

The meeting was called to order by Board President Michele Arminio at 7:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Ms. Michele Arminio
Ms. Kathleen Belko
Ms. Karen Bierman
Mr. Adi Nikitinsky
Mr. Andy Paluri
Ms. Rupa Siegel
Ms. Chrissy Skurbe
Mr. Peter Tufano

STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Dori Alvich, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Adam Layman, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Michael C. Gorski, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – approximately 34

After the Pledge of Allegiance, and the roll call, the Board Secretary read the following statement:

In accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law, the Monroe Township Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published and electronic notice provided by having the date, time, and place thereof posted February 18, 2021:

1. At all schools,
2. On the District website at <https://www.monroe.k12.nj.us/>,
3. Home News Tribune,
4. Cranbury Press, and
5. Filed with the Clerk of the Municipality.

Instructions for making a public comment:

1. To make a public comment, please use the “raise hand” feature.
2. When you are called on to speak during public forum your microphone status will be set to UNMUTE. Please do not attempt to UNMUTE yourself as this may cause your microphone to stay MUTED.
3. When called upon, you will be given the option to share your device’s camera with the rest of the panelists and attendees during your speaking time. If you choose to do this simply click the “video camera” icon.
4. After you are unmuted, please state your name and address. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to four minutes’ duration, or less, in accordance with Board Bylaw 0167.
5. After you are finished speaking you will be muted and your permission to share your camera will be disabled.
6. Please turn off the “raise hand” feature.

Minutes of the Public Special Meeting of the Monroe Township Board of Education which was held virtually on February 22, 2021.

Ms. Arminio stated that tonight's special meeting was scheduled for board training about the Budget so both the Board and the public can obtain a better understanding of what the Board's responsibilities are in budgeting.

NJSBA BOARD TRAINING ON THE BOARD'S ROLE IN FINANCE AND BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE BUDGET PHILOSOPHY AND FINANCE

Ms. Maryann Friedman, Field Service Representative, New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), provided the Board with training on the Board's role in finance and budget development. Ms. Friedman defined various terms that relate to finance and budgeting.

The presentation included the following:

Fiscal Management - including maintenance of standard operating procedures and monthly reports; satisfaction of annual audits; management of grants and capital funds; implementation of a facilities plan; completion of annual safety reviews; preparation and analysis of fiscal year cash flow; and employment of a certified facilities manager.

Governance as it relates to finance and budgets - annually reviews, updates and adopts policies; has policy and contract with superintendent to annually evaluate and adopt goals; overseeing the budget process that targets student achievement; board reviews all audit recommendations and, if required, approves superintendent for audit findings and recommendations.

Next, Ms. Friedman reviewed the district's 2018/19 New Jersey Department of Education Performance Review with the Board.

Ms. Friedman stated that the Board follows the budget process by conducting a public hearing on the proposed budget; adopting the budget at a public meeting; provides ongoing information on the budget's status and any revisions or emergent conditions; and makes the budget available for public notice and inspection.

Ms. Friedman further stated that the Board's financial responsibilities are to develop the district financial goals and support the district's educational plan; balance the educational needs of the students with the taxpayers' ability to pay; oversee the financial management of the district; annually set district educational goals and provide financial support; develop policies and procedures to expedite financial processes and ensure appropriate financial oversight, using monthly reports, budget, audit and other appropriate financial records; review and approve the monthly board secretary financial reports; annually appoint an auditor and treasurer of school moneys if applicable and board secretary; approve the actual expenditures and monitor financial reports; and understand and approve all line item transfers.

Planning and Policy - determine the district's long-range educational goals, the financial implications of those goals and the appropriate financial strategies to reach those goals as well as the community impact of those strategies, and monitor and evaluate the district's progress toward those goals.

The Board's financial responsibility for the Budget is to set budget parameters and priorities for budget development process in accordance with policy; understand proposed budget

implications, programs and changes; reach consensus on a budget appropriate for students and taxpayers that supports student achievement; assist in explaining the budget to the general public in accordance with policy and indicate how it supports student achievement; evaluate on an on-going basis the implementation of the budget.

The Board's financial responsibility for the audit is to appoint an auditor; accept the annual audit report; approve the Corrective Action Plan that addresses all recommendations.

The Board's financial responsibility for bidding is to adopt and ensure implementation of policies covering all aspects of the bidding process and approve or reject all bids in accordance with statute.

Additionally, the Board approves all purchase orders and bill lists in accordance with district policy; understand and approve all line item transfers; provide for transportation for public and non-public students as required by statute and board policy; reviews and approves the monthly board secretary's financial reports monthly.

Mr. Gorski provided an explanation on the following district funds:

Fund 10/General Fund; Fund 11/General Current Expense; Fund 12/Capital Outlay; Fund 20/Special Revenue Fund; Fund 40/Debt Service Fund; Fund 60/Enterprise Funds; and Fund 80/Trust and Agency Funds.

Mr. Gorski also reviewed the district's bid threshold and quote threshold with a qualified purchasing agent.

Ms. Friedman stated that the Budget is comprised of the following revenue source and expenditures:

Revenue sources which are: Local Property Taxes, State Aid, Federal Aid, Tuitions, Miscellaneous Revenues, Capital Reserve Fund, Undesignated General Fund Balance (Surplus)

Expenditures which are: Current expenses, Capital outlay, Capital Reserve Fund, Debt Service

Lastly, Ms. Friedman summarized by stating that when it comes to finance and budgets the Board:

- 1). Establishes priorities for the fiscal management of the district.
- 2). Approves, adopts and monitors the annual budget.
- 3). Provides leadership in securing community support for resources.
- 4). Adopts policies for the accounting of school funds.
- 5). Reviews and approves pertinent contracts.
- 6). Reviews annual audit reports and takes action if needed.

Mr. Paluri inquired if Ms. Friedman had knowledge of other districts conducting a forensic audit and if it is a common practice. Ms. Friedman responded that she was not aware of any and the only exception she would think would justify one, is if there were a lot of audit exceptions that

required a corrective action plan. Mr. Paluri also inquired how districts move funds between various allocations to address aging facilities and increased student growth when they are not receiving the appropriate aid. Mr. Gorski responded that the plan to address those needs are placed within the Long Range Facility Plan (LRFP) and the projected increase in unhoused students are two areas of great concern right now. Adding that it is a Board Goal to address both. Mr. Paluri stressed concern with the amount of snow that we have had this season and the life of the roofs. Ms. Arminio stated that the District has been very diligent on providing facility needs over the past few years, regrettably the Board has not been able to pass a referendum to address them all, but we are very aware of what the needs are. Unfortunately, the district is being overrun and overcome by the rapid increase in student enrollment.

Ms. Bierman inquired about the NJQSAC data that was presented for Instruction and Program and questioned if 87% was a typical rating. Dr. Alvich explained that the score is given to the District from the State and the majority of the score comes from state test scores and attendance.

Ms. Arminio stated that when it comes to reviewing the monthly financials, it is difficult to see what items are within a line item such as invoices. Ms. Arminio inquired how the Board can be provided with that information. Ms. Friedman offered some possible scenarios where it would be appropriate for board members to question detailed information but reminded the Board that they are a board of oversight and getting into specific line items and invoices is not the purview of the Board. Ms. Arminio responded that some community members would like to look at those specific details and as taxpayers she believes it is their right and the right of the Board. Ms. Arminio added that it becomes a tough situation to follow those guidelines and not micromanage while believing the public has the right to those answers. Ms. Belko added that the district is spending over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the taxpayers' money that the township collects, and the Board has a huge responsibility to answer the questions of the residents.

Ms. Arminio inquired if requesting the actual cost per student is something that the Board should be able to ascertain. Mr. Gorski explained that the Budget is not constructed by utilizing the cost per pupil times the number of pupils. The budget is constructed much more department centric; we begin with a zero-based formula which calculates what the needs are going to be as projected by the teachers, principals, supervisors, assistant superintendent, and then budget is created from scratch, not just generalized through average costs.

PUBLIC FORUM

Pradeep Melam 4 Jake Place - inquired what the actual cost per pupil is and how it is determined. Mr. Melam stated that he is unsure why Ms. Friedman said that it isn't the purview of the Board, the Board is there to protect the taxpayer and make sure that funds are spent correctly. Mr. Melam further stated that the actual cost per pupil is needed to determine how much tuition to charge Jamesburg. Mr. Gorski referred Mr. Melam to the User Friendly Budget listed on the district website and the Taxpayers Guide to Educational Spending.

Ms. Arminio requested that if a finite number is available, that that number be presented at the budget hearing meeting.

Brian Fabiano 19 Patricia Place - stated that this training exercise this evening is great, but nothing is going to come out of it unless the board and administration come together to make

changes. In the presentation there was a lot of mention about securing community support. Mr. Fabiano stated that he can see that the Board wants to push for that community engagement and that is needed to have transparency and have the community feel good about the decisions that are being made. Regarding the Budget being available to the public, Mr. Fabiano stated that he had previously requested to view the Budget at the district office but was denied repeatedly and inquired how he can go about doing that. Lastly, Mr. Fabiano stated that the term cash cow that was used earlier when referring to the Falcon Care Program could be construed as offensive to some especially to the parents utilizing the program. Ms. Arminio advised Mr. Fabiano to send an email request to Dr. Alvich and copy her and she will arrange a time for to review the Budget.

Neha Desai 3 Forest Park Terrace (previously submitted via email) -

When I moved to Monroe, I was one of the three south Asian students. I went through name calling and bullying. Since then, Monroe has become a diverse community. The situation that occurred with the Sikh student is sad and unacceptable. The responsible students and their parents should apologize to the Sikh student. What actions will be put in place to prevent this from occurring again?

David Rokose (previously submitted via email) -

As we're approaching the 1-year mark of virtual learning, please let us know the plan for the 2021-2022 school year. There were understandably issues planning for the 2020-2021 school year regarding PPE and many teachers not wanting to go into classrooms, but as there are 6 months to prepare for the next school year let us know the plan to get kids in school 5 days per week. Whether it is a full 6+ hours, or a 4-hour day plus home lunch and instruction, kids need the option to be in school 5 days because they learn better that way AND it is better for their social development. A virtual option for those who prefer it or kids who are sick or COVID exposed is great, but there NEEDS to be an offer of 5 full days.

Please give a solid YES or NO if you will make this happen. No "we are trying" or "we will see" just a simple YES or NO answer as many of us parents are evaluating alternatives if we cannot rely on you and the Monroe school system to provide the education our children deserve. Catholic schools and many other towns have had children in their hybrid programs in the schools many more days than Monroe schools did this year (my son in the hybrid program will only have been in actual class 3 days in the entire month of February). Monroe is one of the better school systems and I know we can do better than that. My preference is to keep my kids in Monroe schools because they've had GREAT teachers (Mill Lake) so far, but we want to be sure they'll be offered real school 5 days next year because this hybrid program is just not working. While the hybrid program was a well-intentioned work-around for this school year, it cannot be the plan for next year.

Please give a solid YES or NO, not like last August where we were told there would be a hybrid program and then it reverted to 100% virtual just before the school year started. If there is time to make drastic decisions or changes, this is the time to do it (split school sessions, hiring outside the union, etc. I'm sure you've been bombarded with many ideas already). Dr. Alvich responded that the District hasn't been given any direction from the State for September yet. Dr. Alvich reported that administration is looking at trying to expand this year, but we are still in the orange level; cases are still being monitored; they are ensuring they have enough staff, barriers, and PPE; and a safe distance can be maintained.

Minutes of the Public Special Meeting of the Monroe Township Board of Education which was held virtually on February 22, 2021.

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

Due to the monthly meeting being four days ago, Ms. Arminio forfeited her report this evening.

OTHER BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS

Mr. Paluri requested that administration investigate the concept of starting the school day a little later as he has heard that some schools that made the switch are finding that staff and students are much more attentive.

CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION

Be It Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Township of Monroe hereby moves to go into Closed Session, in accordance with the Sunshine Law, Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975 (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 through 10:4-21), to discuss the following subject(s):

- Review of applications for In-House Counsel

Following closed session, action may be taken. The discussion conducted in closed session can be disclosed to the public at such time as the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

A motion was made by Mr. Paluri and seconded by Ms. Belko that the members of the Board of Education go into closed session. Motion carried.

Adjourned to Closed Session at 8:56 p.m.

Returned to Public Meeting at 9:45 p.m.

PUBLIC FORUM - None

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

Ms. Arminio stated that the next public meeting of the Monroe Township Board of Education will convene at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 15, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Tufano and seconded by Ms. Skurbe that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. The public meeting adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael C. Gorski, CPA
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

The video recording of this meeting of the Monroe Township Board of Education can be found on the district website or <https://monroetv.viebit.com/index.php?folder=Board+of+Education>



Monday, February 22, 2021
MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES DURING THE MEETING
ALL INDIVIDUALS SITTING AT THE BOARD TABLE SHOULD HAVE THEIR PHONES PUT AWAY

VIRTUAL
7:00 P.M.

Any member of the public may record the proceedings of a public meeting of the Board in a manner that does not interrupt the proceedings, inhibit the conduct of the meeting, or distract Board Members or other observers present at the meeting.

The Board will permit the use of tape recorders, still or movie cameras, or videotape cameras only when notice of such intended use has been given to the Board Secretary one day in advance of the meeting. Any video recording device must be located and operated from inconspicuous locations in the meeting room as determined by the presiding officer of the meeting. The presiding officer may also limit the number of video recording devices if he/she determines the number and position of the video recording devices will be an unnecessary intrusion to the meeting. In this event, preference will be given based on the order in which prior notice requesting to record the meeting was provided to the Board Secretary.

The presiding officer shall determine when any recording device interferes with the conduct of a Board meeting and may order that an interfering device be removed.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Subject	A. BOARD MEMBERS
Meeting	Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
Category	3. ROLL CALL
Access	Public
Type	Information
Ms. Michele Arminio Ms. Kathleen Belko Ms. Karen Bierman Mr. Ken Chiarella Mr. Adi Nikitinsky Mr. Andy Paluri Ms. Rupa Siegel Ms. Chrissy Skurbe Mr. Peter Tufano	

JAMESBURG BOARD MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE (See Note 2)

Mr. Paul Rutsky

STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Kayleigh Craver
 Ms. Samaara Jain

4. STATEMENT

Subject **A. STATEMENT**

Meeting Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Category 4. STATEMENT

Access Public

Type Information

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5. NJSBA BOARD TRAINING ON THE BOARD'S ROLE IN FINANCE AND BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE BUDGET PHILOSOPHY AND FINANCE

Subject **A. BOARD TRAINING**

Meeting Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Category 5. NJSBA BOARD TRAINING ON THE BOARD'S ROLE IN FINANCE AND BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE BUDGET PHILOSOPHY AND FINANCE

Access Public

Type

NJSBA BOARD TRAINING ON THE BOARD'S ROLE IN FINANCE AND BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE BUDGET PHILOSOPHY AND FINANCE

6. PUBLIC FORUM

Subject **A. PUBLIC FORUM (See Note 3)**

Meeting Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Category 6. PUBLIC FORUM

Access Public

Type

See Note 3.

7. BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

8. OTHER BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS

9. CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION

Subject A. CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION

Meeting Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Category 9. CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION

Access Public

Type

Be It Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Township of Monroe hereby moves to go into Closed Session, in accordance with the Sunshine Law, Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975 (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 through 10:4-21), to discuss the following subject(s):

- Review of applications for In-House Counsel

Following closed session, action may be taken. The discussion conducted in closed session can be disclosed to the public at such time as the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

10. PUBLIC FORUM - CLOSED SESSION ITEMS ONLY

Subject A. PUBLIC FORUM -(see Note 3)

Meeting Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Category 10. PUBLIC FORUM - CLOSED SESSION ITEMS ONLY

Access Public

Type

11. NEXT SCHEDULED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MARCH 15, 2021

Subject A. NEXT SCHEDULED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MARCH 15, 2021

Meeting Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Category 11. NEXT SCHEDULED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MARCH 15, 2021

Access Public

Type

The next scheduled Board of Education Meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2021 7:00 p.m.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Subject A. NOTES

Meeting	Feb 22, 2021 - MONROE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
Category	12. ADJOURNMENT
Access	Public
Type	Action

NOTES

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Note 2: The Jamesburg Representative shall be eligible to vote on only those matters specifically designated in N.J.S.A 18A:38-8.1, as follows:

1. Tuition to be charged the sending district by the receiving district and the bill lists or contracts for the purchase, operation or maintenance of facilities, equipment and instructional materials to be used in the education of the pupils of the sending district.
2. New capital construction to be utilized by sending district pupils.
3. Appointment, transfer or removal of teaching staff members providing services to pupils of the sending district, including any teaching staff member who is a member of the receiving district's central administrative staff.
4. Addition or deletion of curricular and extracurricular programs involving pupils of the sending district.
5. Any matter directly involving sending district students or programs and services used by them.
6. The annual receiving district budget.
7. Any collectively-negotiated agreement involving employees who provide services used by sending district students.
8. Any individual employee contracts not covered by a collectively-negotiated agreement, if those employees provide or oversee programs or services utilized by sending district students.
9. Any matter concerning governance of the receiving district board of education, including, but not limited to, the selection of board president and vice-president, approval of board bylaws, and the employment of professionals or consultants such as attorneys, architects, engineers, or others who provide services to the receiving district board of education.

To the extent the Jamesburg Representative inadvertently votes on any other matter, his vote shall not be counted.

Note 3: Public discussion is confined to this portion of the Agenda unless permission is granted by the Board President prior to the start of the meeting or when the Board is considering a Special Agenda Item that the Board deems appropriate for public participation. Anyone wishing to address the Board can do so by following the instructions below:

1. To make a public comment, please use the "raise hand" feature.
2. When you are called on to speak during public forum your microphone status will be set to UNMUTE. Please do not attempt to UNMUTE yourself as this may cause your microphone to stay MUTED.
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5. After you are finished speaking you will be muted and your permission to share your camera will be disabled.
6. Please turn off the "raise hand" feature.

Members of the public may submit comments to submit@monroe.k12.nj.us via electronic mail or by written letter addressed to the Board Secretary. Public comments can be submitted up to eight hours prior to the start of the scheduled meeting. All submitted comments will be limited to four minutes' duration, or less in accordance with Board Bylaw 0167. Residents submitting comments will not be provided an opportunity to comment during Public Forum 1 or 2, as applicable.