

Special Meeting
Board Retreat
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
February 12, 2026

A Special 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 February 12, 2026.

Board President Meyer called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Bennett, Board Member Brown
Board Member Callahan, Board Member Higgins,
Board Member Kapadia, Board President Meyer,
Board Member Nayar, Board Member Stephan

Absent: Board Member Sackett-Gable

EIGHT VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT

Pledge of Allegiance

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

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 4:26 p.m. on February 2, 2026.
- B. That said notice was sent via email to Maplewood and South Orange Township Clerks and the Editors of the News Record, Star Ledger, TapintoSOMA and the Village Green.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Tonight is our first quarterly retreat of 2026. We will be covering our mandatory Annual Ethics training led by our Board Attorney, Mr. Patrick Carrigg, Esq. Following that, we have a training by our New Jersey School Board Association Field Services Representative Gene Cleary. Ms. Cleary will be discussing the preparation of the district's annual budget and the board's role in overseeing that process, including our role in approving and shaping district programming. The Board will leave the dais and move to the conference tables to foster a more relaxed discussion. The meeting will continue to be open to the public, live streamed will be closed.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

NONE.

ANNUAL ETHICS TRAINING

Board Attorney Mr. Patrick Carrigg, Esq. Facilitated the Annual Ethics

Training for the Board of Education. The Training included the following:

- New Jersey School Ethics Act
- Compliance With the School Ethics Act
- The Big Three: Collective Negotiations, Personnel Including Superintendent, Role of Board Members
 - Negotiations Committee Selection
 - Recent Decisions
 - Board Member Involvement in Personnel Decisions
- Board Members' Role
- Board Policy
- Board Members' Role in Sharing Information
- Limits on Board Member Access
- When is a Disclaimer Necessary
 - Lack of Disclaimer not always a violation
 - Ineffective Disclaimer
 - Private Action and the Disclaimer
- Board Against Board Member
- Confidential Information
- Conclusion

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Board Member Callahan made a motion seconded by Board Member Kapadia to reopen Hearing of Individuals and Delegations. Motion unanimously approved.

Community Member Jonathan Castro addressed the Board regarding budget concerns.

The board left the dais and moved to the conference area for the balance of the meeting, which was conducted in public but not livestreamed.

Board Retreat

NJSBA Field Representative Jeanne Cleary, facilitated the Board Retreat on Budget Development and The **Role** of the Board in Approving and Shaping District Programming. The presentation included the following:

- How well does the budget support student achievement?
 - Focus of Governance - Policy, Planning, Appraisal - Service ALL Students
 - Data of Student performance including sub-group performance
 - District Goals focused on improving student achievement and advancing student opportunity
 - Board approves goals
 - Board evaluates the CSA
 - CSA Evaluation is a collaborative process to focus on furthering student achievement
 - Board Goals

- Support District Goals through Governance
 - Budget – approving a budget that supports goals: educational plans, curriculum, staffing, PD, facilities, technology, etc.
 - Strengthening governance to more efficiently collaborate with administration
- Budgetary and Finance Definitions
- New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)
 - The DOE’s monitoring and self-evaluation system for public school districts that focus on 5 key components:
 - Instruction & Program
 - Fiscal
 - Governance
 - Operations
 - Personnel
 - QSAC – Fiscal Management 15 District Performative Review (DPR) Indicators
- Board Financial Responsibilities
 - Overall
 - Budget
 - Audit
 - Bidding
 - Continuing responsibilities
- NJSBA’s Task Force on Student Achievement – Recommendations for Boards
- Items to consider in budgeting
- The Budget is Comprised of:
 - Revenue Sources
 - Expenditures
- Budget IS:
 - The financial expression of your district’s educational goals and aspirations.
 - A management tool prepared annually to reflect revenues available and to indicate how those revenues are to be utilized.
 - A plan for controlling the level and type of spending in your school system during the budget year.
 - A means of determining the efficiency of your school system’s educational program and the progress of your district towards your educational goals.
 - A consensus document that reflects the input of your administration, board and community.
- The Board’s Role in Budget
 - Understand how the district operates
 - Governance
 - Policies
 - Curriculum and programs

- Staffing
- Understand the budget process
- Establish clear and realistic budget goals - aligned with the district's mission to instruct
- Remain informed on the development of the district budget through periodic updates from district administration
- Offer meaningful and constructive comments and questions
- Review and approve preliminary and final budgets for submission to the Executive County Superintendent (ECS)
- Hire and rely on the finance experts:
 - Business Administrator / Business office staff
 - Independent auditor
- Understand the various means used by central administration to manage the district budget
- Review and approve monthly financial reporting
- Review and approve the annual audit
- Remain informed on any budgetary issues through periodic updates from district administration
- In Summary: When it Comes to Budget and Finance:
 - The Board
 - Establishes priorities for the fiscal management of the district.
 - Approves, adopts and monitors the annual budget.
 - Provides leadership in securing community support for resources.
 - Reviews and approves pertinent contracts.
 - Reviews annual audit reports and makes appropriate adjustments.
 - The Business Administrator
 - Is the district's budget officer.
 - Prepares a detailed budget based on the Board's priorities and parameters and presents it for approval.
 - Provides rationale for budgets to maintain community support.
 - Oversees monthly financial report and presentation.
 - Acts as a financial and legislative resource to the board.

Future Meetings

The Board of Education will meet in Public Session on Thursday, February 26, 2026 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, 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. Action will be taken.

Board Member Callahan made a motion, seconded by Board Member Nayar to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 9:10 p.m.

Board Secretary