

Special Meeting
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
November 30, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held using the online video conference platform on November 30, 2020.

Board President Annemarie Maini called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Adequate written notice of this meeting of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education was sent to the Township and Village Clerks, The Star Ledger, the News Record, TAPintoSOMA.net, villagegreennj.com and all schools.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Motion made by Board Member Maini, seconded by Board Member Mazzocchi to allow distance participation for this Special Board meeting during the COVID-19 emergency.

Motion passed 5 yes, 0 no.

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Cuttle, Board President Maini,
Board Member Mazzocchi, Board Member Siders,
Board Member Zubieta,

Absent: Board Member E. Baker, Board Member R. Baker,
Board Member Joshua, Board Member Wright

5 VOTING MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

The Board held a moment of silence to acknowledge the passing of former Columbia High School Dean, Hope Taylor. Ms. Taylor was employed by the District for 30 years. We will formally acknowledge Ms. Taylor at our December Board meeting.

Board President Maini explained that Superintendent's mid-year review was moved from January/February to November/December in order to capture feedback from Board members who have served for at least a year and have a deeper perspective of the Superintendent's performance. Since our November 16, Board meeting we received the election results and I would like to congratulate, Susan Bergin, Elissa Malespina, Courtney Winkfield and Board Member Zubieta. I look forward to serving on the Board with each of you.

At the December 14, Board meeting I will acknowledge the service of Board Members Elizabeth Baker, Robin Baker and Anthony Mazzocchi who will no longer serve on the Board of Education. The January 6, 2021 reorganizational meeting will include the Oaths of Office for our new Board Members as well as Ethics Training for all Board members.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

The School Board meeting is a business meeting in public not a meeting with the public. Oftentimes it may appear to members of our audience that the Board of Education takes action with very little comment and in many cases a unanimous vote. Before a matter is placed on the agenda at a public meeting, the Administration has thoroughly reviewed the matter with the Superintendent of Schools/Chief School Administrator (CSA). If the Superintendent of Schools/Chief School Administrator is satisfied that the matter is ready to be presented to the Board of Education, it is then referred to the appropriate Board Committee. The Members of the Board Committee work with Administration and the Superintendent to assure that the members fully understand the matter. After the committee discusses the matter, it is presented to the full Board for discussion before any action is taken. Only then, is it placed on the agenda for action at a public meeting.

Board Member Wright arrived at 7:07 p.m.

6 VOTING MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Abigail Murtagh

In light of tonight's mid-year evaluation, I wanted to take a minute to express my deep appreciation for the work Dr. Taylor has done as Superintendent. We have benefited so much from his vast educational experience and his commitment to making positive thoughtful improvements in our District. Dr. Taylor has brought so much positive change. He has made marked improvements in communication, holding town halls, responding in real time to public speaks and replying to all of his emails which given the volume this year must be an herculean task. His presentations at meetings and public events are comprehensive. For example when Dr. Taylor entered the District, he inherited a proposed integration design that seems to have been picked mostly for cost effectiveness. Dr. Taylor had the courage and leadership to pause that decision, to seek out feedback from experts, to examine multiple integration models both in design and practice and to meet with groups of stakeholders. He studied, listened, synthesized and then explained that process in detail when he proposed his plan to the District. He has demonstrated that the same comprehensive process during the pandemic. This has not been an easy year. How could it be? Especially in a District that spent almost two years showing the community just how run down and nonfunctioning our building were. Dr. Taylor has committed to giving all students access. He has committed to making our buildings safe and has not forced teachers and students back when he knows they are not. He has been open to adjusting his design in response to feedback, knowing that each change that fixes one problem will unearth opposite discontent. When mistakes were made when the HVAC systems were not ready, Dr. Taylor immediately came out and publicly took ultimate responsibility. He has remained calm, professional and engaged throughout all of this. He continues to

approach our community with kindness and humor. He continues to be committed to equity even reorganizing the Central Office to support this commitment. Soon the pandemic school will be a thing of the past. I am grateful that Dr. Taylor has been here to lead us in this insane time and I cannot wait to see how he leads our District once this has all passed.

Thank you for your time.

Future Meetings

The Board of Education will meet in Executive Session on Monday, December 14, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. via online video conference platform to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in public session at 7:30 p.m. using the online video conference platform. The community can view the meeting by following the steps below. Action will be taken.

The Board of Education will meet for its annual Reorganizational Meeting on Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via the online video conference platform. Action will be taken.

Motion made by Board President Maini, seconded by Board Member Cuttle to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss the Superintendent's Mid-Year Evaluation.

Motion to adjourn to Executive Session unanimously approved at 7:17 p.m.

Paul Roth, Board Secretary