

TRENTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
108 North Clinton Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey 08609
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday – May 4, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.

Completed May 11, 2021
Convened at 5:30 P.M.

Call to Order

Board President Addie Daniels-Lane called the meeting to order at 5:30 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 – arrived 5:55 p.m.
Taraun McKnight – arrived 5:35 p.m.
Gerald Truehart II
Jeannie Weakliem

Absent:

Sadé Williams

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

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 Mr. Bouie and seconded by Ms. Weakliem 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	not present for vote		
Taraun McKnight	X		
Gerald Truehart II	X		
Jeannie Weakliem	X		
Sadé Williams	absent		
Addie Daniels-Lane	X		

Prior to Public Participation, Board President Daniels-Lane advised that Acting Superintendent Llano would be making remarks. Mr. Llano thanked everyone for their efforts in welcoming students back to school in person. He stated that numbers are continuing to improve. President Daniels-Lane echoed Mr. Llano's sentiments and appreciation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

President Daniels-Lane advised the public of the procedures outlined in Bylaw 0167 - Public Participation in Board Meetings. She noted the large number of speakers signed up, and she asked speakers to limit their time if possible due to the 60-minute time allotted for Public Participation.

Ms. Marilyn Hester, Teacher, expressed concern with the docking of teachers' pay. She also felt the classrooms are not safe for student and staff return.

Ms. Marlena Ventura, Teacher, said the first day of a hybrid learning environment was chaotic. She stated that Professional Development on the subject was not helpful. She also stated that some parents did not fill out the Covid survey. She felt that protocols are not being followed consistently and that synchronous learning is not working.

Ms. Lisa Pulliam, Teacher, expressed concern about the docking of teachers' pay. She stated that the parents of her students never received a letter about their children's reporting schedule.

Ms. Adrienne Agnoli said that suspected mold in her classroom was not tested, only covered with spackle. She stated she is still awaiting a 2000 report on mold remediation and asbestos cleanup. She expressed concern about the presence of mold elsewhere at Grant School. She stated that her HEPA air filter is not working. She also felt that someone should be present to assist people entering the building with the temperature

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taking routine. Lastly, she stated that cloths she used to clean her classroom were black when she finished.

Ms. Erin Kondash, Teacher, also expressed concern with the docking of teachers' pay. She stated there is conflicting information being shared.

Ms. Michelle Marrazzo, Teacher, felt that Board meetings should be held in person. She stated that there were only 10 students on the first day of in-person learning, and two entered with a fever because the temperature scanner failed. She also expressed concern about an internet outage. Ms. Marrazzo said that more parents are opting for remote instruction for their children. She expressed concern about teachers not getting paid for summer school and PD sessions from the month of August. She also stated that Custodians are owed retro checks. Lastly, she discussed health and safety conditions, including mold and musty air, and she stated there are not enough substitute teachers to cover for staff members who are quarantining due to Covid.

Ms. Kathy Wolden, Teacher, observed that 32% of the Trenton population has been vaccinated. She felt that the reopening showed deficiencies in preparedness, especially regarding health and safety with the presence of maintenance workers in the buildings. She also asked that the HVAC study be taken off the website, stating that it is misleading.

Mr. John Forte, Teacher, felt that teachers are being disrespected, particularly with the issue of docked pay during a pandemic.

Ms. Nicole Backlund, Teacher, discussed the challenges she faces with the hybrid schedule such as moving her cart to different classrooms during the day. She hoped that the next Superintendent will have the best interests of the community in the forefront.

Trenton Education Association (TEA) Grievance Chair, Ms. Janice Williams, felt that some Board Members are not qualified to lead. She also stated that alternative facts are being shared from Leadership for the following points: stance of Administration on returning to in-person learning and results of Covid survey sent to parents. She said there were several inconsistencies between the District's reopening plan submitted to the injunction judge and the one submitted to the Department of Education. Ms. Williams felt that Trenton has the highest administrative cost in Mercer County and that some Leadership members want to overexert authority. Lastly, she expressed concern about legal costs in the District and the way the Superintendent Search was conducted.

Dr. John Guindon, Teacher, felt there is no accountability on the part of the Board and Leadership. He again questioned the need for virtual Board meetings, as had other speakers this evening. He felt that Board Counsel, in a court hearing, misrepresented TEA's concerns regarding health and safety. Lastly, he expressed concern with the docking of teachers' pay and with teachers not being paid for work performed in August.

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Mr. Darren Freedom Green, Community, spoke of the need for a united voice in advocating for new school buildings. He also felt that the number of homicides in the City are a result of both government and the school system. He said the school system should be at war with social issues, institutional racism, etc. Mr. Green felt that the docking of teachers' pay was not a wise move. Lastly, he said that children learn disrespect from adults and that the next Superintendent should be a person who will stay and put Trenton's needs first.

Ms. Judy Martinez, President of the Trenton Educational Secretaries Association (TESA), recognized the passing of TESA Past Vice President Ann Sciarrotta. She also acknowledged the passing of Lakeira Jones, who worked for the District in the Human Resources Department; and Lillian Delacruz, who was a Child Study Team Member. She stated that all of them deserve to be acknowledged. Ms. Martinez stated that secretaries have been in the buildings since July, and she wished to make it clear that TESA did not support returning to the buildings or extending the number of days the buildings were open. She stated that TESA submitted a demand to bargain for health and safety; but Administration did not respond, and TESA members did not have a choice in returning to the buildings. She stated that members who did not report for work due to health issues had their pay docked. Ms. Martinez said that TESA members were not informed of Covid issues in a timely manner. She felt that the District has taken advantage of the secretaries, does not appreciate them and does not respond to grievances or status requests. Lastly, Ms. Martinez asked for more secretarial positions rather than administrative ones.

Ms. Lydia Thornton, Trenton resident, felt that there should be no time limit on public comments. She also felt that the Board does not ask enough questions of Administration, and that more conversation needs to happen in public. Ms. Thornton felt an audit of the budget is needed and that not enough funding is allocated to books for students and to keeping students in District. Lastly, she asked Board Members to walk through the schools and listen to the concerns of public speakers.

Ms. Marizol Tirado, TESA Vice President, expressed concern with the creation of a Program Manager for the Bilingual Department at the April 26 meeting. She stated there was no Job Description attached to the agenda. She also observed that two secretarial positions and 10 administrative positions were approved on April 26, and she recalled that the previous Superintendent authorized the creation of 11 additional school secretarial positions for the 2020-2021 school year. She stated that the District is short staffed in support personnel, and she asked that the additional funding the District is expecting be directed towards increasing the number of secretaries.

TEA President Ms. Talithea Duncan said the names of the finalists for Superintendent have not been communicated. She asked for more transparency. She also expressed concern about the docking of teachers' pay and felt the decision was made in haste. She stated that some teachers used their personal funds to make sure that instruction has been continuous during the pandemic.

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ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Daniels-Lane read the Executive Session Resolution:

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 **May 4, 2021** for the statutorily permissible purposes indicated in this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that action may 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.

Motion was made by Mr. Bouie and seconded by Ms. Weakliem to adjourn the meeting into Executive Session. **All** were in favor, **0** opposed **0** abstentions.

ADJOURN 7:00 p.m. to Closed Executive Session for interview of candidates for Superintendent of Schools.

REOPEN PUBLIC MEETING 10:14 p.m.

Ms. Daniels-Lane thanked everyone for their time this evening. She reminded Board Members of scheduled meetings in May: May 12, May 17 and May 24.

Motion was made and properly seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:16 p.m.

ADJOURN 10:16 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted

Jayne S. Howard

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Business Administrator/Board Secretary