

South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
Reorganization Meeting
January 5, 2023

A Reorganization Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held in the District Meeting Room at the Administration Building, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, New Jersey as well as utilizing the online video conference platform on January 5, 2023.

Board Secretary Eric Burnside called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Please take notice that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in the following manner:

- A. That written notice was sent from the Office of the Secretary of the Board at 7:30 p.m. on June 27, 2022.
- B. That said notice was sent via email to Maplewood and South Orange Township Clerks and the Editors of the News Record, Star Ledger, and the Village Green.

Pledge of Allegiance

OATH OF OFFICE

Mr. Burnside Administered the oaths of office to the elected Board Members: Nubia DuVall Wilson, Regina Eckert and Bill Gifford
[The signed Oaths of Office are on file in the Board Secretary's Office.]

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Bergin, Board Member Duvall Wilson,
Board Member Eckert, Board Member Gifford
Board Member Malespina, Board Member Telesford,
Board Member Vadlamani, Board Member Winkfield,
Board Member Wittleder, Student Rep. Morros

Absent: None

NINE VOTING MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Burnside explained the process for the election of officers and called for nominations for President of the Board.

Board Member Malespina nominated Board Member Wittleder. There were no further nominations for President.

Board Member Winkfield thanked Board Member Wittleder for taking the time to personally reach out to each Board Member. The time that you spent not only sharing your vision but also listening to some of my concerns not only on the call but in subsequent emails definitely conveyed a lot of respect for this process. I've shared with you privately the concerns I have about your nomination and I appreciate the time you took to speak with me.

Student Rep. Morros thanked Board Member Wittleder for making it a priority to meet with he and Student Rep. Previlon when she was first elected to the Board to understand their experiences and the changes that we wanted to see.

ROLL CALL for Board Member Wittleder as President: YES: DuVall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Malespina, Wittleder NO: Bergin, Telesford, Vadlamani, Winkfield

Board Member Wittleder was elected President and assumed the Chair.

Board President Wittleder called for nominations for 1st Vice President of the Board.

Board President Wittleder nominated Board Member Malespina. Board Member Winkfield nominated Board Member Telesford. There were no further nominations for 1st Vice President.

Board Members Winkfield, Bergin and Telesford expressed their concerns with Board Member Malespina's nomination for 1st Vice President.

Board Member DuVall Wilson spoke in support of Board Member Malespina reminding the Board of her many years of experience in education and urged the Board to try to move forward together.

Board Member Vadlamani spoke in support of Board Member Telesford listing many qualifications that would make him an excellent candidate for 1st Vice President.

ROLL CALL for Board Member Malespina as 1st Vice President: YES: Duvall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Malespina, Wittleder NO: Bergin, Telesford, Vadlamani, Winkfield

Board Member Malespina was elected 1st Vice President.

Board Member Malespina expressed her desire to work closely to restore the relationships on the Board of Education.

President Wittleder called for nominations for 2nd Vice President of the Board.

Board Member Gifford nominated Board Member DuVall Wilson as 2nd Vice President. There were no further nominations for 2nd Vice President.

Board Member Malespina expressed her excitement to work with Board Member DuVall Wilson.

Board Member Vadlamani spoke in support of Board Member DuVall Wilson for 2nd VP as the leading candidate in the 2022 Board election in addition to other qualifications, Board Member DuVall Wilson is more than qualified to hold this position.

ROLL CALL for Board Member DuVall Wilson as 2nd Vice President
YES: DuVall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Malespina, Telesford, Vadlamani, Wittleder NO: None ABSTAIN: Bergin, Winkfield

Board Member DuVall Wilson was elected 2nd Vice President.

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

BOARD RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION FOR BOARD MEMBER JOHANNA WRIGHT

Board President Wittleder acknowledged Board Member Wright for nine years of service on the Board of Education and over 40 years of dedication and commitment to the students of South Orange and Maplewood. Board Member Wright's level of service, she is deserving of a lifetime achievement award.

Congratulations Executive Committee

Congratulations to Board Members Elissa Malespina and Nubia Duvall Wilson who were elected 1st and 2nd VP this evening. I am really excited about this leadership team and what I believe we can accomplish on behalf of our students.

Statement by the Board President

As I reflect on my short time on the Board I have never been more hopeful than I am right now about the capacity, capability and potential of the Board I was just chosen to lead. To my fellow Board colleagues, I am grateful to all of you, whether you voted for me this evening or not. We are a team of nine and I value the unique experiences and perspectives of each and everyone of you. I believe that in working together we can build a Board that focuses on and drives positive student outcomes and experiences, fosters two-way dialogue with the community, holds one another accountable, leads with integrity, transparency and openness. Lastly, we can be a Board that prioritizes evolution and innovation as we strive to make our processes, policies, governance practices, communications and programs better, year after year.

As elected officials the community has entrusted us with a tremendous responsibility, to support and advocate for more than 6,900 students in South Orange Maplewood. As the new Board President, I will work to ensure that we are committed to making sure that each and every student in South Orange Maplewood is given every opportunity to thrive in this

district. We are going to work hard to fulfill that promise and likewise for our 700+ staff members especially our teachers who represent this district to students and families daily. We want to assure you the district is listening to you and partnering with you to present our students with the best experiences and outcomes.

I want to thank the members of the community who send emails, join us at Board meetings for public speaks or share their stories online. This Board represents all of you and whether you have raised points of consideration, concern or recognition you help us shape our committee meeting agendas, conversation topics at the Board table and ultimately the policies passed districtwide. We need your voices to be an effective Board and I encourage you to continue to engage with us. We are always open to constructive feedback and new ideas, in fact we welcome it.

To my beautiful family I love you.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

The following community members spoke about the many contributions of Board Member, retired teacher, coach and community member Johanna Wright. Speakers shared memories and expressed how Board Member Wright has immeasurably positively impacted the lives of family, friends, colleagues, students and the community: Anita Mack, Dan Fabrizio, Rocio Lopez, Village President Sheena Collum, Mayor Dean Dafis, Kendall Whitlock, Jasmine Wright, Willie Sumner.

Jasmine Wright (Daughter of Johanna Wright)

Good Evening Everyone,

My name is Jasmine Wright and I have the honor of being Johanna Wright's daughter. I am also a product of South Orange Maplewood School District having attended Marshall School, Jefferson School, South Orange Middle School and Columbia High School. I was also one of her basketball players and cheerleaders, so I was around her all of the time. I have never seen someone whose true purpose is to serve students and I think you see just a small portion of that in this room. People have come here from out of state as well as people she just met over the holidays are here to support her on this night because of her energy and who she is. I am honored, blessed and fortunate to be her daughter and to have the fortune to share her with all of you.

This is not the end because I know who she is. I know she will be around campaigning for children. I am also an educator, I've never known an educator in my life that has a connection to so many former students as Johanna Wright. She has students who are over 50 years old still coming by her house, students who are like siblings to me. That is really something special, she is really something special. There are generations and generations of students that she has a close connection with, that reach out to her beyond South Orange Middle School, the lessons, coaching, the basketball court, people look to her for advice

and a long time ago I used to be jealous but I've realized that there was no need because that was what was needed from her and that's what I needed to grab from her.

I just want to say thank you for being such an outlet for so many people and for being an outlet for myself and the community. We needed you. You are truly, truly a gem. I appreciate the pride that you have, the fact that you are never afraid to say what is on your mind and your commitment to myself and everyone who came to support you and those who wish they could be here.

Motion made by Board Member Malespina, seconded by Board President Wittleder to move up recognitions on the agenda. Motion unanimously approved.

BOARD MEMBER WRIGHT

I want to thank you all for affording me the opportunity to say a few words. Today is validation that truth matters and standing on principle is what matters most when you are representing our children. When I first ran for tis office I said I would always put children first. I kept my word. I came to this Board with no agenda and representing no special interests in our two towns. My constituents were our children. I kept my word. I never waived in calling out wrong doings and holding this district accountable, even if it meant that I was criticized, because I kept my word. That is all that matters to me. My word is bond. I don't lie. Our children always knew Momma Wright had their backs and I will always have their back, their front and their sides, know that. Tonight, I will leave here with my head held high and kicking the dust off my feet. Don't short change our children! Don't talk about equity, be about it! Don't lie, tell the truth! You can't hide from it. The truth shall set you free. I kept my word, I stood on truth. Thank you, God Bless you and watch over our children.

**Board recessed at 7:50 p.m.
Board reconvened at 8:00 p.m.**

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Board President Wittleder made a motion seconded by Board Member Malespina, to adopt standing Board committees.

Thank you, former Board President Joshua who was instrumental in reaching out to Board Members to collect their preferences for standing Board Committees. He also created a wonderful catalog of onboarding documents to assist Board members.

Board Members discussed committee assignments and procedures for committee assignments.

4391. Approve Standing Committees [list on file in Board Secretary's office]

ROLL CALL: Motion 4391 PASSED. YES: DuVall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Malespina, Wittleder NO: Bergin, Telesford, Vadlamani, Winkfield

4390. Approve the following Reorganizational Appointments for the 2022-2023 School Year:

1. Appoint Eric Burnside as Board Secretary and authorize him to sign checks, notes, drafts, bills of exchange, acceptance, undertakings or other orders for payment of money.
2. Appoint Eric Burnside as the Qualified Purchasing Agent and authorize Mr. Burnside to negotiate and award contracts pursuant to NJSA 18A:18A-3.
3. Appoint Eric Burnside as Custodian of Records for the school district.
4. Appoint Andrea Del Guercio as Assistant Board Secretary and authorize her to sign checks, notes, drafts, bills of exchange, acceptance, undertakings or other orders for the payment of money in the absence of the Board Secretary.
5. Appoint Dr. Kevin Gilbert, Asst. Superintendent of Access and Equity as the District ADA/504 Compliance Coordinator for employees January 1, 2023 - February 14, 2023.
6. Appoint Tunde Adedoyin, Director of Human Resources as the District ADA/504 Compliance Coordinator for employees February 15, 2023 - June 30, 2023.
7. Appoint Susie Budine, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services as District Liaison for the Education of Homeless Children (per N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.5).
8. Appoint Susie Budine, as Liaison to the Department of Children and Families Division of Child Protection and Permanency.
9. Appoint Susie Budine, as the District ADA/504 Compliance Committee Coordinator for students.
10. Appoint Dr. Kevin Gilbert, as the Affirmative Action Officer for the school district.
11. Appoint Dr. Kevin Gilbert, as the Anti-Bullying Coordinator for the school district.
12. Appoint Dr. Kevin Gilbert, as the District Title IX Coordinator.
13. Accept the By-Laws, Policies, Rules and Regulations.
14. Adopt the Public Meeting Calendar for 2023 per attached.
15. Adopt Code of Ethics
16. Adopt the following newspapers and electronic news media for legal advertisements and the publication of Board meetings for the 2022-2023 school year: The Star Ledger, News Record, TAPintoSOMA.net, villagegreennj.com or the New York Times.
17. Approve the following depositories for school monies:
 - a. Bank of America
 - b. Chase Manhattan Bank
 - c. NJ ARM
 - d. PNC Bank
 - e. Wells Fargo Bank

Board President Wittleder presented a document for discussion that supports a two public meetings per month meeting structure. Research suggests School Boards that utilize this structure have shown improvements in expanding the board's monthly bandwidth, board and community trust, effective and transparent communication, improved access to timely information, building better consensus amongst the Board, all around improvement in Board performance and Governing the District. This structure will allow the Board to take action more than once per month to approve our overall efficacy. In addition to these benefits it would increase public engagement, reduce meeting timeframes, improve overall attention and action towards closed business items. This structure would give the Board two closed session meetings per month. Board President Wittleder explained the purpose of each meeting.

Dr. Taylor suggested administration conduct research through their perspective organizations to identify best practices and challenges of a two meeting per month structure. One challenge the administration would like the Board to consider is that SOMSD is such a dynamic district that within two weeks we could have a number of actionable items.

Board Member Telesford asked if Board President Wittleder consulted with administration before proposing this calendar? What were their recommendations?

Board Member Vadlamani asked that the Board finish the action portion of the meeting and then continue this discussion.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4390 PASSED. YES: Bergin, DuVall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Malespina, Telesford, Vadlamani, Winkfield
Wittleder NO: None

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

None.

DISCUSSION CONTINUED

Board Members continued the discussion about the proposed two public Board Meeting structure.

Board Member Vadlamani expressed concern that this committee schedule does not support working Board Members.

Board Member Malespina supports the two meeting per month structure. It will lead to more open and transparent communication with faculty and the community and will allow as a whole more understanding of what is going on throughout the district.

Board Member Telesford asked if these meetings will have the same structure as the current public meetings? How can we reduce the time

via the same structure unless we are limiting the time of the meeting? Two meetings per month is not kind to people who have to work.

Board Member Bergin provided background to the new members regarding the previous years meeting schedule and why the meeting structure changed to allow administration more time to conduct business. Committee meetings were also rearranged. The district puts a lot of effort into preparing for one meeting and two meetings will double that workload rather than reduce the amount of time.

Board Member Winkfield feels the Board needs more time to consider this new structure. Administration should be given time to gather more information to share with us so the Board can have that information for consideration before making a decision. A time limit should be imposed if the two meeting structure is implemented.

Board Member DuVall Wilson feels the Board needs more time to determine if this structure will work so it is not a disservice to the Board and district and would like this to be something the majority of the Board is excited about and not a hinderance to the Board's success this year.

Dr. Taylor suggested adding this discussion to the February agenda.

Board Member Bergin suggested making shift to two public meetings in July.

Board Member Gifford supports two public meeting but with a time limit or meeting structure that will prevent two long meetings similar to the one meeting structure the Board has now.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board of Education will meet in Public Session on Thursday, January 26, 2022 at 6:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Immediately following the opening of Public Session, the board will move to go into a Closed Session in the Superintendent's Office, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ, as well as using an online video conference platform to discuss personnel, matters within the attorney-client privilege, legal, negotiations, and other matters that may arise and require discussion, to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session (estimated to be 7:30 pm) in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ in person and utilizing an online video conference platform which will include Hearing of Individuals. The community can view the meeting by following the steps which will be listed on the agenda. If there are members of the community who would like to attend the meeting in person, please note that masks and social distancing are optional in accordance with the guidance received from the local DOH and the CDC. Action will be taken.

Motion made by Board President Wittleder, seconded by Board Member Malespina to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 8:42 p.m.

Eric Burnside, Board Secretary