAVEL AND REIMBURSEMENT**  
 The Board of Education approves the following under the "Travel and Reimbursement Policy" of the South Amboy - Board of Education as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools:

STAFF/BOARD MEMBER	PROGRAM DATE	PROGRAM TITLE OR EVENT	FEES	GAAP ACCOUNT
LISA MCALONIE	JAN 13, 2021	YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & FIRST AID, USA	\$175	20-270-100-300-00-00-00-060
THOMAS HEIRY	FEB 02, 2021 AND MAR 03, 2021	STUDENT HEALTH ISSUES CERT. PROGRAM	\$375	20-270-100-300-00-00-00-060

**12. ESEA CONSOLIDATED AMENDMENT #1**

That the Board of Education approves the submission of Amendment #1 to the FY21 ESEA Grant to apply FY20 public carry-over funds. ([Attachment](#))

**13. IDEA AMENDMENT #1**

That the Board of Education approves the submission of Amendment #1 to the FY21 IDEA Grant to apply FY20 public carry-over funds. ([Attachment](#))

**14. APPROVAL OF SERVICE CONTRACT FOR 2020-2021 – N.J. COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND**

The Board of Education approves the service contract between the South Amboy Board of Education and N.J. Commission for the Blind for student #670096827, for the period of November 15, 2020 – June 30, 2021 in the total amount of \$1,580. (Copy of contract is on file in the Board Office)

**15. APPROVAL OF SIDEBAR AGREEMENT WITH SAEA - DENTAL REIMBURSEMENT**

That the Board of Education approves the sidebar agreement with the South Amboy Education Association regarding employee contributions toward dental premiums reimbursement.

**OTHER MOTIONS**

**HIB Reports**

**16. AFFIRM HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION & BULLYING (HIB) INCIDENT REPORT 2020**

That the Board of Education affirms the Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying (HIB) Incident Report for HIB incidents reported to the Board of Education. ([HIB Memo for January 2021](#))

**ATHLETICS REPORT (Brian Murphy)**

Mr. Murphy – Discussed winter sports rosters being full. Talked about the JV girls' basketball and cheer teams as well as HS Track. He referred the public the athletics webpage for all correspondence. He discussed the streaming of home athletic events and the impact of Covid on the sports programs to this point. He also talked about the advisors for activities as well as the yearbook for this year and the cost.

**BUILDINGS & GROUNDS REPORT (Paula Taggart)**

Mr. Frascella – Discussed the Buildings & Grounds Committee meeting where the main topics were the continued cleaning and disinfecting of the buildings. Preparations for eventual return to school as well as HVAC issues were discussed.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Mrs. Gonzalez – Felt that the resolution for item #2 described as a public health crisis is strong. How do we measure level of racism and where to find the data?

Mr. Walsh – The source of the data was outlined in the resolution. Racism plagues society so as a district it is important that we recognize it and combat it. We want to state that we stand for racial equality. It is important that we put these things in place for the future.

Mrs. Gonzalez – Page 2, column 1. What data shows that racism is Public Health concern?

Mr. Walsh – The policy explains the studies used.

Mrs. Gonzalez – What data is there for South Amboy Public Health Crisis?

Mr. Diaz – Why do we need data to understand that racism is a problem in this Country? Mr. Walsh brought this policy because he wanted to get out in front of the issue.

Mrs. Gonzalez – South Amboy Schools already take equality into consideration. Why is there a health crisis?

Mr. Walsh – Data is national, it includes South Amboy. It is important that we put it in writing. Over 50% of the HIBs we have, have a racial component to them.

Mrs. Gonzalez – If racism is an issue in South Amboy, why doesn't the policy include all minorities? Why just African-Americans?

Mr. Walsh – Communities of Color were mentioned in the resolution.

Mrs. Gonzalez – It specifically states African-Americans?

Mr. Walsh – That is just one example from the resolution.

Mrs. McLaughlin – She supports Mrs. Gonzalez position. Calling it a public health crisis makes it seem like our teachers and staff are doing nothing to combat racism. She has never seen a huge race problem in our district.

Mr. Murphy – Understands national racism problem but agrees with Mrs. Gonzalez. Feels this is asserting that there is an issue within our schools.

Mrs. McLaughlin – Questions on paragraph #5 in item #2. What does where they live mean?

Mr. Walsh – Our school should support equity in school and society.

Mr. Murphy – The yearbook will end up costing \$80/\$90 per student. How have we shopped the yearbook around because the cost seems high? What is Purple and Gold?

Mr. McLaughlin – Item #4 regarding electronic participation in meetings. If Board Members cannot attend, they can then call in and vote? Why do you have to have your camera on during closed session? This is directed at me because I don't always have my camera on because I am doing things. Can I be ordered to do this? Why are committee members putting this forward as a policy?

Mr. Silvestro – This is more aspirational than a hard policy.

Mr. Diaz – We need to know who is on the meeting in closed session.

Mrs. McLaughlin – Other people have their camera on and we can see other people in the background. People can be on the other side of the camera.

Mr. Dragotta – Let's go back to live meetings.

Mrs. Gonzalez – Virtual Board Meetings only apply to Covid? Can it be used for other issues?

Mrs. McLaughlin – Do these policies apply to the Superintendent? He has contacted people during the meetings? With regard to use of the internet...She claimed she made a post on Facebook after not hearing from the Superintendent regarding an issue with her child. Immediately upon posting on Facebook she received a response. She would not have taken to Facebook if she had received a response immediately.

Mr. Walsh – There are some concerns on how social media is used by board members.

Mr. Diaz – I responded in a timely fashion, but the truth is we have board members that like to take to social media.

Mrs. McLaughlin – Stated that Mr. Diaz ignored the emails. Asked if she can OPRA emails?

Mrs. Gonzalez – Stated that she was elected to be a voice of the community and she no longer supports the direction of the district. At this time she resigns her position at the end of the meeting.

Mrs. Taggart – Is item #2 meant to be proactive or reactive? Are we rewording the “South Amboy” in this? Is this possible to table?

Mrs. Kasics – Would Mr. Diaz be willing to take out line number one?

Ms. Conway – This policy is saying that we are currently doing things correctly and that we want to continue to do so. I don’t see a problem with it.

Mr. Walsh – Stated that the policy was his idea. Statistics support what the resolution states. As a Board, our major role is as policy makers. We do not use our policies or our policy committee as a way of targeting individuals.

Mrs. McLaughlin – Stated that as everyone knows she has had an adversarial relationship with the Superintendent. She discussed her role as a board member and implored the public to pay attention. Do not keep quiet because you fear retaliation from the administration. She loves the community but at this time she cannot support the direction of the district and is resigning from her board member position after this meeting.

Mr. Murphy – Wanted to discuss that he was told by the administration that he could not put registration information on his Facebook account regarding Middle School basketball. He told Mr. Walsh that he was disappointed that for two Board Members to resign he should have had more of a response than “thank you.” He asked that the two Board Members reconsider.

Mr. Walsh – I responded that way because it is their decision. I wish them all the best but it is obviously a big decision and something that they have thought about.

#### **A. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY MOTIONS AND OTHER ITEMS**

Brandon Russel – Disagreed with the statement that item #2 implies that teachers aren’t doing their jobs. Believes that the district should want to be in the forefront on the fight against racism and was glad to see the resolution.

Diane Smocovich – Hopes that Mrs. McLaughlin and Mrs. Gonzalez reconsider their resignation. It is difficult being a parent and board member.

#### **APPROVE ALL ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mrs. Taggart that Agenda Item #2 be postponed to the next meeting.

Ayes: Gonzalez, Kasics, McLaughlin, Murphy, Taggart  
 Nays: Albarran, Conway, Dragotta, Walsh  
 Abstention: None  
 Absent: None

A motion was made by Mr. Walsh and seconded by Mrs. Kasics to approve of the consent agenda (excluding item #2) of the regular public meeting of January 25, 2021 as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Ayes: Albarran, Conway, Dragotta, Gonzalez, Kasics, McLaughlin, Murphy, Taggart, Walsh  
 Nays: Gonzalez (#4), McLaughlin (#4, #5), Murphy (#5), Taggart (#4)  
 Abstention: Kasics (#10)  
 Absent: None

## **B. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

Mr. Mercado – Felt that the teachers are doing a great job in class and extra-curricular activities. Basketball season was off to a great start.

## **C. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS**

Mr. Murphy – Mr. Mercado helped tutor his son and he wanted to thank him.

Mrs. Gonzalez – Thanked everyone for their support, but she does not agree with the direction of the Board.

Mr. Murphy – Mr. Dunphy did a video presentation and put the honor roll students in the paper. How come this doesn't happen at the MHS. Wants Mrs. McLaughlin and Mrs. Gonzalez to reconsider their resignations.

Mrs. McLaughlin – Stated that Mr. Dragotta took his phone off mute to drown out other people's comments.

Mrs. Taggart – Thanked teachers for doing the spirit ride. Resignations took her by complete surprise. She thanked Mrs. Gonzalez and Mrs. McLaughlin for giving her a voice. She will keep her voice and keep fighting for what is right. Hopes that they reconsider.

Mrs. McLaughlin – Will not reconsider but may run again if she sees positive change on the Board in the future.

Mr. Walsh – Thanked the teachers and staff for their hard work. He stated that as Board Members we work toward progress and disagreements happen. He thanked Mrs. Gonzalez and Mrs. McLaughlin for the time and service as Board Members.

## **D. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion by Mr. Walsh and seconded by Ms. Conway that there being no further business the meeting be adjourned at 8:30 pm. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.



Respectfully,

*Peter Frascella*

Peter Frascella  
Board Secretary