



HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AGENDA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
HOLMDEL HIGH SCHOOL
SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 6:00 P.M.
PUBLIC MEETING APPROXIMATELY 7:00 P.M.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Holmdel Township Public Schools is to provide a comprehensive and caring educational environment that will develop the potential of every student into achievement. In partnership with our community, the School District will support all of our students' efforts to meet and exceed the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, and to become responsible and resourceful citizens and lifelong learners.

A. Call to Order

The Board of Education, Township of Holmdel, met in a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at Holmdel High School, 36 Crawfords Corner Road, Holmdel, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Mr. Reddy, Board President.

B. Open Public Meetings Act

Statement is hereby made that adequate notice of this meeting was given by:

- Posting written notice prominently on the bulletin board in the Office of the Board of Education, 65 McCampbell Road, Holmdel, New Jersey, the District's website and sent to the four district schools.
- The mailing and/or hand delivery of said notice to the designated newspapers, Asbury Park Press, Star Ledger, the PLG, PSG, PSA, PTSO, SAB presidents and student representatives to the Board.
- Filing with the Clerk of Holmdel Township, Police Headquarters and Public Library.

C. Roll Call

The following Board members were present: Mesdames: Briamonte. Messrs: Reddy, Wall, Buckley, DiMare and Mann. Absent: Mrs. Zhang, Dr. Collur and Mrs. Tuccillo. Also present, Dr. J. Scott Cascone, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Jessica L. DeWysockie, Assistant Business Administrator/Assistant Board Secretary and Ms. Katherine Gilfillan, Board Attorney. Student Representatives to the Board, Ms. Anugna Parvateneni and Mr. Jack Powers were absent.

D. Resolution for Executive Session

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b, permits a public body to go into an Executive (Closed) Session during a public meeting to discuss certain matters specified in the statute; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has determined that it is necessary to go into an Executive Closed Session to discuss matters relating to certain items as permitted by N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Education of the Township of Holmdel that it shall adjourn into Closed Session at this time to discuss the following subject matter(s) without the presence of the public in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b and 10:4-13:

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1. Student matters
2. Personnel matters
3. Matters falling within the attorney-client privilege

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, it is not yet possible to determine when the matters discussed in Closed Session will be made public; the matter(s) discussed will be made known to the public at such time as appropriate action is taken on said matter(s), and when disclosure will not result in unwarranted invasion of individual privacy or prejudice to the best interests of the Board of Education, provided such disclosures will not violate Federal, State, or local statutes or regulations and do not fall within the attorney-client privilege.

MOTION: Mr. Mann SECOND: Mr. Buckley

Show of Hands to Accept – All Approved

At 6:06 p.m., the meeting moved to Executive Session.

E. Motion to Return to Public Session

Resolved: That the Board of Education returns to public session.

MOTION: Mr. Mann SECOND: Dr. Collur

Show of Hands to Accept – All Approved

At 7:10 p.m., the meeting returned to public session.

F. Call to Order

The Board of Education, Township of Holmdel, met in a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at Holmdel High School, 36 Crawfords Corner Road, Holmdel, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Mr. Reddy, Board Vice President.

G. Opening Statement

Meetings of the Board are open to the public and all members of the community should feel free to participate:

- There is one opportunity for the public to speak.
- Any individual desiring to speak shall give his or her name, address, and the group, if any, that is represented.
- The presentation shall be as brief as possible but no more than three (3) minutes per individual.
- There are certain matters that may be brought before the board that cannot be immediately addressed in public. Such matters may be referred by the president to a board committee and/or to the Superintendent for consideration and/or resolution.
- The board vests in its president, or other presiding officer, authority to terminate the remarks of any individual if he/she deems it in the best interest of those present to do so.

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H. Roll Call/Flag Salute

The following Board members were present: Mesdames: Briamonte, Zhang, Collur and Tuccillo. Messrs: Reddy, Wall, Buckley, DiMare and Mann. Also present, Dr. J. Scott Cascone, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Jessica L. DeWysockie, Assistant Business Administrator/Assistant Board Secretary and Ms. Katherine Gilfillan, Board Attorney. Student Representatives to the Board, Ms. Anugna Parvatneni and Mr. Jack Powers were absent.

I. Questions or Comments from the Public

- Alison LoPresti, BOE candidate, commented on Policy #5756.
- Ron Mack, Matawan resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Barbara Singer, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- Karen Strickland, Holmdel resident, referenced Crawford Hill and commented on Policy #5756.
- Denise King, HTEA President, commented on Policy #5756.
- Sloane Timson, Middletown resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Theresa Sperber, Middletown resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Jakob Pender, Rutgers New Brunswick, commented on Policy #5756.
- Carolyn Mack, Matawan resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Sabrina Wilhelm, Red Bank resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Judy Bacon, Marlboro resident speaking for Holmdel Community UCC, commented on Policy #5756.
- Mat Weisfeld, Holmdel resident, commented on Policy #5756 and also referenced the Robotics program.
- Tom Santora, Holmdel resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Chandana Rao, Holmdel resident, commented on Policy #5756.
- Anthony Libecchi, BOE candidate, commented on Policy #5756.
- Alicia Unusan, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- Mindy Kim-Liu, parent, commented on Policy #5756 and a banned book. (The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian)

Dr. Cascone provided follow-up comments regarding the banned book.

- Concetta Taylor, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- Nina Decker, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- Tia Kolovos, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- John Giampolo, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- Alison LoPresti made additional comments on Policy #5756.
- Sara Buker, parent, commented on Policy #5756.
- Craig Bettencourt, parent, commented on Policy #5756.

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- Barbara Singer made additional comments on Policy #5756.

J. Old Business

1. New Turf Field – Field Lights Discussion

- Mr. Reddy shared that leadership has not received any formal notification from the Township on whether or not they will be able to provide funding.
- Dr. Cascone provided a brief overview of this topic and then it was decided that the Board would discuss this topic at an upcoming meeting.
- Mrs. Briamonte provided some background on field lights, sharing that, when the second turf field was being put in, the existing Board, at that time, decided to move forward with the turf field but not pay for lights. Conduit was run during the installation so that it would be easy for a user group or multiple user groups to fund the lights. Mrs. Briamonte shared that we are in the business of education our students and providing activities in and around school. Mrs. Briamonte also referenced budget concerns and that the Board shouldn't even consider this.
- Mrs. Zhang asked how many of our district teams are utilizing the field after dark and would require lighting and Dr. Cascone responded zero.
- Mr. Wall made additional comments and shared that the Board was not unanimous with regard to the lighting on the field when the turf field was built.
- Dr. Collur referenced budgetary concerns and shared that this is an item that can be discussed at a future Board meeting.
- Mr. Reddy made final comments and moved onto the next topic.

K. New Business

1. Policy #5756 Discussion – President Reddy moved this item up to be discussed immediately following Questions/Comments from the Public and prior to Old Business.

Dr. Cascone provided an overview of this matter and made additional comments regarding Policy #5756.

Dr. Collur thanked the public for their input and shared that she needs more time in order to make a decision on Policy #5756 and suggested the Board hold off in order to give the Ad Hoc Policy Committee an opportunity to review and consider all policies. She also shared that, while this is an important topic, the Board's focus has been shifted from curriculum and academics.

Mr. Mann echoed Dr. Collur's comments regarding the Board getting back to focusing on education and referenced one of the public comments regarding a statement that was made at a previous meeting. Mr. Mann then shared that, if a student expresses mental illness (in any capacity), parents should be notified.

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Mr. DiMare referenced the injunctions in other districts and stated those districts were trying to amend the Policy which is very different from repealing the Policy, which is what Holmdel is considering. Mr. DiMare shared his thoughts on the Policy and expressed the need to for children to feel safe and teach them that it is ok and important to involve their parents in difficult conversations. Further, Mr. DiMare stated that he does not support this policy and is ready to act on it this evening.

Mr. Wall referenced Policy #5756 and shared the reasons why this Policy should be withdrawn and feels the contract with Strauss Esmay should be cancelled. Mr. Wall shared that this is not about LGBTQ. This is about severing a relationship between children and their parents and the sooner the policy is rescinded, the better.

Mrs. Tuccillo referenced two specific sentences in the Policy and shared her thoughts on the Policy. She shared her thoughts and expressed that she needs more time and that the Policy was included on tonight's agenda as an item for discussion (only) and does not feel there should be a vote on this Policy this evening.

Mrs. Briamonte thanked everyone for coming and speaking tonight. She shared that, based on conversations with Dr. Cascone, we currently have transgender students here in the district and are not experiencing any issues. There are open lines of communication with staff members, guidance counselors and parents which seems to be working really well. Mrs. Briamonte referenced transparency and stated this item was listed as a discussion point only for tonight's Committee of the Whole meeting and the Board shouldn't be voting on it this evening and stated that, if the Board is planning to vote on this item, it should occur at next week's Board meeting.

Dr. Collur had a follow up question regarding whether holding off on voting would put the District at risk. Ms. Gilfillan shared that it appears the district would not be in jeopardy and clarified that the four districts involved in litigation actually changed their policy to require parental notification and that repealing the policy is a different situation.

Dr. Collur asked if the district would still be required to notify parents if the policy is repealed. Ms. Gilfillan stated that, if the policy is repealed, that does not affirmatively direct staff members to notify parents of any specific issue going on with their student relative to the gender identity discussion. So that is still left in the hands of the education professionals. However, Ms. Gilfillan mentioned, there is absolutely law in New Jersey that speaks to having to notify parents of any situation which poses an immediate risk of harm, if the student is speaking of harming themselves or harming others, the absolutely is a requirement that the district notify the parents.

Dr. Collur again restated her position that she needs more time in order to make a decision on this policy.

Mrs. Zhang thanked everyone for providing their perspective and referenced the rush of adding this Policy to the agenda. She stated that she also needs more time in order to make a decision on this policy and that she will not be voting tonight.

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Mr. Reddy made follow up comments regarding this policy (and others) and shared that he does not think the Board should be voting on this. For tonight, it should be a topic for discussion only, as it has been. He thanked everyone for sharing their viewpoints and stated that he is not asking for a resolution tonight and suggested waiting until next week.

Mr. Wall made follow up comments.

Ms. Gilfillan explained the Board's process regarding making and/or repealing policies.

The Board conducted a straw poll on placing this policy on the September 27th agenda for repeal.

YES: Mr. Reddy, Mr. Wall, Mrs. Tuccillo, Mr. Buckley, Mr. DiMare and Mr. Mann

Mrs. Briamonte, Mrs. Zhang and Dr. Collur did not vote as they needed additional time to form an opinion on the matter.

2. Review of Agenda Action Items for September 27, 2023 Public Meeting
 - Dr. Cascone, Mrs. Lamoglia, Mr. Howard and Mrs. DeWysockie reviewed the draft agenda accordingly.
 3. Central Office Department Updates
 - Administration provided the applicable department updates.
 - Mrs. Tuccillo stated that related services just started and asked if it might be possible to begin providing these services sooner at the start of the school year.
 4. ~~Waivers~~ (Tabled)
 5. ~~AI~~ (Tabled)
 6. Crawford Hill Collaboration
 - Mr. Reddy shared that, with respect to the Township Committee, the District, Administration and the Board of Education are very aware of the discussions around the property and are very much interested in working and supporting the project, should there be an educational component to it. He went on to say that it would be premature for the Board to discuss any further at this time as it is very early and that the Board and Township have a call scheduled for tomorrow.
 7. ~~Policy #5756 Discussion~~ (Moved to #1)
- L. Executive Session (if required) – None

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M. Adjournment

Board President Reddy called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Wall motioned, Mr. Reddy seconded and by a unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 10:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jessica L. DeWysockie
Assistant Business Administrator/Assistant Board Secretary