

**FORT LEE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FORT LEE, NEW JERSEY**

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 7, 2012

Auditorium, High School, 3000 Lemoine Ave.

1. The Regular Business Meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM by Mr. Arthur Levine, President of the Fort Lee Board of Education.
2. Mrs. Linda McCue, led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. Public Announcement by the President of the Board of Education:
The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Fort Lee Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time, and place thereof posted in the entrance hall of the Board Office, 2175 Lemoine Avenue; published in the Board's designated newspapers: Fort Lee Patch.com, The Record, The Star Ledger, The Suburbanite; filed with the Clerk of the Borough of Fort Lee; and mailed to all persons, if any, who have requested said notice.
4. **ROLL CALL**
PRESENT: Mr. Carmelo Luppino, Jr., Mrs. Linda McCue, Mrs. Angela Napolitano, Mr. Yusang Park, Mr. Joseph Surace, and Mr. Arthur W. Levine

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Sharon Amato, Mrs. Cheryl Balletto, and Mr. Matthew Giacobbe, Esq.

ABSENT: Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh, Ms. Helen Yoon
5. **REPORT OF THE INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS- None**
6. **REPORT OF THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES-None**
7. **BOARD SECRETARY AND TREASURER REPORT FOR MARCH 2012**
Mrs. Cheryl Balletto gave a report on the school bond referendum. The contract on the agenda to be awarded tonight is roughly \$1.7 million dollars less than budgeted. She then introduced Ms. Lisa Gorab (bond counsel) to present the resolution for selling of the school referendum bonds. Ms Lisa Gorab reported that the Fort Lee School District will sell the Bonds through the Bergen County Improvement Authority. This will save the district approximately \$500,000 in interest by using the Triple A rating. She also stated that it looks like we can finance the bonds over a 20 year period due to the lower interest rate and have a lower tax impact.

	Motion by Mr. Carmelo Luppino To Approve Board Secretary and Treasurer Report for the month of March 2012.	Seconded by Mrs. Linda McCue On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	
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8. **APPROVAL OF MONTHLY BUDGET STATUS CERTIFICATION MARCH 2012**

	Motion by Mr. Carmelo Luppino Monthly Budget Status Certification for the month of March 2012.	Seconded by Mrs. Angela Napolitano On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	
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9. **PUBLIC WORK SESSION**

- ◆ Leadership Advantage gave an update to the public and board regarding the superintendent search. There were 22 candidates who applied of which about 13 to consider. Richard Moresco, Leadership Advantage expressed the issue of confidentiality of the candidates who applied. He stated searched are becoming difficult due to the salary caps. The business administrator will keep the information on file. The public report should be sent to the attorney to review for compliance with personnel.

	Motion by Mr. Yusang Park To open the public work session.	Seconded by Mr. Carmelo Luppino On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	
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10. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- ◆ Minutes from the Executive Session and Regular Business Meeting on April 16, 2012 and the minutes from the Special Private Work Session and Special Public Business Meeting on April 23, 2012.

	Motion by Mrs. Linda McCue To Approve Minutes from the Executive Session and Regular Business Meeting on April 16, 2012 and the Special Private Work Session and Special Public Business Meeting on April 23, 2012.	Seconded by Mr. Joseph Surace On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent. Mrs. Angela Napolitano abstained from the vote.	
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11. **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS LISTED ON TONIGHT'S AGENDA AND ANY OTHER TOPIC OF CONCERN**

- ◆ Matthew Giacobbe outlined what could be discussed at the meeting. Employees have not received a rice notice and could be spoken about. Mr. Matthew Giacobbe explained the non renewal process to the public.
- ◆ Fran Crozer spoke about Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman being non renewed. She stated Ms. Martelo teaches writing techniques, reading and has good classroom management skills. They are teachers that share their passion. Homework is more than busy work. Mr. Zellman is the best of the best. Teaches life skills, science, attends PTA meetings, and nature preserve trips. Inconceivable that you wouldn't keep good teachers. Hope this mistake can be corrected.
- ◆ Howard Lipoff, the Treasurer of FLEA stated that one year ago when teachers were let go after great reviews it created damage and urge the board to take action tonight. Sends chilling message that even if an employee is exceptional they can go to the unemployment line. Discourages other to apply to Fort Lee. Zellman volunteers to chaperone and it is not appreciated. Then staff members will less likely volunteer. District has a system of evaluation then why not informed of a problem. If principal does the recommendation then why not listen to what they say? I urge the board to look at the evaluations of people not renewed.

- ◆ Benny Kern stated that he had Ms. Martelo second period and learned a lot of stuff. I was sad to transfer. First period I had Mr. Zellman and he taught the best lessons and got great grades. I am upset over layoffs. Please reconsider and be very grateful.
- ◆ Ariel Kracemen and another student read a statement that supported Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman.
- ◆ Richard Greenfield stated he was a former guidance counselor at the middle school. I heard that these teachers were not renewed and what has changed since October 2011 and tell them now they are dismissed. They were one of the first there in the morning and last out at night. Held guidance meetings and they didn't miss one in two years. They have dedication. Pleading with you to reconsider to reappointing these fine teachers.
- ◆ A parent spoke that over the last 2 years her 2 daughters had Ms. Martelo as their English teacher and never seen such excitement when reading and writing. Spend four hours doing their homework. Daughter was so excited about writing. Ms. Martelo would always send work pages home on Christmas break. Urge you to reconsider.
- ◆ Eviva Royd stated she is a parent in the district and has an interest in the entire Fort Lee community. Dismayed that Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman are not renewed. They are superb teachers and she read a letter that was sent to the board.
- ◆ Ray Diaz who is a parent of a 7th grader and this testimony of the teachers. My daughter is not in the class but the teachers have a good reputation. I know it is costly to develop and train new teachers. It appears that they have an excellent record of evaluations. Why are they being denied tenure? Was there any intervention or late decision? What evidence or documents is there? We have the right to know. If they are satisfactory then they should be tenured. Please consider because it is hard finding the right employees.
- ◆ Dr. Chinwae thanked the board for all of the great programs in elementary and middle school. Mr. Engravalle was great last year. I didn't have the opportunity to work with Mr. Zellman. Our son was very sad that Mrs. Martelo was let go. Request you to reverse. She sparked a bright light in brought the HLA class alive. Favorite to our son and others. Will help fundraise to keep her. Look forward to a positive outcome.
- ◆ Debbie Oppenheimer the school nurse for 20 years had privilege to work with these two professionals. They are caring, professional and motivated teachers. Ask that their non renewal be strongly reconsidered.
- ◆ Aida Garcia asked where is the Interim Superintendent. Heard he is not here and in Washington DC. Based upon the personal relationship that Steve and Matt Giacobbe have Matt should be involved in superintendent search. She questioned the check to Metropolitan Opera because the PTA at school #4 paid directly and now see it funded for another school?
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated Mr. Engravalle requested a day off.
- ◆ Matthew Giacobbe stated he does not have a personal relationship with Mr. Engravalle and it is blatantly false. He has never been to his house, met his wife and this is baseless. He is not involved in the search and that is a board decision. I was not at private session. This is false.
- ◆ Ms. Paula Colbath stated that Mr. Giacobbe represented Mr. Engravalle in Hamburg. Mr Engravalle has recommendations from Yaccov Brisman and Bruce Padula on his linkedin page from January 2010. This week is teacher appreciation week and our acting superintendent could not make the meeting and respond to the teachers. Commissioner Cerf when ask about education gave one simple response outstanding teachers. Research is very clear. In school factor to be able to recruit, retain and reward staff. These two teachers are outstanding. My son is a 4th grader and I heard they are excellent. Outrageous the he is not here tonight after making unfounded decision and could not face the crowd.
- ◆ A student stated he went to School #4 and school in many countries. In Fort Lee he had many teachers he loved. Mr. Martelo and Mr. Zellman are outstanding teachers. Mr. Martelo is why I love writing. I want to be an author. I learned many things from Mr. Zellman and run home to tell my mom what I learned. Never forget what they taught. It

is obvious what we want and we want them to stay. Egregious mistake not to renew contract.

- ◆ Stephanie Stuart asked about a timeline and when to expect feedback regarding the superintendent search. Nonrenewal of people with excellent evaluations gives a negative perception of the district. Has there been any thought to a principal for the school #1 for the 2012-2013 school year. Who will be in charge in the summer?
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated the next step is for board members to go through the superintendent search files and then the board will schedule interviews.
- ◆ Mrs. Cheryl Balletto stated that right now there is no one for School #1. This summer no one is allowed in the building due to construction.
- ◆ Mr. Ramon Martelo stated he is the father of Christina Martelo and he is confused but filled with pride after the overwhelming support. Outstanding professional qualities of these teachers. Pains me to see shattered dreams. She came on board with a passion to teach and a positive difference. She has worked tirelessly that has earned her high marks. What has changed? These are two teachers doing the best in the classroom. Many parents and students are here and I will read some comments. "Thank you for teaching me writing opened answers. "My love of writing grew" "thanks for being the best language teacher."
- ◆ Mr. Alex Chung stated it is obvious that many parents/students are here. I would be devastated if a teacher that inspired me was not renewed. What can we do to get the teachers back?
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that the teachers request a statement of reasons as to why and the superintendent responds back. The teachers can request a Donaldson Hearing. We would violate their rights if we comment.
- ◆ Mr. Paul Umrchin stated how many 7th grades is the work egregious? He asked all kids from the middle school to stand up. How many have Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman? The teachers have a great amount of support. I would like to know the criteria used to make the decision? Did the board make the decision or is it unilateral by Mr. Engravalle?
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe state the Interim Superintendent makes the unilateral decision. Board is not part to the process. Teachers can request a statement of reasons and then the Interim Superintendent can respond. Then a Donaldson Hearing after that.
- ◆ Mr. Paul Umrchin asked what school policies used to guide him?
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated the guidelines are in 18A and 6A. It is in law. The law states the non renewal process. The board at the Donaldson Hearing can vote if the superintendent is correct or not correct in decision.
- ◆ Mr. Paul Umrchin stated we have to wait for Mr. Engravalle to be here to know what would be the criteria. Hope you have a Donaldson Hearing.
- ◆ Mr. David Sarnoff stated he has been coming to meetings for years and has never seen such a substantial output. It is unfortunate that Mr. Engravalle is not here and that three board members are not here. Is there any meeting scheduled for May? Mr. Engravalle is on his twitter account during the day. It says you should keep good teachers and get rid of bad. You should review his record of tweets and keep track. Who keeps track of him being out of district? Have any steps been taken to cover buildings? Principals can't come to curriculum meetings. The minutes of the 23rd two board counsels were present and they could have a conflict. Mr. Engravalle has been in the position less than a year and did he sit in their classrooms? How can you make the decision? I urge you to convey that passion.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated a certificated person must be in building and be board approved. That is why many schools have vice principals. As the board attorney you represent the board and superintendent and I have never represented Steve Engravalle.
- ◆ Mr. Brian Higgins asked about the specifics of the Donaldson Process. If teachers choose to come before you, what criteria do you have to go over at the meeting or is it the gut feeling of the superintendent? What are the criteria used and what are you held to?

- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated there is no set criteria. The teachers have an open dialogue with us.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe state that the statement of reasons produced by the Interim Superintendent will articulate why they were not renewed. Then the board used the statement of reasons, evaluations, letters, degrees and the comments they heard tonight. They board will deliberate. The decision cannot be arbitrary or capricious to not renew. It is not arbitrary or capricious if there in compelling evidence to do so.
- ◆ A student stated they did not have Mr. Zellman. I had Ms. Martelo and she was amazing with reading and writing. No matter what, Ms. Martelo will not leave without a fight. Look at the teachers skills. Go to the class and see how they teach. They make kids want to learn.
- ◆ A parent stated they had a chance to sit with Mr. Engravalle but don't understand why the teachers were let go. Feel tension. This is a small town but a lot of politics. My daughter is in Ms. Martelo's she is a great teacher. I am expressing my gratitude and appreciation.
- ◆ Ms. Diane Sicari asked when the safety consultants were coming to talk about the audit. The children of Fort Lee should be very proud. The two teachers should be very proud what you taught. If you are not happy with the way things are running come out in November and make a change.

A short break was taken at 9:20 and the meeting reconvened at 9:35 pm.

- ◆ Mr. Gary Novelselski, President of FLEA and a board member in his town. He is a master board member. This board needs to know there is a problem. We have non-renewed teachers all the time. After one year you should know if someone is a good teacher. Might take a second year. If longer than that then it is bad management and bad decision. Also, teachers are retiring because the conditions are such. Teachers are not valued. Get input before making decisions. Teachers not being renewed because of giving a bad grade to a VIP. Problem in the science department and three teachers are leaving. This place has become a safety school and you don't want that reputation. It is easy to fill a room for a football coach but here it is about the classroom. Mr. Engravalle never seen these teachers. Parents and students all in one room and you need to reconsider. The attorney is legally correct except the Donaldson Hearing can be in public session. When you have this many people you should reconsider. Don't let it go and this is serious. Obvious this is bad judgment and hope this is to be rectified.
- ◆ Mrs. Nancy Stern asked the board this is the one time you can look at their files and did any board members look at the files? If you didn't, don't you think you should? Also heard the tapes of the meetings are edited? Who is making the tapes?
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated we have directed by legal that we can't edit the tapes.
- ◆ Mrs. Cheryl Balletto explained that the DVD's are made the next day after the meeting. The DVD is delivered to my office and the courier brings the DVD to Time Warner.
- ◆ Mr. Yusang Park stated he has not looked at files. We do not have the expertise and don't think we should be part of the process until the Donaldson Hearing.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated unless there is a reason to look at the file the board is precluded. The job of the board is to govern and not to administer the schools. The Donaldson allows the review of files. Board has the right to review the entire personnel file.
- ◆ Ms. Cathy Lee stated she came without an understanding and takes a different perspective. Everyone here is in support and you should take that into consideration. Need to be the publics' friend. A lot of animosity in the room. We have rules and guidelines like the library board. I have a child in School #1 and I am concerned that there is no principal. Based upon the time to fill it and it will be summer soon. I hope the school opens with a good principal. Hope the teachers will exercise their rights. It is not right not be here and Mr. Engravalle should be here. Can we have a special meeting?

- ◆ Ms. Carol Tropea stated that at the last meeting she spoke about a change in policy. Did the board discuss and make a decision about a teacher in charge of the building? She gave out a resolution 22569 to the board. Sharon you said that all efforts would be made and an email was sent to teachers but not principals.
- ◆ Dr. Sharon Amato stated there is an administrative council meeting tomorrow to discuss coverage.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe must have a principal and appropriate certificate. You need to have someone in charge in case something happens and they need to be trained. Last year, the assistant superintendent served as a principal.
- ◆ Mr. Yusang Park stated as a board member he does not see any animosity. He sees a lot of passion and care about our school district. Is there any issue regarding posting the video on our website?
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated we would like to but it is a capacity issue. He then asked Cheryl to ask Jason.
- ◆ Mrs. Elizabeth Datova stated everyone here support not to fire Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman. Many don't want to come to a board meeting but we are here. Three days before the NJASK Ms. Martelo stayed until 5 o'clock. My child does not have Mr. Zellman but heard he is great. I feel you shouldn't fire these teachers.
- ◆ The Student Council President Antonio stated he is disgusted and disapproves of the non renewal of the teachers. This gives the students motivation.
- ◆ A student stated he is a 7th grader and has Mr. Zellman and Ms. Martelo. At the beginning of the year he didn't care about science. I've grown a passion for science and he is the best teacher I ever had. Now my grades are A's after his lessons. Ms. Martelo is amazing. I had an 84 and after her teaching had an 88 and now a 92. Made an impact on my life and you should have second judgment on their non-renewal. I am lucky because I had Mr. Zellman and Ms. Martelo. Unfortunate that their contract is not renewed. Not fair. In the beginning of the year I was excited for honors language arts but introduced to grammar, speaking, and reading. I wanted to drop honors but she helped me and saw something in me. Mr. Zellman tells funny jokes and extra trips.
- ◆ Christian Cache a 7th grader stated the masses are here. He then quoted Ronald Regan. He asked the board to make the right turn and keep Mr. Zellman and Ms. Martelo.
- ◆ Mrs. Jodi Etra stated she has a unique opportunity to work in the town she lives. These teachers are the teachers of my son. Every night we eat dinner and there is never a night that they don't talk about their teachers. Hearing it all, I pray my students talk about me the way they talk about these teachers. Thank You for taking the time and patience. I will do a lot more as a parent. Thank You.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated he is very impressed with the children who came out and spoke so eloquently. Every one of your parents should be proud. Hope to see more of you under different circumstances. Thank you for coming and appreciate it.

- ◆ A motion was taken to close the public comment session of the meeting.

At 10:10 pm a break was taken and the meeting reconvened at approximately 10:20.

12. **RESOLUTIONS AND REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

<u>Board Committee</u>	
#1B	Approval - Resolution Regarding School District Report of Incidents of Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying
#2B	Approval of the Official Newspapers/Online Media Outlets for the school district for the 2012-2013 school year

	Motion by Mrs. Angela Napolitano To Approve #1B & #2B	Motion by Mr. Carmelo Luppino On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	
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<u>Buildings and Grounds</u>			
#1B&G	Approval of Asbestos Monitoring Services		
#2B&G	Approval - Boswell McClave Project and Site Engineering Services for the School Bond Referendum at a rate of \$158 per hour, for an additional \$4,676.50		
#3B&G	Approval - Award of Bid to Spartan Construction, Inc. for Masonry Upgrades at School #3, School #4 and Fort Lee High School		
#4B&G	Approval - Award of Bid to USA General Contractors, Corp. for School #1, and Lewis F. Cole Middle School		
#5B&G	Approval - Award of Bid to Framan Mechanical, Inc. for School #1, and Lewis F. Cole Middle School		
	Motion by Mr. Carmelo Luppino To Approve #1B&G - #5B&G	Motion by Mrs. Linda McCue On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	

<u>Curriculum Committee</u>			
#1CUR	Approval of Class Trips totaling \$1,272.00		
#2CUR	Approval of Revised School Calendar for the 2012-2013 school year		
#3CUR	Approval of District Professional Development Plan for 2012-2013		
	Motion by Mr. Carmelo Luppino To Approve #1CUR - #3CUR	Seconded by Mrs. Linda McCue On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	

<u>Finance</u>			
#1F	Approval – Current Bills List Totaling \$1,159,953.06		
#2F	Approval – Line Item Transfers for March 2012		
#3F	Approval of Designated Depositories for 2012-2013		
#5F	Approval - Appreciation Breakfast for Crossing Guards		

#6F	Approval - Acceptance of Donation Totaling \$1,000	
#7F	Approval - Selling of Bonds	
#8F	Approval - Employee Drug Testing Services for 2012-2014	
#9F	Approval - South Bergen Jointure Transportation Contract for 2012-2013	
#10F	Approval of Google Chrome Contract Totaling \$25,740 paid through Grant Funding	
#11F	Approval - Application for Funds to Support Implementation of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act	
	Motion by Mr. Joseph Surace To Approve #1F - #11F Resolution #4F Pulled	Seconded by Mr. Carmelo Luppino On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Joseph Surace abstained from one name in Resolution #1F. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

<u>Health-Welfare and Safety</u>		
#1HWS	Approval - Payment of Home and Bedside Instruction Services	
#2HWS	Approval - Additional Related Service Providers for 2011-2012	
#3HWS	Approval - Addition to Home Instructors List for 2011-2012	
#4HWS	Approval - Appointment of ABA Home Service Provider for 2011-2012	
	Motion by Mrs. Angela Napolitano To Approve #1HWS - #4HWS	Seconded by Mr. Carmelo Luppino On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

<u>Personnel</u>		
#1P	Approval - Staff Trips and Conferences Totaling \$785.72	
#2P	Approval - Retirement of Dennis Sayer as High School Science Teacher	
#3P	Approval - Retirement of Lori Tauscher as Elementary Teacher at School No. 2	
#4P	Approval - Resignation of Susana Russo as Physical Education Aide at School No. 1	
#5P	Approval - Maternity Leave for Michelle Baker as Occupational Therapist for the Child Study Team	

#6P	Approval - Extra Compensation for Parent Involvement Workshop	
#7P	Approval - Appointment of Charles Salame from Part-Time to Full-Time High School English Teacher	
#8P	Approval - Placement of Student Teachers, Student Interns and Practicum Candidates for 2012-2013 school year	
#9P	Approval - Additional Substitutes for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years	
	Motion by Mrs. Linda McCue To Approve #1P - #9P	Seconded by Mr. Carmelo Luppino On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. John Bang, Mr. Peter Suh and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

13. At approximately 10:20 PM, Mrs. Linda McCue, offered, Mr. Carmelo Luppino, seconded by, to adjourn the Regular Business meeting. On voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

Roll calls and resolutions of this meeting are attached.

Respectfully submitted,

CHERYL BALLETO
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY

CB/mp
Att.
5-17-12