

FLEMINGTON-RARITAN REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
August 14, 2017
MINUTES

The Regular Meeting of the Flemington-Raritan Regional Board of Education was called to order in conformance with the "Sunshine Law" by the Board President at 6:00 p.m. in Auditorium at the J.P. Case Middle School.

Members Present

Jessica Abbott
Tim Bart
Dennis Copeland
Marianne Kenny

Laurie Markowski
Christopher Walker
Anna Fallon

Members Absent

Sandra Borucki
Michael Stager

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Ruberto thanked the Board for gathering this evening to approve necessary Personnel items. Dr. Ruberto will make an announcement to the staff tomorrow regarding this evening's appointments. She shared that Ms. Ahmed will be the Principal of Copper Hill Elementary School, Ms. Griffith will be the Interim Vice Principal at Copper Hill and Dr. Giordanella will be the Interim Director of Special Services. In addition, Ms. Kristen Wolff is also to be hired as a Supervisor of Math/Science. A World Language Teacher for Copper Hill and Barley Sheaf will also be approved tonight. Dr. Ruberto thanked Ms. Zullo and Ms. Bruhn for their hard work this past week. She noted that Mr. Bland, Ms. Ahmed and she will be covering Copper Hill until the Interim Vice Principal is available to start. She advised the new 3rd grade teacher position being approved was not budgeted for and commended Ms. Voorhees for working through the financial need. She shared that the Guidance appointment at J.P. Case and the Vice Principal at RFIS will both be appointed at the August 28th meeting. She thanked Buildings and Grounds and stated we have great facilities here.

Dr. Ruberto stated she and Mr. Bland are keeping an eye on the Willows development and that they are 80% full and will continue to monitor the enrollment. The district is trying to fill the LDTC position, as of right now there are no candidates. Dr. Ruberto will be hiring a per-diem staff member. We have four nursing companies now that can service our district with substitute nurses. The Mission Statement is now on the front page of the website, it is what Flemington-Raritan believes in. She asked Ms. Fallon to bring back Legislative notes. A Board Member will report on these notes. Dr. Ruberto also updated everyone on the status of the Physical Education class and being excused from it. The Curriculum for PE is not only exercise but also includes health class. She further noted that on the NJDOE website there is no option for K-8 and students must have 150 minutes of physical education. Dr. Ruberto noted that a Professional Development Day for secretaries is being held tomorrow, there was a staff meeting last week and a parent meeting scheduled for tomorrow evening at J. P. Case. Dr. Ruberto visited the extended school year program as well as the ESL students. She thanked all staff involved with these projects. She spoke about policies and that there will be a few being approved as they are mandated.

Dr. Copeland asked Dr. Ruberto to explain item #8 on the agenda amending the Supervisors salary. Dr. Ruberto explained the Supervisor needed to be aligned with the other Supervisor. Dr. Ruberto stated the need to maintain an even playing field, she did an analysis, reviewed the job description and student data, and noted she needed to bring the salary into alignment.

Ms. Fallon asked Mrs. Mitcheltree for her email so that she may forward Board Candidate information to her.

CITIZENS ADDRESS THE BOARD

Dr. Ruberto mentioned she received a letter from a gentleman with questions. She wanted to make everyone aware that she will be answering his questions at the August 28th Board Meeting.

Rachel Ladd, parent, wants to thank the Board and Dr. Ruberto for the last two meetings; they have been a complete change. She thanked them for the transparency and the openness, "we appreciate it." She stated she wanted to know if the Board was going to address the petition that five Board Members signed and gave to the Board to recall Ms. Fallon. She asked Ms. Fallon if she had the petition and Ms. Fallon replied she did not. She noted the Board read it into the minutes and Ms. Fallon you responded in the newspaper, "you gave a comment to the paper that you were not aware that the petition was going to happen."

We are forced to do a recall election now due to your refusal to resign. She stated that she wanted that on record. Ms. Fallon noted, "I am here tonight. We are focused on moving the district forward."

We are here for the sole purpose tonight of filling our staff positions so that we can have a successful opening of school.” She noted that the focus of our Board is on our district and to keep the district moving forward in a positive way. Ms. Ladd agreed and that in moving forward that would also mean you stepping down as the President. She shared that there has been an overwhelming outcry from the public and from your Board for you to resign. She noted Ms. Fallon was a part of went on that last two years and there is distrust.

Mr. Walker asked if he could discuss the newspaper comments. Ms. Fallon asked if he could wait until Old Business. He agreed.

Donna Schenkel, parent, noted that during the last year she has listened to buzz and watched social media posts around the community. She stated in addition to being embarrassed, it made her sad and annoyed. Ms. Schenkel noted she attended Board Meetings and was present at the Board Meeting which Dr. Caulfield resigned. She noted true to form, as one staff member pointed out it was more entertaining than Dancing with the Stars. She stated sadly, she didn't find that a very positive thing. She stated the community missed a huge opportunity to unite that night, instead of using that moment as a turning point and moving in a new direction, the negativity continued. She noted on one of the audios a parent alluded to the fact that, if something was not done about Dr. Caulfield, that “Ms. Fallon you would be next.” Ms. Schenkel went on to read the definition of bullying. She stated the community was outraged because of the bullying at the hands of Dr. Caulfield. She teaches her children not to bully, to look out for others and to resolve differences in a civil manner. She noted we should definitely hold ourselves to a higher level of behavioral accountability. She asked, when is this going to stop, what is the end intent? She noted what continues to go on is a disturbing precedent. She asked will there be outrage every time someone is annoyed with a teacher or with a staff member. Ms. Schenkel stated I have no personal affiliation with Ms. Fallon; we are not friends, not facebook friends. Ms. Schenkel attested, however, that whenever she has contacted Ms. Fallon with a copy to the whole Board, Ms. Fallon's responses have been appropriate and dignified within the scope of her concern. There are nine Board Members on this Board and I have always copied all of them. She noted she has listened to meetings where no other Board Member vocalized anything, an opinion, a defense, a concern and yet, even though Ms. Fallon is not the only one who voted Dr. Caulfield in, she is the only one being attacked. She noted there was a mention of legal fees and could you imagine the legal fees the district would incur, if Dr. Caulfield was not removed in due diligence. She noted she has not volunteered to serve the community as a Board Member. She stated that it is her hope that the Board can work together to find a resolution to this ongoing hostility. She noted she knows that there are strong individuals on both sides and asked everyone to think about, what you would do if you were in the others shoes. She noted she certainly has lots of thoughts and views on the misrepresentation of information. She hopes that everyone educates themselves and comes together and starts the school year with positive press, positive employment, and passionate visions and with moving towards a settled contract. She stated she hopes this enthusiasm at these meetings continues to the walks/runs and fundraisers that is the good stuff that this community is made of. She thanked the Board for listening and thanked Dr. Ruberto for her no nonsense professionalism and strong convictions.

Sarah Silber, parent, stated she is frightened. She stated that change needs to happen that is effective and no one should be frightened to speak. She thanked all the Board Members for volunteering, “it is a job she would not want to do.” She noted as a parent and former teacher, the teachers, administrators and staff of our schools are first. She stated that they have one of the hardest and most underappreciated professions and feels that it is one of the most important. She noted we have the best in the business and her children are fortunate to be students here and thanked all the staff for the care they put into their jobs and the hard work they do. She stated, what I want to talk about now is what Ms. Fallon has done or not done over these last couple of years. She feels the true problem left when Dr. Caulfield resigned. Ms. Fallon has served this community as an elected volunteer for many years. She noted Ms. Fallon's, neighbors did not run for the local school board, her husband did not run for the local school board, most importantly, her two children did not run for the local school board and they should not have to see their name plastered all over town, to have to question their mother and answer to their friends. Ms. Silber stated that she is speaking up now because she is worried about the message that is being sent to all of our children. She noted over the past months she has attended the meetings, wore her t-shirt and supported the school faculty and staff. She stated these words are being spoken now because, “I am watching a friend be vilified.” She added that a woman who is not as awful as she is being portrayed, “she is trying to do what is best for the children.” She said integrity is not something Ms. Fallon relaxes on, whether she agrees with her decisions or not, she does not take that away from her. She noted that we need to think about healing and being kinder and setting an example as how we want to be seen as a community, as parents, as leaders, as people. She urged both sides to consider healing and moving on and communicate effectively. She noted that right now that is not being done in a respective and productive way.

Eric Liszt, parent, stated he was a Board Member and knows the pressure of the public. He asked how many people with what has been going on would volunteer to be a Board Member now and put themselves at risk as well as your family for the things that are being said in our community.

He stated that he encourages us as a community to support the schools and the Board Members and show a sign of respect for both, because the message we are sending out now is hurtful to us and it is critical to our children. He noted the people on the Board are a part of our community. He noted to respect the people that are involved, just because we have the right to do something doesn't make it the right thing to do. He encouraged everyone to be supportive of these Board Members.

Debbie Tyler, parent, shared that she is disappointed with the parents and the Board of Education of this district, all of the negative press and the negative social media. She noted we have a Superintendent that was not working out for us and she is now gone. She stated it is time to move on and stop the negativity. She noted that we need unity and to stop the anger and the bullying. She asked that the contract be settled and to stop the negative publicity. She shared she posted several things on social media the past few months and one was how she was embarrassed at the NJ.com article with a giant sign that said FU. She stated there are many, many people that feel the same way she does. She stated she would not be bullied and will stand up for the people who are too afraid to speak. She watched Ms. Fallon fight for the kids who could not fight for themselves for school lunches. She stated Mr. Fallon is a good mom, a good person and does not deserve what has happened and what continues to happen. She added that while driving around Flemington, she was embarrassed by all the signs and the way we are treating each other and noted that it needs to stop. She stated we all need to work together in unity and to resolve the teacher's contract. She stated we need to think about the students and stop this nonsense.

Rayna Tyler, student, stated that Ms. Fallon was on the Board when she voiced her concerns at a Board Meeting about school lunches and the need for a World Language Teacher. She felt that Ms. Fallon heard her concerns. She noted she believes what is going on with Ms. Fallon is getting in the way of what is important. She stated the need for unity, to settle the teacher's contract and find a new Superintendent.

Ryan Ladd, parent, noted he understands the call for unity but the committee to recall Ms. Fallon was about choices. He said that Ms. Fallon defended Dr. Caulfield at a parent meeting which shouldn't have been her position at a non-Board function. He noted that we feel that Dr. Caulfield made lots of mistakes and Ms. Fallon continued to support her. Ms. Fallon received emails from parents regarding different situations that have been read into the record and noted that Ms. Fallon didn't act when Dr. Caulfield was bullying staff and administrators and people were leaving. He stated that all of these things happened while you were the Board President and chose to defend Dr. Caulfield. He stated he is all about moving on, but again these things happened with Ms. Fallon at the head. He stated that when people said that Ms. Fallon should step down as President, there was a change.org website. He stated Ms. Fallon did not take the hint; Dr. Caulfield would still be here if it weren't for the parents and the staff that spoke up. He stated Ms. Fallon is responsible for Dr. Caulfield's actions, in his opinion. He stated Dr. Caulfield did a terrible job in his opinion. He stated they did the change.org for both Dr. Caulfield and Ms. Fallon. He said the Board Members have spoken out about Ms. Fallon stepping down as President. He noted Ms. Fallon was notified, people told her we were intending to recall her. He said the recall would be put on the ballot. He stated he has written Ms. Fallon emails and received curt responses all the time. Dr. Copeland interrupted and said, "excuse me; it appears that this is Citizens address the Board not Ms. Fallon and you are addressing Ms. Fallon." Dr. Copeland then corrected Mr. Ladd stating, "it was not Board Members who have spoken out and it was some Board Members that have spoken to be correct and also we are a Board of nine, so even though it may appear that President Fallon has made individual decisions, we are a Board of nine." Mr. Ladd noted that at a coffee with Dr. Caulfield, Dr. Copeland did stand up and defend Dr. Caulfield.

Sherrill DeGenova, teacher, noted that in any system there are checks and balances that will help to make the system run optimally. She stated we know who we are here for, the students. She added we know what our goals and focuses are, but in order to get there and have a working animal, those checks and balances have to work and for the past number of years they have not been working. She stated, citizens, families and employees were not able or allowed to give their input, now that possibility exists. She noted in order to have those checks and balances work, things need to be fully fixed.

Bruce Davidson, resident, former Board Member, would like to emphasize two points. He stated that one is that the public does not understand the way the Board operates and how they are mandated to operate by the State. He added the Board cannot fire the Superintendent unless there is cause and cause means she would have been evaluated to be unfit and failed to meet the objections she was given in the beginning of the year. He noted this is a process and it is a process that any employee would want and it takes time, even when it is obvious that someone is performing badly. He said there is no way, as the gentleman was saying, no one can just walk in and tell the Superintendent they are fired. He stated the Board is a group of nine members, they have to agree on what's going on and the President of the Board speaks for the majority of the Board, working with the Board.

He stated based on the majority of the Board a position is taken, the President says what that position is. He stated getting information back to the public needs improvement, however, even that if it worked properly it would be considered cumbersome by some of the standards of the people that want to stand up here and have a shouting match between a Board Member and a Board President.

He noted that is not productive, you cannot do business that way. He noted the process the Board goes through is cumbersome and the inpatients of people that want change is not going to help the situation in a recall. He stated he wants to remind people that a recall is a very extreme act and that all you have to do is wait for a new term to come up and run for election, get on the Board and you can have a say for your majority on the Board and change things. He said this process just takes longer, but it's the orderly way. He noted he would like to echo the remarks of the last few speakers, especially, Mr. Liszt. He stated we represent our citizens and we don't want the citizens to look at us saying what kind of group is this, respect positions and the effort they are putting in for the good of the students. He congratulated the Board for being here and putting the time and effort in to try and make things move forward. He asked the public for respect and calm and forbearance.

PERSONNEL

The next meeting is August 17, 2017.

The Personnel items were approved under one motion made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Bart.

Certified Staff – Appointments, Resignations & Leaves of Absence

1. Approval was given for the following staff member to take a leave of absence as follows:*

Item	Last Name	First Name	Loc.	Position	Type of Leave	Leave	Anticipated Dates
1.	Assini	Andrew	JPC	Grade 8 Social Studies	Paternity	FMLA	September 18, 2017-December 8, 2017

***Mr. Walker abstained.**

2. Approval was given to employ the following staff members for the 2017-2018 school year pending fingerprints and health exam.*

Item	Last Name	First Name	Position/ Location	Effective Date	Salary/Degree	Certification/College
1.	Wolff	Kristen	Math/Science Supervisor	October 16, 2017	\$120,000/MA	Teacher of Mathematics, Teacher of Students with Disabilities, Supervisor/University of Scranton, Rutgers University, Bucknell University
2.	Ahmed	Vanessa	Principal/CH	August 15, 2017	\$126,000/MA	Principal, Supervisor, Elementary School Teacher/Rider University, The College of New Jersey
3.*	Bellotti	Adrianna	World Language/ CH & BS	September 1, 2017	*\$51,525/BA/3	Teacher of Spanish (CE)/ St. Tomas of Aquinas University
4.*	Ingram	Meghan	Grade 3/BS	September 1, 2017	*\$54,060/MA/1	Elementary School Teacher Grade K-6 (CEAS), Teacher of Deaf or Hard of Hearing with Oral/Aural Communication (CEAS)
5.*	Malave	Madison	Grade 5/RFIS	September 1, 2017	*\$54,360/MA/2	Elementary School Teacher in Grades K-6 (CEAS), Elementary School with Subject Matter Specialization: Language Arts/Literacy Specialization in Grades 5-8/ Rutgers University

***Mr. Walker abstained from (3-5).**

**Salary to be amended at the conclusion of negotiations*

3. Approval was given to employ Dr. Kathleen Giordanella as Interim Director of Special Services at a rate of \$500 per diem for the 2017-2018 school year.
4. Approval was given to employ Erica Leeson as Interim LDT/C at a rate of \$400 per diem, to conduct Special Education Evaluations with case management duties when necessary, for the 2017-2018 school year.
5. Approval was given to employ Stephanie Bilenker as Interim Special Education Professional Development Consultant at a rate of \$500 per diem, on an as needed basis, for the 2017-2018 school year.

6. Approval was given to employ Diane Mari as Special Education Consultant at a rate of \$500 per diem, on an as needed basis, for the 2017-2018 school year.
7. Approval was given to employ Katherine Griffith as Interim Vice Principal at Copper Hill School Elementary School at a rate of \$500 per diem, effective September 20, 2017 through October 31, 2017.
8. Approval was given to amend the salary of Michelle Cook, Supervisor of Language Arts/Social Studies to \$120,000 effective August 15, 2017.
9. Approval was given to designate Mary Jane Custy, Stretch Teacher at Barley Sheaf School, as a District-wide Foundations Coach, for the 2017-2018 school year.*

***Mr. Walker abstained.**

10. Approval was given to voluntarily transfer the following certified staff members for the 2017-2018 school year as follows:*

Item	Last Name	First Name	From		To	
			Position/Loc.	Salary/Step	Position/Loc.	Salary/Step
1.	Squashic	Samantha	Grade 5/RFIS	\$54,725/3	Resource Center/RH	\$54,725/3
2.	Colonna	Rachel	School Based Social Worker/SS	\$55,635/3	Social Worker/SS	\$56,135/4

***Mr. Walker abstained.**

**Salary to be amended at the conclusion of negotiations*

All Staff – Additional Compensation

11. Approval was given to amend the May 30, 2017 motion:

to employ the following staff members for additional compensation during the 2017-2018 school year. Salary to be amended at the conclusion of negotiations:

Item	Last Name	First Name	Loc.	Purpose	Max # of Hours	Rate
31.	Mazzetta	Kay	CH	Summer Speech Evaluations	50	Hourly

to read:

Item	Last Name	First Name	Loc.	Purpose	Max # of Hours	Rate
31.	Mazzetta	Kay	CH	Summer Speech Evaluations	70	Hourly

12. Approval was given to employ the following staff members for extra compensation during the 2017-2018 school year. Salary to be amended at the conclusion of negotiations.

Item	Last Name	First Name	Loc.	Purpose	Max. # of Hours	Rate
1.	Benedetti	Anthony	CH	Winter Concert - January 18, 2018	2	\$30.62/hr.
2.	Benedetti	Anthony	CH	Spring Concert – May 3, 2018	2	\$30.62/hr.
3.	Golding	Dawn	CH	Winter Concert - January 18, 2018	2	\$30.62/hr.
4.	Golding	Dawn	CH	Spring Concert – May 3, 2018	2	\$30.62/hr.

**Salary to be amended at the conclusion of negotiations*

Aye: Ms. Abbott Ms. Markowski Nay: 0 **Abstain: Mr. Walker-item 1,2(3-5), 9 & 10**
 Mr. Bart Mr. Walker
 Dr. Copeland Ms. Fallon
 Dr. Kenny
 Ms. Markowski

Ms. Fallon noted that it is always a great pleasure to see growth in our staff when she spoke about Ms. Ahmed.

Old Business

Mr. Walker asked Ms. Fallon what her response was to Ms. Ladd’s question and that Ms. Fallon’s answer was unclear to him. He asked Ms. Fallon, did you say “you did not receive the petition, is that correct.” Ms. Fallon stated that is correct.

Mr. Walker said he is a little unclear with that answer because to his knowledge, a Board Member presented it to you before the June 26th Board Meeting and in an article you were quoted as saying, at this point, Ms. Fallon interrupted and reiterated again she never saw it. Mr. Walker asked Ms. Fallon if she was aware that there is a petition. Ms. Fallon responded she heard there is but has never seen it and doesn't know anything about it. She stated, "I don't know what it says, I don't know who signed it, I know nothing." Mr. Walker noted it's on the Board Minutes of June 26th. Ms. Fallon stated she was not here to approve the Board Minutes. Mr. Walker felt her quotes in the article were unfair to the majority of the Board Members who did approach her with this petition. Ms. Fallon stated no one approached her with the petition; I have made that very clear. Ms. Fallon asked Mr. Walker if he approached her with the petition. Mr. Walker responded no, it was his understanding it was another Board Member and out of respect for you as a colleague and a Board Member to bring this to your attention, before the June 26th Board Meeting. Ms. Fallon stated he was misinformed. Mr. Bart noted, I think what happened was that the Business Administrator contacted you. Ms. Fallon stated she was not contacted with the petition. Mr. Bart also added that Ms. Hoffmeyer contacted you. Ms. Fallon stated absolutely not. Mr. Walker noted he takes objection with her comments in the article saying that the Board in so many words "blindsided you" with this information. Mr. Walker stated we do operate as a Board of nine and in this democratic system majority of a motion, this should mean something. Mr. Walker noted he would like the Board President to step down from the position. He believes there is nothing the Board can do because of Board Policy, however, the majority of the Board has spoken and signed that petition and is shocked that Ms. Fallon was not aware. Ms. Fallon stated again, "She is not aware of the petition and Mr. Walker should know that is not Board Policy, that is a Statue in the State of New Jersey, that the Board President cannot be removed by Statue." Mr. Walker added he was told by the NJSBA that the Board can have their own Policy and how they want to work with their Board officials. He added he will continue to look into the matter. Mr. Walker noted he is concerned with her quotes in the paper to fellow Board Members that we did something that was not on the up and up for lack of a better term. Mr. Walker stated they tried to be as transparent with Ms. Fallon.

New Business

Dr. Copeland asked if we need an August 21st Special Board Meeting. Dr. Ruberto does not believe we will need the meeting. Dr. Ruberto reviewed the items needed on the August 28th agenda and announced there is no Special Board Meeting next Monday the 21st.

Mr. Walker stated, "in light of the comments tonight by the public, I would just like to say that yes we are volunteers and no one is getting paid up here and it's not about power because I know I do not want to be Board President, but I want the public to know that the five Board Members that did sign the petition that they are working in the best interest of the children." Mr. Walker asked Ms. Fallon to go back and listen to the June 26th Board Minutes. He stated he was not the only person who spoke at that Board Meeting as other Board Members did. He noted we want her to be a part of this Board team, we are just asking her to step down as President. He stated, "we need new direction and a majority of the Board spoke that night and it is on record."

CITIZENS ADDRESS THE BOARD

None

On the motion of Mr. Bart, seconded by Ms. Abbott, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m. viva voce.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Voorhees
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

2017 Board Meetings

August 28 - Goal Setting Session

September 11 & 25

October 9 & 23

November 13 & 27

December 11