

**Montague Township Board of Education Meeting  
Regular Action Meeting Minutes  
February 14, 2024**

**1. CALL TO ORDER at 6:30 a.m.**

**2. ROLL CALL**

	Present	Absent
Barbara Holstein, President	x	
Michael Zernhelt, Vice President	x	
Christopher Bell	X 6:31 p.m.	
Paul Brislin	x	
Andree Campbell	x	
Tasha DeGeorge	x	
Jaime Johnson	X via zoom	

Others Present:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
James Andriac - Acting Superintendent	x	_____
Michael Bussow, SBA/BS	x	_____
Joseph Garcia, Esq. – Board Atty.	x	_____

**3. FLAG SALUTE - FOLLOWED BY A MOMENT OF SILENCE OR PRAYER**

**4. MISSION STATEMENT - The mission of the Montague Township School District is to provide the best educational experience and opportunities to realize the potential of every child.**

**5. LEGAL NOTICE - 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.**

**6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**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.

Motion to open Executive Session at 6:32 p.m.

Motion Andree Campbell                      2<sup>nd</sup> Paul Brislin                      Voice Vote: All in Favor

Motion to close Executive Session at 7:09 p.m.

Motion Christopher Bell                      2<sup>nd</sup> Paul Brislin                      Voice Vote: All in Favor

Motion to reopen Regular Meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Motion Tasha DeGeorge                      2<sup>nd</sup> Andree Campbell                      Voice Vote: All in Favor

- 7. CSA REPORT - James Andriac, CSA** - Announced and congratulated the January 2024 Students of the Month. Announced that the District is closed on Monday, February 19, 2024 for President's Day. Thanked the PTA for hosting their annual heart's dance that was held on Friday, February 9th. Thanked Ms. Neamand for putting together Valentine's Day cards for our Senior Citizens. They were very happy with the cards. Last week we had our Winter Pep Rally to honor all of our winter athletes for basketball and archery. Friday, February 16 is our Community Cornhole Event at 6PM. Mr. Brislin stated that he was a recipient of the Valentine's Day cards. Announced the Teacher of the Year, Jessica Coppolino and Professional of the Year went to Samantha Frost.
- 8. SBA REPORT - Michael Bussow, SBA** - We are working on the budget, trying to keep things moving and entering next year's projections as we go, making corrections within. Once all the data is in is when we will have a total outlook on what it is. We are definitely trying to keep things where they are at. Reductions as needed. We do have from this year's budget, our PreK expansion was approved. We will be looking for ways to fund some of that because we don't have the full amount needed. That will be over the next three (3) years. We have \$1.3 million that we were awarded from the State which is 40% of the total project cost. You will see tonight that we need to start the ball rolling with our architect because if we do not have a signed Contract by December we risk losing those funds. It's about a six (6) month time from architectural planning to permitting to going out to bid. We advertised for bids on both the parking lot expansions and electrical upgrade last Wednesday. This Friday we have an open tour of the building for the bidders for the electrical upgrade. They will be meeting here with the architect and engineer. The funds for the ESSER II expansion grant was approved. Those funds are for the HVAC for the gym and cafeteria as well as the 1970 addition. If the Board accepts those tonight we can access them and that equipment has been ordered and that work should be completed this summer. We had the ductwork inspected last week and we can utilize the existing ducts for the gym which will save us money. The lighting upgrade is just about finished so we will be filing for our rebate. Ms. Holstein asked if we are changing a meeting date in March? Mr. Bussow stated that it is A-2 in the agenda. Mr. Bussow stated that we have to move the meeting to March 6th because the budget is due to the State by March 7. Ms. Holstein asked Mr. Bussow when he anticipated being able to give the BOE members the full budget to approve? Mr. Bussow stated that we will get our State formula released on February 29th and try to get it to the Board by Friday, March 1. Ms. Holstein stated so they don't get the numbers to us until the 29th and they want the District to turn around by the 7th and approve it? That is a ridiculous amount of time for the Board to be able to sit and evaluate the budget and determine whether or not the budget fits within the guidelines. It doesn't make sense publicly to anyone listening. Not sure when on the 7th it is due but it is due on March 7, 2024. Ms. Holstein would like one more day to review the budget. Mr. Brislin stated that he has the public hearing on March 27, 2024 so we have to submit the budget to the State before we have a public hearing? Ms. Holstein stated that is correct. She continued to say, first we have the preliminary budget which is sent to the County and State and the preliminary budget gets approved by them saying yes it is okay for you to take it out to the public. Ms. Holstein asked Mr. Bussow, if we have the first reading and then the second reading and Mr. Bussow stated yes. Mr. Bussow drafts the budget, the board reviews it and approves and now this budget would typically be presented to the public in April for a vote because that is what we have been doing for 4 years but Governor Murphy decided to change this. We have lost the right to vote on this budget. By law we cannot present this budget to the public anymore. In April we will only be presenting Board members. The budget, as long as it is under 2%, there is no vote on it in April and there is nothing that we can do about that. Mr. Brislin asked Mr. Garcia if we can do at our option a non-binding vote on a non-binding resolution? Mr. Garcia stated that you have to submit a budget to get approved. Mr. Brislin asked if we can include this budget on the form as a non-binding resolution? Mr. Garcia asked if he meant can you put the budget on the ballot and Mr. Brislin said yes. Mr. Garcia said he would have to consult with an election lawyer but he doesn't think you can do that. Ms. Holstein stated that what the Governor did is that he

applied the same rule to the April elections because there are school Districts across the State who did what Montague and Fredon did to vote to move to an April election but Murphy has changed the rules that if you have an April election and it's under 2% you do not vote on budget. Ms. Holstein stated that we spent \$18,000 at the last April election and asked if we are doing our due diligence to spend \$18,000 on an election that nobody wants to participate in and they could come out and vote in November for the same thing. Now that Murphy changed the law it is absolutely ridiculous to have an April election. Ms. Holstein asked Mr. Garcia whether or not we have to have this election. Her understanding is that we have to have a 4th year of the election before the Board as a whole could consider going back to November. Mr. Garcia stated that the statute has a four (4) year requirement that states if you move the election back to November you have to wait four (4) Novembers to move it back to April. It doesn't have that language in there if moving it from April to November. However, we have a crunch time because the board can by resolution move the election from April to November but you have properly notice it so you couldn't do it tonight because he didn't notice it. You would have to give at least 48 hours notice to hold a special meeting. The 2nd time crunch is that you have notice the County Clerk within 60 days or few of the April election. Ms. Holstein stated that we can take it up under new business whether or not the Board wants to pursue it. Mr. Brislin asked about the March meetings. Ms. Holsteins stated that we are moving the March meetings to accommodate the State's tight timeline. Mr. Garcia stated that after reading Title 19 which governs moving the elections and it states that the date of the annual school election may be moved to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November without voter approval upon the adoption of a resolution by the Board of Election of a local regional school district so we can do it or the town can do it. A motion can be done tonight and we can send a letter tomorrow. Mr. Bell asked if it would cost us anything to move it back? Mr. Garcia stated that the statute raises that as a possibility. He's not too sure but it would be cheaper than paying for a separate election. Ms. Holstein stated that there has ever been charge to the school district during 2012 to 2021. There has been no increase in the budget for Montague Township School District since 2020. Ms. Holstein believes that it is in the best financial interest of the district under new business for us to consider. It will extend the terms of everybody. Whoever's term was up in April will now be up on December 31st. Mr. Bell wants to confirm that it would not cost us anything to move the election. Mr. Garcia stated that you have to vote tonight to get the letter to the Clerk by Friday. Mr. Bell wanted to know if we can reverse the vote if it will cost us money. Mr. Garcia stated that if there's no agreement with the Board of Elections then it's not changed. Ms. Holstein will try to get the answer before New Business.

**9. BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT - see above as it is incorporated above**

**10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Ms. Holstein made a motion to approve both the January 10, 2024 regular and executive minutes and January 24, 2024 special meeting and minutes.**

**Moved: Paul Brislin                      Seconded: Andree Campbell**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the Regular Meeting Minutes and the Executive Minutes of January 10, 2024.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the Special Meeting Minutes and the Executive Minutes of January 24, 2024.

Roll Call	Bell	Brislin	Campbell	DeGeorge	Holstein	Johnson	Zernhelt	Total
<b>YES</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7
<b>NO</b>								
<b>ABSTAIN</b>								
<b>ABSENT</b>								

**11. PUBLIC SESSION – AGENDA ITEMS**

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. The board uses the public comment 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.

Motion to open Public Comment at 7:45 p.m.  
 Motion Andree Campbell                    2<sup>nd</sup> Tasha DeGeorge      Voice Vote: All in Favor

Motion to close Public Comment at 7:46 p.m.  
 Motion Christopher Bell                    2<sup>nd</sup> Paul Brislin                    Voice Vote: All in Favor

**12. FINANCE**

**Michael Zernhelt asked to have a vote to do Consent Agenda for Items F-1 through F-7**

Moved: Tasha DeGeorge                    Seconded: Paul Brislin

Roll Call	Bell	Brislin	Campbell	DeGeorge	Holstein	Johnson	Zernhelt	Total
<b>YES</b>	x	x	x	x		x	x	6
<b>NO</b>								
<b>ABSTAIN</b>								1
<b>ABSENT</b>					x (stepped out for a moment)			

Michael Zernhelt asked for a vote on items F-1 through F-7. He explained that we had to do a vote to put them together and now we are voting for the items.

**F-1 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the January 11, 2024 through February 14, 2024, - Bill List below:

Fund 10	\$ 52,950.51
Fund 11	\$ 931,082.45
Fund 12	\$ 7,500.00
Fund 20	\$ 127,906.94
Fund 60	\$ 16,120.05
Fund 95	\$ 299.74
Grand Total	\$1,135,859.69

**F-2 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the Board Secretary’s Report and the Treasurer of School Monies Report for the Month of December 2023 pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-16.10(C)3 and 4.

**F-3 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the Board Secretary’s Report and the Treasurer of School Monies Report for the Month of January 2024 pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-16.10(C)3 and 4.

**F-4 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the transfers adjustments as of February 9, 2024, (see attached).

**F-5 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the acceptance of the Preschool Facilities Expansion Grant Number 23E00483 for FY2023 in the amount of \$1,366,560.00.

**F-6 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the acceptance of the Late Liquidation CRRSA ESSER II Grant Number 21E00306 for FY2021 in the amount of \$341,283.00.

**F-7 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the Master Therapy Services Agreement between Performance Pediatrics, P.C. and Montague Township School District effective February 1, 2024 until June 30, 2024.

**Moved: Tasha DeGeorge**

**Seconded: Paul Brislin**

Roll Call	Bell	Brislin	Campbell	DeGeorge	Holstein	Johnson	Zernhelt	Total
YES	x	x	x	x		x	x	6
NO								
ABSTAIN					x			1
ABSENT								

**13. PERSONNEL**

**Ms. Holstein made a motion to approve both items P-1 and P-2**

**Moved: Andree Campbell**

**Seconded: Christopher Bell**

**P-1 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve **ALYSSA ALLEN** as full time Preschool Teacher, Step B/BA (prorated), pending background check, for the 2023-2024 school year with a start date of on or about April 8, 2024.

**P-2 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve **PENELOPE HEWITT** as a substitute teacher, pending background check, for the 2023-2024 school year.

Roll Call	Bell	Brislin	Campbell	DeGeorge	Holstein	Johnson	Zernhelt	Total
YES	x	x	x	x	x	x		7
NO								
ABSTAIN								
ABSENT								

**14. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS**

**Ms. Holstein made a motion for BG-1 through BG-3**

**Moved: Tasha DeGeorge**

**Seconded: Michael Zernhelt**

**BG-1 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve DMR Architect's Proposal #M2023-24 dated February 8, 2024 to build a **4-classroom addition** to the existing school to increase the capacity for the Pre-K School Program for approximately 60 students. The footprint of the addition will be approximately 5,200 square feet . The fee for architectural and engineering services for the completion of services described in the agreement is \$313,530.00.

**BG-2 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the following requests for Use of Facilities or Grounds for the following:

NAME	USE/PURPOSE	ROOMS	DATE	TIME
<b>Jennifer Seminerio, Master PreK Teacher &amp; Project Self Sufficiency</b>	Raising Resilient Children Community Workshop	Gym, Cafeteria & Bathrooms	Monday March 18, 2024	5PM to 7:30PM
<b>MEA</b>	Annual PRIDE Event - Family Square Dancing	Gym, Cafeteria & Bathrooms	Friday March 22, 2024	4PM to 8:30PM

**BG-3 BE IT RESOLVED**, at the recommendation of the Acting Superintendent, that the Montague Township Board of Education approve the **Montague PTA's** requests for Use of Facilities or Grounds for the following:

USE/PURPOSE	ROOMS	DATE	TIME
PTA Meeting (makeup)	Cafeteria & Bathroom	Tues., Feb. 20 2024	6:30PM to 9:30PM
Family Fitness Night	Gym, Cafeteria & Bathrooms	Fri., Feb. 23, 2024	5:30PM to 8:00PM
Tricky Tray (pending receipt of proof of gaming license)	Hallways, Gym, Cafeteria & Bathrooms	Fri., May 31, 2024 for setup  Sat., June 1, 2024 for event	4PM to 10PM  7AM to 9PM







