

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

MINUTES – SPECIAL PUBLIC BUSINESS MEETING

Monday, June 18, 2012

High School Library/Media Center, 3000 Lemoine Ave.,
Fort Lee, NJ 07024

1. The Special Public Work Session was called to order at 8:09 PM by Mr. Arthur Levine, President of the Fort Lee Board of Education.
2. Mr. Peter Suh, 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. John Bang, Mr. Carmelo Luppino (arrived 8:20pm), Jr., Mrs. Linda McCue, Mrs. Angela Napolitano, Mr. Peter Suh, Mr. Joseph Surace, and Mr. Arthur W. Levine

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

ABSENT: Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon

5. **PUBLIC WORK SESSION: PURPOSE OF THIS SPECIAL PUBLIC BUSINESS MEETING**
 - ◆ TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL, CURRICULUM, FINANCE, AND ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY ARISE.

6. **REPORT OF THE INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS-None**

7. **BOARD SECRETARY AND TREASURER REPORT FOR MAY 2012**

- ◆ For the month of May 2012.

	Motion by Mr. Peter Suh To Approve Board Secretary and Treasurer Report for the month of May 2012.	Seconded by Mrs. Angela Napolitano On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	
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8. **APPROVAL OF MONTHLY BUDGET STATUS CERTIFICATION MAY 2012**

- ◆ For the month of May 2012.

	Motion by Mr. Joseph Surace	Seconded by Mrs. Linda McCue	
	Monthly Budget Status Certification for the month of May 2012.	On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.	

9. **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS LISTED ON TONIGHT'S AGENDA AND ANY OTHER TOPIC OF CONCERN**

- ◆ Mr. Peter Suh asked if the school district has to do Resolution #1B.
- ◆ Mr. Steven Engravalle said yes, this was in the previous board meeting.
- ◆ Mr. David Sarnoff said thanks to School #1 PTA for the barbeque. He asked if the board is planning for the influx of students and has there been an attorney review of the DMC review of expenses. He understands the attorney should not be telling the audience when to stop speaking.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that the DMC contract was sent to him late last week and will not sign or initial it until we review and approve it.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that the only way is to lease the other facilities and the referendum to build was turned down. We are looking at other sites so we will have places.
- ◆ Ms. Diane Sicheri stated that she heard a rumor that Mr. Levine sold condos in the process of moving. If Mr. Bang comes 20 minutes late how is that fair to vote on the superintendent and earlier meetings.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine said no he did not sell condos at that time. A parent went to my daughter and this doesn't involve my daughter directly. A person went and harassed my daughter. All board members have been late and all try to be on time for the board meetings.
- ◆ Mr. John Bang stated that he lets the board know if he is not able to be at the board meeting.
- ◆ Mr. Antonio Denelego stated that he spoke about Mr. Zellman and Ms. Martelo and asked if the Donaldson Hearing happened and has letters been sent out.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that there is no information at this time.
- ◆ Mrs. Rosemary Giacomelli stated that she would like clarity on the Donaldson hearing and within three days have results. There needs to be a meeting to vote on it.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that the board still has another Donaldson Hearing for tonight. The board needs to digest the materials.
- ◆ Mr. Mark Molinari stated that both of his children attended the Fort Lee Schools and one is in the eighth grade. Some teachers have the experience; a few with no enthusiasm and some are deadwood and are being paid a fortune. Children need to have respect for teachers. Mr. Zellman has been a homeroom teacher and his son said he is a great guy and cares about learning. Children respect him and communicate with him. Comments are made about Mr. Zellman and why not be a NASA scientist or teach at MIT? You use early retirement to get rid of deadwood and you are not a machine dealing with people. There are 25 to 30 children in a classroom.
- ◆ Ms. Gabby Higgins asked where did you get your reasoning from because nowhere in the reviews does it say you're rigorous or irreverent.
- ◆ Matthew Giacobbe stated that he is not answering because it is not appropriate for the board to answer in the middle of the Donaldson Hearing.
- ◆ Mr. Hershman of the NJEA stated that in three days the teachers will be notified of its final determination.

- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated we gave time until 8:03 for presentations.
- ◆ Mr. Hershman stated that he said it to clarify.
- ◆ Mr. Joseph Surace stated that the board can go into private.
- ◆ Matthew Giacobbe stated yes we can discuss this and can come back.
- ◆ Mr. Carmelo Luppino stated that the employee will be notified by letter and if the board votes.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that the employee must have five votes to overturn the decision. If the board does not want to have an action, then there is no vote.
- ◆ A student stated that he Mr. Zellman is someone that you can count on to listen. He has never been interested in science but now he participates and said how much he loves science.
- ◆ A student stated that he had both teachers and loved the classes. He wouldn't have gotten through the NJASK without Ms. Martelo. The reason is because he didn't have enough rigor. No board members or Superintendent have ever reviewed lessons.
- ◆ A student stated that she heard Ms. Martelo is nice and objective. She had Mr. Zellman and he treats all the students the same. She makes classes enjoyable and he is the only reason she likes to go to school. She has made Facebook and posters in class and the board should make the right decision.
- ◆ Ms. Eva Rhode stated that she is a fantastic teacher and Ms. Martelo should be renewed. She is not asking for specific information that is in her file, but what are the criteria to make a decision of renewal and should her file be reviewed?
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that under the law a Board of Education does not make the decision, only the Superintendent does. The Superintendent can use any facet in a workplace during the first three years. The personnel files are available for the board members to be considered.
- ◆ Ms. Eva Rhode asked what is the expectation to be reviewed.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that the board hasn't completed the process.
- ◆ Ms. Eva Rhode asked what are the criteria by the Interim Superintendent. Is it different for every employee and not say anything from the board?
- ◆ Mr. Steven Engravalle stated that he looks at every single piece of data and including what he sees today. There is no evaluation process in Fort Lee.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Barckman stated that there are four Donaldson Hearings.
- ◆ Kimi, a student stated that the seventh graders are able to represent someone who genuinely has a passion for Ms. Martelo who has done so much to educate us. It is time for us to be there for them. It is vital to academic success. Why let them go. Ask anyone and anyone who has observed her class about her which you did not do. She is what the foundation of teaching is about. You can count on her. She refuses to sit with this injustice.
- ◆ Mr. Peter Suh stated that he hopes to see Kimi on the debate team.
- ◆ Ms. Stephanie Coslow stated that it is not too late for the board to change their mind. She knows that the board will make the right decision. She doesn't know how her son got into Honors English when she noticed around Christmas his change in thinking and writing essays. Fort Lee has some awesome teachers. She kept her session on time. We have a wonderful principal and we hope that the Superintendent goes to bed and makes the right decision. She asked Mr. Engravalle if he communicates with others about the thoughts that he has about cutting teachers.
- ◆ Mr. Steven Engravalle stated that he is confident that he made the right decision at the time and still feels that way. There are very tough decisions and he does communicate. The buck stops here.
- ◆ Ms. Meta asked if Mr. Engravalle made his decision and is sticking by it. Then why are we here?
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that this is not how it works. Once the Superintendent makes a decision then the employee is non-renewed. The teacher then comes to the board to override their decision. We will review the materials and evaluation in private.

- ◆ Ms. Meta stated that it is hard to find good teachers that will be respected. Why lose to another school district. It is about our children going to the Middle School. I was told that Fort Lee is a good district but is not doing well. We should keep good teachers and help improve our district. I am standing here for the children.
- ◆ Nicole, a student stated that she had Mr. Zellman and he is one of the best. He is always funny and this is unfortunate. He had great lesson plans. Most of what she knows is taught by Mr. Zellman. He would always have definitions or hands on lab. He brought in a heart from a cow. A year later she remembered that Curriculum was a favorite part of her day. She applied to Bergen County Academies and she got in. Please renew Ms. Martelo since she is a most deserving person.
- ◆ Dr. Nina Levinson asked if the Superintendent is present during the Donaldson Hearings.
- ◆ Mrs. Nancy Stern asked about the Superintendent Search and asked if there will be a finalist forum and has the board made a decision. She also asked if the board met with about an Evaluation Policy. The evaluation was done on April 30, 2012 and the requirement of QSAC could mean points will be lost.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that the board is working on it and engages with the school boards. This is a unique situation because Mr. Engravalle is an interim.
- ◆ Nancy Stern stated that the New Jersey School Boards stated that on April 30, 2012 the contract should be filed by that date. If it is an interim is to do it.
- ◆ Mr. Peter Suh stated that the other candidates have not given permission and he did not want to be disclosed.
- ◆ Benny, an eighth grader stated that he had Mr. Zellman and was scared because he gives homework. He had to do a field project and realized what a great experience it was and quoted Mr. Engravalle that he loves public speaking. He asked the board if the students voice matter.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that the board hears everyone and likes to hear from students that are proud.
- ◆ A student was talking about Mr. Zellman and stated that they would learn something new with Mr. Zellman and he is his favorite teacher. He learned with the food chain that if you are the weakest link, you are eliminate the strongest link when you get rid of the deadwood by not getting rid of what you really want.
- ◆ Mrs. Paula Colbath stated that this is life changing and would like to know why all the board members are not here. She would like to understand what the process is to renew teachers and how to make observations. Did the Superintendent go into the room on more than one occasion? She heard that she had an apartment in Piermont and is now in Closter? The last meeting needs to be about legal domicile.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that he owned a residence and his legal domicile is in Fort Lee. He owns other properties.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that you can have more residences and have a legal domicile, live, sleep and vote in Fort Lee.
- ◆ Mr. Paula Colbath asked if Mr. Arthur Levine lives in Fort Lee.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated yes his legal residence is in Fort Lee.
- ◆ Mrs. Paula Colbath stated that her legal residence is 5 Horizon Road in Fort Lee. She asked what observations the Superintendent does in order to have first-hand knowledge of the teacher.
- ◆ Mr. Steven Engravalle stated that the Board President or board members do not observe teachers. Mr. Steven Engravalle stated that there is no formalized process and we use all facets to make our decisions. I did not evaluate the teacher. I review evaluations and all other information.
- ◆ Mrs. Paula Colbath asked if there is any rule that you can't do it.
- ◆ Mr. Steven Engravalle stated no.

- ◆ Mrs. Paula Colbath asked about safety type issues and what is the status of the investigation.
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that he spoke to you and had conversations. He asked for names and people that are being emailed for information. He also stated that he asked to meet with Mrs. Colbath but she would not meet with him.
- ◆ Mr. Carmelo Luppino stated that he is reaching a point.
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that if you feel a member of the public is investigating you need to report it to the police. You cannot comment on what we are doing with an employee.
- ◆ Mrs. Aida Garcia stated that on March 21, 2012 we had a meeting about redevelopment and five board members and the Interim Superintendent said this hasn't happened in forty years and won't ever happen again.
- ◆ Mr. Steven Engravalle stated that this is exactly what I said and I have been in contact with the mayor. Every time we speak it is a new step.
- ◆ Ms. Aida Garcia stated that this is not the way you said it.
- ◆ Mr. Paul Umrichin stated that this is directed to Mr. Peter Suh and Mr. John Bang. Do you have children in School #4 and the High School? Mr. Zellman stated that Katlyn had him and looked at stuff and this was groundbreaking. The Field Guides was the first thing that he did in college. It's a shame to lose good teachers. Your children will go to the school.
- ◆ Ms. Diane Alteri stated that she had heard from children and parents and would like to know that you are hearing them. You support their previous decision. How do we know if the board will overturn a decision?
- ◆ Mr. Arthur Levine stated that the board heard from people and will consider it in private session.
- ◆ Mr. Alex Floratos stated that he doesn't know the teachers but there must be reasons. He has heard a lot of positives and hopes that you will reconsider.
- ◆ Mrs. Mildred Federico stated that when she sat on the board for several years never once did we have a Donaldson Hearing and tonight there were four and she is amazed.
- ◆ Ms. JoAnn Tarabola stated that the teachers always had three evaluations and were done by the principal. There was a column for needs improvement. At the Middle School Ms. Giacomelli always had a plan. They met with the teachers before their next evaluation. Has the board members seen the evaluations?
- ◆ Mr. Matthew Giacobbe stated that you can't go random this evening. The board will review and must have a reason. The files have been available in the Board Office.
- ◆ Ms. Han stated that she has two children in the district and they had both Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman. They applied for Private Schools and her daughter was able to write essays on her own. Mr. Zellman is respected and liked. He inspires and she is pleading the board to overturn their decision. She has a second child who is going into the seventh grade. She said this grade is very crucial and she is considering relocating. She voted for all the board members.
- ◆ Mohamed stated that he had both teachers who are positive. He knows what he wants in a teacher. He left Mr. Zellman's class smiling for the day. He passed the NJASK and Mr. Zellman made the seventh grade memorable. Six hours in all for three board meetings and at least ten teenagers came out for one purpose which is to save Ms. Martelo and Mr. Zellman. Do you believe we would attend if Mr. Zellman wasn't amazing? He set up tuna fish to get raccoons and skunks. He is asking that the board doesn't get rid of the two best teachers. He realizes that he wants to be a teacher and a scientist. This affects me in every way.
- ◆ Mr. Peter Suh said thanks for coming and he had Mr. John Palmisano as his Science teacher and that was his favorite teacher. He took AP classes because he had great teachers. We think that it's not just the best situation now but will be in the future. We will look at what everyone has said. We don't want to rush into anything and make the right decision. Yes, each decision is very important to him as Chairperson of Personnel.

- ◆ Mr. Carmelo Luppino stated that some parents said there is deadwood when we have tenure and we need to consider. As board members we have issues. Dr. Nina Levinson should run for the board.
- ◆ Mr. Joseph Surace stated that I was born and raised in a community but I hear we have great teachers and then parents send their children to private schools. He hears one thing and the parents do another. This is sending different signals.

10. **RESOLUTIONS AND REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

<u>Board Committee</u>		
#1B	Resolution Regarding School District Report of Incidents of Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying	
	Motion by Mr. Peter Suh To Approve #1B	Motion by Mrs. Angela Napolitano On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

<u>Curriculum Committee</u>		
#1CUR	Approval of Class Trips at No Cost to the District	
#2CUR	Leadership and Learning Center Contracts Totaling \$68,025.53	
#3CUR	Approval of Implementation of The Strategic Actions & Innovations for Learning Program (SAIL) at Fort Lee High School	
	Motion by Mrs. Linda McCue To Approve #1CUR - #3CUR	Seconded by Mr. Carmelo Luppino On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

<u>Finance</u>	
#1F	Approval – Current Bills List Totaling \$463,251.53
#2F	Approval – Cafeteria Claims for May 2012 Totaling \$120,701.20
#3F	Approval - Extended School Day Program Claims for May 2012 Totaling \$5,525.96
#4F	Approval – Line Item Transfers for May 2012
#5F	School Alliance Insurance Fund Resolution Appointing a Risk Management Consultant
#6F	Deposit to Reserves
#7F	Agreement/Contract Renewals for 2012-2013 school year

	Motion by Mr. Joseph Surace To Approve #1F - #7F	Seconded by Mr. Peter Suh On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.
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Health-Welfare and Safety		
#1HWS	Payment of Home Instruction Services	
	Motion by Mr. Carmelo Luppino To Approve #1HWS	Seconded by Mrs. Linda McCue On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

Personnel		
#1P	Approval - Staff Trips And Conferences At No Cost To The District	
#2P	Resignation Of Vanda Sorrentino As ESDP Aide At School No. 1	
#3P	Rescinding the Appointment of Michelle Colegia as Teacher for 2012 Extended School Year (ESY) Summer Program	
#4P	Appointment of Elizabeth Lembo as Special Education Teacher at School No. 2 for the 2012-2013 school year	
#5P	Placement of Student Teacher for 2012-2013 school year	
#6P	Increase Hourly Wage for School Bus Driver Pedro Granados	
#7P	Appointment of Home Instructors for 2012-2013 school year	
#8P	2012 Summer Employment	
	Motion by Mr. Peter Suh To Approve #1P - #8P	Seconded by Mrs. Linda McCue On roll call, Motion carried. Mr. Yusang Park and Ms. Helen Yoon were absent.

11. At approximately 9:45 PM, Mr. Carmelo Luppino offered, Mr. Peter Suh seconded by, to reenter into the Private Business meeting. On voice vote, motion carried unanimously.
12. At approximately 11:02 PM, Mrs. Angela Napolitano offered, Mrs. Linda McCue seconded by, to reopen the Special Public Business Meeting. On voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

13. At approximately 11:04 PM, Mr. Peter Suh, offered, Mrs. Angela Napolitano, seconded by, to adjourn the Special Public Business meeting. On voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

Roll calls and resolutions of this meeting are attached.

Respectfully submitted,

CHERYL BALLETT
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY

CB/mp
Att.
6-20-12