

Special Meeting
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
June 28, 2021

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held using the online video conference platform on June 28, 2021.

Board President Thair Joshua called the meeting to order at 6:32 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 the District website.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Bergin, Board Member Cuttle
Board Member Joshua, Board Member Maini,
Board Member Malespina, Board Member Siders,
Board Member Winkfield, Board Member Wright,

Absent: None

EIGHT VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT

Motion made by Board President Joshua, seconded by Board Member Winkfield to allow distance participation in our monthly Regular Board Meeting during the COVID-19 emergency.

Motion passed 8 yes, 0 no.

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.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Kaitlin Wittleder

Tonight I speak on behalf of our SOMA community to address all of you directly, as individuals elected by our community to represent the best interests of our children, to please share what is being done to address the ongoing security concerns at the Underhill Sports Complex. Underhill has been plagued with ongoing safety issues for years now and I believe that the South Orange Maplewood School District has been negligent in addressing these concerns as we now face the tremendous and senseless loss of our beloved Moussa Fofana. Prioritizing the safety of our children should be of the utmost importance and should be urgently addressed. During the May 17 Board meeting, the BOE directly commented on children not feeling safe attending events while closing the sentence with the focus on building a new facility - this was just a few weeks prior to Moussa's death. I would argue that delivering on a child's fundamental right to safety on school property should be our first and only priority until it's done. We can't enter the 2021-2022 academic school year with this critical issue left unresolved. Our community is filled with many individuals, including myself, who would be happy to help develop some of these new policies and come up with strategies that make our children, and their families, feel safe and welcome in this shared space. I would like to now turn it over to our Board Members to answer these questions directly because our community deserves transparency and we cannot condone inaction anymore.

What are we going to do to address ongoing security concerns?
Can you confirm today that you will be able to sufficiently address these security issues by the upcoming academic school year?

Beth Cosentino

Good evening, I'm writing to follow up on a concern I recently brought to your attention regarding the lack of crossing guards this summer. I have also alerted Village President Sheena Collum, Mayor Frank McGehee, the South Orange Board of Trustees, the Maplewood Township Committee, and the police chiefs of South Orange and Maplewood of this concern.

Starting on July 6, the South Orange Maplewood School District's Extended School Year (ESY) will begin for over 250 special education students. Some of the students will be walking to and from South Mountain and Maplewood Middle and they have a right to be safe just as they do during the regular school year.

As a parent of a child with a disability, it is especially important to me you recognize that to be inclusive means all children are treated with the same safety standards all year long, including summer

programming. I hope that you will advocate and do whatever it is that you can to ensure the safety of these students.

Thank you.

Dr. Taylor

- All students who attend ESY are offered transportation. There are some families who choose not to utilize our buses. I do not believe that there have been crossing guards for ESY programming in the past because transportation is provided.
- It goes without saying that our Board of Education, Administration and teachers all have a deep concern around safety and security. We held a safety and security town hall meeting for the high school precovid around some of these concerns and issues and implemented some security measures that we thought to make and keep our students safe. I am not comfortable discussing plans for security and safety improvements because it makes us more vulnerable. The Board President, Mayor and police chief has spoken with us several times so this is an ongoing very very high priority shared concern between both townships the Board and administration.

ITEM FOR ACTION

MOTION made by Board President Joshua, seconded by Board Member Maini, that the Board of Education approves the following:

4165. APPOINTMENT

(This employment is conditional and subject to the disclosure requirement; pending compliance with NJ Public Law 2018, Chapter 5)

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ACTUAL SALARY
Burnside, Eric	School Business Administrator/Board Secretary DIST - 1.0 FTE	9/1/21 6/30/22	\$170,000

Board members and Dr. Taylor discussed the appointment of Mr. Burnside. Dr. Taylor provided background information and details about the interview process for this position

ROLL CALL: Motion 4165 Passed. YES: Bergin, Cuttle, Joshua, Maini, Siders, Winkfield NO: Malespina, Wright

NEW BUSINESS

Board Member Wright

I would like to discuss the process for the evaluation of the Superintendent.

Board Member Malespina

Thank you to the Maplewood Police Department who assisted students with last minute COVID rapid testing so that they were able to participate in prom.

There will be a rally for justice for Moussa Fofana, on Wednesday at Ritzer Field. I would like as many people as possible to attend. Thank you to former Maplewood Mayor Profeta who donated \$10,000 as a reward in hopes of getting information that will lead to justice for Moussa.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Motion Made by Board President Joshua, seconded by Board Member Maini that the Board of Education will meet in a Special Public Meeting on Monday, July 12, 2021, at 6:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ, as well as using the online video conference platform, which will include Hearing of Individuals and Delegations and interview candidates for the vacant Board member position. The community also can view the meeting by following the steps which will be listed on the agenda. Immediately following the Public Session, the Board of Education will then move to go into Executive Session, in person and utilizing an online video conference platform, to deliberate. The Board of Education will return to the Public Session to vote and appoint a candidate. Action will be taken

MOTION made by Board President Joshua, seconded by Board Member Cuttle that the Board of Education adjourn to Executive session. Motion unanimously approved at 7:05 p.m.

Andrea Del Guercio, Acting Board Secretary