



## Robbinsville Board of Education

### Special Meeting Minutes

Pond Road Middle School Cafetorium | Tuesday, January 2, 2024  
Immediately following the Reorganization Meeting

**PLEASE SILENCE ALL MOBILE DEVICES DURING THE MEETING**  
**NO SMOKING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

- I. **Call to order:** The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to ensure the rights of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act, the Robbinsville Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Trenton Times on December 27, 2023, and the Township of Robbinsville Bulletin Board no less than forty-eight hours in advance of the meeting. This notice was also posted at Sharon Elementary School, Pond Road Middle School, and Robbinsville High School. In accordance with N.J.S.A 18A:12-24.1 and Policy 0142 the Robbinsville Board of Education shall be bound by the provisions of the School Ethics Act.

**Roll Call**

Time: 6:40 p.m.

Board Member	Present	Arrived At	Absent
Mrs. Nadia Bandukda	✓		
Mr. Jai Gulati	✓		
Mrs. Amanda Hill D'Angelo	✓		
Mr. Arthur Howard	✓		
Ms. Tanya Lehmann	✓		
Mr. Raghu Nandan	✓		
Mr. Peter Oehlberg	✓		
Dr. Jeffrey Pierro	✓		
Mr. Anthony Ray	✓		

Mr. Brian Betze, CSA (**Present**); Mr. Nick Mackres, SBA/Board Secretary (**Present**); Mr. Patrick Carrigg Esq., Board Attorney (**Present**)

## II. **Board President's Report**

Mr. Oehlberg welcomed the public to the special meeting of the Robbinsville Board of Education.

## III. **Superintendent's Report – Mr. Brian Betze**

### A. Public Question Presentation

Mr. Betze presented the details of the revised public question that would be put forth for the public to vote during a March Special Election.

**Mrs. Hill D'Angelo** asked what the district would face if state aid was cut and not flat for the upcoming school year. Mr. Betze stated that the administration would meet to determine cuts to align the budget and those items would be recommended to the board for consideration. He stated the cuts would ultimately be a board decision.

**Mrs. Bandukda** stated the desire for this public question to pass but asked for the details should the public question fail again in March. Mr. Betze explained there are 4 election opportunities per year for public questions to be presented to the community.

**Mr. Nandan** asked if the township agreed to pay for School Resource Officers for the school district. Mr. Betze said he is hopeful this would be the case, but the township is still working on their budget and this could not be confirmed at this point. Mr. Nandan also suggested a one-page document to help the community understand the public question better.

**Mr. Oehlberg** asked Mr. Betze to explain how community members with no students in the district can join the district mailing list to receive communications. Mr. Betze explained where that mailing list can be found on the district website.

#### **IV. Business Administrator/ Board Secretary's Report – Mr. Nick Mackres**

No Business Administrator report was given.

#### **V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only (Section VI: Resolutions)**

**Motion:** to open public comment on agenda items for 20 minutes.

On motion by Mr. Gulati, and seconded by Dr. Pierro

Time: 7:04 p.m.

Vote: 9 ayes

0 nays

0 absent

0 abstain

Time will be allocated for public comment at this meeting. Members of the public wishing to address the Board of Education on agenda items must state their name, municipality, and the group, if any, they represent. A member of the public shall not be permitted to speak until he/she is recognized by the presiding officer. In accordance with District Policy 0167, each comment shall be limited to three (3) minutes. No participant may speak more than once. No dialogue between a speaker and the Board and/or Superintendent shall extend the three (3) minute time limit provided herein.

Live Streaming of the meetings shall be for viewing only. The public will not have the ability to participate in public session comments unless they are physically present at the meeting.

Although the Board encourages public comment, the presiding officer can interrupt, warn and/or terminate a participant's statement, question, or inquiry when it is too lengthy and may also interrupt and warn a participant when the statement, question, or inquiry is abusive, obscene, or may be defamatory. Moreover, the presiding officer can request any person to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum.

In adherence to protocol established by the New Jersey School Boards Association, the Board will use this public comment period as an opportunity to listen to resident concerns, but not to debate issues or to enter into a question-and-answer session. Issues raised by members of the public may require review and investigation and may or may not be responded to by the Board or Superintendent during the meeting. All comments will be considered, and a response will be forthcoming, if and when appropriate.

**Sharon Devito (Robbinsville Resident)** – Offered a suggestion to produce a mailer for the public question to educate the community. Asked if the special election will be handled by the township clerk or county clerk.

**Arun Karpur (Robbinsville Resident)** – Thanked Superintendent Betze for his presentation. Believes 2.75 million is the correct number and makes sense for the district’s needs. Asked what changed in the two numbers for each public question.

**Noushin Kanani (Robbinsville Resident)** – Asked how much the special election will cost the district. Asked what the district is going to do about the 2.1 million shortfall as it will not go away.

**Deb Blakely (Robbinsville Resident)** – Clarified that the county runs the election, not the township but the township clerk is available for guidance during the process.

**Arun Karpur (Robbinsville Resident)** – Asked if the district has thought about the \$500,000 shortfall presented during the presentation.

**Resolved:** to close public comment on agenda items and resume order of business.

On motion by Mr. Gulati, and seconded by Mr. Nandan Time: 7:15 p.m.

Vote: 9 ayes 0 nays 0 absent 0 abstain

## VI. Resolutions

The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education approve the following action item A:

**Motion by Mr. Gulati Seconded by Dr. Pierro**

**Vote:**

Board Member	Present	Arrived At	Absent
Mrs. Nadia Bandukda	✓		
Mr. Jai Gulati	✓		
Mrs. Amanda Hill D’Angelo	✓		
Mr. Arthur Howard	✓		
Ms. Tanya Lehmann	✓		
Mr. Raghu Nandan	✓		
Mr. Peter Oehlberg	✓		
Dr. Jeffrey Pierro	✓		
Mr. Anthony Ray	✓		

**A discussion was held among the board about the wording of resolution A.**

Motion was carried by Mr. Gulati, and seconded by Dr. Pierro to amend resolution A.

Vote: 9 ayes 0 nays 0 absent 0 abstain

### A. Approval of Public Question

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED**, that the Robbinsville Township Board of Education approves the following question to be placed on the March 2024 Special Election Ballot for the 2024-2025 School Year Budget:

The Robbinsville Board of Education seeks approval from the district's legal voters to raise an additional \$2,750,000.00 for the 2024/25 school year as permitted under 18A:22-40 for the following purposes:

- Maintain teachers and instructional assistants ~~to avoid elimination of program(s).~~
- Maintain current programs
- Maintain facilities.
- Maintain current level of courtesy bussing.
- Maintain current level of funding for athletics and co-curricular activities.

~~Under the 2018 revised state school funding formula, the Robbinsville Township School District is slated to lose an additional \$2.7 million based upon revised projections. Approval of this question will bring the district in line with its local fair share, prevent increases in class size, and avoid further loss of programs and activities. These expenditures are in addition to those required to achieve New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Approval of these taxes will result in a permanent increase in the district's tax levy.~~

**VII. Old Business**

No old business was discussed.

**VIII. New Business**

**Ms. Lehmann** asked the board attorney, Mr. Carrigg, to reiterate the limitations board members have when discussing a public question. Mr. Carrigg clarified that board members can educate the public about the public question, but they cannot persuade the public to vote yes or no.

**Mr. Nandan** suggested providing the community with a scope of what each committee does so the community better understands. Suggested a mission statement for each committee.

**IX. Public Comment: School Related Matters**

**Motion:** to open public comment on agenda and non-agenda items for 20 minutes.

On motion by Mr. Gulati, and seconded by Dr. Pierro

Time: 7:36 p.m.

Vote: 9 ayes

0 nays

0 absent

0 abstain

Time will be allocated for public comment at this meeting. Members of the public wishing to address the Board of Education on school related matters must state their name, municipality, and the group, if any, they represent. A member of the public shall not be permitted to speak until he/she is recognized by the presiding officer. In accordance with District Policy 0167, each comment shall be limited to three (3) minutes. No participant may speak more than once. No dialogue between a speaker and the Board and/or Superintendent shall extend the three (3) minute time limit provided herein.

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**Noushin Kanani (Robbinsville Resident)** – Stated making the public question more positive might make residents feel like there is not a true need for the funding. Asked for committee topics and discussions to be shared with the public so they understand each board member’s stance on topics.

**Kapil Thakkar (Robbinsville Resident)** – Welcomed the new board members. Thanked them for their support of public question and shared he is cautious about the public question passing but optimistic.

**Arun Karpur (Robbinsville Resident)** – Welcomed the new board members. Asked how this board will ensure trust is built with the community and urged the board to provide transparency.

**Resolved:** to close public comment on agenda and non-agenda items.

On motion by Mr. Gulati, and seconded by Mr. Nandan Time: 7:42 p.m.

Vote: 9 ayes      0 nays      0 absent      0 abstain

**Dr. Pierro** thanked the community who attended the meeting and shared he is committed to providing transparency to the community. Also stated that while the public question has a positive message, it is also factual which, in his opinion, is most important.

**Optional: Adjourn**

On motion by Ms. Lehmann, and seconded by Mr. Gulati to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: 9 ayes      0 nays      0 absent      0 abstain

Time: 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nick Mackres  
Board Secretary