MEETING MINUTES

12/16/2020

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of Totowa was held virtually and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:48-8(b), and guidance from the NJ Department of Community Affairs Division of Local Government Services via Zoom on December 16, 2020.

1. Call To Order

President Guarneri called the meeting to order at 6:12 P.M. and led all present in the salute to the flag and remain standing for a moment of silence for our past and present troops.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Ms. Alesandrelli, Ms. Antonucci, Ms. Carr, Ms. DeCeglie, Mr. Guarneri

Mr. Kerwin, and Mr. Reynoso

Members Absent: Mr. Bierach and Mr. Tangora

Also Present: Patricia Capitelli, Superintendent of Schools

Vincent Varcadipane, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Mr. Raymond B. Reddin, Board Attorney

3. Open Public Meeting Notice

The following statement was read by Mr. Varcadipane:

The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act, the Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Municipal Building and notice was mailed to the North Jersey Herald News and The Record.

Mr. Tangora joined the meeting at this time.

4. Public to be Heard

Mr. Guarneri asked Mr. Varcadipane if there were any questions from the public. Mr. Varcadipane stated that he will read all of the public questions per participant before a response is given.

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Mr. Steve Borace stated the following:

I posted the following message on Facebook today and have been prompted to contact you and bring this up during tonight's Board meeting. Please see below.

Dear Totowa School District or To Whom It May Concern:

I think we can all appreciate the joy and excitement of being a child and hearing the rumbling of rumors about a snowstorm that's on its way. Then, watching the weather reports all week, while trying to decipher the jargon of the meteorologist, it was so much simpler to ask Mom and Dad, "does that mean snow?"

The morning of the storm, you might have woken a little earlier, just to listen to the school closings on the radio, or watch them scroll by at the bottom of the TV newscast in alphabetical order; then immediately wondering if you'd missed your school and having to wait for it all over again. And then finally, you'd get confirmation. A snow day! One of the most magical days of childhood, especially this time of year when magic truly happens!

Childhood is supposed to be a joyful, exciting time, full of magic. It's a time when unexpected wonderful things happen on the most ordinary of days. Sadly, 2020 has robbed this from our children in so many ways. They have been forced to miss birthday parties, sports seasons, recreational activities, and visits with friends, performances, and vacations. Parents, children, and teachers have been forced to toil with the rigors of online learning. Forced to sit in front of a screen for hours on end, wearing masks, staying 6 feet apart, washing hands constantly and being scared of catching this awful virus are things with which even adults have struggled.

So, when I received the phone message yesterday that the Totowa School District was exercising its right to utilize remote learning as a way of maintaining classroom attendance for the upcoming winter storm, my heart literally dropped. Not only does this come during the Holiday Season, but during a year that has presented us with so much disappointment, could you not find it in your hearts to let these children have — what I believe is an inherent right of passage — a snow day? Must you compound the misery that has already precluded this day with yet MORE remote learning, restrictions, and — let's be honest — useless time wasted for a child that must now be forced to sit in front of a computer screen when all they really want to do is play in the snow?

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I understand that it is the right of the school district to mandate this action, but I must call you out on the ethics of your decision and hope that you reconsider, for the sake of these children and in the spirit of the Holiday Season. Let them play in the snow!

Ms. Jessica Stroh stated the following:

Good afternoon,

My daughter is Daniella Stroh in first grade. When she heard that it was going to snow, Daniella's excitement was tangible. She immediately expressed, "I can't wait for a snow day!" Upon telling her that it would be a remote day instead, Daniella's disappointment was clear. Even though she has only been in school for a few years, she understands that snow days are happy breaks sprinkled into the winter.

Please, consider letting the children having a day to get off of the computers and enjoy time with their families! Daniella, and her classmates, would be so happy!

Ms. Jennifer Britting of 93 Sutton Ave. stated the following:

Dear Ms. Capitelli and the Totowa Board of Education.

Good evening, my name is Jennifer Britting and I live at 93 Sutton Ave.

While I understand the district's position and the ablity to choose to utilize fully remote instruction to meet the minimum 180-day school year requirement, I urge you to reconsider this decision and allow Thursday, December 17, 2020 to be a true snow day. This year has been met with unbelievable challenges in all of our families and in our lives. Our children, teachers, families, staff, and administration have been working extremely hard to keep up the momentum of teaching and learning thus far. A snow day, with the expected considerable amount of snow, would be a welcome sign of joy, a break from the stressful day to day of our new "normal" lives, and time well spent with our families. My boys can't wait to play in the snow, bake cookies, make forts, stay in pj's, and just be kids.

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When the phones were ringing last night, both of my boys, Landon and Rylan were waiting with excited anticipation to hear the words from Ms. Capitelli to tell them that a snow day was coming. We had to explain that it will be different this year, and that even though there was a half day Wednesday, Thursday will be a full remote instruction day from home. They instantly began to tear up and already started to question how and why. My heart sank because this is the continued disappointment that they continue to experience by the events that we have no control over in the face of this pandemic.

However, this you do have control over, and many Superintendents have been sending out letters and statements of closing for a true snow day. As for now, there are many other districts who have already called a snow day, such Little Falls, Woodland Park, Wayne, and many other districts in Passaic County and throughout NJ. Let's be one of the districts who do the same.

It will be well received and greatly appreciated by children, parents, teachers, staff, administration, and all involved. We could use a real snow day and a well deserved break.

I appreciate your time and hope that the decision to be fully remote on Thursday will be reconsidered for a much needed snow day!

Stay safe and be well, Jennifer Britting

Ms. Capitelli stated that making the decision to have a remote day of instruction instead of a snow day was not an easy decision. The reason the District made that decision was due to the following reasons. As of now the state is allowing districts to use remote learning on inclement weather days to count toward the mandatory 180 school days. This decision by the state may be changed. Second, there are three built in snow days into the calendar. With such a late start to the school year, there are not many options for adding days to the school year if those snow days are used. We don't know what the weather is going to be like for the remainder of this winter. We also have a long stretch of of time between January and April with 1 day off on the calendar. These are the reasons why the District decided to use this day as a remote instruction day and count it toward the mandatory 180 days instead of calling a traditional snow day. The message that was sent out yesterday also clearly stated that just because the District decided to use a remote day of learning tomorrow does not mean that all inclement weather days will be treated as such.

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5. 2021 - 2022 Application for State School Aid

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Director of Special Education, recommends the Board retroactively approve the submission of the 2021 - 2022 Application for State School Aid (ASSA) to the New Jersey State Department of Education on Wednesday, December 2, 2020.

6. Instructional Resource List Additions

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board approve the additions to the Totowa School District Instructional Resource List for the 2020 - 2021 school year as follows:

Digital Resource Boom Cards

7. Use of Facilities - Virtual Student Picture Pickup

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve the request of the P.T.O. to distribute Pictures to the Virtual Students as follows:

Virtual Student Fall Picture Pickup

Washington Park School Outside of Gym Friday, November 20, 2020

4:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M. (In Person)

Motion for approval of items 5-7

MOTION:

Mr. Tangora

SECONDED:

Ms. Alesandrelli

VOTE:

Unanimous

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8. Informational

Tree Lighting Ceremony

Mid-Marks

8th Grade Mentors

LATIC Video

Dates for Your Information

Dec. 13	Paperless Mid-Term Reports Online - Marking Period 2
Dec. 24-31	Winter Recess - Schools Closed
Jan. 1	Winter Recess - Schools Closed
Jan. 4	Schools Reopen
Jan. 18	Martin Luther King Day - 1:20 P.M. Dismissal (Students Only)
Jan. 20	Board of Education Meeting - WPS 7:00 P.M.

Attachments:

News Articles:

Remote Learning vs. In Person Learning Masked Up Mentoring

9. Committee Reports

Mr. Guarneri stated committee meetings were not held.

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10. Executive Session

A request for executive session was made to discuss personnel matters and other business excluded from the Open Public Meeting by Law. The Board entered executive session at 6:24 p.m.

Mr. Reddin said, in Executive Session the Board will be discussing personnel and legal matters. The discussion will last approximately thirty (30) minutes and no action will be taken.

Motion for approval of item 10

MOTION: Ms. DeCeglie SECONDED: Ms. Carr VOTE: Unanimous

The Board returned from executive session at 6:59 P.M.

11. Substitute Teachers

The Superintendent recommends the Board approve the following substitute teachers submitted by the Substitute Registry:

Priority II
Maltino, Jacquelyn
Manzi, Lauren
Morano, Sarah Marie

12. Substitute Teacher

The Superintendent recommends the Board approve the following to receive her substitute teacher certification:

Priority III

Schiavo, Sabrina, Totowa

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13. Resignation - Joseph Mosley

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively accept the resignation of Joseph Mosley, School Psychologist, for the Totowa School District effective Friday, November 20, 2020.

14. Appointment - Custodial Engineer

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively appoint Ms. Lenie Shytaj to the position of Custodial Engineer for the 2020 - 2021 school year beginning on Tuesday, December 1, 2020. Ms. Shytaj will be placed on Step - 1 \$40,000 (prorated) of the contracted custodial salary guide and will remain on Step - 1 for the 2021 - 2022 school year.

15. Appointment - Custodial Engineer

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively appoint Ms. Loriann Badan to the position of Custodial Engineer for the 2020 - 2021 school year beginning on Thursday, December 3, 2020. Ms. Badan will be placed on Step - 1 \$40,000 (prorated) of the contracted custodial salary guide and will remain on Step - 1 for the 2021 - 2022 school year.

16. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Daniella Harris beginning Tuesday, November 17, 2020, through Wednesday, November 18, 2020. Ms. Harris will be paid \$200. per day for two (2) days.

17. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Megan Schultz beginning Monday, November 16, 2020, through Thursday, November 19, 2020. Ms. Schultz will be paid \$200. per day for four (4) days.

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18. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Kathleen Peterson beginning Monday, November 30, 2020, through Friday, December 4, 2020, and Tuesday, December 8, 2020, and Thursday, December 10, 2020. Ms. Peterson will be paid \$200. per day for seven (7) days.

19. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Jennifer Reeves beginning on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, through Friday, December 18, 2020. Ms. Reeves will be paid \$200. per day for eight (8) days.

20. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Jennifer Tafuri beginning Monday, November 30, 2020, through Wednesday, December 23, 2020. Ms. Tafuri will be paid \$200. per day for eighteen (18) days.

21. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Erica Wolpert beginning on Thursday, December 3, 2020. Ms. Wolpert will be paid \$200. per day for one (1) day.

22. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Evelyn Garofalo beginning on Monday, November 30, 2020, through Friday, December 4, 2020.

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23. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Michael Quintieri beginning on Tuesday, November 24, 2020, through Tuesday, December 8, 2020.

24. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Kevin Germann beginning on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, through Thursday, December 10, 2020.

25. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Douglas Upritchard beginning on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, through Thursday, December 3, 2020.

26. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Gregory Shields beginning on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, through Thursday, December 3, 2020.

27. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Christopher Jacob beginning on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, through Thursday, December 3, 2020.

28. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Robert Brillante beginning on Monday, November 30, 2020, through Friday, December 11, 2020.

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29. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Angelo Marocco beginning on Monday, November 30, 2020, through Friday, December 4, 2020.

30. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Kenneth Mamary beginning on Monday, November 30, 2020, through Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

31. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Jasmine Guerra from Thursday, December 3, 2020, through Friday, December 11, 2020. Ms. Guerra will be paid for seven (7) days.

32. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Rita Sakhat. Ms. Sakhat will be on leave from Thursday, December 3, 2020, through Wednesday, December 16, 2020. She will be paid for ten (10) days.

33. Approval - Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board approve a Family First Coronavirus Response Act Leave for Erica Wolpert beginning on Thursday, December 17, 2020. Ms. Wolpert will be paid \$200. per day for one (1) day.

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34. Approval - Unpaid Leave

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board approve an unpaid leave for Rita Sakhat from Thursday, December 17, 2020, through Wednesday, December 23, 2020.

35. Revision - Unpaid Leave

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board approve the revision to the unpaid leave for James Buttimore from Wednesday, November 25, 2020, through Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

36. Approval - Teacher Corrective Action Plans (CAPS)

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board retroactively approve the Teachers' Corrective Action Plans (CAPS) for the 2020 - 2021 school year as per the attached.

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37. Maternity/Child Care Leave of Absence - Saranda Lipovica

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team, recommends the Board approve the maternity/child care leave of absence for Saranda Lipovica as follows:

Ms. Lipovica will begin her maternity/child care leave on Monday, January 25, 2021, through Wednesday, June 16, 2021, as per the following provisions:

- 1. Leave is granted without pay and benefits.
- 2. She will remain at Step-2 on the guide for the 2021 2022 school year.
- 3. A. Leave will start on Monday, January 25, 2021.
 - B. Medical leave will be invoked from Monday, January 25, 2021, through Friday, March 5, 2021.
 - C. FMLA will be invoked from Monday, March 8, 2021, through Friday, June 4, 2021, twelve (12) weeks. Benefits will be retained in accordance with FMLA.
 - D. Ms. Lipovica will take an unpaid leave from Monday, June 7, 2021 to Wednesday, June 16, 2021.
 - E. Ms. Lipovica will return on Thursday, June 17, 2021.
 - F. Her annual benefit contribution will be charged. Benefit costs will be incurred by Ms. Lipovica for any further additional time absent outside the FMLA 12-week period.

Motion for approval of items 11-37

MOTION: Mr. Reynoso SECONDED: Mr. Tangora VOTE: Unanimous

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38. Approval of Minutes-November 18, 2020 - Regular Meeting

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the minutes of the meeting of November 18, 2020 as presented.

Motion for approval of items 38

MOTION: Mr. Reynoso SECONDED: Mr. Tangora VOTE: Unanimous

39. Approval of Minutes-November 18, 2020 - Executive Session

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the minutes of the Executive Session during the meeting of November 18, 2020 as presented.

Motion for approval of items 39

MOTION: Ms. Carr

SECONDED: Ms. Alesandrelli VOTE: Unanimous

40. Approval of Bills List – December

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the December Bills List as presented.

41. Acceptance of Financial Status Report - November

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary recommends the Board accept the Financial Status Report for the month of November 2020, as presented.

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42. Monthly Financial Certification of the Board Secretary and the Board of Education – November

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/ Board Secretary, recommends the Board certify that the major accounts and fund balances in the 2020-2021 budget have not been over expended and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the year.

43. Acceptance of Bank Reconciliations - November

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the Bank Reconciliations for the month of November 2020, as presented.

44. Acceptance of Board Secretary Report - November

The Superintendent in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the Board Secretary Report for the month of November 2020, as presented.

45. Acceptance of Treasurer of School Monies Report - November

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the Treasurer Report for the month of November 2020, as presented.

46. Acceptance of Financial Summary Report - November

The Superintendent in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the Financial Summary Report for the month of November 2020, as presented.

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47. Approval of Line Item Budget Transfers - November

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board approve the following line item budget transfer for the month of November 2020, as presented. (See Attachment #1 Monthly Transfer Report)

48. Acceptance of Revenue Report – November

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board accept the Revenue Report for the month of November 2020, as presented.

49. Approval of Payment of Cafeteria Invoices

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/ Board Secretary, recommends the Board approve payment of the following cafeteria invoices.

<u>Vendor</u>	<u>Description</u>	Check #	Amount	
Pomptonian	Invoice 912111320	1409	\$ 7,453.00	
Pomptonian	Invoice 912112020	1410	\$ 4,095.80	
Pomptonian	Invoice 912113020	1411	\$ 8,086.94	
Pomptonian	Invoice 912120420	1412	\$ 7,264.36	

50. Approval of 2020-2021 Transportation Contract NRESC

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends that the Board retroactively approve the 2020-2021 school year transportation contract with North Region Educational Services Commission, Wayne as follows:

Route #	School	Contractor	Cost Per Route	Date
1034 2021	Shepard School	Omar Transp.	\$ 31,020.00+1,240.80	11/2/20-June

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51. Approval of Additional Appropriations (Covid-19)

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board approve the following additional appropriations do to the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. First Student PO 21-1244 \$320.00 Additional Bus Cleaning

2. American Paper & Supply Co. PO 21-1212 \$500.00 Face Masks

52. Approval of 2020-2022 CARES Emergency Relief Grant Application

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Administrative Team recommends the Board, retroactively approve the submission of the 2020-2022 CARES Emergency Relief Grant Application, released by the New Jersey State Department of Education and accepts the grant award of funds upon the approval of the 2020-2022 CARES Emergency Relief Grant application in the amount of \$91,741.00 for the Totowa School District purchase of laptops and \$21,772 for St. James Academy for the purchase of \$10,886 in laptops and \$10,886 in nursing services to be provided by the NRESC.

53. Approval of Emergency Repairs - Boiler Steam Pipe Memorial School

The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, recommends the Board retroactively approve the repair services of CJ Vanderbeck & Son Inc. These repair services were needed to patch a broken steam pipe, monitor the pipe and fix the pipe during Christmas break. The broken steam pipe would reduce the ability of the boilers to heat Memorial School. The emergency request was submitted to the Passaic County Superintendent on December 4, 2020 and was approved on December 7, 2020.

Motion for approval of item 40-53

MOTION: Mr. Reynoso
SECONDED: Ms. DeCeglie
VOTE: Unanimous

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54. Old Business

There was no old business.

55. New Business

There was no new business.

56. Hearing and Petition of Citizens

Mr. Guarneri asked Mr. Varcadipane if there were any emails from the public. Mr. Varcadipane stated there was one.

Good evening. My name is Dina Heerema at 401 Riverview Drive.

Even though it is disappointing for our children not to have a snow day, can a half day be considered for tomorrow and all sections end at 1:20?

Hope you can consider the thought for the sake of all involved.

Thank you. Stay safe, healthy, and happy holidays to all!

There is always sunshine after a storm!

Mr. Guarneri thanked Ms. Heerema for her comment.

57. Other Matters of a Timely Nature

There were no other matters of a timely nature.

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58. Adjournment

Upon motion by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Ms. Alesandrelli this meeting was adjourned at 7:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Vincent Varcadipane

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary