

**Board of Education - Hunterdon County, NJ**

**MINUTES**

**Annual Budget Hearing and Regular Meeting**

**Tuesday, May 7, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Location - North Hunterdon High School Cafeteria B  
1445 Route 31, Annandale, NJ 08801**

Click [May 7, 2024 BOE Meeting](#) to access the live stream/recording

1. President Glen Farbanish called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and read the Public Meeting notice.

**2. Roll Call**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Municipalities Represented</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>
Kristina Cagno - Present	Califon Borough / Tewksbury Township	0.8
Bryan Chapman - Present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough	0.9
Glen Farbanish - Present	Union Township	1.4
Nicole Gallo - Present	High Bridge Borough / Lebanon Township	1.2
Tara Marie Hintz - Present	High Bridge Borough / Lebanon Township	1.2
Beth Kotran - Present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough	0.9
Brendan Mclsaac - Present	Town of Clinton / Franklin Township / Glen Gardner Borough	0.9
John Melick - Present	Califon Borough / Tewksbury Township	0.8
Cynthia Reyes - Present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough	0.9
Kimberly Solino - Present	Bethlehem Township / Hampton Borough	1.2
Daniel Spanton - Present	Clinton Township / Lebanon Borough	0.9
Jessica Viotto - Absent	Town of Clinton / Franklin Township / Glen Gardner Borough	0.9

**Also Present:** R. Bergacs - Assistant Superintendent, K. Blew - School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, G. Vargas-Dellacasa - District Technology Coordinator, M. Smagala - District Communications Coordinator, R. Broan, Director of Curriculum, Articulation and Student Achievement, G. Cottrell - Principal of North Hunterdon High School, R. Peterson - Principal of Voorhees High School, A. Li - School Board Attorney, Comegno Law Group P.C.

3. **Flag Salute**
4. **Motion by B. Kotran and second by N. Gallo** to approve agenda item 4.1. **Motion carried on voice vote**, with abstentions from C. Reyes and K. Solino.
  - 4.1. [Minutes - March 19, 2024 School Board meeting](#)

## 5. **Board Student Representatives' Report**

Adeline Cooper reported for Voorhees:

- Spring sports have been honoring current senior athletes
- Student Pep Rally highlighted sports team captains and previewed the Drama production of Les Mis
- Wellness Fair hosted by the School Counseling Department included snacks, fidget spinners, therapy dogs and opportunity to meet with mental health professionals
- Drama Club presented Les Mis in April
- Anatomy and AP Bio classes visited the Liberty Science Center where students viewed a live feed of a kidney transplant
- SHIP, Student Helper Integration Program, hosted a dance for incoming freshmen
- Seniors participated in National Decision Day on May 1 sharing their post graduation plans
- Upcoming Senior events include a dinner cruise, Senior class trip, Prom and Graduation
- Thank you to the Board as well as the Voorhees administration for giving me the opportunity to be the voice of the Voorhees student body.

Inesh Raddalgoda reported for North Hunterdon:

- Spring has students busy preparing for finals, AP testing and college plans
- Special Olympics was held this past Sunday and was a successful event
- Spring sports coming to a close - Girls Lacrosse team is moving onto the finals of Hunterdon/Warren/Sussex Tournament
- Jazz Ensemble performed at the Neshaminy High School Jazz Fest, where they received an Outstanding rating, and several seniors earned spotlight awards
- Relay for Life will take place on Friday, May 10 and will be dedicated to Joey Edwards
- Cultural Appreciation Day is planned and will showcase ethnic foods and traditions
- Upcoming Senior events include Prom, Senior Awards and Project Graduation
- Thank you for having me on the Board, it was a great experience.

### 5.1. Recognition of Student Representatives' Service to the Board

- Ron Peterson, VHS Principal, thanked Adeline Cooper and Sidonie Lyons for representing the school and student body as student representatives on the Board
- Greg Cottrell, NHHS Principal, thanked Inesh Raddalgoda and Jude Gepp for their student leadership and representation on the Board.

## 6. **Public Hearing and Adoption of the 2024-2025 School Year Budget**

6.1. [Public hearing presentation](#) on the 2024-2025 school year budget presented by Kathryn Blew, School Business Administrator.

Board member Brendan McIsaac commented on the cycle of reductions in state funding and whether any forecast is known for future state aid. K. Blew noted that although the District is in its final year of this reduction in state funding cycle, the District did receive an increase this year. Going forward, the District will continue to rely on the formula provided by the state for funding, knowing that the formula has never been fully funded.

- 6.2. **Opportunity for Public Comment** (2024-2025 school year budget)  
(3) members of the public spoke regarding the school budget, and topics included staff retention, potential removal or reduction of programs, resident taxes and the Superintendent's salary.
- 6.3. **Motion by K. Solino and second by B. Mclsaac** to approve [Resolution 050724-3](#), establishing maximum travel expenditures and maximum professional services expenditures, and adoption of the 2024-2025 school year budget.  
**Motion carried unanimously on roll call vote.**
7. **Motion by N. Gallo and second by B. Kotran** to adopt [Resolution 050724-4](#) for executive session to discuss matters falling under category 7 as reflected in the attached resolution. **Motion carried unanimously on voice vote** and the Board adjourned to executive session at 7:27 p.m.
- Motion by K. Solino and second by B. Mclsaac** to reconvene public session. **Motion carried unanimously on voice vote** and the Board reconvened public session at 8:30 p.m.
8. **Chief School Administrator's Report**  
Assistant Superintendent R. Bergacs provided the Chief School Administrator's Report:
- On Saturday, April 27th, the North Hunterdon High School Jazz Ensemble performed at the New Jersey Association of Jazz Education's Group II State Finals. They finished ranking 8th. It was the first time in school history that the Jazz Ensemble participated in the preliminary round for the NJAJE State Finals, so to finish ranking 8th in Group II finals is one for the school history books.
  - Voorhees Drama Club students attending the Bucks County Student Theater Festival on April 25th. They won 7 awards during the festival! More information is posted on the VHS website.
  - North Hunterdon's Diversity Club will hold its 3rd annual Cultural Celebrations Day on May 24th. Students or clubs can sign up to host a table to showcase traditions, cultural experiences, languages, foods, etc.
  - Voorhees Junior-Senior Prom will be held on May 30th and the North Hunterdon Senior Prom will be held on May 31st. We hope our students have a great time and stay safe.
  - National Teacher Appreciation week is this week - thank you to all of our teachers for their hard work.
  - Joe Milligan, a Vietnam War veteran and 1959 NHHS alumnus, shared his experiences in Vietnam with NHHS students. The presentation and dialog between Mr. Milligan and the students were awesome.
- 8.1. Report on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) - (2) incidents reported and investigated (1 founded, 1 unfounded)
- 8.2. **Motion by B. Kotran and second by K. Cagno** to affirm the determinations on the [HIB Incidents](#) reported at the March 19, 2024 Board meeting. **Motion carried unanimously on voice vote.**
- 8.3. [Monthly Reports - March 2024](#)
9. **G. Farbanish provided the School Board President's Report:**
- 9.1. Voorhees High School Graduation Ceremony - June 11, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
- 9.2. North Hunterdon High School Graduation Ceremony - June 11, 2024, 10:30 a.m.
- 9.3. Regular Board Meeting - June 25, 2024, 7:00 p.m. at the District Administration Office

9.4. Deadline to submit [Nominating Petitions](#) for School Board vacancies to the County Clerk's office - July 29, 2024, 4:00 p.m.

- Superintendent, Mr. Bender continues to manage our schools and interact with the Board. Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Bergacs is temporarily representing the administration at the Board meetings.
- Congratulations to Board members, Kim Solino and Tara Hintz for their work related to the NJSBA Board Member Academy Certification Programs. These programs are in addition to their volunteer work on our District's Board.

10. **Opportunity for Public Comment**

- (12) individuals spoke
- **Motion by B. Chapman and second by B. Kotran** to extend public comment by an additional 30 minutes. **Motion carried on a voice vote.**
- (11) additional individuals spoke
- Public comments addressed topics to include the library book recently challenged, parental rights and support of the NHHS school librarian.

11. **Evaluation of Library Material per Policy 9130:**

Board discussion of NHHS Reconsideration Committee's report of the library book "Let's Talk About It" by Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan, following the submission of a public complaint on 2/13/2024, in accordance with Policy 9130.

Student board alternate Jude Gepp shared their opinion as well as student feedback they have received from peers regarding the book challenge. Board members expressed their opinions and discussion ensued with references to the NJ state obscenity law, the Miller Test, professional reviews, parental rights and potential parental restrictions.

**Motion by N. Gallo and second by C. Reyes** to remove the book based on violation of the New Jersey obscenity law. **Motion failed based on roll call vote**, with weighted votes of "no" totalling 7 from B. Chapman (.9), T. Hintz (1.2), B. Kotran (.9), B. Mclsaac (.9), J. Melick (.8), D. Spanton (.9), and G. Farbanish (1.4). Weighted votes of "yes" totaling 4.1 from K. Cagno (.8), N. Gallo (1.2), C. Reyes (.9), K. Solino (1.2).

12. **Curriculum, Instruction and Technology - Committee Report**

- Curriculum, Instruction & Technology agenda items reviewed and recommended for approval
- Staff summer curriculum hours are planned for summer work on curriculum and College Board revisions to AP courses
- Committee discussed more consistency among the classes in weighting for common assessments
- Our District Technology Coordinator, G. Vargas-Dellacasa, met with the committee for a discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI). Discussion and plans for implementation of AI in the curriculum and potential policy will continue.

**Motion by J. Melick and second by B. Mclsaac** to approve agenda items 12.1-12.4.

**Motion carried unanimously on voice vote.**

12.1. [NHV District Professional Development Plan for 2024-2025](#)

12.2. [Home Instruction](#)

12.3. [Out of District Placements](#)

12.4. [Professional Consultants-Student Services](#)

13. **Policy and School Security - Committee Report**
  - The Books/Materials Reconsideration Form was reviewed and the title revised to include Instructional as well as Resource materials, keeping in alignment with the regulation language. Both schools are named on the form making it universal for the district.
  - NJSBA conversion to the policy manual is underway between the administrative team and NJSBA representatives. NJSBA will provide the new manual upon completion of the conversion. The process for adoption of the entire policy manual is being determined.
  - Cell phone reception at VHS has areas with poor reception varying by cell carrier.
14. **Finance, Facilities and Transportation - Committee Report**
  - The committee reviewed the budget and next steps. A Bill has been proposed that would allow NJ municipalities to raise taxes up to the amount that equals state funding lost over the S2 budget reduction years. The current budget has been developed without consideration of this pending bill.
  - Capital project to replace classroom doors that do not meet safety requirements is moving forward and a request for bids is due this month. This project includes installation of classroom doors with required vision panel and safety closures for lockdown purposes.

Board members discussed the proposed bill and effects on the District's budget.

**Motion by T. Hintz and second by D. Spanton** to approve agenda items 14.1-14.18.

**Motion carried on voice vote**, with an abstention from B. Chapman for item 14.18.

- 14.1. [Resolution 050724-5](#) Participation in the School Regionalization Efficiency Program with the Bloomsbury Board of Education
- 14.2. [Hunterdon Central Regional High School Joint Transportation Agreement](#) for the 2023-2024 school year
- 14.3. [Amendment #2](#) to the Honeywell Agreement for the Repair Phase of the NJ Clean Energy Grant
- 14.4. [Resolution 050724-6](#) Acceptance of the 2024-2025 NJSIG Safety Grant in the amount of \$16,000
- 14.5. [Resolution 050724-7](#) Appointment of Pomptonian Food Services for Food Services Management for the 2024-2025 school year
- 14.6. [Resolution 050724-10](#) Withdrawal of EUS/RFP 24-01 Broker of Record Services-Health Benefits
- 14.7. [Resolution 050724-8](#) Medical and Dental Benefit Rates with the Schools Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) for the 2024-2025 school year
- 14.8. [Resolution 050724-9](#) Prescription Benefit Rates with Benecard, Inc. for the 2024-2025 school year
- 14.9. [Requisition of Taxes](#) for 2024-2025
- 14.10. [Multi-Year Contract\(s\)](#)
- 14.11. [Purchase\(s\) above \\$44,000](#) for the 2024-2025 school year
- 14.12. [Co-op and State Contract Vendors](#) that exceed the bid threshold for the 2023-2024 school year
- 14.13. [Staff Training and Travel Requests](#)
- 14.14. [Monthly Bills List for May 2024](#)
- 14.15. [Resolution 050724-1](#) Monthly Financial Reports Certification for March 2024
- 14.16. [Board Secretary Report](#) for month ending March 2024

- 14.17. [Treasurer Report](#) for month ending March 2024
- 14.18. [Transfer of Funds](#) within the 2023-2024 school year budget - March 2024
15. **Community Relations and Student Affairs - Committee Report**
- A co-op gymnastics team has been approved by the NJSIAA for the District. Voorhees now has student interest in a gymnastics team, which was not the case in prior years. Voorhees students will participate on the joint team with North as the home school.
  - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) events and activities have been taking place over the last few months among administration, staff and students. The committee reported on all the great work that has been done at the schools in relation to DEI, specifically the amount of student-driven activities that have been held.
16. **Delegates' Reports**
- T. Hintz shared that the NJ School Boards Association (NJSBA) Delegates Assembly will be held on 5/18. She will be in attendance representing the Board.
  - K. Solino shared that the Hunterdon County School Boards Association (HCSBA) meeting on 5/9 will recognize teachers, teacher of the year and Board members receiving accolades. Board members are urged to attend the HCSBA meetings held throughout the school year for professional development as well as networking opportunities.
17. **Personnel - Committee Report**
- The Personnel Committee met and reviewed the Personnel Agenda.
18. **Motion by B. McIsaac and second by B. Kotran** to adopt [Resolution 050724-2](#) for executive session to discuss matters falling under category 8 as reflected in the attached resolution. **Motion carried unanimously on voice vote** and the Board adjourned to executive session at 10:41 p.m.
19. **Motion by J. Melick and second by T. Hintz** to reconvene public session. **Motion carried unanimously on voice vote** and the Board reconvened public session at 11:41 p.m.
20. **Motion by N. Gallo and second K. Cagno** to approve agenda items 20.1 and 20.2. **Motion carried on a roll call vote**, with abstentions from K. Solino for Personnel Agenda items 4.9 and 4.11, included in Agenda item 20.1, and also Agenda item 20.2.
- 20.1. [Item P05072024](#) - Personnel Agenda May 7, 2024
- 20.2. Executive Session Minutes March 19, 2024
21. **Old and New Business**
- G. Farbanish is working with Gwen Thornton, NJSBA, to set up a meeting to work on board goals and objectives. Timing and due date for Superintendent evaluations to be confirmed.
  - N. Gallo asked if the Monthly Reports agenda item could be reviewed in a committee. B. Kotran responded that they can be covered in the Curriculum, Instruction and Technology committee.
  - K. Cagno asked that July and December board meetings be added back into the meeting calendar. Board members discussed adding a July BOE meeting and a date is to be determined.
  - Board members discussed the breakdown of budget expenses by subject. (Ex. Math, English, Athletics)

22. **Motion by K. Solino and second by N. Gallo to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously on voice vote**, and the meeting adjourned at 11:54 p.m.

Submitted by:

*Kathryn Blew*

Kathryn Blew, CPA

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary