

**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY
MINUTES INDEX
MARCH 13, 2023
REGULAR SESSION 6:00 P.M.
EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:04 P.M.
RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
REGULAR SESSION 7:06 P.M.
RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

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**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 13, 2023
REGULAR SESSION 6:00 P.M.
EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:04 P.M.
RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
REGULAR SESSION 7:06 P.M.
RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

I. Regular Session – Call to Order – 6:00 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

III. Roll Call

Present: Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White, Ms. Brooks, Mr. Markarian, Mr. Siet, Ms. Fox.
Board Counsel John Croot

Absent: Ms. Light

IV. Executive Session – 6:04 p.m.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Bernards Township Board of Education shall meet in closed session to discuss item(s) a, e, f and g below which falls within an exception of our open meeting policy and permits the Board to have a private discussion, since it deals with specific exceptions contained in N.J.S.A.10:4-12b. Matters rendered confidential by Federal Law, State Law, or Court Rule:

- a. Individual privacy
- b. Collective bargaining agreements
- c. Purchase or lease of real property if public interest could be adversely affected
- d. Investment of public funds if public interest could be adversely affected
- e. Tactics or techniques utilized in protecting public safety and property
- f. Pending or anticipated litigation
- g. Attorney – client privilege
- h. Personnel – employment matters affecting a specific prospective or current employee

On motion by Mr. Molinari seconded by Mr. Salmon and approved by all present, the Board recessed into executive session at 6:04p.m.

Any discussion held by the Board, which need not remain confidential, will be made public as soon as practical. Minutes of the private session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists. All appropriate persons, who may be discussed in private session, have been adequately notified.

On motion by Mr. Molinari seconded by Mr. Rascio and approved by all present, the Board closed executive session at 6:57p.m.

V. **Reconvene Regular Session – Call to Order – 7:06 p.m.**

VI. **Statement of Public Notice**

This is a regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Bernards Township. Notice of the time and place of this meeting was provided and copies of that resolution were forwarded to the official newspapers as designated by the Board of Education and to the Township Clerk and a copy of the notice was posted on the bulletin board of the Board of Education Offices in accordance with P.L. 1975 Chapter 231A.

For those members of the public who are unable to attend our meeting in-person, a livestream link of the meeting is posted on the district website, www.bernardsboe.com.

We very much welcome input from the public. There are two times during regular meetings that the public is invited to speak. One time is early in the meeting before the Board votes, when you may speak about any item that is listed on tonight's agenda. Towards the end of the meeting, there is another public forum to address any matter of public concern related to the schools.

When you approach the microphone, please state your name and address. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three (3) minutes duration. No participant may speak more than once during a given public comment session. In order to run efficient meetings and to allow maximum opportunity for members of the public to speak, the Board reserves the right to set a different time limit for individual comments and/or to set an overall time limit for the public comment portions of the agenda. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer, no participant may address or question Board members individually.

As a courtesy to those individuals unable to attend our meetings in person, public comment may be made remotely through Zoom. Interested individuals should

navigate to the district webpage, www.bernardsboe.com, and select "Board of Education" followed by "Public Comment" to review specific instructions, or click [here](#).

Public comments made in-person will be processed first, then comments via Zoom. No public comments will be accepted before 7PM or after item XXI. Public Comment of the agenda ends.

Please understand that public comment portions of our agendas are not structured as question and answer sessions, but rather they are offered as opportunities to share your thoughts with the Board. The Board/Administration will respond to public comments to the extent possible. Any Board responses to public comments will generally be addressed during Board Forum, or during committee reports. However, all comments are considered and will be investigated and addressed as appropriate.

Please be courteous and mindful of the rights of others when speaking. Comments may not be abusive, obscene, threatening or irrelevant. Please understand that students and employees have specific legal and privacy protections. The Board is not permitted to respond in public to comments about students and employees. Please also understand that the Board will not be responsible for the content of comments made by members of the public. Members of the public are cautioned that they are speaking at their own risk and any personally directed statements they make may subject them to legal liability to the effected individual.

If it is necessary for the Board to go into executive session at the end of the meeting, we will provide an estimated length of time for the session and whether any action is anticipated to be taken upon returning to public session.

VII. Student Representative – Petra Deffenbaugh

Ms. Deffenbaugh discussed happenings at Ridge High School including the testing schedule, Ridge Wellness Day, the Newsies performance, a class of 2024 fundraiser, the Room to Read book drive, a dodgeball fundraiser, a clothing drive, accolades and awards, a Ridge Speech and Debate and the success of the Ridge Ice Hockey Team and Boys Fencing teams and current rankings of teams along with upcoming Spring sports updates. Ms. Deffenbaugh pointed out that there are many talented students at Ridge and the opportunities that students have.

VIII. Board President Comments

IX. Board Presentation

1) Preliminary 2023-24 Budget – Beth Brooks, Acting Business Administrator, and Nick Markarian, Superintendent

Acting Business Administrator Beth Brooks presented an overview of the 2023-24 school budget.

Items highlighted included:

- Goals for the 2023-2024 Budget which include maintaining all programs and services, the support of district goals, strategic plan and to minimize tax increases.
- The 2023-2024 general operating, grant and debt expenses and explanation of increases and cost drivers.
- Capital projects and reserve deposits
- The budgeted fund balance and a budget revenue comparison from year to year.
- An explanation of reserve accounts
- An eleven year history of taxes

Superintendent Markarian discussed Curriculum highlights for the 2023-2304 budget that support expanded opportunities through curriculum writing and purchase of new textbooks. Mr. Markarian discussed new course opportunities at Ridge High School, programs at the elementary level and police staffing at the elementary schools (SLEO III).

Superintendent Markarian discussed the enrollment trends over the past five years including changes and projections for the fall of 2023 noting that the district plans on having the demographer come in and update projections next year and discussed the personnel portion of the budget.

Board members discussed concerns with the budget and tax increases, actual expenses from the prior year and proposed expenditures, the upcoming contract negotiations with the teacher's union, the need to find savings and bending the cost curve in the district and the review process of the budget for board members.

Superintendent Markarian provided further information for several costs outlined in the budget.

For the complete presentation click [here](#).

X. Superintendent's Report

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- 1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby affirm receipt of the **HIB Report** dated March 13, 2023.

On motion by Mr. Salmon seconded by Ms. White Items #1 was approved by the following roll call vote:

- “Ayes” - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White
“Noes” - None
“Abstain” - None

Superintendent Markarian noted that the Ridge High School Cheerleaders won a state championship and congratulated the team.

XI. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Comments from the public included the topics of the need of Assistant Principals in the schools, staffing impacts in the schools, appreciation to the staff and board for the support of the children in the district, making budgetary line items available to the public, the topic of having SLEO III's in all of the schools, the budget and quality of the school district.

Superintendent Markarian and Interim Business Administrator Brooks provided further explanation into budgetary questions presented by the public.

XII. Approval of Minutes

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- 1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following minutes:

March 1, 2023 – Executive Minutes
March 1, 2023 – Regular Session Minutes

On motion by Mr. Salmon seconded by MS. White the foregoing were approved by the following roll call vote:

“Ayes” - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio,
Mr. Salmon, Ms. White
“Noes” - None
“Abstain” - None

XIII. Finance Committee Report

Report on Progress

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve a list of disbursements dated March 13, 2023 consisting of warrants in the amount of \$1,754,492.84.

On motion by Ms. Hira seconded by Mr. Salmon Items #1 was approved by the following roll call vote:

“Ayes” - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio,
Mr. Salmon, Ms. White
“Noes” - None
“Abstain” - None

XIV. Personnel Committee Report

Report: Committee meeting of February 17, 2023

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby approve the following personnel items upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools:

1) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby appoint **Mi Zhou** Secretary Cedar Hill School at a salary of Step 1 \$54,948 effective March 10, 2023 through May 5, 2023 as a medical leave replacement. Salary to be prorated to reflect dates worked.

On motion by Mr. Salmon seconded by Ms. McKeon Item #1 was approved by the following roll call vote:

“Ayes” - Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Ms. Hira, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio,
Mr. Salmon, Ms. White
“Noes” - None
“Abstain” - None

XV. Policy Committee Report

Report: Committee meeting of March 6, 2023

Ms. McKeon provided a report from the March 6, 2023 Policy Committee Meeting. Topics at the meeting included a review of policies and regulations for AP Exams for Home Schooling, Adoption of Textbooks, Assignment of Pupils, Administering an Opiate Antidote, first readings on policies and regulations for Board Committees, Board Member Use of Electronic Communication and second readings on previously discussed policies and regulations.

XVI. Curriculum Committee Report

Report: Committee meeting of March 3, 2023

Mr. Salmon provided a report from the March 3, 2023 Curriculum Committee meeting. Topics at the meeting included textbook proposals, the summer STEM offering, information literacy standards, the need for a world language honor society advisor, a scheduling update, the Health Curriculum board resolution and an opt-out update.

Board members discussed the opt-out method and its effectiveness.

XVII. Wellness Committee Report

Report: Committee meeting of February 22, 2023

Ms. White provided a report from the February 22, 2023 Wellness Committee meeting. Topics at the meeting included ESS and Elementary support, the March 1, 2023 Wellness Day, a Ridge High School culture and climate survey and the use of common spaces at Ridge.

XVIII. Facilities & Operations Committee Report

Report: Committee meeting of March 2, 2023

Mr. Rascio provided a report from the March 2, 2023 Facilities & Operations Committee meeting. Topics included the girls varsity softball field, the Ridge High School access road, work orders, supplies, busing and the William Annin Middle School circle.

XIX. Liaison Committee Reports

Ms. McKeon discussed a recent NJ School Boards Legislative Meeting that she had attended. Topics at the meeting included the state budget, state aide and pending bills.

XX. Public Comment

Comments from the public included the topics of SLEO's, support services, a compliment to the Board of Education members for resolving the softball field drainage issues, the Health Curriculum, equity and budgetary questions.

XXI. Board Forum

Mr. Rascio expressed that the reason to delay voting on the preliminary budget was to make sure that all Board members understand all of the dynamics of the budget prior to voting.

Mr. Salmon discussed the possibility of having a BT Connect meeting to discuss school start times and addressed having an SLEO in the building.

President Molinari addressed kindness, tolerance and respectfulness and clarified that Health Curriculum concerns are being addressed across the board. Mr. Molinari discussed the process of committee meetings.

XXII. Adjournment

On motion by Mr. Rascio and seconded by Mr. Salmon and approved by all present, the meeting was adjourned at 10:29p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Brooks
Acting Board Secretary