

**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY
MINUTES INDEX
MARCH 20, 2023
REGULAR SESSION 6:00 P.M.
EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:03 P.M.
WILLIAM ANNIN MIDDLE SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
REGULAR SESSION 7:11 P.M.
WILLIAM ANNIN MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**

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**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY
MEETING AGENDA
MARCH 20, 2023
REGULAR SESSION 6:00 P.M.
EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:03P.M.
WILLIAM ANNIN MIDDLE SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
REGULAR SESSION 7:11 P.M.
WILLIAM ANNIN MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**

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. Light, Ms. McKeon, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Rascio, Mr. Salmon, Ms. White, Ms. Brooks, Mr. Markarian, Mr. Siet, Ms. Fox. Board Counsel John Croot

Absent: None

IV. Executive Session – 6:03 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 Ms. Light and approved by all present, the Board recessed into executive session at 6:03p.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 Ms. Light and approved by all present, the Board closed executive session at 6:59p.m.

V. **Reconvene Regular Session – Call to Order – 7:11 p.m.**

VI. **Statement of Public Notice**

This is a Special 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. At this Special Meeting there will be one forum for public participation which will be held early in the meeting.

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 the public comment session 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. Board President Comments

President Molinari encouraged the public to adhere to parliamentary procedure.

VIII. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Markarian explained the changes made to the preliminary budget and several areas that were adjusted accordingly.

IX. Public Comment

Comments from the public included concerns with the National Honors Society application process, budget concerns in relation to the levy, concerns with spending the Capital Reserves in lieu of a tax levy and a question of transparency in budget line items.

Superintendent Markarian spoke to the National Honors Society comment and stated that he had spoken to Dr. Lazovick about the late applications and spoke to the question of the use of Capital Reserves and the subsequent deposit.

X. Finance Committee Report

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- 1) BE IT RESOLVED that the tentative budget to be approved for the 2023-2024 school year using the 2023-2024 state aid figures and the Secretary to the

Board of Education be authorized to submit the following tentative budget to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for approval in accordance with the statutory deadline:

	<u>CURRENT</u> <u>EXPENSE</u> <u>FUND</u>	<u>SPECIAL</u> <u>REVENUES</u>	<u>DEBT</u> <u>SERVICE</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
2023-2024 Total				
Expenditures	\$114,886,211	\$2,273,161	\$6,482,513	\$123,641,885
Less: Anticipated Revenues	\$23,571,347	\$2,273,161	\$1,367,512	\$27,212,020
Taxes to be Raised:	<u>\$91,314,864</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$5,115,001</u>	<u>\$96,429,865</u>

And to advertise said tentative budget in the Bernardsville News in accordance with the form suggested by the State Department of Education and according to law.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations is \$1,017,614 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Capital Reserve Account for future approved projects approved by Board of Education.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations is \$552,829 for the transfer to the debt service fund for the repayment of district issued debt.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations is \$44,100 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Maintenance Reserve Account for future use by Board of Education approval.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations is \$88,000 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Emergency Reserve Account for future use by Board of Education approval.

2) The Bernards Township Board of Education does hereby adopt the following resolution for out-of-district and intra-district travel for school year 2023-2024:

WHEREAS, the Bernards Township Board of Education recognizes school staff and Board members will incur travel expenses related to and within the scope of their current responsibilities and for travel that promotes the delivery of instruction of furthers the efficient operation of the school district; and

WHEREAS, N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.1 et seq. requires Board members to receive approval of these expenses by a majority of the full voting membership of the Board and staff members to receive prior approval of these expenses by the Superintendent of Schools and a majority of the full voting membership of the Board; and

WHEREAS, a Board of Education may establish, for regular district business travel only, an annual school year threshold of \$150 per staff member where prior Board approval shall not be required unless this annual threshold for a staff member is exceeded in a given school year (July 1 through June 30); and

WHEREAS, travel and related expenses not in compliance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.1 et seq., but deemed by the Board of Education to be necessary and unavoidable as noted on the approved Board of Education Out of District Travel and Reimbursement Forms; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education approves all travel not in compliance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.1 et seq. as being necessary and unavoidable as noted on the approved Board of Education Out of District Travel and Reimbursement Forms; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Education approves travel and related expense reimbursements in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.2(b), to the maximum expenditure of \$125,000 for all staff and Board members.

On motion by Mr. Amin seconded by Mr. Rascio Items #1 and 2 were approved by the following roll call vote:

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

Ms. Light thanked Superintendent Markarian and Acting Business Administrator Brooks for their hard work. Ms. Light made a statement with regard to her absence in the past two meetings and discussed the budget process.

Ms. White asked a question with regard to the meeting minutes. A discussion ensued with regard to the distribution of minutes and reading of them during the public meeting.

Mr. Amin discussed reducing administration costs and structural changes needed to the district and his concerns with a sustainable budget.

Ms. McKeon reiterated concerns that she had at the Finance Committee meeting including the costs of new employees planned for the district, future replacement of devices, the upcoming demographer report and where the district will be in the next couple of years when the teacher’s contract is renegotiated and mental health needs of the students moving forward.

Ms. Light stated that another evaluation of district finances will be done in June 2023.

Board members discussed structural changes and the impact on the district in relation to the administrators.

Ms. Csipak discussed mitigating the impacts of inflation and use of capital reserves.

Ms. White stressed that the district's position has been no cuts to programs and services and the potential residual impact in relation to recommendations made to the district.

Mr. Salmon clarified the finance agenda items and not wanting to cut programs and services to the district, the financial impact of the SRO Positions in at Ridge High School and William Annin Middle School no longer being funded by the town and the proposal for SLEO Officers in the Elementary buildings, increased maintenance personnel and what expenses are being cut to make up for the costs. Mr. Salmon also discussed cost drivers to the budget.

President Molinari discuss costs and enrollment numbers,

Acting Business Administrator Brooks discussed how the tax levy cap works in relation to the Board.

Superintendent Markarian thanked everyone for their vote and support to the preliminary budget and stated while he felt excellent work was done, there are concerns with the revenue side that need to be monitored as closely as the expenses. Mr. Markarian thanked the Finance Committee, the Board, Acting Business Administrator Brooks and noted the former success of the previous Business Administrator, Mr. McLaughlin.

XI. Board Forum

Board members discussed administrator positions.

Mr. Amin made a motion to direct administration to have a plan to reduce administrative costs prior to Assistant Principal roles being filled.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Rascio.

“Nick to come back to BOE with reduced administrative costs that are sustainable and not fill any AP Role (1, 2, 3 or more) in the interim”

Yes- Ms. Light, Mr. Molinari, Mr. Amin, Ms. Csipak, Mr. Rascio

No- Mr. Salmon, Ms. White, Ms. Hira, Ms. McKeon

Abstain-

Board members discussed the motion on the table.

Superintendent Markarian discussed the logistics behind providing recommendations to the Board but that ultimately he works for the Board and the direction set by the Board.

XII. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Light and seconded by Mr. Rascio and approved by all present, the meeting was adjourned at 9:06p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Brooks
Acting Board Secretary