

**BERKELEY HEIGHTS BOARD OF EDUCATION
EXECUTIVE SESSION
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 16, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

The Berkeley Heights Board of Education held a Meeting on Thursday, November 16, 2023, in the Governor Livingston High School Cafeteria. The Meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Angela Penna, at 6:33pm.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Bradford
Mr. Cianciulli
Dr. Foregger
Mrs. Khanna
Mrs. Stanley
Mrs. Young
Mrs. Penna

Dr. Varley, Superintendent of School
Dr. Anthony Giordano, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony Juskiewicz, Business Administrator/Board Secretary
Mr. Mark Wenczel, Board Attorney

ABSENT

Mr. Hyman

DISCUSSION

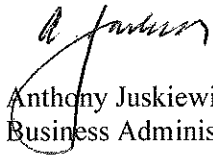
PERSONNEL MATTERS –

- Resignation of Steve Hopkins and the next step for replacement.
- Mr. Hopkins – increase in his PO allowance for staff members to present at the National Conference. The limit is \$1,800 per person. Seal of Biliteracy parameters to go over the limit employee must be a presenter in order to exceed the limit in the future.

CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS –

- Columbia Middle School turf field agreement. Waiting for borough attorney to provide the contract/lease agreement of maintenance of field.
- Discussion of architect and the RFP process. Possibly holding interviews in the future. December 7, 2023, architects.

Respectfully submitted,



Anthony Juskiewicz
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Dr. Varley

I am withdrawing my request to present at the AASA National Conference (Feb 14-18 2024) and I will stop all work on the associated project.

It is, of course, the Board's prerogative to spend its money as it wishes. However, in withdrawing my request I would like to make two points. The first is the interpretation of the BHAA contract that the \$1800 dollars for administrative professional development represents a ceiling and not a floor. The intent of the \$1800 dollar figure in the contract was not to limit administrators in attending professional conferences, rather it was to encourage more people to attend them. There is no language in the contract that states that the \$1800 is a limit, and I am certain that I could go back over the last four years that this language has been in place in the BHAA contract and find past practice to that effect. It is not my intention to grieve this decision - that is for the leadership of the administrators association to do. I am sure that they will not notice this change in practice.

Beyond the new interpretation of the contract. There is a larger, more dispiriting issue in play. There was a time when the Berkeley Heights community, in general, and the Board of Education, in particular, celebrated and supported its Administrators when they were chosen to present at National (and State) Conferences. It was viewed as a tremendous honor for both the individual administrator and for the Berkeley Heights Public Schools that our practices and programs were being recognized Nationally for their excellence.

There is currently a public narrative that has been aired at several BOE meetings that spending money on an administrator's attendance to present at a national conference is a waste of resources and takes away

11/3/23, 10:26 AM

Berkeley Heights Public Schools Mail - Fwd: Withdraw of Professional Development Request

from the students of Berkeley Heights. Putting aside the assumption that being nationally recognized for excellence is bad, this narrative also misses the many positive outcomes of attendance at a national conference: the seminars attended; the professional conversations; the validation of practice; networking; and -most importantly- the sparking of ideas. All of these are positive benefits to the students and staff of Berkeley Heights Public Schools.

In addition, the current climate where administrators (and it has been more than one) are subject to public attack for attending and presenting at professional conferences will have a chilling effect on the professional growth of BHPS administrators and ultimately on the quality of our programs. How does one measure the negative impact of an opportunity not taken? A thought un-sparked? It is unknowable - but it is very real.

Again, it is the board's prerogative to spend money as it wishes. But, to be clear, I have never attended a conference where I did not spend several hundred dollars of my own money. I did not mind doing this because the District was supportive - both educationally and financially - of the opportunity. However, now having to bear the bulk of the cost and be subject to public attack for being selected to showcase the excellent programs of the District - why bother?

Finally, this decision and the public narrative that drives it do not, and will not, impact me personally or professionally. But, it will ultimately have a negative impact on Berkeley Heights Public Schools and its students as other administrators and staff decide - why bother?

Yours in Education,

Steve Hopkins

