

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS  
IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN**

**MINUTES**

**Regular Public Meeting  
February 28, 2023**

**Board Auditorium  
540 Farview Avenue, Paramus, New Jersey**

The Board of Education of the Vocational School District in the County of Bergen held its Regular Public Meeting on Tuesday February 28, 2023 in the Board of Education Auditorium, 540 Farview Avenue, Paramus, N.J. Mr. William Connelly, President of the Board, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present at roll call:**

Mr. William Connelly, *President*  
Mr. Louis DeLisio, *Executive Bergen County Superintendent of Schools*  
Mr. Jason Kim, *Vice President*  
Dr. Lawrence Meyerson

**Also in attendance:**

Howard Lerner, Ed.D., *Superintendent of Schools*  
John Susino, *Board Secretary/School Business Administrator*  
Andrea Sheridan, *Assistant Superintendent of Schools*  
Richard Panicucci, *Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction*  
Gary Hall, *Director of Human Resources*  
William Soukas, Esq., *Board Attorney*

**All present pledged allegiance to the United States of America.**

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT:**

John Susino, Board Secretary, read the following statement as required by the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of the public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act, the Board of Vocational Education in the County of Bergen has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time, and place thereof posted on a bulletin board prominently displayed in lobby of the Board offices and by the The Record and Herald News.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

A motion was made by Mr. Kim, seconded by Dr. Meyerson, to approve the following minutes:

Public Work Session Meeting:	January 24, 2023
Regular Public Meeting:	January 24, 2023
Executive Session:	January 24, 2023

A roll call vote was taken to approve the minutes listed above:

Mr. Connelly	Yes
Mr. DeLisio	Yes
Mr. Kim	Yes
Dr. Meyerson	Yes

### **BOARD SECRETARY/BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

❖ Board Secretary John Susino provided the following report to the Board.

▪ **2023-2024 School Year Budget**

- John Susino, School Business Administrator and Board Secretary, presented the administration's proposed 2023-2024 school year budget.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

❖ **HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING REPORT**

The District is required to report specific incidents of harassment, intimidation and/or bullying to the Board of Education. There were eleven (11) HIB incidents reported since last month which, after thorough investigation, two were determined to be HIB incidents and nine were non-HIB incidents.

▪ **HIB Incident: HIB Case #7 – Teterboro - School Year 2022-2023**

- *Incident*—insulting or demeaning verbal and electronic comments, physical attacks, and insulting or demeaning gestures that the offenders knew would cause the victim harm and also created a hostile educational environment, placed the victim in fear of physical and emotional harm, and interfered with the victim's education.
- *Intervention*—parent contact, consultation with case manager, individual counseling, restorative group counseling, suspension, and suspension alternative program.

▪ **HIB Incident: HIB Case #8 – Paramus - School Year 2022-2023**

- *Incident*—insulting or demeaning verbal comment which created a hostile educational environment and interfered with the victim's education.
- *Intervention*—parent contact, individual counseling, consultation with the behaviorist and case manager, and amended existing behavior plan

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #9 – IIDT - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #10 – IIDT - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #11 – IIDT - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #12 – Teterboro - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #13 – ATHS - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #14 – Paramus - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #15 – Paramus - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #16 – Paramus - School Year 2022-2023**

▪ **Non-HIB Incident: Alleged HIB Case #17 – Paramus - School Year 2022-2023**

❖ **BUS EVACUATION DRILLS**

- As per resolution number: **23-A-92T -APPROVAL – AUTHORIZATION ACCEPTANCE OF BUS EVACUATION DRILL REPORT 22-23**, and in accordance with NJDOE

requirements I am reporting to the board that the district has completed the first round of the required bus evacuation drills for the first half of the 2022-2023 school year.

❖ **DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS, ACCOLADES AND OTHER IMPORTANT DISTRICT INFORMATION**

Dr. Lerner shared highlights of the many accomplishments of our students and staff, including the following:

- **NAVIGATING SUCCESS THROUGH WELLNESS INITIATIVE**
  - Navigating Success Through Wellness completed ARISE/Restorative sessions on 3 campuses and provided the Parent Restorative Meeting on January 5th. Senior Transition Groups will start next month.
  - NSTW facilitated Resilience Training at both Northern Valley Old Tappan and Demarest for Freshmen.
- **APPLIED TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL**
  - On January 27<sup>th</sup> students in the Health Professions program attended a panel discussion with professionals from the Hospital for Special Surgery. Through participating in the discussion, students had the opportunity to learn about different career paths from a Sports Medicine physician, nurse, radiologist, MRI tech and a hospital administrator.
- **BERGEN COUNTY ACADEMIES**
  - Six students from BCA were semi-finalists in the 2022 Regeneron Science Talent Search. BCA had the most Regeneron Scholars in NJ and the third highest in the Nation..
  - Eight BCA students have been named U.S. Presidential Scholar Candidates. The winners will be announced in April. Most of the Scholars are selected based on their broad academic achievement. It is an amazing accomplishment to have eight students from the same school awarded this distinction as Scholar Candidates. Congratulations to everyone involved.
- **PARAMUS CAMPUS**
  - Congratulations go to three junior Healthcare Occupations students who placed 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, in last month's state wide HOSA-Future Health Professionals, Personal Care competition. Also, congratulations to a Senior Media Production student who was recently named a 2023 *Unsung Hero*, by the Bergen County School Boards Association
- **TETERBORO CAMPUS**
  - Three Law & Justice 12th grade students were featured in a news article about their public policy initiative. These students are leading the way in reducing the overall environmental impact of school cafeterias. The idea came to the group following a return to in-person learning when they saw piles of plastic waste piling up in the garbage cans each day.
  - The Empower Club welcomed CNBC Executive Producer, Sandy Cannold to speak to students.
- **INSTITUTE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY @ NORTHERN VALLEY – DEMAREST & OLD TAPPAN CAMPUSES**
  - **UX/UI Design**
    - 4 students in our Old Tappan program have advanced to the state competition in Atlantic City for the FBLA UX design event this month.
    - OT and NVD students have completed the first of 7 checkpoints in the Google UX Professional Certification, which will offer them more robust resumes and competitive internships for their senior experience.
  - **Exercise Science/Sports Medicine**

- Congratulations to HOSA Northern Region competitors and a freshman student that placed 4th in Extemporaneous writing in his first HOSA competition.
- For CTE month, Sports Medicine Students are learning about vital signs, how to measure them and how exercise affects them.
- **ADULT EDUCATION**
  - Our Fall program ended on 2/14/2023 and our Spring program started on 2/22/2023. The Police Recruit class started on 2/13/2023.
  - We are conducting virtual bleeding control classes for Technical School staff.
- **EMS**
  - Our Fall EMS program ended on February 14, and our Spring program began on 2/22/2023. The Police Recruit class started on 2/13/2023.
  - We are conducting virtual bleeding control classes for Technical School staff.
- **ATHLETICS**
  - Girls' Varsity Fencing won 1st place for foil in the Bergen County Tournament and the Santelli Tournament.
- **BERGEN COUNTY JOB CENTER**
  - The BCJC has successfully rolled out our Laptop Loaner Program to our TANF Clients.
- **BELA**
  - BELA had a wonderful time at BCA with Chef Scott and Chef Mike making pizza as our Little Chef's program.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION ACTION:**

On the motion by Mr. Kim, seconded by Dr. Meyerson, the following resolutions were presented for action.

Administration	23-A-83T	Through	23-A-92T
Personnel	23-P-68T	Through	23-P-85T
Finance	23-F-128T	Through	23-F-142T

**BOARD DISCUSSION - CONSENT AGENDA ONLY**

Mr. DeLisio informed the Board that he would be abstaining from the following resolutions:

23-A-87T, 23-P-72T, 23-F-128T, 23-F-129T, 23-F-132T

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – CONSENT AGENDA ONLY**

There was no public participation on the consent agenda.

**BOARD VOTE - CONSENT AGENDA**

A roll call vote on the consent agenda, as identified above, was taken:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstain</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Mr. Connelly	X			
Mr. DeLisio	X		23-A-87T, 23-P-72T, 23-F-128T, 23-F-129T, 23-F-132T	
Mr. Kim	X			
Dr. Meyerson	X			

### **OFF-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS**

There were no off-consent resolutions.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - ANY ISSUE**

- ❖ Zaid Hussein, Outreach Coordinator for CAIR-NJ, requested for the Bergen County Technical Schools to have Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha added to the 2023-2024 school year calendar as days off for students and staff. This request accommodates the Muslim students who attend BCTS and celebrate these holidays, as they are at an academic disadvantage when making a decision to either missing school or missing their religious observances.
- ❖ Hooriya Bagasra, of Teaneck and second year student at BCA made the following comments:
  - Hello, my name is Hooriya Bagasra. I am a sophomore at the Bergen County Academies and I am a resident of Teaneck. On behalf of the Muslim student population in all BCTS campuses, we would like to kindly ask the board to consider two holidays, which are Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr. I believe that there is room in the BCTS school calendar to provide for these two holidays. We the students at BCTS Campuses would like you to consider adding the holiday of Eid into our list of religious holidays that the school is closed for. In Islam, there are two major holidays that are celebrated by Muslims all over the word, Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr. Eid-ul-Fitr is a celebration for Muslims which happens at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, where Muslims fast. Additionally, Eid-ul-Adha observes the sacrifice made by Prophet Abraham and the completion of Hajj, which is the pilgrimage that Muslims take to Makkah. Muslims follow the lunar calendar and the date of the holidays changes every year and as the Muslim population in BCTS Campuses increases, it is imperative to allow students to be able to celebrate their religious holidays. The BCTS students have collected 510 signatures that support our initiative to get Eid off for students in these BCTS campuses. This year, eid ul fitr is April 21 and eid ul adha on June 29. Next year the dates will move back ten days and we will discuss the dates before and confirm it with the board members. We also request that if it Eid falls on a weekend, then the day before be off for students. Furthermore, since Eid is not a religious holiday currently on the school calendar, many students throughout all BCTS campuses struggle with not being in school and missing school work. As the Muslim population in BCTS Campuses increases, it is vital to allow students to be able to celebrate their religious holidays. Having the school closed for Eid, students will be able to enjoy their holidays without the anxiety of missing pertinent lessons.

Personally, as a student at the Bergen County Academies, I am not able to focus on celebrating Eid without thinking about the school work that I am missing at the moment. Last year, when I was at my family's house, I was thinking about how much work I had to finish the next day, and how I had to study for my Biology Quiz. As a Muslim student, we are at an academic disadvantage as we are not able to celebrate our holiday, without the constant reminder of work and lessons that we are missing. Additionally, some friends of mine told me last year that they

were unable to celebrate Eid properly because they had to do work or then their grades would drop which they could not allow. Constantly worrying about our grades stops us from celebrating with our family and friends. As a school that has more incoming Muslim students, I ask kindly that the board members give students a day off to be able to celebrate their holiday without any struggles.

- ❖ Khashiya Ranginwala, a Teaneck resident and third year student attending BCA, made the following comments:
  - Muslims celebrate 2 holidays: Eid ul Adha and Eid ul Fitr. In the BCTS district, there are around 120 Muslim students. As a Muslim junior at BCA, I have had to miss school in order to celebrate these holidays. However, it's difficult for me to celebrate when I'm worried about school and what lessons and assessments I'm missing. Additionally, there's the extra stress of making up all the work we missed when taking a day off. For this reason, we request to have a day off for Eid ul Adha and Eid ul Fitr. We want to be able to celebrate our holiday the way everyone else celebrates theirs': without any stress or worry about school. She commented that local districts, including Paramus, Fair Lawn and Teaneck, have added the Muslim holidays to their school calendars. Ms. Ranginwala requested that the Board also add the holidays to the BCTS calendar.
- ❖ Saeed Qureshi, Imam Darul Islah Mosque in Teaneck, also spoke regarding adding the Muslim holidays to the school calendar. He stated that often he receives requests from parents to have their children excused from school to attend the religious services. He has often heard from students that feel conflicted between their religious obligations and their schoolwork. Imam Qureshi also gave a brief history of the origin of the holidays and their meaning and importance to Muslims.

Mr. Connelly thanked the presenters for the information they provided and stated that the Board and administration would further investigate the matter.

#### **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING:**

Mr. Kim made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Dr. Meyerson. All members present voted in the affirmative; none opposed. Mr. Connelly adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

NOTE: No further action was taken by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,



John Susino  
Board Secretary/School Business Administrator

Approved by the Board of Education at its regular meeting of 3-28-23