

The following is a summary of the April 29, 2021, Combined Conference and Regular Meeting and Public Meeting to Adopt Budget of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education:

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Melissa Varley, Superintendent of Schools, provided the following report:

Good evening and thank you all for coming. Tonight the Board of Education will be voting on the proposal for FDK and the necessary realignment of our elementary schools as well as approving the proposed budget for the 2021-2022 school year.

The proposed budget includes the addition of Full Day Kindergarten teachers, supplies, and other supports. It also includes a counselor and a school social worker to support our students in their transition back to, what we all hope will be, a normal school year in the Fall.

I would like to take a quick moment to respond to a specific question we received about 5th graders remaining at Woodruff. We have examined the numbers and determined that we would need a minimum of 18 students. This number is very fluid because it is impacted by special education and support considerations that we won't know until we see the specific students who choose to remain.

When we began the proposal for FDK and realigning the elementary schools, we knew it would be a contentious issue. We knew that no matter what change we proposed, and no matter how we proceeded, we knew that there would be people who would be upset. Knowing that we did our best to produce the best possible plan for the children of Berkeley Heights. We also knew that no matter how meticulously we planned, there would be things we did not think of. I want to thank everyone who gave feedback through our listening sessions. Your input has been invaluable in making our proposal stronger and more comprehensive. We have also listened to you both in these sessions and through all of your emails and worked as best we can to answer your questions and address your areas of concern while maintaining the integrity of the proposal. I am confident that the FDK and realignment proposal provides the best educational opportunity for our current and future students.

Before I begin with the presentation, I want to take a moment to address the direction and the tone that the process has descended to. When the Board of Education tasked me to develop a plan for Full Day Kindergarten it became quickly apparent that the best solution would be to realign the elementary schools and I knew that it would become a contentious issue. People are passionate about their elementary schools. I understand that, both as a professional educator and as a mother.

While I understand that people are deeply passionate about the subject, what I was unprepared for were the many personal attacks. Reasonable people can disagree, but personal attacks are unnecessary.

To take the most recent example of many, I have been repeatedly and publicly called a liar.

Superintendent’s Report (continued)

This attack is based on emails and responses surrounding the traffic study. Specifically, I responded to an email message on April 12th commenting on two discussions I had previously had (in 2020) with the BHPD. When I worked on, and ultimately posted a Facebook response I referred to a more recent meeting with the BHPD that had occurred on April 14th. I apologize, I should have been more clear that these were two different sets of conversations that occurred at two different times. I take full responsibility if this was not clear. It was also not a lie.

As I have said, reasonable people can disagree. If you want to disagree with the plan - please do so - we have used these discussions to make a better proposal. If you want to attack me personally to attack the plan - you have the right to do so - but it is uncalled for and it will not make a better proposal and will not help the district move forward.

Please click [here](#) to see the Re-Imagining K-5 Education Recommendation and Survey Results, as presented by Dr. Varley.

Doug Reinstein, President of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education, recognized and thanked the following community members for their outstanding volunteer efforts in facilitating COVID vaccination appointments for Berkeley Heights Public Schools staff members: Daniela McDonnell, Debra Varnerin, Gia Meredith, Krista Saturnia, Tammy Sanders, Ritu Chandra, Jill Chhowalla, Jennifer Battista, and Cheryl Harris. These volunteers will be presented with certificates of appreciation from the Board of Education.

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Report of the Student Representatives

Emily Haines reported on the following:

- Governor Livingston Spring sports are now fully in season, with all teams up and running.
- The Highlander Baseball team has a 4-1 record after a huge win over Westfield yesterday.
- GL Softball is now 3-1 and they will be hosting their Softball Showdown event this Saturday at 11 a.m. with Summit, Chatham and Watchung Hills.
- GLHS Boys Lacrosse is playing Cranford today and they currently have a record of 2-2.
- The Highlander Girls Lacrosse team is 3-2 and both losses were by only two goals.
- GL Boys Tennis is competing in the Union County Tournament, with singles match moving on to day two.
- The Highlander Track and Field team has had two dual meets and will be hosting the Union County Championships on May 12th and 13th. GLTV will be live-streaming this event.
- Finally, the GLHS Golf team placed 6th in the upper division at the Union County Conference Championships. Chris Caccamo led the Highlander team with a 90 and Thomas Burke followed with a 91.

Report of the Student Representatives (continued)

Thomas Burke reported on the following:

- As the weather steadily improves signaling the end of the school year and the beginning of summer, it also means that clubs prepare for their final events of the year.
- Interact recently made over 1,200 sandwiches for Market Street Mission and will be helping pack and sort food next Saturday at the Hillside Food Bank.
- The Understanding Asian Cultures club held a meeting last week sharing information on the holiday of Ramadan and how to support those celebrating the event.
- Given that April is Genocide Awareness Month, numerous events were organized to observe it. Ms. Toporek of the Highlander Newspaper Club led a roundtable discussion “WHAT IT MEANS TO NEVER FORGET: Being the Grandchild of a Holocaust Survivor.”
- Model United Nations also observed Genocide Awareness Month by organizing events such as weekly acts of kindness, sharing narratives of genocides that have occurred, and hosting guest speaker Greg Serian, a second-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide, who will share the story of his grandmother’s struggle to survive the Armenian genocide.
- As we transition in May, the Student Ambassadors are helping celebrate Staff Appreciation Month by making mini-gifts such as soaps and lotions to place in faculty bathrooms, lounges, and the main office. They have also shared a Thank You Gram Google Form where students can write thank you messages to their teachers.
- Finally, the GL Hilltop Players have been hard at work on their production of *Clue!*, a classic comic murder mystery. The student actors and Mr. Miceli have been working with GLTV and Mr. Voorhees to create a unique video production over Zoom. They hope to have the play ready for the weekend of May 20-23 and are discussing additional ways to make the show accessible to the Berkeley Heights and Mountainside communities. Expect finalized dates and ticketing information soon!
- Despite the end of the year closing in, students are seizing all of the remaining moments to participate in meaningful events.

Facilities Report

Donna Felezzola, School Business Administrator, presented the following report:

There are several resolutions on the agenda pertaining to facilities. We are approving the use of the GL turf field and track for a summer camp, and are approving the installation of security cameras at the GL Snack Shack.

The Board will also be appointing an engineering firm to perform a traffic study at our schools. Initial scope is to concentrate on the elementary schools, but we will also be completing a traffic study at Columbia Middle School and Governor Livingston High School. Our goal is to optimize the flow into and out of the schools, as the engineers will look at schools in relation to the neighborhood streets, school access, parking, and pedestrian accommodations. They will observe drop off and pick up, and study the impact of this on surrounding roads.

We had a bid opening for the installation of the classroom toilets at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center and William Woodruff School and will be awarding those contracts in preparation for Full-Day Kindergarten.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following:

The following Resolution:

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:44-2, the Board of Education of the Berkeley Heights School District (“Board”) is authorized to establish a full-day kindergarten program; and

WHEREAS, to better develop students’ educational and social growth, the Board has determined to offer a full-day kindergarten program beginning in the 2021-2022 school year; and

WHEREAS, the 2021-2022 operating budget accounts for potential increases in facilities, personnel, and transportation costs associated with establishing a full-day kindergarten program; and

WHEREAS, to better effectuate students’ educational and social growth and provide for continuity in instruction and more appropriate facilities density, and in accordance with its authority to furnish suitable educational facilities pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-1, the Board has determined to restructure certain schools in conjunction with the establishment of a full-day kindergarten program; and

WHEREAS, the Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center currently offers Pre-Kindergarten through first grade classes, and the Board intends to reconfigure the Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center to offer Pre-Kindergarten through second grade classes; and

WHEREAS, the William Woodruff Elementary School currently offers second through fifth grade classes, and the Board intends to reconfigure the William Woodruff Elementary School to offer Kindergarten through second grade classes; and

WHEREAS, the Thomas P. Hughes Elementary School and Mountain Park Elementary School currently offer second through fifth grade classes, and the Board intends to reconfigure the Thomas P. Hughes Elementary School and Mountain Park Elementary School to offer third through fifth grade classes; and

WHEREAS, to avoid disruption to students’ continuity in instruction, the Board may implement a transition period for the above reconfiguration.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on behalf of the Board of Education of the Berkeley Heights School District, that the Board hereby establishes a full-day kindergarten program within the Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center and the William Woodruff Elementary School beginning in the 2021-2022 school year.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

The following Resolution (continued):

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that implementation of a full-day kindergarten program is within the current operation budget of the Berkeley Heights School District and that the Board shall reconfigure certain schools to effectuate students' educational and social growth and better provide for continuity in instruction with appropriate facilities density in the elementary schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board intends to reconfigure the Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center to offer Pre-Kindergarten through second grade classes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board intends to reconfigure the William Woodruff Elementary School to offer Kindergarten through second grade classes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board intends to reconfigure the Thomas P. Hughes Elementary School and Mountain Park Elementary School to offer third through fifth grade classes.

- The proposed school district operating budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the amount of \$57,228,184, of which \$45,347,241 will be raised by taxes.
- Professional development days and travel reimbursement for district staff members.
- The participation of district students and staff members in educational field trips.
- The Berkeley Heights Public Schools Five-Year Curriculum Cycles for 2020-2021 through 2024-2025.
- The new textbook Inspire Physics (McGraw-Hill Education, 2020), for use in Grade 11 Physics classes at Governor Livingston High School.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- The following new and revised Curriculum Guides for use in the Berkeley Heights Public Schools:

Curriculum Revisions:

6th and 7th Grade World Languages

Acting Workshop

Analytical Reading

AP Biology

AP Studio Art

Art Grades K-5

Comprehensive Health Grades 6-8

Comprehensive Health Grades 9-12

English 3/ English 3 Honors

English 4/ English 4 Honors

Forensic Science

Grade 6 Social Studies: World History, Cultures and Geography

Grade 7 Language Arts/ Accelerated

Jazz Improvisation

Journalism Workshop: Newspaper

Music Theory

New Courses:

Civics

CMS Outreach

Crime Scene Investigators

Fan Fiction

Mythbusters

Race and America in the 21st Century

Roots and Rhythm

STEAM Seminar

- The employment of substitute/supplemental personnel for the 2020-2021 school year.
- The re-employment of non-tenured certificated staff members for the 2021-2022 school year.
- The appointment of Fall 2021 season and Winter 2021-2022 season athletics coaches at Governor Livingston High School and Columbia Middle School.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- The employment of Yuthika Deva, 10-Month Secretary in the Governor Livingston High School Guidance Office, for two days per week for a maximum of 16 days during Summer 2021 in support of various Guidance-related functions that are usually performed during July and August each year.
- The employment of Cody Tomchak as a Summer Technology Assistant, effective May 24, 2021, through August 31, 2021.
- An increase in employment hours to full-time status for Antonino Passalacqua, Paraprofessional at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center, effective May 17, 2021.
- The acceptance of the retirement of Carol Sangiovanni from her position as Kindergarten Teacher at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center, effective July 1, 2021.
- The acceptance of the retirement of Karen Calabrese from her position as Grade 3 Teacher at William Woodruff School, effective July 1, 2021.
- The renewal of the participation of the Berkeley Heights Public Schools in the Hunterdon County Cooperative Pricing Agreement, the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey Cooperative Pricing Agreement, and the Union County Cooperative Pricing Agreement for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.
- The participation of the Berkeley Heights Public Schools in the Somerset County Cooperative Pricing Agreement and the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.
- The following Professional Services Appointments for the 2021-2022 fiscal year:

Firm

Suplee, Clooney
Solutions Architecture
Porzio, Bromberg & Newman
Cleary, Giacobbe, Alfieri, Jacobs
Scarinci Hollenbeck
Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, P.A
Richard Bezozo, MD

Services

School Auditor
Architect
School Board Attorney
School Board Attorney
Special Education Attorney
Bond Counsel
School Physician

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- The following Insurance Broker Appointments for the 2021-2022 fiscal year:

Richland Knowles Agency	Property, Casualty & Liability Insurance
Alliant Employee Benefits	Health Benefits Consulting
Centric Benefits Consulting	Dental Insurance Broker
- The renewal of the software support contract with Computer Solutions, Inc. for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.
- The contract with Somerset County Educational Services Commission to provide transportation services to the Berkeley Heights Public Schools during the 2021-2022 school year.
- The contract with Union County Educational Services Commission to provide transportation services to the Berkeley Heights Public Schools during the 2021-2022 school year.
- The continued membership of Governor Livingston High School in the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.
- The following Student Participation Fees in the Berkeley Heights Public Schools for the 2021-2022 school year:

GLHS Athletic & Activity Fee	\$150
GLHS Activity Fee	\$100
Columbia Athletic & Activity Fee	\$100
Columbia Activity Fee	\$ 75
- The use of school district facilities, as indicated:

Pure Movement Dance Center: Governor Livingston Auditorium – June 1, 2 and 5, 2021.
Studio Allegro: Governor Livingston Auditorium – June 19, 2021.
Highlander Soccer Camp: Governor Livingston Turf/Track Complex, June 28-July 2, 2021.
- The purchase and installation of security cameras at the Governor Livingston Snack Shack through the state-approved contract with Dyntek Services, Inc.
- The appointment of Dynamic Engineering Consultants, Inc., to perform a traffic study at the district’s elementary schools.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- To award a contract for Classroom Toilet Upgrades at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center and William Woodruff School to the apparent low bidder, Salazar & Associates, Inc., subject to architect and attorney review.
- The release of Executive Session Minutes to the public for the meetings of January 1, 2021, through March 31, 2021.

The Board of Education will conduct a Combined Conference and Regular Meeting on Thursday, May 13th at 7:30 p.m. at Columbia Middle School and via Zoom.