

HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2023 Rescheduled to March 2, 2023

5:30 pm. Open the Meeting and enter Executive Session in the Administration Building: Room 21

Public Portion will begin at 7:00 p.m in the Board Room

2 Windsor Avenue, Hopatcong, NJ 07843

CALL TO ORDER

Time: 5:30 pm

1. FLAG SALUTE

2. OPENING STATEMENT

In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, this public body, the Hopatcong Board of Education hereby announces that The New Jersey Herald and the Daily Record have been notified by email that this Board of Education Regular Meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m following the Executive Session (in room 21) which starts at 5:30 p.m. on February 27, 2023 at the Hopatcong Board of Education, Board meeting room in the Administration Building.

3. ROLL CALL

| | | | | | |
|---------|------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Present | Scott Francis | Present | Nicole Falconi-Shubert | Present | Philip DiStefano |
| Present | *Joseph Falconi | Present | ^Gerard Gruenfelder | Absent | #Jayna Gulan |
| Absent | Jennifer Johnson | Present | Jackie Turkington | Present | Jennifer Polowchena |

*arrived 5:32 pm

^arrived 5:34 pm

#arrived 5:36 pm

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion will be made that the Hopatcong Board of Education will enter Executive Session in room 21 to discuss personnel and attorney/client privilege, which are exempt from public participation pursuant to New Jersey Public Law 1975, Chapter 231, Open Public Meetings Act. Any discussions held by the Board which need not remain confidential will be made public when appropriate. Minutes of the Executive Session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists. The Board will reconvene in public session at 7:00 p.m. following the executive session.

Motion to enter executive session:

(ACTION) Motion by Francis seconded by Falconi-Shubert.

| | | | | | |
|--------|------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Yes | Scott Francis | Yes | Nicole Falconi-Shubert | Yes | Philip DiStefano |
| Yes | * Joseph Falconi | Absent | ^Gerard Gruenfelder | Absent | Jayna Gulan |
| Absent | Jennifer Johnson | Yes | Jackie Turkington | Yes | Jennifer Polowchena |

*arrived 5:32 pm

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5. RECONVENE

Motion to Reconvene

(ACTION) Motion by Turkington, seconded by Falconi-Shubert

| | | | | | |
|--------|------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| Yes | Scott Francis | Yes | Nicole Falconi-Shubert | Yes | Philip DiStefano |
| Yes | Joseph Falconi | Yes | Gerard Gruenfelder | Yes | Jayna Gulan |
| Absent | Jennifer Johnson | Yes | Jackie Turkington | Yes | Jennifer Polowchena |

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of the following meetings, as reported by the Board Secretary reviewed by the Board President and members of the Board:

- a. January 30, 2023 - Executive Meeting
- b. January 30, 2023 – Regular Meeting

Motion to approve 6a-6d:

(ACTION) Motion by Falconi-Shubert seconded by J. Falconi

| | | | | | |
|--------|------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| Yes | Scott Francis | Yes | Nicole Falconi-Shubert | Yes | Philip DiStefano |
| Yes | Joseph Falconi | Yes | Gerard Gruenfelder | Yes | Jayna Gulan |
| Absent | Jennifer Johnson | Yes | Jackie Turkington | Yes | Jennifer Polowchena |

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND HIB REPORT

- a. Superintendent's Report – **Mr. Arthur DiBenedetto, Interim Superintendent of Schools**
 1. Review of Agenda.
 2. Referendum
 3. Presentation on State Tests Results – Fall Start Strong.
- b. A second reading and approval of the Superintendent's HIB Report for January 2023 as presented to the Board at the January meeting on January 30, 2023. Approval of the Superintendent's HIB report for February 2023 for first reading and review as presented to the Board at the February meeting on March 2, 2023.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

- a. The following students were chosen as **Hopatcong High School's Students of the Month** for their outstanding performance in January 2023:

Grade 8 – Paxton Rileigh Herrera

Honorable Mention: Miguel Angel Vargas Restrepo

Grade 9 – Georgia Reardon

December 2022: Antonio Sudak

Grade 10 - Jacob Dora

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Grade 11 – Anthony Haines

Honorable Mention: Victor Morais

Grade 12 – Abigail Polowchena

Honorable Mention: Julia Santiago

- b. The following students were chosen as **Hopatcong High School Scholar Athlete of the Month** for their outstanding performance in January 2023:
 - Girls Basketball** – Jenna Fattorusso, Senior
 - Boys Basketball** – Tiberiu Stupar, Sophomore
- c. Congratulations to **Hopatcong Middle School Students** who made High Honor Roll and Honor Roll for the second marking period of the 2022 – 2023 school year.
- d. Congratulations to **Hopatcong High School Students** who made High Honor Roll and Honor Roll for the second marking period of the 2022 – 2023 school year.

9. PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

Project Graduation – Harlem Wizards fundraiser was tremendous and the staff and community support was greatly appreciated.

Candy Bar Bingo March 3rd (cost \$5 per card)

Drama Club – Spring performance May 4, 5, 6, and 7th

10. PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL DISCUSSION

11. FINANCE

- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that bills for the General Fund and Special Revenues (Grants) account, January 30, 2023 through February 27, 2023 be approved in the following amounts:

| | |
|---|------------------|
| General Fund and Special Revenue (Grants) account | - \$1,151,250.13 |
| Cafeteria account | - \$157,607.59 |
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Board Secretary's Report for the month of January 2023.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Transfer Report for the month of January 2023.
- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Treasurer's Report for the month of January 2023.
- e. It is recommended by the Superintendent that Jeff Hallenbeck, Business Administrator/Board Secretary be designated as the Public Agency Compliance Officer (P.A.C.O.)
- f. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the acceptance of a donation of assorted golfing equipment to our golf team. The equipment is from Chris Clark from Liquidate PGA-GMCS (Golf Merchandise Clearance Service) and is valued at \$2,500.

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12. PERSONNEL

Approval of the following personnel items, **12a – 12o**, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval of employment of **Thomas Falco** as Full-Time Custodian with a prorated salary of \$43,660, which represents step 1 of the custodian guide, per contract; with an effective date of March 1, 2023.
- b. Approval of employment of **John Bleibdrey** as Part-Time Custodian with a prorated salary of \$27,285 minus \$400 for not having a black seal, which represents step 1 of the custodian guide, per contract; pending background check.
- c. Approval of employment of **Shannon Potucek** as a Paraprofessional at the Middle School effective March 6, 2023 at a rate of \$15.13/hour. Should toileting be required there will be an additional \$1 added to the hourly rate.
- d. Approval of employment of **Donna George** as a Paraprofessional at Durban Ave effective February 21, 2023 at a rate of \$15.13/hour plus \$1 differential for toileting.
- e. Approval of employment of **Samantha Apgar**, as Preschool Disabled Teacher for Durban Ave with a prorated salary of \$71,895 which represents Level MA/Step 2 of the 2022-2023 HEA Salary Guide effective April 28, 2023 or sooner pending completion of prior contract.
- f. Approval of the employment of **Kristy Vazquez**, as a First Grade Teacher Long-Term Leave Replacement at Durban Ave School. Kristy will be paid 20 days at the substitute per diem rate of \$110/per day then to be paid at a prorated annual salary of \$64,405 which represents Level BA/Step 1 of the 2022-2023 HEA Salary Guide until the leave is over.
- g. Approval to accept the resignation of **Kristine Bohn-Mendyk** from her position as Elementary School Teacher.
- h. Approval to rescind the employment of **Rebecca Christides** from her previously appointed position as Paraprofessional.
- i. Approval to rescind the employment of **Reyna Soto** from her previously appointed position as Paraprofessional.
- j. Approval to accept the resignation of **Terry Germann** from her position as Paraprofessional from Durban Ave effective March 3, 2023.
- k. Approval of **Milagro Segura** to complete physical therapy observation hours during Spring 2023 with Melanie Piereth.
- l. Approval of **Paul Miller** to be the mentor for **Austin Brown** as Physical Education Teacher.
- m. Approval of **Employee #80465** to take a paid medical leave of absence beginning February 13, 2023 with an anticipated return date of April 6, 2023.
- n. Approval of the following **Advisor/Coach Position** for the 2022-2023 school year:

| Name | Nature of Action | Position | Class | Level | Salary |
|--------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Ryan Thurnes | Appoint | Volunteer Baseball Coach | - | - | - |

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| | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Ryan Fisher | Appoint | Volunteer Baseball Coach | - | - | - |
|-------------|---------|--------------------------|---|---|---|

- o. Approval of substitute teachers & paraprofessional:
 - i. Timothy Forst, Substitute Teacher

13. TRAVEL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Resolved, that the Hopatcong Board of Education approve travel costs as related in this resolution which are educationally necessary and fiscally prudent and are related to and within the scope of the employee's current responsibilities and promotes the delivery of instruction or furthers the efficient operation of the school district. The reimbursement listed in this resolution are in compliance with the state travel reimbursement guidelines as established by the Department of Treasury and Board of Education policy in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.1. seq

Approval of the following staff to attend Professional Development/Conference*

| Name | Title | Cost | Date |
|--------------------|--|--------------------|---------------|
| Tracey Talmadge | Purchasing Certification | \$944 | 5/1/23-6/4-23 |
| Taleen Ohannessian | Middle School Students: Understanding and Managing Mental Health Challenges | \$0 + mileage | 3/29/23 |
| Lisa Schuffenhauer | Oppositional Defiant and Disruptive Children and Adolescents | \$119.99 + mileage | 3/24/23 |
| James McKowen | NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching (Virtual) | \$100 | - |
| Pamela Brennan | Academic Integrity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (Virtual) | \$0 | 2/1/23 |
| | FC & MSUNER - Expanding Narratives: Seeing More of the Story – Intro (Virtual) | \$0 | 1/31/23 |
| | ChatGPT: A Boom or Our Doom? (Virtual) | \$0 | 2/19/23 |
| | | | |

****Cost will be reimbursed upon completion of attendance and all documentation has been provided.***

14. POLICY & REGULATIONS

Approval of item **14a-14b**, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the Student Achievement and Operations Committees of the Board:

- a. Approval of modifications and additions to the policies and regulations of the Hopatcong Board of Education in accordance with statutory and regulatory changes for approval, as revised, for [FIRST READING:](#)

| <u>Policy/Regulation #</u> | <u>Title</u> |
|----------------------------|---|
| P 1648.11 | The Road Forward COVID-19 – Health and Safety (Abolish) |
| P & R 2423 | Bilingual and ESL Education (M) (Revised) |
| P 2425 | Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program (M) (Revised) |
| R 2425 | Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program (M) (New) |
| P & R 5200 | Attendance (M) (Revised) |
| P 8140 | Student Enrollments (M) (Revised) |
| R 8140 | Enrollment Accounting (M) (Revised) |

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| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| P & R 8330 | Student Records (M) (Revised) |
| R 8420.2 | Bomb Threats (M) (Revised) |
| R 8420.7 | Lockdown Procedures (M) (Revised) |
| R 8420.10 | Active Shooter (M) (Revised) |
| P 0155 | Board Committees |

- b. Approval of modifications and additions to the policies and regulations of the Hopatcong Board of Education in accordance with statutory and regulatory changes for approval, as revised, for [SECOND READING](#):

Policy/Regulation #

Title

P&R 5536

Random Testing for Student Alcohol or Drug Use

15. **STUDENTS AND SERVICES**

Approval of the following items, 15a-15e as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 15058. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the rate of \$35.00 per hour effective 2/1/23 for approximately 6 weeks.
- b. Approval for 10 hours of home instruction services for student no. 14422. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$35.00 per hour from February 3, 2023 to February 9, 2023.
- c. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 13241. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$35.00 per hour beginning February 3, 2023 until further notice.
- d. Approval for 6 hours of home instruction services for student no. 15020. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$35.00 per hour from February 14, 2023 to February 16, 2023.
- e. Approval of the following field trip requests:

| School | Date | Trip |
|-------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| High School | 2/24-2/26/23 | Ocean City, Maryland - Cheerleading |
| High School | 3/14/23 | Sussex County Teen Arts Festival |
| High School | 3/1/23 | Sparta Lanes – FIT |
| High School | 3/9/23 | Paterson Great Falls – Quest |
| High School | 3/16/23 | Pyramid Mountain Hike – Quest |
| High School | 3/25/23 | Caldwell University |
| High School | 5/23/23 | Hopatcong State Park – GSA |

16. **RESOLUTIONS**

- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Hopatcong Board of Education approve The Alpha Best Summer Camp which will run from 7am to 6pm from June 26 to August 18, 2023.

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- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Hopatcong Board of Education approve an additional teacher, Linda Aviles for Comp Ed Pods.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Hopatcong Board of Education approve the Agreement with Power Ad.

17. SUSSEX COUNTY REGIONAL COOPERATIVE

- a. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of bills** for the Sussex County Regional Cooperative Operating account for January 31, 2023 through February 27, 2023 in the amount of \$48,247.00 for Regular bills.
- b. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **termination** of Employee # 81445 effective February 7, 2023.
- c. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval to hire** current Substitute Bus Driver, Brianna Norlander as a Bus Driver effective March 1, 2023 for the 2022-2023 school year at the hourly rate of \$28.00 for 6.5 hours per day.
- d. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of a Resolution for Participation in Coordinated Transportation with Warren County Special Services School District** for the 2023-2024 School Year in consideration of prorated contracts plus a two percent (2%) administrative fee.
- e. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval of the following new member districts for the 2022 – 2023 school year:

**Frelinghuysen
Madison**

- f.
 - 1. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **acceptance** of student transportation **quotations for Special Education Routes** for the 2022 - 2023 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
 - 2. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **award** of student transportation **quotations for Special Education Routes** to the lowest, responsible and responsive bus contractor companies for the 2022 -2023 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.

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3. The Superintendent and Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of *Renewal Transportation Routes for the 2022-2023*** school year not to exceed CPI of 1.91% as listed on Exhibit A.
4. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of *route contract addendums*** for the 2022 – 2023 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
5. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **acceptance** of student transportation **quotations** for ***Athletic/Class/Field Trips*** for the 2022-2023 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
6. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **award** of student transportation **quotations** for ***Athletic/Class/Field Trips*** to the lowest, responsible and responsive bus contractor companies for the 2022-2023 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
7. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of *seventy-seven (77) Member School Districts*** for the 2023-2024 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.

ADDENDUM

February 27, 2023

Regular Meeting

- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve **Employee #80492** to take an unpaid medical leave of absence using FMLA beginning March 6, 2023 for 6 weeks with an anticipated return date of April 4, 2023.
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the three year contract between Planet Networks and Hopatcong Board of Education beginning July 1, 2023.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the employment of **Kelly Ryder**, as a First Grade Teacher Long-Term Leave Replacement at Durban Ave School. Kelly has worked/been paid 20+ days at the substitute per diem rate of \$110/per day, now to be paid at a prorated annual salary of \$64,405 which represents Level BA/Step 1 of the 2022-2023 HEA Salary Guide effective March 1, 2023 until the leave is over.
- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the employment of **Joseph Badgley** as a Paraprofessional Tulsa Trail School at a rate of \$15.13/hour. Should toileting be required there will be an additional \$1 added to the hourly rate. Start date pending completion of new hire paperwork/background check.

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- e. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve **Stephanie Vitale** to perform per case psychological evaluations at \$300 per evaluation.
- f. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the following staff for the Special Education Compensatory Education Afterschool March Program. Each staff member will be paid for a total of 12 hours at \$35/an hour.
 - Suzanne Annette (Durban)
 - Linda Aviles (Tulsa Trail)
 - Carla Malatesta, Amelia Nittolo (Middle School)
- g. The Board authorizes the Superintendent to move forward with the preliminary process of executing a contract of sale on the former garage property, subject to successful completion of the final negotiations and legal counsel approval.

Motion to approve Items 11 through Addendum item g:

(ACTION) Motion by Turkington seconded by Polowchena

| | | | | | |
|--------|------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| Yes | Scott Francis | Yes | Nicole Falconi-Shubert | Yes | Philip DiStefano |
| Yes | Joseph Falconi | Yes | Gerard Gruenfelder | Yes | Jayna Gulan |
| Absent | Jennifer Johnson | Yes | Jackie Turkington | Yes | Jennifer Polowchena |

- h. **WHEREAS**, the Board is responsible for protecting and maintaining the integrity of its operations; and

WHEREAS, the Board has an obligation to ensure that the Hopatcong School District is well-run: and

WHEREAS, the Board recently was made aware of alleged comments and actions by Board Member Gerard Gruenfelder that potentially jeopardize the operations of the Board; and

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Act was enacted to "ensure and preserve public confidence in the integrity of elected and appointed school board members and school administrators." *N.,J.A.C. 6A:28-I.I.*

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Act further provides that Board members confine their board action to "policy making, planning, and appraisal" and will "not administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run." *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1.*

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WHEREAS, the School Ethics Act further provides that. Board members are prohibited from taking "private action that may compromise the board." *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24. 1.*

WHEREAS, the alleged comments and actions by Board Member Gruenfelder, if proven true, may violate the School Ethics Act and/or Code of Ethics for School Board Members; and

WHEREAS, the Board cannot and would not make an ultimate decision as to guilt or innocence, but recognizes that the appropriate place for such a determination is the School Ethics Commission, which can weigh the relevant evidence and testimony; and

WHEREAS, the Board takes the alleged conduct seriously, which it hopes to have addressed in the appropriate forum to allow the Board to focus on the District's business, while maintaining the confidence of its employees and the public;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Board empowers and directs the Board President to file an appropriate complaint with the School Ethics Commission with regard to the alleged violations of the School Ethics Act and/or Code of Ethics for School Board Members with the assistance of the Board's attorney; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board directs and empowers the Board President to file this action with regret that such action is necessary, but believes it is left with no other alternative in order to have this matter reviewed and concluded, while maintaining the public's confidence in the Board.

Motion to approve Items Addendum Item h:

(ACTION) Motion by J. Falconi seconded by Polowchena

| | | | | | |
|--------|------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| Yes | Scott Francis | Yes | Nicole Falconi-Shubert | No | Philip DiStefano |
| Yes | Joseph Falconi | No | Gerard Gruenfelder | Yes | Jayna Gulan |
| Absent | Jennifer Johnson | Yes | Jackie Turkington | Yes | Jennifer Polowchena |

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18. **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mrs. Turkington appreciates the support for our schools and efforts.

Mr. Gruenfelder does not support the process taken tonight and will defend himself against the charges and will not resign his position from the Board.

Mr. Francis appreciates the great work of our staff over the course of the school year thus far.

19. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn:

(ACTION) Motion by Turkington, seconded by Gulan

All in favor Yes Time: 7:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Hallenbeck
Board Secretary