

CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Closter, New Jersey

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Tenakill Middle School

December 3, 2024 - 7:30 PM

The Board meeting was called to order by Ms. Finkelstein at 7:30 PM.

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li,
Ms. Wagner

The following Board members were absent:

None

Also present:

Mr. McHale and Mr. Villanueva

NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT - Read by the President:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Secretary to the Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting by having the date, time, and place thereof, posted at each school building within the district, district website, the Board of Education office, the Office of the Borough Clerk, and transmitted to *The Record* and *Northern Valley Suburbanite* newspapers.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Ms. Dianne Smith, Principal of Hillside Elementary School, shared her report with the Board and the community:

- **Hillside Enrollment:** We currently have 602 students, with a few new additions joining us this past week.
- **Thanksgiving Show Success:** Congratulations to Ms. Pidi and the first-grade team for a fantastic Thanksgiving show! The students did an incredible job, and it was a joy for everyone who attended.
- **Student Council Update:** Student Council Elections took place last week. Congratulations to
 - **President:** Jeremiah Chang
 - **VP:** Elizabeth Hodgskin
 - **Treasurer:** Haas Kim

○ **Secretary:** Paul Srinivasan

The officers participated in their first event, assisting with handing out programs for the Thanksgiving show!

- **Fourth-Grade Field Trip:** *The trip to Franklin Mine was a great success! Students thoroughly enjoyed the experience and learned so much.*
- **LEAD Program:** *Sgt. Krapels continues to engage our fourth graders with valuable lessons in the LEAD program.*
- **Spanish Transition:** *Ms. Wilson, our new Spanish teacher, has made a smooth transition, and students are excited and eager to learn with her.*
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** *Conferences continue this week, with evening conferences scheduled for Thursday. Hillside Helpers will be on hand to assist families as needed.*
- **Trimester Update:** *The first trimester ends tomorrow, December 4th. The parent portal will open after school on Monday, December 9, and parents will receive an email notification with details.*
- **Computer Science Education Week:** *We celebrate Computer Science Education Week next week! Ms. Iyo has shared fantastic resources for staff to access so students can enjoy time dedicated to coding and computational thinking.*
- **Holiday Boutique:** *Our Holiday Boutique will take place on December 10-11.*
- **Winter Concert:** *Mark your calendars! The Winter Concert will be held on December 18 at 10:00 AM. Dress rehearsals are scheduled for December 17, with grades 2 and 3 attending.*
- **Toy Drive:** *The annual PBA Toy Drive runs through December 18. Thank you for your generosity in making the holidays brighter for others! Look for details regarding a contest sponsored by the Closter Police Department, where the class with the most donations wins a pizza party!*
- *We wish our Hillside families a happy and enjoyable holiday season!*

Ms. Christine Cipollini, Principal of Tenakill Middle School, shared with the Board and the community her report:

- *Today, TMS enrollment is 597 students, with an additional student joining in the coming weeks.*
- *Congratulations to students Sohun Advani and Sam Berenflod, who were selected to be a part of the Bergen County Band.*
- *An additional congratulations to all students who participated in the Peace Poster Contest, sponsored by the Lions Club. Four students earned awards locally: Eda Turkeldi, Xian Foo, Palak Dhorajia, and Ming Yan Wu. An awards ceremony was held for these students and their parents after school last week. All poster creations are displayed in the hallway by the art room and auditorium.*
- *We are looking forward to our TREP\$ Marketplace on December 19th from 6-8 pm. TREP\$, short for entrepreneurs, is a program designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of entrepreneurship. Through hands-on learning, students in grade 6 develop business ideas, create products or services, and bring their visions to life in a real-world setting. All students have been engaging in entrepreneurial learning each week with support from the 6th-grade*

math teachers. The Marketplace is the culminating event of the TREP\$ program. 6th grade students will set up individual "business booths" to sell their products to the school and local community. This event fosters creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration while allowing students to practice financial literacy, marketing, and communication skills. On behalf of the 6th grade team, she is extending the invitation to the board, and the community to join us for the marketplace in the coming weeks.

- Student-led conferences began this afternoon for TMS students and families. The evening portion of conferences will take place tomorrow. Trimester 1 ends on Wednesday, December 4th, and grades/report cards will be released in the afternoon on December 9th.
- The TMS Winter Concert will take place on Wednesday, December 11th. There will be two performances on that day: 1:30 pm for a student assembly and 6:30 pm for family and friends.
- On December 12th, Mr. Azoulay, a 7th-grade parent working in the medical field, will be presenting to 7th-grade students about real-world experiences connected to student learning in the anatomy unit. A special thank you to Mr. Azoulay for providing this opportunity for students. On Monday Dec. 16th, students in grade 8 will attend a drug abuse awareness assembly in connection to learning in Health.
- Additionally, 8th graders will be participating in TeenCAP, a program aimed at training students to recognize and deal with potentially dangerous situations. These workshops will occur over 3 days, December 17 -19, during Grade 8 Social Studies classes.
- TMS students will attend the PTO holiday boutique on Dec. 12th or 13th. Thank you to the PTO for their ongoing support of our schools.
- Next week, we welcome Ms. Clifford as the new grade 5 ELA/Social Studies teacher. We look forward to having her join our TMS family. Thank you to Ms. Auriti for her instruction and support of 5th-grade students over the past few months.
- Yesterday, TMS staff engaged in PD centralized around Google Classroom, led by Mr. Calabria, our Technology Teacher. Staff engaged in hands-on learning, exploring ways to engage students, and supporting instruction through the Google Classroom platform.
- Thank you again. Wishing you and your families a happy and healthy winter season!

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Vincent McHale, Superintendent of Schools, shared with the Board and the community his report:

- He thanked our outgoing Board trustees, Liz Fanelli, Janice Yeoh, and Sheryl Wagner, for their unwavering commitment to the Closter Public Schools over the last three years. On behalf of the entire Closter community, He is grateful for your expertise, dedication, and care, which have played a vital role in maintaining our school's tradition of excellence. He wishes you all the best in your future pursuits and encourages you to continue being the strong advocates for our schools that you have always been!
- Hillside Elementary School presented the First Grade Thanksgiving Concert on Tuesday, November 26, 2024. The students did an outstanding job singing and reciting poems about Thanksgiving, turkeys, and gratitude. Thank you to Ms. Pidi, the first-grade teachers, and the paraprofessionals for all their work in preparing the students. The Hillside Fourth Grade Holiday Concert will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 18, 2024.

- *Tenakill Middle School will present its TMS Winter Concert at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 11, 2024. Ms. Abbey, Ms. Riecken, and the students are rehearsing and are excited to share their talents. All are invited.*
- *Tenakill Middle School had two students accepted into the Bergen County Band this year. Congratulations to Samuel Berenfeld (grade 8), who was chosen for alto saxophone, and to Sohumi Advani (grade 7) chosen for multi-percussion. Thank you to Ms. Abbey for her role in assisting our instrumental music students in attaining this prestigious recognition.*
- *Don't miss the annual Tenakill TREP\$ Marketplace on Thursday, December 19, 2024, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Our sixth-grade entrepreneurs will sell their products to the school and local community. This event promotes the development of creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork among students. It also allows them to enhance their financial literacy, marketing abilities, and communication skills through hands-on experiences and interaction with customers from the community. This year it is just in time to finish your holiday shopping! We hope to see you there.*
- *Closter Public Schools will have a half-day session on Monday, December 23, 2024. We will be closed for the holiday recess from December 24, 2024, – January 1, 2025. Schools will reopen on Thursday, January 2, 2025.*
- *He wishes everyone a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy new year!*

BOARD COMMITTEES

No board committees met before this meeting.

INTERVIEWS TO FILL THE OPEN SEAT

- Gal Paldi
- Jun Young Ro
- Solim Choi
- Reginald Punla
- Leslie Pena
- Shirley Louie
- Nicole Wiggins
- Angelica Segui

Ms. Finkelstein thanked the candidates for their interest in the open Board of Education seat and outlined the interview process.

Each candidate shared their background and reasons for applying. They also responded to questions from the trustees.

PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATED TO THE VACANCY

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross ▾ to open the meeting to the public.

Public comments on the vacancy are limited to three (3) minutes per person, with a total of 15 minutes allowed as per bylaw 0167. Large groups should select one representative. Speakers must state their name and address.

Mr. Wiggins, husband of Nicole Wiggins (an applicant), expressed his support for his wife's application for the open seat.

Ms. Laurie Rochlin, a staff member at Tenakill Middle School, thanked the applicants and shared her appreciation for their exceptional backgrounds.

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross ▾ to resume the regular order of business.

CLOSED SESSION #1 MOTION

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Yeoh ▾ to adjourn into closed session for the trustees to deliberate on the appointment to the open Board of Education seat.

Motion was approved ▾ by a voice vote of the Board:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li,
Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

The Board went into Closed Session at 8:24 PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 9:25 PM.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND VOTE

Ms. Finkelstein noted the difficulty of the decision due to the high caliber of candidates. She explained that trustees will nominate candidates for the open seat, followed by a roll call vote in the order of nominations.

Moved by Ms. Li ▾ , seconded by Ms. Fanelli ▾ to nominate Jun Young Ro to fill the vacant seat on the Closter Board of Education.

MOTION to appoint Jun Young Ro to fill the vacant seat on the Board of Education, effective January 2, 2025, through December 31, 2025. The unexpired one-year term will appear on the November 2025 election ballot in accordance with state law.

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li

NAYS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Micera, Ms. Wagner

Motion did not pass.

Moved by Ms. Wagner , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross to nominate Gal Paldi to fill the vacant seat on the Closter Board of Education.

MOTION to appoint Gal Paldi to fill the vacant seat on the Board of Education, effective January 2, 2025, through December 31, 2025. The unexpired one-year term will appear on the November 2025 election ballot in accordance with state law.

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Wagner

NAYS: Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li

Mr. Paldi received five affirmative votes and will fill the open Board of Education seat.

Moved by Mr. Choi , seconded by Ms. Micera to nominate Reginald Punla to fill the vacant seat on the Closter Board of Education.

MOTION to appoint Reginald Punla to fill the vacant seat on the Board of Education, effective January 2, 2025, through December 31, 2025. The unexpired one-year term will appear on the November 2025 election ballot in accordance with state law.

A vote was unnecessary for Mr. Punla as Mr. Paldi had already secured five affirmative votes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Ms. Yeoh to open the meeting to the public.

Statements made by individual participants are limited to a duration of three (3) minutes unless otherwise announced at the beginning of the discussion. A maximum of 15 minutes for public input is scheduled as per bylaw 0167. The Board urges large groups to select one person to represent them. The Board reminds those individuals who take the opportunity to speak to please step up, identify themselves by name and address, and to limit their comments to items listed on the agenda.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross to resume the regular order of business.

BOARD OPERATIONS

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Ms. Yeoh to approve Motions A and B.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li, Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Board of Education Meeting Minutes**

Motion to approve the November 12, 2024, Board of Education meeting minutes.

B. **APPROVAL - Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB)**

Motion to affirm the decision of the Superintendent of Schools regarding Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB) incidents TMS-2425-07, TMS-2425-08, TMS-2425-09,, TMS-2425-10 and HES-2425-02 as reported to the Board in Executive Session at the November 12, 2024, meeting.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Ms. Wagner; Members: Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Yeoh

Moved by Ms. Wagner , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - C.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li, Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Staff Coursework**

Motion to approve the following courses for the 2024-2025 school year as recommended to the Superintendent by the Principals:

Staff Member: Jennifer Annese
Course No./Title: 1) EDUC-928: Whole Student Education for Social Emotional Learning
2) EDUC-929: Trauma-Informed Teaching
Institution: Fresno Pacific University
Credits: 6 (3 credits each)

Staff Member: Katharine Meyers
Course No./Title: EDUC-7644 Structured Literacy 4
Institution: Fairleigh Dickinson University
Credits: 3

Staff Member: Grace Park
Course No./Title: EDUC-7644 Structured Literacy 4

Institution: Fairleigh Dickinson University
Credits: 3

Staff Member: Francesca Rivellini
Course No./Title: ELAD 540: Differentiated Supervision
Institution: Montclair State University
Credits: 3

B. APPROVAL - Staff Conferences

Motion to approve the following staff conferences for the 2024-2025 school year:

Staff Member(s): Alexandra Earle
Conference: NV K-8 Counselor Meetings
Location: Charles DeWolf Middle School and NVRHS-OT, Old Tappan
Date: 12/6/24 and 12/13/24
Cost to Board: \$6.86 (Total mileage)

Staff Member(s): Vincent McHale
Conference: TECHSPO 2025
Location: Harrah's, Atlantic City, NJ
Date: 1/29/25 - 1/31/25
Cost to Board: \$1,117.24 (Registration \$590, hotels, meals, mileage & incidents \$527.24)

Staff Member(s): Christine Cipollini
Conference: Celebrating Diversity Conference
Location: College of NJ - Ewing Twp., NJ
Date: 12/5/24
Cost to Board: \$102.94 (Mileage \$72.94; estimated tolls \$30)

Staff Member(s): Andrew Enrique, Anna Suttora and Floro Villanueva Jr.
Conference: Pension Review and Updates
Location: Whippany, NJ
Date: 2/13/25
Cost to Board: \$650.92 (Total registration \$535; total mileage \$115.92)

Staff Member(s): Andrew Enrique, Doreen Scarpelli and Floro Villanueva Jr.
Conference: Audit Review
Location: Whippany, NJ
Date: 4/10/25
Cost to Board: \$650.92 (Total registration \$535; total mileage \$115.92)

Staff Member(s): Andrew Enrique

Conference: Administrative Assistant Program
 Location: Whippany, NJ
 Date: 5/20/25
 Cost to Board: \$183.64 (Total registration \$145; total mileage \$38.64)

C. **APPROVAL - Field Trips**

Motion to approve the following field trips for the 2024-2025 school year:

School: Tenakill School
 Group: Gardening Club & 8th Grade Science
 Month: Each Month (December 2024 - June 2025)
 Destination: Tenakill Brook
 Location: Behind the Softball Field

School: Hillside School
 Group: Kindergarten
 Month: June 2025
 Destination: Health Barn USA
 Location: Ridgewood, NJ

FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Ms. Yeoh; Members: Mr. Choi, Ms. Finkelstein

Moved by Ms. Yeoh , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - D.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li, Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Payment of Bills**

Motion to approve the payment of bills from November 12, 2024, to November 29, 2024, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$1,058,155.19
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 7,859.21
Capital Fund (Fund 30)	\$ 6,278.89
NJ Dept of Labor & Workforce	\$ 8,838.56
Total	\$1,081,131.85

B. APPROVAL - Allowance Draw on Windows Project

Motion to confirm the allowance draw of \$19,265.00 from the Tenakill Windows Project for the installation of new window roller shades, with the amount to be deducted from the allowance included in the base bid.

C. APPROVAL - Allowance Draw on Roof Project

Motion to confirm the allowance draw from the Hillside and Tenakill Roof Projects for the following work:

- Curb-to-wall expansion joint at the modular building parapet wall for \$20,462.96.
- Replacement and installation of gas regulators for \$10,600.00 (previously approved on 9/24/24).
- Labor, materials, and tools to disconnect the electrical conduit, set up temporary power, and reconnect power and controls for the AC condensers in the Hillside gym for \$19,573.52.
- Painting of gas pipes at Hillside and Tenakill for \$11,260.80.
- Gas pipe pressure test at Tenakill for \$3,270.00.

The total amount will be deducted from the allowance included in the base bid.

D. APPROVAL - Staff Remuneration

Motion to approve remuneration to staff members as follows:

Staff Member: Francesca Rivellini
Course: Effective Leadership in a Diverse Society
College/University: Montclair State University
Remuneration: \$1,000.00

PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Ms. Salamea-Cross; Members: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera

Moved by Ms. Salamea-Cross , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - D.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li,
Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

A. Resignation of Lisamarie Sanchez as Tenakill Middle School Science Long-Term Leave Replacement for the 2024-2025 School Year

Motion to accept the resignation of Lisamarie Sanchez as Long-Term Leave Replacement for Brianna McSweeney, Middle School Science teacher, effective immediately.

B. **APPROVAL - Extension of James Gerbig as Long-Term Leave Replacement - Hillside School Special Education Teacher**

Motion to approve the extension of James Gerbig as Long-Term Leave Replacement - HES Special Education Teacher - from December 6, 2024, through December 17, 2024.

C. **APPROVAL - Mural Work for Sarah Menchise**

Motion to approve up to 35 hours of work for Sarah Menchise for the creation of a mural in Hillside Elementary School along the walls of the ramp in the new wing at a rate of \$50 per hour. The total cost is not to exceed \$1,750, with the full completion of the work as submitted in the proposal.

D. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence for Alison Wong, Hillside School Pre-K Teacher**

Motion to approve Alison Wong, HES Pre-K Teacher, for a leave of absence from April 21, 2025, through October 6, 2025, as follows:

- Paid sick leave from April 21, 2025, through April 29, 2025; and
- Personal leave from April 29, 2025, through May 2, 2025; and
- FMLA personal disability leave from May 5, 2025, through June 2, 2025; and
- An FMLA and NJFLA child bonding leave from June 3, 2025, through October 6, 2025 (including summer months), with an anticipated return to work on October 7, 2025.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

- *Presentation of SY 2025-2026 Budget Calendar*

Mr. Villanueva provided the trustees and members of the public with an overview of the district's budget calendar. He explained the timeline, starting with when the process began for administrators and other staff involved in the budget preparation. Additionally, he outlined key deadlines and upcoming schedules, specifically highlighting important dates for the Finance and Physical Plant Committee.

- *Reminder: Organization Meeting of the Closter BOE - January 2, 2025 (Thursday)*

Mr. Villanueva announced that the Board of Education's organization meeting will be held on Thursday, January 2nd. This special date is required by law, as the meeting must occur during the first week of January.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾, seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross ▾ to open the meeting for public comments.

Ms. Jannie Chung, Mayor and Council Liaison, thanked the outgoing trustees for their service. She then announced the Christmas Tree Lighting scheduled for December 8th. She also mentioned the possibility of selling Closter gear to the community and plans to involve students in a logo design contest. Further details will be shared with the school principals.

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross to close the meeting to public comments.

CLOSED SESSION #2 MOTION

Moved by Ms. Yeoh , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve the following Closed Session Motion. Motion was approved by a voice vote of the Board:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li, Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education will adjourn to a Closed Session to discuss the following:

HIB

The matters so discussed will be disclosed to the public as soon as and to the extent that such disclosure can be made without adversely affecting the public.

The Board went into Closed Session at 9:45 PM.
The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 9:57 PM.

BOARD OPERATIONS

Moved by Ms. Fanelli , seconded by Ms. Yeoh to add and approve Motion C. Motion was approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein, Mr. Choi, Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li, Ms. Wagner

NAYS: None

C. **APPROVAL - Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB)**

Motion to AFFIRM / MODIFY / REJECT the decision of the Superintendent of Schools regarding Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying (HIB) incident TMS-2425-06 as reported to the Board in Executive Session at the October 29, 2024, and December 3, 2024, meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Ms. Micera ~ , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross ~ to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.
Business Administrator/Board Secretary