BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
280 ASBURY-WEST PORTAL ROAD
ASBURY, NEW JERSEY 08802
908-479-6336

WORK SESSION MEETING
MINUTES
February 10, 2021

For the Work Session Meeting of the Bethlehem Township Board of Education
being held by video conference call and
video conference on Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER – President Roosen called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE:
In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Law of New Jersey, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by sending notice to: The Hunterdon County Democrat, Bethlehem Township Clerk and by posting on the bulletin boards in the Ethel Hoppock Middle School and Thomas B. Conley Schools.

There are two options to participate in the meeting - please use the Google Meet link below or join by phone:

Join with Google Meet **meet.google.com/uoz-ozbq-dsd OR Join by phone (US) +1 442-600-4847 PIN: 864 517 043#**

IV. ROLL CALL

Mr. Gregory Glazar	*Present*	***Mr. Travis Roop***	*Present*	***Dr. Gregory C. Farley, CSA***	*Present*
Mr. Kyle Harris	*Present*	***Mrs. Debra Roosen***	*Present*	***Mrs. Beverly Vlietstra, SBA/BS***	*Present*
Mr. John Logar	*Present*			***Fiona Cousland, Attorney***	*Present*

V. BOARD CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

A. BOARD MEMBER CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS - To fill two vacant board member seats through December 31, 2021.

- Candidates for Board Vacancies:
  Alyce Hunter, Ed.D., Mr. Thomas Gregor, Mr. Ryan Caughey and Ms. Danielle Sepelya

- Alyce Hunter: President Roosen welcomed Alyce and inquired as to why she wanted to become a board member. Alyce was previously a board member and believes Bethlehem Township School District should be very proud of the fine job of educating the students. Now that her children are grown, it gives her the time to give back to the community. She previously held a career as a teacher and as an administrator. Her

specific skills include previous board experience with chairing many committees. Her long term expectations are to support the teachers, students and administrators both socially and emotionally as they transition back to a full school day. The roll she sees as a board member is to support the schools and administration without getting involved in the politics. The budget is an area she would like to see strengthen like pupal spenditures, shared services, school choice verses tuition students, curriculum and negotiations. Alyce is aware of the time commitments and seriousness of being a board member. Alyce feels unpopular decisions are solved by doing what's best for the students morally and ethnically. Success for Alyce incudes focusing on the academic growth for all students, especially the ones with exceptionalities and she was happy to read about the mindfulness activities for social and emotional support. Alyce thanked the board for their time and feels schools have a long journey ahead to get back to prepandemic times. President Roosen thanked Mrs. Hunter and commented that a decision will be made at tonight's executive session.

- Tom Gregor: President Roosen welcomed and thanked Mr. Gregor on behalf of the board and asked the same questions proposed to all the candidates. Mr. Gregor would like to be a board member because Bethlehem Township is a great area to raise a family due to the quality of the school district. His free time allows him to be a great resource to help make difficult decisions for the administration, staff and students. His specific skills are that he was a prior board member for 2.5 years before he relocated out of state and was a board member during the search for a new superintendent. His long term expectations are to find a plan for the challenges and difficult decisions such as declining enrollment and increased costs of the maintenance of two schools. Mr. Gregor sees his role as board member to provide the resources to the administration and staff for the student's education with budgetary experience to help the BA with fiscal responsibility and negotiate vendor contracts. He's thrilled that Mr. Douglas is now the facilities manager to help fix things and save the school money. Areas that he would like to improve upon would be to safely get the kids in the classroom for a full day. President Roosen inquired about the time and training commitment and the ethic law disclosure and superintendent search. He replied he has the time to devote to the board. Mr. Gregor would make unpopular decisions by weighing the pros and cons and making the best morally or ethnically decision for the students. For a successful student, he believes in creating an environment for each child to be exposed to music, arts, academic or sports for them to thrive. An area of concern would be the abrupt board vacancies and Dr. Farley's resignation.
- Ryan Caughey: President Roosen thanked Mr. Caughey for applying and proposed the same questions as the other applicants. He is interested in providing his experience to help the budgetary and long term goals while serving the community. His specific skills include corporate finance background and strategic planning. His expectations are to see things through and remain on the board long term. His skills to strengthen the board are finding solutions to difficult situations while communicating with the community during the process. A particular area Mr. Caughey would like to strengthen is the diversity goal and to expand on inclusion using his global corporation experience. Mr. Caughey is aware of the time and commitment and the ethic law disclosure as a board member and appreciates the training. He is aware of the challenges of unpopular decisions as a board member but his commitment is to the board. Success for the children is to provide the tools for social, emotional and academic growth through community and school support. An area of change would have been more transparency in the decision of keeping the 6th grade at Conley.
- Danielle Sepelva: Mrs. Sepelva would like to be a board member to offer her background experience in quality control and quality assurance skills and as a fresh set of eyes to offer to the community. Her specific skills include team work and data trends. Long term expectations are to ensure the students and staff have the tools they need. Her skills as a board member include her athletic driven mindset and keeping the children first. A specific area in the district she would like to see strengthen is in-service training for the teachers and to make sure the students have the tools necessary to succeed. She has the support of her husband to make sure she is available for the extra time for meetings, training commitments and the ethnic disclosure requirements. Her job experience relates to her making unpopular decisions and she would use

that experience to make sure the children, teachers and community come first. Success for the children is a combination of the teachers, parents and community setting them up for the real world.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION - A

MOTION by Mr. Glazar, seconded by Mr. Harris to go into Executive Session at 8:04
BE IT RESOLVED pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12), that the Board enter into Closed Session at this time to discuss confidential matters pertaining to: Board Candidates

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the matters discussed in Closed Session should be made public as soon as the need for confidentiality no longer exists, but it is not known at this time when that may be.

On a roll call vote, all present were in favor. Motion passes

MOTION by Mr. Logar, seconded by Mr. Harris, to return to public session.

MOTION by Mr. Logar, seconded by Mr. Harris, to appoint Alyce Hunter and Ryan Caughey to fill vacancies on the Board from February 24, 2021 through December 31 2021.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Please be advised:

- Pursuant to Board Policy #0167, members of the public who wish to make a statement during the Public Comments portion of the meeting may speak for no more than three (3) minutes.
- Pursuant to Board Policy #0167, all statements from the public must be directed to the President or other presiding officer; no participant may address or question board members individually.
- Pursuant to Board Policy #0164.6, the Board shall require members of the public to identify themselves prior to speaking. Please state your name and address, or name and group you are representing.
- Since this meeting is being held by video conference call and videoconference due to the coronavirus pandemic, if the public wishes to make a comment, they may do so by:

  (1). Calling in to the number provided for participants on the videoconference or by Google Meet. Press *6 to unmute during the call and *6 again to mute.

  (2). Sending an email to Mrs. Debra D. Roosen, Board President - droosen@btschools.org prior to 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. In the subject line, please write "public comment" if you wish for your email to be read verbatim during the public comments section of the meeting.

- Public participation at board meetings is intended to allow individual members of the public to address the Board on issues of public concern. The public comment period is an opportunity for the Board to listen to citizen concerns, but not to debate issues or enter into a question-and-answer session or a "cross examination" between the public and individual members. While all comments made by the public will be taken under advisement, the Board will not respond to comments made by the public.

Mayor Baumgarten relayed a message from the municipal clerk requesting the snow plow contract get executed and he was happy to report that the municipality can save the district money by getting reimbursed from FEMA. Mrs. Vliestra requested Mrs. Roosen stop by the business office to sign the contract.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

- President Roosen received a letter from a concerned parent and Dr. Farley will be meeting with the parent this week to resolve the issue.
- President Roosen received a letter from the association and they would like to be part of the search for a new superintendent/principal process and requested a committee be formed.

- Bloomsbury School District president and vice president communicated with President Roosen in reference to setting up a meeting to discuss shared services and dates to meet were exchanged.
- Union and Franklin Township School District board presidents also requested to set up dates to discuss shared services.
- Maren Smagala, NHVHS District Communications Coordinator sent a response in regard to articulation committee meetings being cancelled this year due to the pandemic.

IX. BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MOTION by Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Roop to approve letter A.
A. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board upon recommendation of the Chief School Administrator, approve a Resolution requesting Governor Murphy to include Public School District Personnel in the official Expert Vaccine Allotment Panel's definition of Frontline Workers.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the **Bethlehem Township Board of Education** recognizes that the United States, the State of New Jersey and local health authorities, as well as the World Health Organization, have declared a public health emergency regarding the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the federal and state authorities have put in place guidance detailing the precautionary measures schools must implement to stop its spread of this disease; and

WHEREAS, public schools have a profound impact on millions of students, families and staff and are charged with the care, education, nourishment of their students and are an integral part of the health and safety of our communities; and

WHEREAS, our district has responded to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, providing students and staff members with the technology and resources necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of instruction, virtually and in-person; and

WHEREAS, the board has a substantial public interest in protecting the health and safety of its students, staff, and community and ensuring that the district can provide staff and students with a safe and effective educational environment that supports student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the board recognizes that this health emergency made it necessary to close schools and reinvent the educational programs in a virtual setting and that this may have an adverse impact on student achievement and the emotional and social wellbeing of students; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 Vaccination Plan published by the State of New Jersey Department of Health **(December 15, 2020, pgs. 36-37)** prioritizes the availability of vaccines to "essential workers" in Phase 1B of the vaccine protocol; and

WHEREAS, school district staff at all levels are essential to the day-to-day operations of this district, responsible for the thorough and efficient education of all students and their social and emotional wellbeing, are critical for virtual and in-class instruction and are "essential workers;"

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the **Bethlehem Township Board of Education** finds a substantial public purpose exists to request that Governor Murphy give appropriate priority in the statewide administration of the COVID-19 vaccine to all public school district personnel.

COVID-19 Vaccination Plan published by the State of New Jersey Department of Health, see:
https://nj.gov/health/legal/covid19/NJ%20Interim%20COVID-19%20Vaccination%20Plan%20-%20Revised%2012-15-20.pdf

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded to the member of the insert legislative district number legislative district delegation, Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, Governor Phil Murphy, and to the New Jersey School Boards Association.

- President Roosen requested this resolution be sent to the Hunterdon County Commissioners with a letter to the Hunterdon County Health Department, Bethlehem Township Municipal Officials and Mr. Colalillo from Shop Rite and a press release to our local newspaper. The Board was in agreement of supporting our teachers.
- The BOE gratitude goes out to the Bethlehem Township Dept. of Public Works and our custodians for their outstanding snow removal job and the cleanest parking lot and sidewalks.
- 2020 NJSBA workshops are all available online for all board members.
- Mr. Harris has been reappointed to take over the Negotiation Committee.
- Board members should continue to review policies and access the Strauss Esmay & NJSBA website. See Bev or Peggy for access.

On a roll call vote, all present are in favor. Motion passes.

X. CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- **Summer offerings**
- **Progress towards Goals**
- **Winners of the Snowman Contest (Student Representative Ryan Kapp)** – To be announced at the next meeting.
- **Attendance - Students (Average Daily Attendance-ADA and Average Daily Enrollment-ADE) and Staff** – Information coming in two weeks.

XI. SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY REPORT

- New website for the financial disclosure ethnic forms is not available yet.
- Fire inspector scheduled to return this week for the small projects and quotes are still being obtained for the tank cleaning. President Roosen requested a list of the minor fire violations. Mrs. Vlietstra will email a list to the board.
- Audit complete for this year and presentation will be at the next board meeting.

XII. FINANCE

A. Ernie Turner will do an overview of the preliminary budget for 2021-2022.

Mr. Turner is a retired school business administrator who is working on a very tight 2021-22 school budget alongside Mrs. Vliestra and due to the reduced state aid, this district falls under the category of one of the districts that has been losing state aide over the last few years. Due to the $250,000 reduction, the 2021-22 budget will be extremely difficult to balance. The district is allowed to use the 2% cap plus any bank caps to offset the budget, but it will not be enough to break even. Due to this reduction; programs, staffing, etc. for the students will not be able to be maintained. As discussed last year, consolidating two schools into one, and a small construction project for added classroom space at Conley will save your district money, face regionalization or be absorbed by another school district. We'll know more about the upcoming state aid on February 24, 2021 when Gov. Murphy gives his State of the State Address to be able to see the full effect of the reduced state aid. Federal grant funding is not significant enough to offset the state reduced funding. A very tight, balanced 2021-22 budget (in preparation for the 2022-23 budget) will be submitted keeping in mind the best educational environment for the children. Myself, Beverly and Dr. Farley will keep the board members and the community informed throughout the process. President Roosen inquired about the reason for not having an audit before the budget? Mr. Turner replied the

auditor report should have been sent out. Mrs. Vliestra informed the board that the reason for the delay was because the auditor's partner has been sick. President Roosen inquired about how much money was saved with keeping the 6th graders at Conley? He explained that removing one grade from Hoppock while keeping the school open did not reduce the redundancy. Mr. Logar inquired about how the district can utilize the surplus every year to keep the programs going. Mrs. Vliestra reported the surplus was partly related to Covid and ordering less supplies, less electricity, reduced garbage pickup and not replacing 2.5 teachers. Some savings were realized while the buildings were shut down. Mr. Logar suggested not budgeting for things we are not using to avoid the surplus. Mr. Turner reported the state sent out the superintendent timeline calendar and will be forwarded to Mrs. Vlietstra. Mr. Logar proposed a two option budget with one being a flat budget with a zero percent increase. Mr. Roop also proposed a proactive instead of reactive process to get ahead of our options. Mr. Logar suggested highlighted assumptions in the budget. President Roosen's concern to Mrs. Vlietstra and Mr. Turner is about learning loss for students and teacher burn-out and thanked Mr. Turner for his expertise in the budget field and for his 2021-22 presentation.

MOTION by Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Travis to approve Letter B.

B. Appointment of New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) to conduct the Superintendent Search - Att #1

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board appoint New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) to conduct the Superintendent Search.

Four categories of service were offered and President Roosen's recommendation is the $7,000 proposal. Mr. Roop and Mr. Glazar were in agreement. Mr. Logar asked about help with the search from our attorneys. Attorney Moore offered negotiation of the superintendent's contract at no additional cost. Mr. Harris feels an interim would fit best as we consider shared superintendent services as well as other options so we can find a better solution before we commit. President Roosen feels shared services would not conflict with the CSA search and that we owe it to the district and community to try to find the best educational leader. Mr. Roop proposes we explore our options and better understand the pros and cons for the best decision and obtain a more custom fit from NJSBA. Mr. Glazar agrees with Mr. Harris and Mr. Roop. President Roosen interpreted that the board wanted to table the search until executive session.

XIII. TRANSPORTATION - None

XIV. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

- **Update on Buildings & Grounds in two weeks**

XV. EDUCATION - Att #2

A. BT Preschool and Kindergarten Registration for the 2021-2022 School Year

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board upon recommendation of the Chief School Administrator, approve the following program/registration for BT Preschool and Kindergarten for the 2021-2022 School Year.

- **Bethlehem Township Preschool Registration for 2021-2022 - Applications due by April 2, 2021**
- **Kindergarten Registration for 2021-2022 - Registration date set for June 2, 2021**

B. Updated School Calendar for the 2020-2021 School Year

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board upon recommendation of the Chief School Administrator, approve to make up one emergency closing day.

- No action taken. Vote to adjust updated calendar to the state mandated 180 days at the next meeting.

- **School Calendar for 2021-2022**

XVI. CURRICULUM/STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- **Escape Room Club** – A club for students to work as a team to follow clues and solve puzzles to unlock certain areas. Approval to come at the February 24, 2021 Board Meeting.
- **Summer Camp/Academic Support** – Approval to come at the February 24, 2021 board meeting.
- **Curriculum Updates for Summer 2021** – A curriculum update regarding structure for the summer. President Roosen asked about what will be replacing 'Build Your Own Curriculum'? Dr. Farley replied all the same curriculum is being converted over to a google docs format.

XVII. POLICY - None

XVIII. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- **Update from Reopening Committee with survey data**
    - **Step by step framework on how we are adapting schedule** – Dr. Farley reported a productive meeting with the board members, parents, teachers and administrators on getting the students back in school for a full day, but reported that more data is needed. Surveys are being sent out to teachers, staff member and parents to improve community relations. An upcoming meeting to move ahead will take place before the next board meeting. Mr. Logar felt there was constructive conversation for the review of the survey results on how to move forward. Mr. Roop found it very encouraging because it was a voice that represented the community, teachers and administrators. Mr. Logar and Mr. Travis request board approval to create an ad hoc committee forum via a virtual web meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2021 from 7:00 – 8:30 open to the public to increase transparency regarding school district items to address a broader group. No discussion on specific school personnel, students or administrators will be allowed. No action will be taken. Topics will be summarized and brought to the board at the next meeting. President Roosen would like to strengthen community outreach, but because of privacy concerns, believes it should be as a community input night so the entire community is aware of the meeting. Attorney Moore is concerned with privacy issues, but board members are able to mute the speaker as a form of control in case you need it. President Roosen suggested to postpone this ad hoc committee until we can protect the board. Another concern for President Roosen is she feels it is administration's job to supply the answers to questions from the public. Mr. Gregor & Mr. Harris agree with Mr. Logar and Mr. Roop to try this forum. President Roosen inquired if there would be an agenda? Mr. Logar replied no. Mr. Harris inquired if the meeting will be recorded? Mr. Logar replied yes. Attorney Moore recommends recording the forum so the board can view it.

      MOTION by Mr. Logar, seconded by Mr. Glazar to request a community virtual meeting Wednesday, February 17, 2021 from 7:00 – 8:30 via google meet where Mr. Travis Roop and Mr. John Logar will host an open forum discussion with the community.

      On a roll call vote, all present were in favor except Board President Roosen who declined. Motion passes.

XIX. EXECUTIVE SESSION - B

MOTION by Mr. Travis, seconded by Mr. Glazar to go into Executive Session.
BE IT RESOLVED pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12), that the Board enter into Closed Session at this time to discuss confidential matters pertaining to:

- Personnel - recommendations for appointments, separations, changes in assignment and/or leaves of absence.
- Pending or anticipated litigation or matters falling within the attorney-client privilege

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the matters discussed in Closed Session should be made public as soon as the need for confidentiality no longer exists, but is not known at this time when that may be.

MOTION by Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Roop, to return to public session.

On a roll call vote, all present were in favor. Motion passes.

XX. OLD BUSINESS - None

XXI. NEW BUSINESS - None

XXII. NOTEWORTHY DATES:

A. February 24, 2021 - Regular Board Meeting - Held Virtually - 6:30 p.m.

President Roosen noted the following dates to the board:

- NJSBA is offering Governance II financed on February 16, 2021 virtually. Governance III will be held on February 18, 2021 virtually for mandatory training. Please see Bev or NJSBA for help.
- Hunterdon Family School Boards Association will have a virtual County meeting on February 25, 2021 from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

XXIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN by Mr. Glazar, seconded by Mr. Harris.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beverly Vlietstra

Beverly Vlietstra
Interim Business Administrator/Board Secretary