

TRENTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
108 North Clinton Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey 08609
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday – April 7, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Completed April 28, 2021
Convened at 6:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Board President Addie Daniels-Lane called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

President Daniels-Lane led the salute to the flag.

Roll Call

Present:

Gene Bouie
Nicole Brossoie
Addie Daniels-Lane
Yolanda Marrero-Lopez
Taraun McKnight
Gerald Truehart II
Jeannie Weakliem

Absent:

Sadé Williams

Acting Superintendent of Schools – Alfonso Q. Llano, Jr. - Absent

Business Administrator/Board Secretary – Jayne Howard - Present

New Jersey Sunshine Law - Read by Board President Daniels-Lane

The New Jersey Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right to the public to have advanced notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted on.

On the rules of this act, the Trenton Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting by publicizing the date, time and place, therefore posted on Trenton's Webpage, the Times and the Star Ledger.

Formal Action will not take place at this meeting.

Mission Statement - Read by Board President Daniels-Lane

All students will graduate with a vision for their future, motivated to learn continually and prepared to succeed in their choice of college or career.

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Adoption of Agenda

Motion was made by Ms. Marrero-Lopez and seconded by Mr. Bouie to adopt the agenda. Agenda was adopted by all Board Members present.

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
Gene Bouie	X		
Nicole Brossoie	X		
Yolanda Marrero-Lopez	X		
Taraun McKnight	X		
Gerald Truehart II	X		
Jeannie Weakliem	X		
Sadé Williams	Absent		
Addie Daniels-Lane	X		

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Daniels-Lane read the Executive Session Resolution:

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION
April 7, 2021

WHEREAS, The Open Public Meetings Act, codified as N.J.S.A. § 10:4-6, et seq., permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting under certain circumstances; and,

WHEREAS, the Trenton Board of Education is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist, indicated as follows:

Any material which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy if disclosed.

MATTERS/CAPTION:

- Interview Candidates for Superintendent of Schools

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Trenton Board of Education, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, that an Executive Session will be held on April 7, 2021 for the statutorily permissible purposes indicated in this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that action may or may not be taken by the Board when it reconvenes in Open Session.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Session with regard to the above subject matter shall be disclosed to the public at a later date and to the extent that the same is not prejudicial to the interests of the parties involved, no longer adverse to the public interest, or does not endanger any individual's right to privacy.

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Motion was made by Mr. Bouie and seconded by Ms. Marrero-Lopez to adjourn the meeting into Executive Session. **All** Board Members present were in favor, **0** opposed **0** abstentions.

President Daniels-Lane advised the public that the meeting will reopen at approximately 9-9:30 p.m.

ADJOURN 6:03 p.m. to Executive Session for the interviews of Superintendent candidates.

REOPEN PUBLIC MEETING

Open Public Meeting reconvened at approximately 9:30 p.m. with the following Board Members in attendance: Yolanda Marrero-Lopez, Taraun McKnight, Gerald Truehart II, Jeannie Weakliem and Addie Daniels-Lane.

President Daniels-Lane advised that Public Participation is limited to 60 minutes duration. She read highlights of Board Policy 0167 – Public Participation in Board Meetings.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Ana Lozado, Bilingual Kindergarten Teacher, expressed her concern about disrupting student instruction late in the year as the students have adapted to virtual learning. In addition, she does not feel the students are prepared to follow safety rules to prevent the spread of COVID.

Ms. Nicole Backlund, Art Teacher, expressed her concern about the constant turnover in Leadership. With the constant changes, a Superintendent does not get to know the students and the people in the community. There should be more continuity. She said the District has yet to answer questions related to the reopening of the school. She discussed many possible negative scenarios that could occur, and she asked if it is worth the risk to reopen schools. Ms. Backlund pleaded with the Board to consider a candidate for the Superintendent's position who will have the best interests of the students and community.

Ms. Dawn Howlen, Teacher, stated there was no true transparency in the Superintendent Search. She said there needs to be a candidate who is for Trenton. There needs to be a better plan to include stakeholders.

Dr. John Guindon, Health Teacher, felt that Leadership should set the example for the District to follow, and he said that the Board meeting in a virtual format shows that it is not safe to reopen the schools. He also stated that reopening this late in the school year is not worth the risks and the extra work involved in getting students acclimated to in person learning.

Ms. Marlena Ventura, Kindergarten Teacher, said there has been a lack of forethought by the District in planning for instructional procedures and classroom ritual routines with reopening. Students must learn new classroom rules. She also expressed concern with

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teachers having to balance their time between in-person students and their virtual students learning at home.

Ms. Kathy Graf, Teacher, said there is a lack of transparency in the Superintendent Search and in hybrid planning. She felt that bargaining units should be more involved in both areas, and she asked for more collaboration.

Ms. Dana Oliver, Teacher, felt that children are not being put first and that there are many unanswered questions. She asked how testing will be handled in a hybrid environment. She also expressed concern with logistical issues such as students not wearing their masks and moving about the hallways.

Trenton Education Association (TEA) President Ms. Talithea Duncan felt that the stakeholder survey used in the Superintendent Search was flawed and not reflective of the community. She also felt there is a lack of transparency in the search process. She stated that she sent emails to the Board offering suggestions on how best to solicit community feedback and that she does not see that any of her ideas were implemented. Ms. Duncan recalled past Superintendent Searches where community forums were held with prospective candidates able to answer questions from stakeholders. She urged collaboration between unions and the Board.

TEA Grievance Chair Ms. Janice Williams felt that more experienced Board Members should have been leading the Superintendent Search. She stated that a strong instructional leader is needed in the role of Superintendent, and she said that the unions should be involved in the search process. Regarding school reopening, Ms. Williams felt there is no value in bringing students back to in person learning so late in the school year. She stated the Board should be asking questions on the mechanics and logistics of hybrid learning.

After the conclusion of Public Participation, Ms. Daniels-Lane responded to some of the concerns expressed as follows:

- Adequate notice of tonight's meeting was not provided – Per Ms. Howard, the notice was sent to the newspaper on March 30. The newspaper makes the decision on date of posting. The advertisement was also posted in the usual places (i.e., District website).
- New Board Member leading the Superintendent Search – President Daniels-Lane expressed her complete confidence in Vice President McKnight's ability to lead the search. She stated that Ms. McKnight is an attorney and concerned Board Member.
- Lack of union involvement in the search process – President Daniels-Lane stated that the unions were involved and participated in the town hall that was held, and that they had the opportunity to respond to the survey

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posted. She also stated that QR codes were posted throughout the District to enable as many parents as possible to access the survey. The survey response time was also extended.

- Reopening on May 3 is not safe – President Daniels-Lane said that reopening was originally scheduled for February or March, but it was postponed due to safety concerns that were expressed. She stated that the District is moving forward now and that the Health Department will certainly be consulted for a status of the virus in the City.

Ms. Marrero-Lopez made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 10:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Ms. McKnight and approved by all Board Members present.

ADJOURN approximately 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Jayne S. Howard

Jayne S. Howard
Business Administrator/Board Secretary