

MINUTES
Special Meeting
Thursday, January 17, 2019
6:00 PM
Auditorium
William C. McGinnis School
271 State Street

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reading of Notice of Meeting – President Kenneth Puccio
4. Reading of Announcement of Special Meeting – Mr. Derek J. Jess
5. Roll call

Mr. Convery	<u> P </u>	Mr. Martinez	<u> A </u>
Mr. Iglesia	<u> P </u>	Mr. Massopust	<u> P </u>
Ms. Lebron	<u> P </u>	Mr. Puccio	<u> P </u>
Ms. Marquez-Villafañe	<u> P </u>	Ms. Vazquez	<u> P </u>

Administration:

Dr. Roman	<u> P </u>
Mr. Jess	<u> P </u>

6. Board President's Report – Mr. Kenneth Puccio
 - Mr. Puccio provided condolences for those staff members who lost a member of their family this past month.
7. Superintendent's Report – Dr. David A. Roman
 - January has been declared School Board Member Appreciation Month by Governor Murphy and as such he thanked the board members for their work on behalf of our students and our staff.
 - Mr. Jess than read a Proclamation from the state regarding school board recognition:
 - It was than stated that it takes a lot of heart to be a board member. They do a phenomenal job to help us move forward. It's not easy, but when we're in back room conversations the board has always been respectful, dignified and have the best thoughts for our children.
 - Mr. Puccio was recently honored for acts he did to save a child many years ago and that child is now being sworn in as a police officer. It's a heroic lifelong contribution to the City of Perth Amboy and we congratulate Mr. Puccio. A video of the honor was then shown.



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Proclamation

WHEREAS, New Jersey's public schools serve nearly 1.4 million children in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade; and

WHEREAS, nearly 5,000 local board of education members in New Jersey devote countless hours, without remuneration, to the oversight of school district operations, including finances, policy, curriculum and staffing; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's local boards of education endeavor to meet the challenges facing public schools and help students attain the education necessary for postsecondary success so they may compete in a global economy; and

WHEREAS, local boards of education have contributed to New Jersey being among the leading states in academic achievement, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and by district participation and student achievement in the Advanced Placement and SAT assessments; and

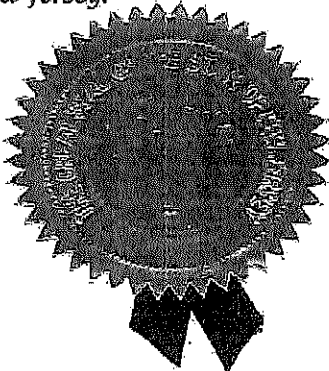
WHEREAS, the National School Boards Association and the New Jersey School Boards Association have declared January 2019 to be School Board Recognition Month; and

WHEREAS, by making meaningful contributions to public education, the dedicated members of local school boards have greatly enhanced the quality of life in our State through their actions and decisions on behalf of our students;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Philip D. Murphy, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

JANUARY 2019
AS
SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH

in New Jersey.



GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this eleventh day of January in the year two thousand nineteen, the two hundred forty-third year of the Independence of the United States.

Shirley Y. Dineen
Lt. GOVERNOR

Philip D. Murphy
GOVERNOR

8. Candidate Interviews – Vacant Board Member Position

- **Candidate #1 - Mrs. Ana Mascenik**
- Mrs. Mascenik provided an opening statement saying that she's been involved with the system for over 50 years starting when she was a student. What brings her here today is she wants to serve as a volunteer for the students. We've all worked intensely to bring them to a prosperous adulthood and also so they can be a benefit to the city. There's a lot going on in the city. She's excited about what's happening. She's on the Zoning Board and how will that affect our schools. When she was an administrator they did strategic planning when they built the last schools. It was a cohesive plan, they worked collaboratively together and you're working together as a board which is a wonderful thing. She takes her grandchildren to school every day and all three of her children went through Perth Amboy Schools and are successful.
- The Board then asked questions:
 1. If given the opportunity to serve our board of education, how do you plan to advocate for student quality education while not placing a burden on the taxpayers?
 - You can use state aid to not put a burden on the taxpayers. You can work with the community and have them volunteer to help keep costs down, such as PTO's and to fund school trips. Grants are also available that the staff can apply for.
 2. What perspective will you bring to this board that may not already be present if you are selected to fill the vacancy?
 - She's been in Perth Amboy all her life, she's knows the community and the board members. When you know how hard working our residents are, the love they have for the kids, the understanding of that and ties to the community will help her in her decision for the students. She's very collaborative and open communication makes decision making easier.
 3. What are your goals if chosen to serve the board?
 - Assist other board members and help them to be effective. She has a clear vision of the board and where we want to go. Be cohesive so that it all comes together. Examples when you open a new school: the traffic pattern can be challenging, do we have enough street access, which kids will go there, what will happen with the reorganization of the middle schools.
 4. What do you see as some of the weaknesses of our district and how would you improve those weaknesses?
 - The issue of poverty of our students. We need to enrich their lives within the district. The emotional and social issues of the district. Parents are working 2 to 3 jobs. They can't give the time to their kids that is needed. Sometimes they only speak one language and they can't help with homework. It's a new culture for people, immigrant children in town, they are coming all the time. They need to be acclimated to our town and our culture. This can help if we support them and work with them.
 5. The safety and security of our students and staff are very important. What ideas can you propose to help ensure the continued safety and security of our students and staff?
 - All schools are open to attack, it's scary. The kids suffer when practicing the drills as they do get anxious. We need to continue the drills and have armed police officers in each building and work collaboratively with the police department. It's crucial to our kids safety. We need to know the kids, our security officers talk to them all the time and they have a good rapport. The teachers also communicate with them. Listen to the students and watch the bullying, cyber bullying especially. We need to keep track of this and work with the police department.

6. In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue/problem facing our school system and how would you try to solve it?
 - Over population of the buildings. The board has taken many steps to fix it and she would like to help with that. The building of the new high school should help, but the issue is when the schools are finally finished they will be over crowded already. The scuttlebutt is that Seaman Avenue will already be full when it opens. We have to project to the future and stay ahead to the town development because that affects the district and the local schools. Our test scores – the kids have to be able to achieve, but they have to move forward. They need to continue to learn so that they can make a life for themselves at the end of the day.

7. Do you think the bilingual program is working? Why or why not?
 - The bilingual program has worked very well. The kids also succeed when they come out of the program and go into regular classes. Immigrants go right into the program because they need more help. Any bilingual program that moves kids to English while maintaining their understanding of their native language will be affected. We're a point of entry.

8. The Perth Amboy Board of Education is comprised of 9 members, who work collectively to serve the students, faculty and staff of this district. Can you share one professional or personal experience where you had to work as a team to reach a goal where you may differed in opinion from the group and what was the outcome?
 - When Wilentz School was opening, the staff for Wilentz and Peterson came together once a month to identify the needs and what needed to be done to meet those needs. They had success because they came to a consensus and everyone was happy. When she was at McGinnis School she wanted to do one thing one way and the staff wanted something else. They didn't vote, but they came to a consensus and while she was not happy with the decision she supported it and worked with it to help make it successful. We'll work together here and be on the same page when making a decision.
 - Mrs. Mascenik closed by saying she would love to sit on this board because it's an exciting time, she wants to be part of it and she has the time to do it and she hopes that she's considered.

- **Candidate #2 - Mr. Anthony Bermudez**
 - Mr. Bermudez opened by thanking the board members for the opportunity to be part of the board of education. He served on the board for one term a few years ago where they started some projects. He has been able to see them go into effect. The board is doing a great job and he sees the chance to fill Ms. Tejada's shoes.
 - 1. If given the opportunity to serve our board of education, how do you plan to advocate for student quality education while not placing a burden on the taxpayers?
 - As far as the tax prayers are concerned, a majority of the money comes from the state. The state is paying at least \$300,000,000 for two new schools. We don't like to pay more in taxes, but we need a balance to pay our fair share to get the right education for our kids. The state isn't going to allow us to continue to get a free ride if we don't hold our end of the bargain so we need to do that before we're forced. He would be in favor of a slight raise in taxes.
 - 2. What perspective will you bring to this board that may not already be present if you are selected to fill the vacancy?
 - Since he has already been on the board he has a good understanding of the policies and procedures. There are a lot of programs that were started when he was on the board. New schools are in progress and we're making good progress. The new guidance suite, knowledge that I possess from being a past board member already.
 - 3. What are your goals if chosen to serve the board?
 - Continue the programs that you're doing here. There's a lot of good things going on here and encourage it to continue and use past knowledge. The communication between the board and the city; we both serve the same community so in order to make them grow we need to communicate. Motivation to do the best that I can. I want to see Perth Amboy progress and succeed.
 - 4. What do you see as some of the weaknesses of our district and how would you improve those weaknesses?
 - Weakness is transportation, keeping upkeep of our building so we continue to use them, communication is better now and overcrowding is the biggest issue.
 - 5. The safety and security of our students and staff are very important. What ideas can you propose to help ensure the continued safety and security of our students and staff?
 - Training, training, training. We have a good security staff in the district. They do their job to the fullest. They train with the police department so we can all be on the same page no matter the issue or incident. He advocated when he was on the board and now the state has approved Special 3's, that will be a big help. The psychological power of that is helpful. The faculty also needs to be trained.
 - 6. In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue/problem facing our school system and how would you try to solve it?
 - Overcrowding – a few ways to contribute on fixing it are the two new schools, this will help, perhaps the use of modular buildings to help with class size and better student teacher ratio.
 - 7. Do you think the bilingual program is working? Why or why not?
 - Yes, research graduation rate went up from 65% to 80%. It has a lot to do with the DLS Program. 85% of Perth Amboy is Spanish speaking, what better way to communicate with them and get them moving. Over 100 kids received the seal of bi-literacy so that says it's working.

8. The Perth Amboy Board of Education is comprised of 9 members, who work collectively to serve the students, faculty and staff of this district. Can you share one professional or personal experience where you had to work as a team to reach a goal where you may differed in opinion from the group and what was the outcome?
- A lot of debate within executive session because of a lot of ideas on how to make the district better. Security was a hot topic for him, especially with Special 3's, power over the way it was resolved was to increase training. We can agree to disagree, but in the end we need an answer. The Super makes the recommendation because he's in the schools, so you take his word for it and after discussion they will side with him on most things.
 - Mr. Bermudez closed by thanking everyone. There are a lot of good things going on. He is from Perth Amboy, born and bred. It starts here, he'd love to fill Ms. Tejada's shoes, it's hard, but he can because he's a veteran of the board and he has the knowledge that is needed.

- **Candidate #3 - Dr. Danielle L. Brown**
 - Dr. Brown's opened by stating that she ran for the board because she has a passion for the young people in the city. She's a product of the system, she's a former educator and committed to the cause to work for the betterment of young people and the programs and she's happy where the board has been going.
1. If given the opportunity to serve our board of education, how do you plan to advocate for student quality education while not placing a burden on the taxpayers?
 - Look at where we are and what our options are as a board and district as well as consider the options that won't place a burden on the tax payers. Information is power and consider every option.
 2. What perspective will you bring to this board that may not already be present if you are selected to fill the vacancy?
 - Portion of the answer remains to be seen because she's not on the board yet, but being a student in Perth Amboy and educator bringing the perspective of a member of community. Someone who serves here and knows the needs of the city. She's on the board of trustees for the oldest theological seminary in the northeast. She works with all. Team work is what I'll bring to the board.
 3. What are your goals if chosen to serve the board?
 - Transparency and collaboration with board members and community members. We are to continue the upward journey while on the board. I want to see the test scores and student achievements improve as well as the graduation rate continue to rise.
 4. What do you see as some of the weaknesses of our district and how would you improve those weaknesses?
 - The turnover rate of staff. There is a large number that are coming in and leaving. We have a community where parents and siblings had the same staff members when they were in school however with people leaving these relationships can't be made. They won't make assumptions as to why. Graduation rates and test scores could be better. We have a transient city where student's move around a lot. Non educational needs still exist that impact the student because they are bringing this into the classroom with them.
 5. The safety and security of our students and staff are very important. What ideas can you propose to help ensure the continued safety and security of our students and staff?
 - We need highly qualified security officers. Increase consistent accountability for those who are responsible for the safety here and very good hiring practices for our security staff.
 6. In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue/problem facing our school system and how would you try to solve it?
 - Student achievement is most pressing. We have different issues because the school board alone cannot address it. Collaboration, working with the entire community to meet the needs of students to lessen the impact of what kids bring into the classroom that effects their achievement.
 7. Do you think the bilingual program is working? Why or why not?
 - To the degree that I'm privy is student by student basis. Some students excel in a program. We don't think that students should go 12 years and not be proficient in the languages.

- 8. The Perth Amboy Board of Education is comprised of 9 members, who work collectively to serve the students, faculty and staff of this district. Can you share one professional or personal experience where you had to work as a team to reach a goal where you may differed in opinion from the group and what was the outcome?
 - It is a work in progress where a group meets daily to make decisions and we often disagree. Collaboration is my life in working with groups and teens. Currently at work we're reformulating and trying to create new models for how to be open and working with the new generation. People at work who are older have different perspectives. We work with the understanding that no matter what we differ on we all agree to serve the people in the community that we serve. We're able to listen to the perspective of others, have an open mind and an open heart in serving the bigger picture is the best way to get your way.
 - Dr. Brown than provided a closing statement and she thanked everyone for allowing her to speak and hopes that you will look favorably on her application.

9. Executive Session –

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (b), the Board of Education may exclude the public from that portion of a public meeting wherein the board discusses any of the matters set forth at N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (b) (1)-(9);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act ("Act"), the Board of Education shall conduct a closed session pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) for the purpose of discussing the following matter(s):

- Matters rendered confidential by state or federal law.
- Personnel.
- Termination of employee.
- Appointment of a public official.
- Matters covered by the attorney-client privilege.
- Pending or anticipated litigation.
- Pending or anticipated contract negotiations.
- Protection of the safety or property of the public.
- Matters involving the purchase, lease or acquisition of real property with public funds.
- Matters which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.
- Matters in which the release of information would impair a right to receive funds from the United States Government.
- Matters concerning collective negotiations and/or the negotiations of terms and conditions of employment of employees of the Board of Education.
- Possible imposition of a civil penalty or suspension.
- Any matter which could adversely affect the public interest if discussion of the matters were disclosed.

It is anticipated that the length of time of this executive session will be 30-60 minutes, and that action may be taken in public after the executive session. A motion was made to go into executive session at 7:10 pm.

<u>Iglesia</u>	<u>Marquez-Villafañe</u>	
Motion	Seconded	CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

10. Motion to re-enter public session at 8:02 pm.

<u>Vazquez</u>	<u>Convery</u>	
Motion	Seconded	CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Mr. Puccio stated that we had 3 very good candidates this evening. We appreciate your efforts. Everything was positive, and you know about the community, you know how to help us and we're very appreciative that you applied for the position.

11. Nomination of Board Member – Dr. Danielle L. Brown

Vazquez Lebron
Motion Seconded CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- **Roll call vote**
- Yes – Puccio, Vazquez, Lebron, Convery, Massopust, Iglesia,
- No – Marquez-Villafañe

- Dr. Brown was sworn in.
- Dr. Brown stated that she’s looking forward to working with everyone and thanked everybody for this opportunity.

12. Old Business

Iglesia Convery (To close old business)
Motion Seconded CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

13. New Business

Convery Iglesia (To close new business)
Motion Seconded CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

14. Open to the Public

- Public member #1 - welcomed Dr. Brown to the board. At the start of the school year the board inquired as to the high staff resignations within the district and the reasons they were given was people were leaving because of more money, because of distance from their homes and the bar was set higher in Perth Amboy, maybe some of them were not up to our standards. We would like you to know that only a small number of people moved out of state, some people have left the district for more money, however the reason most people leave is because they feel miserable and underappreciated. Many take pay cuts to leave, some are irreplaceable, and they are dedicated to our district. It enrages us that they couldn't hack it here. Look at the buildings with the highest number of turnovers and ask why they're leaving. You may review the AFT's exit surveys. There's a lack of respect for staff. We're kept out of the loop with security and we get no information at the high school. The administration is unfamiliar with and provides inconsistent evaluations as procedures vary. The administration gives very little training. There's a lack of student discipline here. There is an overall message of disrespect. Building temperatures vary; it's either too hot or too cold. Investigate on behalf of the staff or the students because our teaching environment is their learning environment.

- Public member #2 - stated that the superintendent stated that administration has high expectations and people can handle it here. Many of the 1,600 employees here want to meet those expectations, however we expect the board to come to the table and negotiate with us, to finish negotiations, to listen to our proposals and to answer those proposals. We'd like to complete our contract as soon as possible with a fair salary and fair working conditions.

Vazquez Convery (To close public business)
Motion Seconded CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

15. Motion to adjourn at 8:14 pm.

Massopust Marquez-Villafañe
Motion Seconded CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,



Derek J. Jess
School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary

DJJ/eh