

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
BOARD OF EDUCATION
MIDLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY
APRIL 6, 2021**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Triolo at 8:00 p.m. and Ms. Garvey read the following statement:

“Adequate notice of this meeting was provided as specified in the Open Meeting Act. Notices of this meeting were sent to The Record, Ridgewood News and to the Midland Park Borough Clerk for the 2021 elective year. A notice was also posted inside the office of the Midland Park Board of Education in a place reserved for such announcements. The Board announces that under its long-standing policy, it will not discuss in public any comments made by members of the public concerning individual staff members or students.”

ROLL CALL

Present:	James Canellas	Sandra Criscenzo
	Christine Dell’Aglio	Nabil Eliya
	Patricia Fantulin	Richard Formicola
	Brian McCourt	Maryalice Thomas

Peter Triolo

OTHERS PRESENT

Staff:	Marie Cirasella, Superintendent of Schools
	Stacy Garvey, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

BOARD PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Midland Park Public School District Mission Statement

The Midland Park School District as part of a strong, dedicated community, provides its students with a comprehensive, adaptive education aligned to 21st century knowledge and skills needed for success in college and career. The district maximizes all resources to empower students to realize their individual worth and responsibility, with the expectation they achieve the New Jersey state standards at all grade levels.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT *Dr. Marie Cirasella*

- Mr. Ferro, Highland School Science Teacher, recently resolved a science dilemma by working with his students to design and build custom shields for the lab. This made it possible for students to work side by side with their lab partners. Mr. Ferro and his students used thermoplastic pipe, clear shower curtains, PVC glue and duct tape to create the shields. Mr. Ferro is an amazing educator and we are very proud to have him as a member of our staff.
- As administrators and local health officials continue to discuss the next phase of our reopening plan, we are focusing on the guidance, the impact of vaccinations and possible measures we can implement to help us in establishing a safe return to full day instruction.

Open to Public – COMMENTS only for action items on the April 6, 2021 agenda.

There were no comments from the public.

BOARD MOTIONS

Action Items:

A. Personnel- (M. Cirasella)

Board resolutions related to hiring for the 2020-2021 school year will be on an emergency basis, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1, N.J.S.A. 18A:39-17 and/or N.J.S.A. 18A:6-4.13, as applicable.

Motion – Dr. Thomas, seconded – Ms. Criscenzo...

1. Approve the following additions to the list of Advisors to Activities and Clubs at the Highland School for the 2020-2021 school year:

		<u>Stipend</u>
Add: Laurie Kamp	Musical Director	\$626
Linda Loken	Assistant Director	\$420
Kathleen LePage	Choreography	\$420

Roll Call: All Yes

B. Finance- (J. Canellas, Chairperson)

Motion – Mr. Canellas, seconded – Mr. McCourt...

1. Approve the tutorial services for a classified high school student at Four Winds Hospital at the rate of \$60 per hour for 5 hours of instruction per week, effective retroactive from March 12, 2021 through April 5, 2021.

Roll Call: All Yes

C. Curriculum- (S. Criscenzo, Chairperson)

Motion – Ms. Criscenzo, seconded – Ms. Dell'Aglia...

1. Approve the recommendation for the placement of a classified high school student on bedside instruction, effective retroactive from March 12, 2021 through April 5, 2021.

Roll Call: All Yes

2. Approve the following resolution:

Motion – Ms. Criscenzo, seconded – Dr. Thomas...

As the result of two unused emergency closing days, approve the adjustment to the 2020-2021 Academic Calendar to reflect that schools will be closed on Friday, May 28, 2021. The last day of school for students has been changed to Tuesday, June 22, 2021. The last day for teachers has been changed to Wednesday, June 23, 2021.

Roll Call: All Yes

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS/Review of April 20, 2021 agenda items

B. Finance Committee- (J. Canellas, Chairperson)

- Typical resolution on regular agenda
- Look forward to starting the new budget year

C. Curriculum Committee- (S. Criscenzo, Chairperson)

No Report

D. Policy Committee- (P. Fantulin, Chairperson)

- Mandated policies will be on the 4/20 agenda
- We are planning a date for our next meeting

E. Legislative Committee- (Administration)

No Report

F. Buildings and Grounds Committee- (C. Dell'Aglio, Chairperson)

- Hoping to meet on 4/20

G. Negotiations Committee- (N. Eliya, Chairperson)

No Report

H. Technology & Public Relations Committee- (R. Formicola, Chairperson)

No Report

I. Town Council- (P. Triolo, B. McCourt)

- We will be following up with Buildings & Grounds and go back to Council to continue Discussions

J. Student Representative- (Samantha Padovano)

- Spring sports have started
- The musical this year is Into the Woods and practice has started
- The seniors started their mural in the senior lounge
- Most students are in person for school, it is very exciting to see everyone again

OLD BUSINESS

No Report

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Triolo read the following statement:

I want to take this opportunity to address the public controversy surrounding the use of Highland School last month by the North/West Bergen/Passaic Basketball League, which is a travel league that is privately owned by one of our Board members, in which Midland Park athletes compete along with many other towns.

Until this controversy arose, neither the Board nor the administration had knowledge about the private status of this League.

Board Policy and Regulation number 7510 explains the uses and groups that may apply to use our facilities, and delegates to the Business Administrator the authority to approve applications provided they fulfill the application procedures and submit all of the required documentation.

The Board does not approve these applications and does not become involved in an applicant's request to use our facilities unless the proposed use falls into the category that requires the applicant to pay a rental fee, in accordance with the board policy and regulation.

The application that was submitted to use the Highland School was submitted by the Board member on behalf of the Midland Park Basketball Association, with all of the required documentation.

However, the North/West Bergen/Passaic Basketball League was not identified in the application and there was no indication that the facilities would be used by other Town leagues when Midland Park athletes were not participating.

Because of this registration omission, the Business Administrator approved the application for the use of Highland School, identifying the Midland Park Basketball Association as a Class I user, entitling them to use the facility without being charged custodial and service costs. Class I users are not brought for board review, as they are designated as School, Recreation department and other community group uses.

Once the Business Administrator learned that other towns were using Highland School, she contacted the Board member to confirm this information and upon doing so, advised him that the use by other towns had to cease because their use was not approved under the application, which was submitted on behalf of the Midland Park Basketball Association.

Upon the Business Administrator's further inquiry, and my own discussion with the Board member, we learned that the League in question is privately owned by him for profit. As such, the Board member was informed that while the League was eligible to apply to use the district's facilities as a private for-profit entity, the League is a Class III user, required to pay a use fee and charges for custodial and service costs, and further more needs to receive board approval.

As for the extended use of Highland School by other town leagues, it was clearly stated that even if the application had been properly submitted by the League, the extended use of Highland School to other towns would not have been permitted during the present public health emergency.

The Board's policy and regulation were not followed by the applicant. Any desire to provide opportunities for student athletes, including our own residents, during this public health emergency does not excuse or justify the failure to abide by the Board's policy and regulation.

We regret that these events have called into question our practices, and that the recent publicity over the League's use of Highland School has cast us in an unfavorable light. Please know that we have taken this matter seriously, and beyond addressing the present circumstances, the Board and the administration are committed to a comprehensive review of the current policy and regulation, in an effort to fortify the application procedures, and to reexamine the imposition of custodial and service fees for the use of the district's facilities to ensure that the district's facilities are being used for community purposes that best serve our residents.

Rich Formicola – I would like to openly apologize for what transpired with the MP Basketball Travel Teams. I thought we could use the gym for only our travel team, but there were too many teams with not enough gym time. We would have to shut down. Since we had extra gym time I thought other teams could play. This is my fault, I did not fill out the other form. I was trying to get the kids in to let them play. This had nothing to do with money. We followed all Covid rules and stopped when told. Normally this would not be an issue, but not this year. I made restitution, it was just a matter of getting games in. Next year will be back to normal. I again apologize, especially to my wife and family.

Motion – Mr. Canellas, seconded – Mr. McCourt...

Motion to go into closed session before the meeting of April 20, 2021, for the purpose of reviewing the hiring of personnel, legal updates and confidential student HIB case reviews.

Roll Call: All Yes

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC- general **COMMENTS** only at this time are to be directed to the Board President.

The following members of the public made the following comments and questions.

Sal Falciglia – *With the CDC changing guidance on social distancing in schools from 6ft down to 3ft while keeping PPE and other measures in place, how is the district adapting to this plan and have the ability to go back to normal school days?*

Dr. Cirasella replied, as we continue to discuss the efficacy of returning to a full instructional day, which includes lunch, we remain mindful of the most recent CDC public health recommendations for schools, as of March 23, 2021. These guidelines state the CDC continues to recommend six feet of physical distancing when masks cannot be worn, such as while eating and drinking during lunch periods in schools. The reduction to three feet is also predicated on the regional risk matrix provided. For example, when the regional risk assessment is high, or orange, six feet of physical distancing is particularly important for middle and high school students, especially when masks cannot be worn. At this time, New Jersey is currently considered very high risk, as is Bergen County. As administrators and local health officials continue to discuss the next phase of our reopening plan, we are focusing on the guidance, the impact of vaccinations, and possible measures we can implement to help us in establishing a safe return to full-day instruction.

I wanted to follow up on the status of the fields, I know the board mentioned at the last meeting they are working with an architect on plans for some of the fields. When will conceptual design and concepts be ready to start the town discussion to try and get support and buy in from all the entities that use these fields?

Mr. Triolo replied, we are planning a Buildings and Grounds committee meeting shortly where all of this information will be reviewed. After, we will be meeting with the representative from the borough for further discussion.

Jill Mulder- Mrs. Mulder stated that she has no personal vendetta and she was shocked to hear how many schools were using our gym when our own students could not use them. Why was the building use form partially filled out. How can this be ok? How does this not break a policy? How can I trust the health and safety of my children?

Lee Barber – Mr. Barber questioned the Board on how could they not be aware that Mr. Formicola owned the North/West Bergen Passaic Basketball League. He also stated that when the Financial Disclosure Statement was filled out it should have been disclosed. The Board would only have known if it was disclosed on the form. This is an ethics violation. This is not going to end here.

Mike Magee – Mr. Magee stated that he is a thirteen year resident. I have known Rich Formicola for several years. He stood before us and acknowledged he made a mistake. All the good he has done needs to be brought out also. Last April Rich arranged for photo sessions and there were approximately 100 different families that added up to over 150 hours of his time and he received no compensation. He had the best interest in the town and families. Whenever we needed a coach, Rich was always there for our kids. No parents step up to help. As a volunteer, he makes this town better. I just wanted to bring this to your attention.

Linda Eliya – Mrs. Eliya stated that Rich has done a lot for our town and community, but he should know what is right and wrong. It is frustrating when kids in school can't use the gym but you used it for basketball and it was open to outside towns then you beg for forgiveness. The Board and Administration need to learn from this and not let it happen again.

Laura Junta – Mrs. Junta commented that Rich is involved with softball, he does good things but it does not excuse him and the forms need to be filled out appropriately. Mrs. Junta asked why do the two unused snow days need to be given back? The teachers and students have been working tirelessly and they have been out a lot. Mrs. Criscenzo stated that the teachers work a certain amount of days and we have to give back unused days under their contract.

Motion- Mr. McCourt, seconded – Ms. Criscenzo...
To adjourn the meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Stacy Garvey
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary