

**Montague Township Board of Education Meeting
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2021
6:30 pm**

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

	Present	Absent
Denise Bogle, Vice President	X	
Dale Bouma		X
Paul Brislin	X	
Danielle Christmann	X	
Barbara Holstein, President	X	
Glen Plotsky	X	
Jennifer VanNess	X	

Others Present:

Timothy Capone - Chief School Administrator
Aldijana Reckovic - Board Secretary
John Comegno - Board Attorney

III. Flag Salute

IV. The mission of the Montague Township School District is to provide the best educational experience and opportunities resources allow, in order to realize the potential of every child.

V. In accordance with the New Jersey Sunshine Law, a legal notice of this meeting has been posted on the official bulletin board at the school and advertised in the New Jersey Herald and the Sunday New Jersey Herald.

VI. Announcement of Executive Session

VII. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montague Township Board of Education recess and proceed to executive session to discuss personnel matters and conduct board attorney interviews. Action may or may not be taken.

Motion to open Executive Session at 6:32pm
Motion Jennifer VanNess 2nd Paul Brislin
Voice vote: All in Favor

Motion to close Executive Session at 8:21pm
Motion Glen Plotsky 2nd Paul Brislin
Voice vote: All in Favor

Motion to reopen Regular Meeting at 8:22
Motion Jennifer VanNess 2nd Dale Bouma
Voice vote: All in Favor

VIII. CSA Report

- Mr. Capone stated the committee meetings that had been scheduled by Ms. Holstein, did not take place because no one showed up for it.
 - Ms. Holstein responded they were cancelled, and those were tentative meetings. Due to circumstances that have occurred with the board, we did not formally schedule them with the board members.
 - Mr. Capone stated we have them in writing from you that these were the scheduled meetings, and you didn't let us know that they were cancelled.
- Mr. Capone asked what are the board priorities? What are the things that you're trying to accomplish? and how are we making sure that there's adequate plans in place? this is a discussion we need to have, as far as the work that the board needs to put in to be able to set a strategic plan set goals and set priorities to move into next year. Because currently, the budget is based on status quo. There has been nothing identified.
 - Ms. Holstein responded did you and Mr. Gumustekin, prepare and submit the budget data into the CDK budget prep software by January 15 of 2021? and on January 29, did you with the BA have a mid-year review at some point with the County Superintendent of Schools?
 - Mr. Capone responded yes.
 - Ms. Holstein stated according to my phone conversation with Neil Cramer today. That is not how he interpreted the budget to have been prepared. He also indicated to me that there were 22 issues that he had sent back, and he told me that I should have received that from you today. At this point I have not received that from you.
 - Mr. Capone responded we received that paperwork from Mr. Cramer today that you just publicly criticize the work of the BA, which I think is concerning, and you're talking about micromanaging the district. The purpose of the board is goals. We've been over this within the ethics training. The reason that I'm harping on it, again, is the fact that we haven't made any progress.
 - Ms. Bogle stated the information that you input into the budget, It was supposed to have been put on to this into a state document on January 15. So in other words, we were sworn in on January 8, we set up committees, all of the information that you were supposed to be inputting into this state or programs should have been worked on all

year long, close to a preliminary budget was supposed to be submitted to the board before we came on before December 31. I don't know if that was ever done.

- Mr. Capone and the board have a detailed discussion regarding the budget.

IX. SBA Report

- None

X. Correspondence

- Ms. Reckovic stated included in tonight's board packet is a letter from Mr. Parrott the Sussex County Clerk. Also, an email from a parent regarding drop-off with a video.
- Ms. Holstein read the following statement prepared by the board's legal counsel Mr. Comegno:

As the public may recall, in light of the Board voting to move the Board election from November to April, annually, there have been discussions about what happens to the terms of current Board members. Specifically, whether terms that would have expired before the November, 2021 elections would expire "earlier," to be voted on during the April, 2021 elections, or whether the terms will be extended, and voted on at the April, 2022 election following the end of the term had the election not been moved. Relevant statutes and regulations concerning the moving of the election don't address this issue, and that different authorities that considered the issue come to different conclusions.

To address this issue and avoid confusion and potential litigation, I wrote to the County Clerk, Mr. Parrott, on January 29, 2021, and asked for direction on this issue from his office. He replied on February 8, 2021 noting that he could not provide such direction from his office but stated his "personal view" was that terms would be lengthened.

Thereafter, in a matter involving the Fredon Township Board of Education, the Sussex County Superior Court considered a similar issue concerning a school district that moved its election to April. The Court concluded that the members' terms in that case should be lengthened.

This past Friday, March 5, 2021, I received a copy of a letter from Clerk Parrott, dated March 5, 2021, finally providing official direction, referencing the Fredon decision, indicating that any terms affected by moving the election to April should be lengthened, not shortened. Clerk Parrott stated that "when the election is moved to April, the first of April election may include only the school budget issue so as not to unlawfully shorten the statutory terms of office of incumbent BOE members Any BOE member whose term would be affected by moving the election to April will have the term extended to the next reorganization meeting after the following April election."

This means that Board member elections will not occur this April, 2021; only a vote on the school district budget will be held. Terms of current members will run until the reorganization meeting following the original end of each of those terms, had the elections remained in November.

Practically speaking, terms of the current members will run as follows:

Terms of Members Plotsky and VanNess, both starting 1-1-2019, will expire before the May, 2022 election.

Terms of Members Bouma, Christmann, and Brislin, all starting 1-1-20, will expire before the May, 2023 election.

My term and that of Ms. Bogle, both starting 1-8-2021, will expire before the May, 2024 election.

I am pleased that this issue is resolved and thank all my Board colleagues for their service to the school district and our community.”

XI. Approval of Minutes

BE IT RESOLVED, at the recommendation of the Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the executive minutes of February 8, 2021.

Mr. Plotsky moved to table the minutes for the next board meeting.

2nd: Paul Brislin

Roll Call	Bogle	Bouma	Brislin	Christmann	Holstein	Plotsky	VanNess	Total
YES	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
NO								
ABSTAIN								
ABSENT		X						1

XII. Public Session

Public comment is invited on all matters pertaining to the school district. All participants shall be permitted four (4) minutes to speak and shall state their name, place of residence, and group affiliation, if appropriate.

Board meetings are a meeting of the Board conducted in public, NOT a meeting of the public conducted in the presence of the Board.

The Board uses the public comment period as an opportunity to listen to citizen concerns, but please be aware that not all issues brought to a board meeting will be resolved this evening; rather, the Board will, in appropriate cases, delegate the authority to investigate the matter to the Superintendent or his designee.

Please let the record reflect that the BOE does not endorse your comments nor will the BOE be held liable for comments you make about a staff member, or other person, which the staff member, or other person, may consider defamatory and/or libelous, as that individual retains all rights to pursue any legal remedies against you.

Motion to open public comment at 8:53pm

Motion Jennifer VanNess 2nd Dale Bouma

Voice vote: All in Favor

- **Eleanor Murphy 15 Plaza Dr, Newton**
The traffic tie up at the morning student drop off, was creating a hazardous situation.
- **Krista Mikulski 2 Elm Court**
The bus and car lineup is a safety concern, the word micromanaging tossed around since this new board came along I'm going to urge the board to understand what role you can play and holding Tim accountable to fix the issue.
- **Andre Campbell 111 Armstrong Rd**
Concerned about the very dangerous bus drop off situation that is occurring on a daily basis.
- **Kathy Ganska Sleepy Hollow Rd**
Very concerned with drop off in the morning.

Motion to close public comment at 9:04pm

Motion Paul Brislin 2nd Glen Plotsky

Voice vote: All in Favor

XVI. Unfinished Business

Ms. Holstein motion to put the \$1.6 million from cap reserve into the budget for the as of right now designated as HVAC, and also COVID related needs to reopen our school district fully in September of 2021.

2nd: Paul Brislin

Ms. Holstein withdraws motion, after speaking with Mr. Comegno.

2nd Paul Brislin

Discussion

- Mr. Plotsky stated I thought the idea is that you have to have a particular project with particular parameters with a particular contractor with a particular price, and we actually have one of those, we had an estimate that set forth all those things and was voted down.
- Ms. Holstein responded my understanding is needing an identified project doesn't mean that we need to have a fully detailed report at this time, we just need to have it included in the budget to be approved by the county.
- Mr. Comegno stated do we have a sense of ballpark approximate what that cost is for the HVAC issue exclusively?
- Mr. Capone responded , if you're planning on doing an HVAC project, we should be doing the RFP now going out to bid and getting that done as soon as possible and being able to access those monies. The project was already spec'ed and put together. So you have a project that you could recall, put forward, go through the process, and do that. The thought that you're going to put this in next year's budget, and that's it's going to be done by September.

- **The Board takes a recess so administration can grab materials for the HVAC project.**

Mr. Plotsky motioned

A-1 BE IT RESOLVED, at the recommendation of the Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey authorizes Parette Somjen Architects LLC to design, submit, prepare bidding documents, solicit for bids, and perform contract administration services related to the “HVAC Upgrades at Montague Township School” at a cost not to exceed \$135,000.00.

Seconded: Jennifer VanNess

Discussion

- Mr. Plotsky stated my recollection in terms of the motion, we need to have the architect do basically the solicitation of bids to contact the various providers of contractors who would actually provide the services. Services would include upgrading all of the ventilation systems, air conditioning within the building. There's security aspects to part of that, there is a scale of essentially the size of the particles, that screening will allow through the different filters.
- Ms. Holstein asked if this is coming from our current fiscal year budget?
 - Mr. Capone responded, yes.
- Mr. Brislin stated in the bidding specifications, can we require a guarantee, if we're going to pay over a million dollars and have a contractor that's responsible for this guarantee that our students can return to Montague school?

- Mr. Comegno responded I think that the practical problem is if you were to include that in the specs, and the architects going follow your directions, it's inconsistent with architectural principles. My recommendation would be not that you limit potential bidders, but that you have a conversation with the architect about how important that is, and make sure you have a comfort level that the specs that are that are going to be put out and the project that you're eventually going to award gets you as close to a guarantee as you can get.
- Mr. Comegno stated just so we're clear, this is authorizing preparation, getting documents, the solicitation of bids, and then what will be before you is an award of the product and that word of it.

Roll Call	Bogle	Bouma	Brislin	Christmann	Holstein	Plotsky	VanNess	Total
YES	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
NO								
ABSTAIN								
ABSENT		X						1

❖ **The Board made suggestions to identify certain projects, for inclusion in the budget.**

- Ms. VanNess suggested the parking lot, and cafeteria.
 - Mr. Capone responded that is in the long range facility plan, at the time when this was added in at of approximately \$500,000 for the parking lot and driveway upgrades.
- Mr. Plotsky suggested to make sure that we can actually support the population that seems to be coming into this building and more sports related options and alternatives, so that our children ultimately would benefit.
- Mr. Brislin suggestion was the cafeteria, and the parking certainly needs to be expanded, enhancement of the playground area, and also the outside lighting.
- Ms. Bogle suggestion was transportation issue, and the parking lot.
- Ms. Christmann suggested the parking, parking lot lighting, cafeteria, and an enhanced library/media center.
- Ms. Holstein stated all of these are definitely things that I would have loved to see any one of them happening.
- Mr. Capone and the board had a detailed conversation for the possibilities of the cafeteria/gym.

Amended

**Ms. VanNess motioned to address next year’s budget for project one:
 The parking lot and playground.
 Second project: Indoor/outdoor lighting.
 2nd: Paul Brislin**

- The Board members and Mr. Capone have a detailed discussion for these projects and the cost that goes with them.

Roll Call	Bogle	Bouma	Brislin	Christmann	Holstein	Plotsky	VanNess	Total
YES	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
NO								
ABSTAIN								
ABSENT		X						1

XVII. New Business

- Ms. Christmann stated are we going to discuss and address the concerns of the drop off and pickups?
- Mr. Plotsky stated this is micromanagement, by definition. I don't think it's something that the board should be discussing. Mr. Capone has been made aware today, by email of the fact that there's a particular issue that's been brought to his attention.
 - Ms. Christmann responded it was brought up at the last meeting also.
- Mr. Capone stated we have contacted the State Police because that's within their purview. There is limitations, to what our responsibilities are. We have certain liabilities that we address and make sure that we're in control of. We are not the sheriff of everything that happens in Montague, we have no authority on Route 206. As I said at the last meeting, I'm very confident in our parents to be able to stagger their time, just like they did last year, just like when we had 100% of our students in to be able to make good decisions. From an administrative standpoint, we have a couple of things that we are looking at as far as making that flow, additional people that we've assigned. We haven't had any cases here, we have been very diligent as far as monitoring the infection rate.
- Ms. Holstein stated to Mr. Capone, you've talked about trying to increase the flow by adding more staff and tweaking certain things that are going on outside, you're considering re tweaking the temperature check requirement. These items that are as presented now do show that the Administration is taking an initiative to try to increase the flow and benefit the students and safety that of people that are coming on and off of 206.
- Ms. VanNess stated I take my children’s temperature even before they get on the bus, and log it as required and being responsible for my kids.

XVIII. Executive Session if necessary:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montague Township Board of Education recess and proceed to executive session to discuss personnel matters and legal issues. Action may or may not be taken.

- Executive Session was not necessary

XIX. Adjournment Motion Barbara Holstein

2nd Paul Brislin

Voice vote: All in Favor

Time of Adjournment: 10:29pm

Respectfully submitted,

Aldijana Reckovic
Board Secretary