

The following is a summary of the February 4, 2021, Combined Conference and Regular Meeting of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education:

### **Superintendent's Report**

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

Good evening. I hope everyone enjoyed the snow day, and have dug out from under all of the snow! This will certainly be with us for a while, and it looks like there might be another storm on the way next week. A very sincere thank you to our maintenance crew for all of their hard work clearing snow and getting our buildings ready for us to come back.

It seems appropriate to take this moment to congratulate our Buildings and Grounds Director, Anthony Amiano. Anthony has been awarded the National Plant Manager of the Year Award for the entire United States and Saudi Arabia. Congratulations on this well-deserved award. I'm sure snow removal in Saudi Arabia is much easier than in New Jersey.

I know that there might be some confusion as to the use of snow days vs remote days. As a rule of thumb, it is my intention to use snow days when it is not possible to get into the building, and remote days in place of a delayed opening or early dismissal day. However, I am also trying to keep my eye on the bigger picture so that we don't have to pull days back from Spring Break. I know we are all hopeful that we might be able to travel by then. I appreciate your support and flexibility as we try to minimize interruptions of the instructional calendar while trying to maintain the overall structure of breaks later in the school year.

In our investigation regarding the 12/21 Board Meeting, we have not had anyone come forward with any substantive information. We urge people to come forward if they have something they would like to share regarding events that have made them feel uncomfortable. The email for our attorney is [BHFormerStudents@cgajlaw.com](mailto:BHFormerStudents@cgajlaw.com).

It has been a few weeks since I gave an update on the district DEI initiative. In that time, I have been working with Mr. Hopkins to move these initiatives forward. During that period, we have identified and met with Marc Strachan. Mr. Strachan brings a wealth of professional experience and knowledge to the table and we think that he can help guide our District Diversity Task Force through the culture change that will make Berkeley Heights Public Schools inclusive of all races, sexual orientation, genders, religions, as well as mental and physical abilities. All students should feel welcome, safe, accepted and included when they come to school. Mr. Strachan is here tonight to give a brief overview of his experience. After this meeting, we will be sending out invitations to form the Berkeley Heights Diversity Task Force. As a reminder the Task Force will, essentially, be creating a strategic plan for the DEI for the district, as well as metrics to measure our progress.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Mr. Marc Strachan.

**Superintendent’s Report (continued)**

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Mr. Scott McKinney, Assistant Superintendent; and Ms. Marybeth Kopacz, Director of Elementary Education and Intervention, delivered a presentation titled [“The Roadway Back: Parent Feedback on Hybrid Instruction.”](#) Mr. McKinney and Ms. Kopacz reviewed the results of a survey disseminated to parents and guardians in December 2020, asking them for their opinions on the district’s hybrid instruction efforts so far during the 2020-2021 school year. Please click [here](#) to see a summary of this report.

Mr. Bill Swisher of Suplee, Clooney & Company, Certified Public Accountants, delivered a presentation to the Board of Education and public about the 2019-2020 District Audit Report for the Berkeley Heights Public Schools.

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**Report of the Student Representatives**

**Emily Haines reported on the following:**

- GLHS sports are starting out the new year strong!
- The Highlander Ice Hockey already has a 4-0 record as well as a game tomorrow.
- GL Girls Basketball has its first game this coming Monday.
- Highlander Boys Basketball has a record of 1-1 and they have their third game tomorrow.
- Unfortunately, there are still no fans allowed at the games, but we are all excited to see what our teams can accomplish.
- As for school, we started the third making period in the hybrid schedule as we had in the fall. The cohorts have both been back in school as of this week.
- There is also the new installment of the gender-neutral bathrooms that has been a great addition to the school, both for inclusiveness and as a way to make all feel comfortable.
- The Student Advisory committee also met to discuss the possible change of graduation gowns, to make the colors not associated with any gender.
- Governor Livingston High School is becoming the best place it can be and there are many more positive changes to come soon.

**Report of the Student Representatives (continued)**

**Thomas Burke reported on the following:**

- Even though we are just one week into the month, one would not be able to tell from all the activities in which students are participating.
- Clubs such as Guitar Club, Coding Club, and TREND have all held regular meetings. The SAGA club recently met with the Understanding Asian Cultures club and BH Unfiltered to get feedback on the presentations they have made for the Support Zone Program Lunch and Learns. The first Lunch and Learn was held today and helps teachers become better resources for their students, particularly their LGBTQ+ students.
- Additionally, Student Ambassadors welcomed new members at its most recent meeting and discussed a potential program that would provide students with a number of mediums where they could share their thoughts on a number of important topics.
- Today, 30 students took part in the prestigious American Mathematics Competition. Based on student scores, they can advance to the next competition: the American Invitational Mathematics Exam.
- Another prestigious exam that students have been offered is the National Spanish Exam. With over 20 students having signed up, the exam will give students the chance to be recognized on a national level for their knowledge of the Spanish language.
- Tonight, members of the Newspaper Club are participating in an "Op-Ed Boot Camp" led by veteran CNN & New York Times Journalist Steven A. Holmes. As a part of the program, students will be matched with a professional advisor to help them with their op-ed for Student Press Freedom Day.
- The Diversity Committee is holding a Literary Circle on February 24th where they will discuss comedian Trevor Noah's autobiography, "Born a Crime." This autobiography sheds light on his experiences growing up as a black child in South Africa.

**Facilities Report**

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

The district is in compliance with the requirements of the “Road Back” guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Education: *All school buildings are required to satisfy the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) standard (N.J.A.C. 12:100-13). No additional ventilation or air quality requirements have been imposed on school buildings as a result of COVID-19.*

The current New Jersey mechanical code requires that each space within our buildings have a certain amount of outside ventilation air in order to maintain proper indoor air quality.

The district is meeting the state guidelines regarding air quality in schools and has taken several steps to increase air circulation within the building and classrooms. The classroom univents bring outside air into the classrooms. The guidelines necessitate that the district’s HVAC systems are operational. In Berkeley Heights, there are mechanical ventilation units in all classrooms. All units have been evaluated and are functioning properly. The units are regularly maintained and serviced. The district has taken an additional step and is providing a “flush out” of the occupied spaces. The operation of the HVAC units has been modified to provide two hours of “occupied” operation before and after being occupied. This additional operation will provide more dilution of any possible contaminants.

There is a lot of discussion regarding MERV 13 filters. Our current univents cannot accommodate MERV 13 filters. Installing these filters would cause the fan motors to overload the recommended amp draw and would actually reduce the airflow substantially.

For rooms without mechanical means to bring in outside air, the code allows for windows that open to provide fresh air to meet the needed outside air component. Opening windows will provide additional ventilation as needed. All classrooms within the district have windows which can be opened.

In addition to these measures, the rooftop exhaust fans, which are part of the existing mechanical systems, have been evaluated by the district for proper operation. Fans which were not working properly were repaired or replaced for the opening of school in September. Additional rooftop fans were added to large group areas, gyms and multi-purpose rooms, increasing air exchanges throughout the building.

Another step we are taking is to give the teachers the option to leave classroom doors open. This also increases air circulation within the classroom.

**The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following:**

- The Board of Education Committee/Liaison appointments for 2021.
- The introduction for study and first reading of the following proposed revised policies:  
Expenditures for Non-Employee Activities, Meals and Refreshments 6423  
Use of School Facilities 7510  
Emergency and Crisis Situations 8420  
Wellness Policy on Nutrition and Physical Activity 8505
- Professional development days and travel reimbursement for district staff members.
- The employment of substitute/supplemental personnel for the 2020-2021 school year.
- New and modified leave of absence requests from district staff members during the 2020-2021 school year.
- To rescind the appointment of Emily Stecher to the extra-curricular activities position of Cheerleading Coach (Winter) at Governor Livingston High School.
- The appointment of Extra-Curricular Activities personnel for the 2020-2021 school year:

**Governor Livingston High School**

**Activity/Position**

Cheerleading Coach (Winter)

**Instructor/Supervisor**

Briana Figueiredo

- The temporary revision of the employment contract of Candace Noyes from 60% of full time to full time, effective February 1, 2021, through March 1, 2021. Mrs. Noyes is a Teacher of Special Education at Governor Livingston High School.
- For Patricia Kelly, Teacher of Special Education at Governor Livingston High School, to teach an extra class beyond her normal teaching schedule on a temporary basis, effective February 1, 2021, through March 1, 2021.
- The employment of Karen Roszak as District Computer Technician for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, effective January 25, 2021.
- The retirement of Carol Chory from her position as Teacher of Mathematics at Columbia Middle School, effective March 1, 2021.

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

- The retirement of Rhonda Einhorn from her position as Teacher of English at Columbia Middle School, effective April 1, 2021.
- To extend the employment of JoAnne Carroll as Interim Principal at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center through February 22, 2021.
- Revised/extended 2020-2021 employment contracts for the following substitute/replacement teachers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position/School</u>	<u>Current Contract</u>	<u>Revised Contract</u>
Bailey Krasovec	Teacher of English/ Columbia MS	9/1/2020- 2/1/2021	9/1/2020- 6/30/2021
Kacie Worswick	Grade 1 Teacher/ McMillin ECC	9/1/2020- 2/1/2021	9/1/2020- 5/3/2021

- The employment of Stacy McGovern as a Paraprofessional at Thomas P. Hughes School, effective February 5, 2021, through June 30, 2021.
- The acceptance of the Annual Audit Report for the 2019-2020 school year as submitted by Suplee, Clooney & Company, Certified Public Accountants.
- The acknowledgement that the 2019-2020 Synopsis of Audit is available to the public and to authorize the district administration to submit said document to the County Superintendent of Schools.
- The release of Executive Session Minutes to the public for the Board of Education meetings of July 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020.
- The acceptance of a grant in the amount of \$2,978.82 to purchase textbooks for the Italian world language program at Governor Livingston High School.
- The school district's updated Use of Facilities Fee Schedule, effective January 1, 2021.

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

- The Agreement with Coach Marc Consulting to serve as outside consultant to the Diversity Task Force at the cost of \$35,000.00, plus relevant expenses.
- The Boy Scout Eagle Project of Matthew Pullara, Berkeley Heights Troop 368, which entails renovation and reorganization of the practice areas in the Band Room at Governor Livingston High School.
- To purchase security cameras for Thomas P. Hughes School through the state-approved contract with Dyntek Services, Inc., in the amount of \$11,262.05.

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Mr. Doug Reinstein, President of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education, announced that the Board intends to offer universal Full-Day Kindergarten in the Berkeley Heights Public Schools for the 2021-2022 school year, starting in September 2021. The district administration is being directed to conduct a comprehensive implementation effort for this program, so it can start for all Kindergarten students this coming September.

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***The Board of Education will conduct a Combined Conference and Regular Meeting on Thursday, February 25, 2021, at 7:30 p.m., via Zoom.***