

Netcong School District  
26 College Road  
Netcong, NJ 07857

Work Session Meeting Minutes  
February 21, 2017

I. CALL TO ORDER

The work session of February 21, 2017 was called to order by President Dalesandro at 7:00 pm.

A. Flag Salute

B. Open Public Meeting Act Proclamation

The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to ensure 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 the Act the Board of Education of the Netcong School District in the County of Morris has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted. The notice was mailed to the Daily Record and those persons or entities requesting notification, and filed with the municipal clerk of the Borough of Netcong.

C. Mission Statement

Netcong, a tradition to nurture, inspire, empower, and achieve by all, for all.

D. Board Goals 2016-17

1. Successfully communicate information for a successful passage of the ballot question.
2. Continue and increase professional development for board members.
3. Create an in-house new board member orientation

E. District Goals 2016-17

1. To continue to improve student achievement.
2. To continue to be financially disciplined in all areas of spending while continuing to maintain improvements to facilities.
3. Explore/Strategize ways to restore programs if the Ballot Question passes or fails.
4. To continue to schedule/complete Referendum projects.

II. ROLL CALL

**The following members were present:** Mrs. Callahan, Mr. Costanzo, Mrs. Dalesandro, Mr. Domick, Mr. Kranz, Mr. Morton, Mrs. Santana, and Mrs. Santalucia.

**Not Present:** Mr. Callahan- work commitment

**Also Present:** Dr. Gina Cinotti, Chief School Administrator  
Nicole Sylvester, Business Administrator/Board Secretary  
Derlys Gutierrez, Board Attorney  
18 members of the public and staff

III. PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

President Dalesandro explained that she had been out sick for the past thirty days and thanked Ms. Santalucia for taking over as Board President while she was ill. She also thanked the NTA for understanding that the scheduled negotiations meeting was changed due to her being sick and Mrs. Sylvester being unavailable.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moved by: Mrs. Santana                      Seconded by: Mr. Costanzo      Time: 7:02 pm

Resolved, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4:13 and 10:4-12 that the Netcong Board of Education hold a closed Executive Session regarding one or more of the following: legal matters, negotiations, personnel issues, individual student matters, and matters which are attorney-client privileged. It is expected that the discussion undertaken in this closed session can be made public at the time official action is taken.

President Dalesandro noted that topics to be discussed included, legal matters. It was anticipated that the session would take approximately 15 minutes, and that action will be taken.

The Board extended Executive Session for an additional 15 minutes.

V. RECONVENE

A motion was made and approved to come out of closed session.

Moved: Mrs. Santana                      Second: Mr. Costanzo              Time: 7:34 pm

The Board reconvened in open session with all members and public in attendance.

VI. BOARD CORRESPONDENCE & MINUTES

None

VII. CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Dr. Cinotti gave out a document showing Morris County and Regional Class sizes which coincided with her presentation on the need for instructional space in the 2017-18 school year. Mrs. Sylvester added to the report that instead of the \$80,0000 cost of the Instructional Space, it was now approximately \$75,000 because the need for the furniture in the original proposal was taken out. Dr. Cinotti also handed out documents pertaining to a personnel concern to be later talked about.

President Dalesandro then stated she was going to create an Ad Hoc committee for the need for instructional space and the Annex building concerns which would consist of, Mrs. Santana, Mrs. Callahan, Mr. Morton and herself and Ms. Santalucia would be the sub for anyone who could not make it.

VIII. SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Mrs. Sylvester indicated that in Robert's Rules of Order it states that, "the minutes should contain mainly a record of what was *done* at the meeting, not what was *said* by the members."

Mrs. Gutierrez then clarified to the Board about abstention votes, stating that abstention votes could still be made; Ms. Gutierrez clarified to the Board that members are allowed to abstain whenever they choose to do so. Ms. Gutierrez then clarified the rules for counting abstentions in Roberts Rules of Order. Discussion ensued.

IX. PETITIONS & REQUESTS OF THE PUBLIC FOR AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

**Open to the Public**

Moved by: Mrs. Santana                      Seconded by: Mr. Costanzo                      Time: 7:48 p.m.

Public is invited to address the Board with any questions, comments, or concerns. The Board requests that the individual address the Board, giving name and address, and asks that all remarks be directed to the Chair. The public portion shall be limited to thirty minutes with a five-minute time limit on each participant. The Board wishes to remind all attendees at its meeting that while it subscribed without reservation to the principle of keeping the public completely informed, by policy it cannot allow public discussion of personnel matters. If a matter concerning the staff of the Netcong Public School is of interest or concern, the matter would be referred to the Chief School Administrator or the Board of Education, either by telephone or letter.

As there were no petitions or requests from the public, a motion was made to close.

**Close to the Public**

Moved by: Mr. Morton                      Seconded by: Mr. Kranz                      Time: 7:49 p.m.

X. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Morton brought up the Ad Hoc committee which was brought up earlier tonight stating that he wanted to discuss this matter. President Dalesandro stated she wanted to get a quote for the mold remediation in the Annex building. Discussion ensued.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

**A. Governance/Policy/Finance – B. Dalesandro (Chair)**

President Dalesandro explained that the reason for the new RICE procedures was not something that Netcong created itself as it does create more work for staff and concerns on the teacher and staff's behalf. She explained that these are new procedures in place per the recent appellate court decision. Therefore, moving forward, anyone placed on the agenda whether it be for professional development, extra pay, etc. would now receive a RICE notice.

**B. Policy- B. Dalesandro (Chair)**

President Dalesandro stated that she wanted the committee to look back at the holiday policy to ensure all holidays are correctly placed in the policy. Mrs. Callahan brought Policy 7510 up for discussion in regards to waiving the \$250 annual fee. Discussion ensued and the Board feels that the \$250 annual fee should be waived and the Policy was revised so in-town and local regional groups will not be charged.

Mr. Costanzo then asked if the School visitor policy could be looked at again. Discussion ensued and the Board asked Mrs. Gutierrez if she could look into this more so they could bring it back to committee.

**C. Facilities- T. Morton (Chair)**

Mr. Morton reported on facilities items on the agenda for next week and the items listed below from the Facilities meeting earlier tonight.

1. **Unhoused students for 2017-18:** Mr. Morton said they went over the PowerPoint which Dr. Cinotti presented earlier.

2. **2017-18 Budget Discussions & Possible Ballot Question:** The committee felt there should be three separate questions on the ballot to possibly bring back Art, Music, and Spanish to full-time.
3. **Actions on Long Range Facility Plan:** The Facilities Committee supports and recommends moving forward with the projects listed below in numerical order:
  1. Dividing Business Office (Phase 2)- committee disagrees on this. Discussion ensued.
  2. Graduation Stairs
  3. Emergency Exit
  4. Gym Bleachers
  5. Paving Parking/Play Area
  6. Replace Gym Divider
  7. Annex repair 15 items
4. **Lead Testing:** Waiting on the quote to move forward.
5. **Donnelly Energy:** Exterior lights were added to the project at an additional cost of \$859 as opposed to outside quotes of almost \$10,000.
6. **Solar Energy with Stanhope:** The Board discussed and would like to move forward on this if possible since the cost would only be about \$1,800 for startup and savings of approximately \$12,000 a year.
7. **Book Bin:** The Board discussed the possible placement of a Book Bin outside. Board members were uneasy about this due to security reasons.
8. **Alarm Quote:** The Board discussed the possibility of having to replace the alarm in the school.

**D. Curriculum- J. Santana (Chair)**

Board Trustee Jen Santana gave a Curriculum report which included the following:

1. Unhoused students for the 17-18 school year
2. Dual Instructional Space
3. Possible Ballot question
4. Wish List for 2017-18 budget
5. RICE Notices
6. No volunteers for Board meeting student presentations
7. Security report from Morris County Prosecutor's Office
8. District Calendar

**Board Trustee Jen Santana moved and Board Trustee Kerri Santalucia seconded, that the Netcong Board of Education approve resolution #1 as presented:**

1. Be it resolved that the Netcong Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the CSA, approves home instruction, as medically necessary, for Student # 32221099 effective February 2, 2017.

*Note: The CSA emailed this to the board on February 2, 2017, to alert them a back date was unavoidable due to the mandate of continuing instruction.*

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Yes:** Mrs. Callahan, Mr. Costanzo, Mrs. Dalesandro, Mr. Domick, Mr. Kranz, Mr. Morton, Ms. Santalucia and Mrs. Santana.

**No:** None

**Abstain:** None

**E. Personnel- Marianne Callahan (Chair)**

President Dalesandro stated that usually personnel issues take place in executive session, however, the Business Administrator /Board Secretary asked that any information/issues be discussed in public. President Dalesandro stated that our Board Secretary Mrs. Nicole Sylvester was sent a Rice notice and it is her right to have any discipline and personnel matters discussed in public. She then asked Mrs. Sylvester if this is correct and Mrs. Sylvester stated that she had been sent a Rice notice and she waved her right to discussions being held in private executive session and she wanted them held in public. Mrs. Callahan then stated that this was discussed in the personnel meeting and the committee felt that this needed to be addressed with the full Board. Board members indicated that the Town Clerk would never act this way. Mr. Morton stated that the town council members would never treat her the way Mrs. Sylvester is treated. President Dalesandro indicated that they cannot evaluate Mrs. Sylvester as the Business Administrator but they do evaluate her as the Board Secretary. President Dalesandro indicated the committee asked that disciplinary action be taken since this is not the first time something like this has occurred. Mrs. Gutierrez explained that since Mrs. Sylvester is a tenured employee, they can either do a verbal reprimand which they just did and it would be documented in the minutes, a letter can be put in her file as Board Secretary or they can withhold an increment from next year. Discussion ensued and the Board felt that they would have a memorandum with the minutes put into her personnel file as Board Secretary.

President Dalesandro then began the conversation by reading an e-mail that was sent to Dr. Cinotti the day after the Board meeting on January 25, 2017.

*Hi Gina,*

*A majority of the board, individually, has reached out to me regarding Nicole's behavior during the public session of last night's meeting. The following adjectives were used during our conversations to describe her behavior, unprofessional, childish, disrespectful, immature, unacceptable and unnecessary. That is just a sampling of what the board members stated to me. I, too found her behavior to be unacceptable while acting as board secretary. In particular when I asked her to call the role for vote and she stated "she will do it when she is ready." And then proceeded to shuffle around papers and tidy up her area. While keeping both the public and the board waiting.*

*I have copied Kerrie as vice President and Maryann as chair of personnel and I am asking Maryann to place this on the agenda for the personnel Committee meeting scheduled for February's 13th immediately following curriculum instruction. This will give the opportunity to the board to discuss it formally in committee before possibly bringing it to the full board for discussion regarding her duties as the board secretary. Depending on how the board wants to move forward it may affect her annual performance review the board completes on her as the board secretary. If the committee feels her actions warrant full discussion by the board we will take the appropriate actions to rice her and give her the opportunity to address the concerns*

*I trust you will hold this matter in the strictest of confidence until The committee can decide if it warrants further review. Or as her immediate supervisor if you have already*

*spoken to her regarding her lack of professionalism and perceive disrespectful behavior please let me know*

*I thank you for your anticipated cooperation and hope to resolve this matter as soon as possible.*

*Kerrie and Maryann I place this in your hands for review.*

Mrs. Sylvester then stated that she feels the Board is constantly telling her how to do her job and feels beat up by the Board. She stated that she has been doing the inclement weather door duty when the teacher or sub is out to keep her grounded and remind her that everything she does is for each child that walks through the door.

President Dalesandro then stated that Mrs. Sylvester has a second issue that she wishes to have discussed in public regarding a potential raise. President Dalesandro said that this was a first for her and that no other employees have ever requested a raise be discussed in public. Present Dalesandro stated that Mrs. Sylvester wrote a letter to Dr. Cinotti asking for a raise. President Dalesandro then read the letter out loud and asked for the board to discuss possibility of a raise. The letter read as follows:

***February 10, 2017***

***To: Dr. Gina Cinotti***

***From: Nicole Sylvester***

***Re: Contract Proposal for 2017-18 School Year***

*Dr. Cinotti,*

*I am writing this memo to you asking if you could please address the Board about increasing my salary from \$83,232 (with 2% increase for 17-18) to \$95,000 for the 2017-18 school year. I started working in Netcong Elementary School in September 2013 as the Assistant Business Administrator. Due to only having a Business Administrator in the District two days a week, I took over almost all tasks in the Business Office such as payroll, purchasing, transportation, Audits on Federal Grants, Annual audits, Financials, Board Secretary reports and minutes, Federal Funding, etc. During this time, I enrolled in classes to receive my Standard Business Administrator Certificate. This was done outside of, and in addition to my normal job duties and hours. Upon successful completion of the program and obtaining my certification, I was recommended for the Business Administrator/Board Secretary position as of January 1, 2015. Since then I have taken full charge of the Business Office and the daily tasks we are faced with.*

*I have also researched other Districts comparable to ours and have outlined that for you in the attached document.*

*I have continued my education and have obtained my QPA (Qualifying Purchasing Agent) Certificate which allows me as the school's purchasing agent to have higher bid and quote thresholds to save the District time during our purchasing and bidding processes.*

*I do understand that there are still teaching positions within the District that still need to be filled or brought up to full-time. However, I have and continue to demonstrate that having*

*stability in the school's Business Office is key to the District's financial success. This stability further ensures a safe and healthy environment for students along with the financial backup for programs and tools they need to have a successful education.*

*I thank you in advance for your attention to my concern and hope we can continue a professional relationship to continue to provide the Students, Faculty and Staff a safe and financially stable School District.*

*Sincerely,*

*Nicole Sylvester*

Discussion ensued. The Board decided that to bring up Mrs. Sylvester's salary to \$95,000 from her current salary of \$81,600 or the equivalent of a 16.5% raise was out of the question. Mrs. Sylvester should not receive a raise larger than a possible 2% . President Dalesandro sent this back for committee recommendation.

**Mr. Costanzo excused himself from the room at 9:23 p.m.**

President Dalesandro also explained that Dr. Cinotti was also RICED and asked that any matters be discussed in public. President Dalesandro stated that Dr. Cinotti asked if the Board would reopen her contract to possibly changing the salary cap if the salary cap was to increase as expected. The Board discussed and stated they would take further action if the salary cap did in fact get raised.

**XII. MISCELLANEOUS**

President Dalesandro stated that on March 4<sup>th</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual St. Patrick's Day Italian Style Dinner initiative would be taking place. She said that she needed volunteers to help sell tickets at ShopRite and Sam's Club.

**XIII. PETITIONS AND REQUESTS OF THE PUBLIC**

**Open to the Public**

Moved by: Mr. Morton      Seconded by: Mr. Kranz      Time: 9:31 p.m.

**A.** Public is invited to address the Board with any questions, comments, or concerns. The Board requests that the individual address the Board, giving name and address, and asks that all remarks be directed to the Chair. The public portion shall be limited to thirty minutes with a five-minute time limit on each participant. The Board wishes to remind all attendees at its meeting that while it subscribed without reservation to the principle of keeping the public completely informed, by policy it cannot allow of interest or concern, the matter would be referred to the Chief School Administrator or the Board of Education, either by telephone or letter.

Miss DeVito stated that she was at last month's meeting regarding Mrs. Sylvester's reaction and disagreed with the Board stating that she saw someone who was ready to cry.

Ms. DeLuca asked if there would be someone to represent the children regarding the Ad Hoc committee that was created earlier so students had a voice at the table. Mrs. Dalesandro indicated that they would have a voice at the meeting.

As there were no further petitions or requests from the public, a motion was made to close.

**Close to the Public**

Moved by: Mrs. Santana

Seconded by: Mr. Morton

Time: 9:36 p.m.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moved by: Mr. Morton

Seconded by: Mr. Kranz

Time: 9:36 pm

Resolved, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4:13 and 10:4-12 that the Netcong Board of Education hold a closed Executive Session regarding one or more of the following: legal matters, negotiations, personnel issues, individual student matters, and matters which are attorney-client privileged. It is expected that the discussion undertaken in this closed session can be made public at the time official action is taken.

President Dalesandro noted that topics to be discussed included, legal matters and negotiations. It was anticipated that the session would take approximately one hour, and that no action will be taken.

XV. RECONVENE

A motion was made and approved to come out of closed session.

Moved: Mrs. Santana

Second: Mr. Morton

Time: 10:30 pm

The Board reconvened in open session with all members in attendance and no members of the public.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further Business before the Board, a motion was made and approved to adjourn.

Moved: Mr. Domick

Second: Mr. Kranz

Time: 10:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Nicole Sylvester

Business Administrator/Board Secretary