

Minutes of **Wednesday, August 14, 2024, Public Board Meeting** of the Orange Board of Education held at 6:00 pm.

**Vice President Shawneque Johnson is presiding over tonight's Meeting.**

Ms. Sueann Gravesande

Mr. Derrick Henry

Ms. Samantha Crockett

Ms. Fatimah Turner, Ph.D. – **Absent**

Mr. Siaka Sherif

Ms. Shawneque Johnson

Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield

Mr. David Armstrong

Mr. Tyrone Tarver

**ROLL CALL (6) PRESENT (0) LATE (3) ABSENT**

**ALSO PRESENT:**

- Mr. Jason Ballard, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Mr. Lamont Zachary, Assistant Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Jessica Kleen, School Board Attorney Substitute with the firm of Machado

**FLAG SALUTE**

Ms. Johnson motions to move into Executive Session.

**Moved by Mr. David Armstrong Seconded by Mr. Derrick Henry**

**ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to close the Executive Session and move into a Public Meeting.

**Moved by Mr. David Armstrong Seconded by Ms. Sueann Gravesande**

**ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson introduces our Superintendent, Dr. Fitzhugh.

Dr. Fitzhugh acknowledges the recent loss of three influential community members in Orange Township: Dr. Daniella Smalls Bailey, former Orange Board of Education member; Ms. Felicia Jenkins, a Chart Wells employee at Rosa Parks; and James A. Summers, a beloved figure in the city. He calls for a moment of silence to honor their memory. He then expresses condolences to the families and assures them of the support of the Orange School District. The community is urged to come together during the summer to remember and respect those who have passed away.

Ms. Johnson introduces Honeywell.

Before the presentation by Honeywell on utilizing energy savings for school repairs, Mr. Ballard expresses gratitude to the board, superintendent, and team for their efforts over three years on the project. Key figures mentioned are Karen Nagel, Edwin Vasquez, Lamont Zachary, and Karolet Rodriguez. Partners from Honeywell, Phoenix Advisors, and Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, P.A. are acknowledged. He explains that the project aims to use energy

savings to fund much-needed repairs, such as boiler replacements, LED lighting, and building management systems across school facilities. The total investment is around \$14 million, representing a culmination of various past projects. Mr. Ballard emphasizes the importance of focusing on students' needs through these initiatives. He explains that the presentation will delve into the specifics of the project. Overall, the project is a significant endeavor that has been years in the making for the benefit of Orange Township Public Schools.

Mr. Ballard then introduces Ms. Caroline Jackson from Honeywell to present.

Caroline Jackson and her team presents information about the Energy Savings Improvement Program, highlighting their roles in educating, developing solutions, and managing projects. The program in New Jersey aims to fund investments using energy savings and grants, focusing on energy-efficient measures like HVAC systems. Caroline emphasizes time efficiency, explains the process involving audits and financing, and addresses industry acronyms. She mentions collaboration with others to analyze financial and legal aspects, ensuring a thorough overview of the program's implementation and timeline. The presentation showcases the team's expertise in energy efficiency and commitment to helping clients with cost-saving and sustainable energy solutions, overseen by the Board of Public Utilities for compliance.

Ms. Jackson discusses legislation to help struggling school districts pass referendums by allowing larger projects instead of focusing on utility bills. The process involves BPU and third-party engineer reviews to ensure accuracy. The goal is to reduce energy costs from \$1.5 million to \$1 million, with savings used for loan repayment. Maintenance costs are expected to decrease as well. The team includes development, installation, and backup support. Honeywell professionals provide legal and financial assistance. The project oversight includes solution development, design procurement, construction, and post-construction verification for successful outcomes and financial benefits.

**Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs):** Ms. Jackson discusses the benefits of replacing existing school lighting with LED fixtures to improve energy efficiency and maintenance. By removing ballasts and installing uniform LED lighting, significant energy savings can be achieved. The project aims to provide a cleaner aesthetic and enhance safety with better color rendering for cameras, emphasizing LED lighting as a crucial measure for maximizing energy savings and efficiency improvements in school buildings.

**HVAC Control Systems Upgrades:** Ms. Jackson emphasizes the importance of upgrading HVAC control systems in schools to improve efficiency and reduce energy consumption. The controls play a crucial role in regulating equipment based on occupancy and external temperatures. Investing in upgrading controls will lead to significant energy savings and reduce equipment wear and tear. Additionally, replacing older pneumatic controls with electronic DDC systems will enhance reliability and performance, ultimately contributing to the project's success.

**Boiler Plants:** Ms. Jackson states how they're looking at Forest and Park Avenue to install new boilers and hot water heaters at Rosa Park.

**Building Envelope:** Building envelope plays a crucial role in energy efficiency. She explains how by keeping windows and doors closed, heating and cooling expenses are reduced. Insulating the ceiling and walls with proper door sweeps helps maintain conditioned air inside. This prevents outside air from entering, which can lead to increased humidity and equipment use. She concludes by stating how improving building envelope saves energy and ensures efficient operation of equipment.

**Solar PV:** Orange High School, Heywood, Rosa Parks, and Oakwood has a roof ready for solar PV, which could reduce the rate of energy consumption from 12-13 cents to four or five cents. The solar PPA provider will lease the space on the roof and charge less than the current rate. The district is working on the Energy Savings Improvement program (ESIP) and other grant programs, including boiler replacements at Heywood. A green technology, a co-generation unit (CHP), is being considered as a supplemental heat source for the high school's hot water loop. This technology is incentivized by the BPU to extend financing, and the high school can use this supplemental heat to use lower-cost electricity. The district is also considering other green initiatives, such as boiler replacements and the use of a co-generation unit.

Ms. Jackson inquires of all present in the room whether there are any questions regarding the scope.

Unable to detect due to audio, someone asks what is the estimated duration required to fully implement all these elements?

Ms. Jackson answers by explaining that the project is estimated to cost \$12.3 million over 18 months, with energy savings of 13 million over 20 years, solar savings of almost \$2 million, and operational savings of 762,000. The rebates have been divided into two years, with the first year focusing on lighting and building envelope measures. The PPA rate is estimated at 4 cents based on other projects. The overall savings are cushioned by a 4% refunding bond rate, which is still to be determined. She concludes by stating that the project is in good shape to fund it with a refunding bond, as the team has done a lot of work over the last three years to ensure good records and good billing.

**NJ Energy Savings Plan ESP Cash Flow:** Ms. Jackson continues to explain how the cash flow for the project includes energy, solar, and operational savings, balanced with rebates and loan repayments. The initial capital was 4.5, but it was reduced to 3.2. The project will be done on-site with a budget of 1.8 from the roofer, resulting in a 1.4 million budget. She further explains how Sherry's positive cash flow is slightly less than the original budget, but she needs to use a refunding bond and how the project is being budgeted using the lease purchase model.

**The ESIP Project encompasses the following elements:** all work, designs, and professional assistance. They will work with professionals to design aspects such as investment grade audits, engineering design, and procurement. They will be part of the client's team to ensure procurement and delivery correctly. Victor will be present at pre-bid meetings and walk through buildings. The price and cash flow are not to exceed, and if bids go over, they will rebid or redesign if necessary. Energy savings will cover the project costs and fees.

Mr. Henry raises questions about the guarantee of numbers for inconclusive projects like Bell Stadium, which may change as necessary for project success or completion. Mr. Henry seeks verification regarding whether we are still in discussions about Bell Stadium.

Ms. Jackson explains that Bell Stadium is currently equipped with lighting and a building envelope project and any modifications or removals will result in credit. Therefore, decisions must be received before bid submission or contract finalization.

Mr. Ballard further adds that the project assumes responsibility for Bell Stadium and himself. The goal is to ensure funds are set aside for upgrading the facility's lighting, building envelope, and turf replacement. Other measures are being discussed for renovation and the funds can be used for other school building projects.

Ms. Jackson continues by sharing the project schedule for Bell Stadium and states the following: negotiations in August 2024, contract submission in October, final design review in November, DOE applications in December to

January, procurement activities in December to January, site visits, and bid review in January. She further explains that Victor and his team will handle all aspects of the project. Lighting can start as soon as the fur, lamp, and ballast are changed. The heating season is not until next summer, with boilers in by October 15th, 2025. Controls are often the last thing to be finished, and the project will be completed in spring 2026, with measurement and verification in June 2025.

Mr. Henry inquires whether a copy of this presentation can be made available afterwards.

Ms. Jackson indicates that Mr. Ballard has received the presentation.

Mr. Tarver asks if there will there be any disruption to the instruction during this process?

Mr. Ballard answers by explaining how the project aims to avoid interrupting instruction by completing lighting work off-hours, using custodial crews, and completing boiler work during school hours. After three years of vetting, the project has been completed to ensure minimal disruption to children.

Mr. Tarver inquires clarification whether all board members were provided with the opportunity to review the complete presentation that is currently being presented.

Mr. Ballard answers by explaining how the presentation is a full-blown update on the progress of the ESIP, which was discussed in committee and provided to the board members and states that this is the first time the committee has been provided with a comprehensive overview.

Mr. Sherif expresses concern about the potential disengagement from the other energy system, stating that it could potentially disrupt teaching and equipment usage in different schools, leading to the need for multiple sites to generate energy, potentially causing disruptions in the district.

Mr. Ballard explains how the schedule is a snapshot of desired progress, but after bidding, phasing will be implemented to ensure each building is completed first. Some tasks, like LED lighting and boiler work, can occur simultaneously during off-hours. The contractor's crew size may also involve multiple buildings, ensuring instruction is not interrupted.

Mr. Sherif asks if the initiative is funded by the state and aims to establish a contractual agreement with individuals for maintenance, specifically in relation to the solar system.

Mr. Ballard answers by explaining how the solar system is independent from the state and can be purchased through a solar power purchase agreement (PPA). This cost-effective option reduces energy costs and allows for multiple projects, including interior construction. Solar energy also reduces overall energy credit, reducing utility costs. While there is a connection cost, solar power significantly lowers electricity bills.

Mr. Sherif inquires whether we are employing this component for installation and if we will also provide maintenance during its operation.

Ms. Jackson explains the process of selecting a solar PPA provider for a school, stating that the cost per KWH is around 4 cents, with escalations being budget friendly. The PPA will provide a design, efficiency of panels, and a warranty. The speaker also mentions that the selection process is coordinated with the roof ages, as they cannot put

solar where the roof has a 15 or more-year warranty. The speaker emphasizes that the RFP will help the committee select the best provider for the school, considering factors such as lighting savings, building management, and building envelope savings.

Mr. Sherif emphasizes the significance of maintenance, indicating that it holds considerable importance for him. He expresses a desire to understand whether the pricing for this specific energy will remain stable or fluctuate in the future.

Ms. Jackson states how the solar project is a capital project with no maintenance, but it will have a fixed rate for year one and a fixed escalation. The 50 kw roof size might only support 200 KW, so the other 150 kw will be the same price. The price is complicated due to roofs with shadowing, trees, or retention walls.

Mr. Sherif is seeking clarification on the stability of the pricing structure, as it is currently not generating revenue.

Ms. Jackson explains how the piece from the PPA will be stipulated in the bids, and the utility company's piece will be escalated as normal escalations.

Mr. Ballard adds that the PPA is more regulated, resulting in incremental increases based on the schedule, unlike regular utility companies which offer significant increases.

Ms. Jackson continues and says that the PPA company is responsible for providing energy, and their RFP and language are protective of the district, making it more predictable and budget friendly. They are responsible for ensuring payment if necessary.

Mr. Wingfield inquires about the 12.3 refunding bond. He asks for clarification on what the payment structure will be and states that it was mentioned that it will be distributed over a period of 20 years.

Mr. Ballard states that Mr. Tony Solimine, our bond counsel, will be assisting us to ensure accuracy in our statements, and we will defer to him, Caroline, and Sherry for comprehensive resolution.

Mr. Solimine discusses the financing of ESIP through the issuance of refunding bonds. The school district currently pays \$1.5 million in energy costs, which is reduced to \$1 million with energy conservation measures. The delta of 500,000 is used for maintenance costs and debt service on borrowed bonds. The remaining \$1.5 million budget is allocated to the utility and \$400 for principle and interest on borrowed funds. The project is legally structured to allocate funds differently without new money.

Sherry states further elaborates how the financing for the EIP projects will be based on projected energy savings, verified by Honeywell, and approved by the BPU. The financing will involve a refunding bond, which is a mechanism established by the state to refund future energy costs, ensuring the project's financial stability and safety.

Mr. Ballard asks Sherry to discuss the bond rating, highlighting the district's financial health's importance in their current capabilities, mentioning its unpredictability three years ago.

Sherry explains how Standard and Poor's have been reviewing the district's financial health since selling bonds. They have been in touch with the district annually, keeping investors updated on the district's financial health. They have noted the district's strength and financial turnaround in recent calls. This has allowed them to secure

better financing rates, allowing for more projects and lower interest rates on bonds. This has allowed the district to secure an even better rate on the financing, allowing for more projects.

Mr. Wingfield inquires about the reduction in monthly payments after 20 years, as we no longer need to repay bond amounts.

Sherry answers by discussing the ongoing savings and potential payments for new projects after 20 years. She mentions that while better technology will be available in the future, the same benefits will still be provided, such as the use of boilers and other improvements.

Mr. Wingfield inquires, more specifically, about the nature of the monthly bond payments over the course of 20 years. What will the total amount be?

Sherry explains how the project will match the savings of approximately 700,000, including PPA, energy cost, regular operational savings, and rebates. There is a cushion of 30 to \$50,000 per year, allowing for additional savings after the payment. The project is budget neutral.

Mr. Ballard discusses the need for urgent repairs in buildings, such as boiler work, unit ventilators, HVAC upgrades, and LED lighting. They argue that while saving money, they will finance the construction costs that would not be possible with the operating budget. They emphasize the importance of incorporating the latest technology into buildings, as seen in the bright and inviting spaces of Cleveland Elementary and the new wing of the high school.

Mr. Wingfield requests further information regarding the estimated monthly payments we anticipate for the bond payments.

Ms. Jackson states that Sherry will adjust the estimated board costs for the first two years, which are higher due to rebates and grants. The annual cost is about 741,000, offset by energy and operational savings.

Mr. Wingfield inquires whether the estimate is provided on an annual basis or otherwise, rather than monthly.

Sherry confirms annual payments for the ESIP project in New Jersey, with principal and interest payments occurring biannually at a 4% interest rate. The bond sale is expected in early October, and ensuring bond payments do not exceed projected savings is crucial for maintaining a net neutral position annually.

Ms. Jackson explains that the net cash flow for the board is adjusted based on factors like energy savings, rebates, grants, and operational savings. The initial estimate was \$52,000, revised to \$38,000 or \$39,000, with a buffer for potential increases.

Mr. Wingfield inquires about the current S&P rating based on your research findings.

Ms. Jackson states that our current rating is an A, and I believe there was an extended duration during which the district received a negative outlook for the bond rating.

Mr. Ballard thanks everyone for their questions and thanks Caroline, Sherry, and Tony for their assistance. He acknowledges the extensive information provided and encourages further inquiries. He promises to provide answers

and consult partners for additional information and further states that a copy of the presentation will be available on the website.

Ms. Crockett is requesting a procedural inquiry due to time constraints and requires further discussion before casting a vote on a matter.

Mr. Solimine states that the board is considering several actions, including the approval of an energy savings plan, contracting with Honeywell, and introducing a refunding bond ordinance. They have determined a suitable amount for transferring funds from the Capital Reserve for the school facilities project. The board also authorizes a power purchase agreement, allowing solar panel installation at a lower rate, contributing to the financial model and facilitating additional projects under the ESIP. Additionally, the board must approve a savings guarantee from an energy service company like Honeywell.

Ms. Crockett verifies her understanding by stating that the total expenditure for 20-year projects is 12.3 million, and the bond we plan to secure is 12.5 million.

Ms. Jackson confirmed a bond amount of approximately 1.4 million, with Sherry to calculate the difference once appropriation is confirmed. The total includes 12.3 million, legal and bond costs, and deducted for borrowing.

Ms. Crockett confirms understanding and requests confirmation on the 1.4 million allocated from our own resources, which was discussed during the budget approval process.

Mr. Ballard confirms that annual capital reserve allocation for roofing projects, enabling solar panel installation without proper roofs for the past two years.

Ms. Crockett acknowledges the situation, stating that funds allocated for bond repayment will balance out over 20 years, aiming for significant savings due to the established bond payment structure.

Mr. Ballard confirms that you will see savings and benefit from the new construction and facility.

Ms. Crockett contends that, despite potentially high costs, investing in boilers and HVAC systems is essential for reaching a break-even point.

Mr. Ballard states we are currently obligated to pay \$1.5 million, with an additional \$1 million for construction expenses. The main challenge is funding repairs, which can be expensive. Implementing new systems will reduce repair work.

Ms. Crockett acknowledges the larger initial two years and inquires about concerns about the total amount, specifically if it has been accounted for in the upcoming year's budget.

Mr. Ballard expresses that he is not concerned in the slightest, as we have received assurances from all parties involved who have reviewed the situation.

Ms. Jackson confirmed that rebates will be issued to us in our second year, expected within six to eight weeks after project completion and further states that we may borrow resources for a few months while waiting.

Ms. Crockett appreciates the clarification, while Ms. Jackson emphasizes the need for a clear distinction between the figure of 1.4 and the roofs, represented by the figure of 1.8.

Mr. Henry inquires about the calculation of 12.3 million over 20 years, which equates to approximately 615,000, and whether this amount is calculated before or after the rebate.

Mr. Ballard responds by reminding Mr. Henry and all present that we are contributing to \$1.4 million from the Capital Reserve. Therefore, the total project is funded from the utility line in our budget over the 15 to 20 years for the remaining \$12.3 million for the project.

Mr. Ballard invites Mr. Solimine to discuss the annual energy savings, which total \$13.5 million over 20 years. They calculate these savings from energy conservation measures, solar savings from Honeywell, operational savings, and rebates. Sherry determines they can borrow \$16.3 million, leading to a savings guarantee of \$12 million. The expected savings range between \$52,000 and \$35,000, with all calculations verified.

Ms. Gravesande questions Mr. Ballard about proposed school initiatives, expressing concerns about their impact on students and their potential benefits, especially in extreme temperature-affected classrooms.

Mr. Ballard affirms that this initiative will significantly enhance the students' experience. Mr. Ballard thanks all present for their collective effort, acknowledging the support of partners and team members, and the superintendent's vision for advancing the project. He also thanks the board for their attention and appreciation.

Ms. Johnson extends a warm welcome to our Student Representative, Mr. Tito, as he returns. Mr. Ballard assumes the role of presenter, bestowing upon Mr. Tito a plaque that honors his successful tenure. Mr. Ballard articulates his gratitude and privilege in having collaborated with Tito throughout the past year. Dr. Fitzhugh, along with the board leadership, recognizes Tito's unwavering commitment. The plaque presentation takes place on August 14th, 2024, in collaboration with the Orange Board of Education and the Orange School District. This plaque celebrates Mr. Tito's determination, openness, and dedication to amplifying student voices.

Mr. Tito conveys his enthusiasm regarding his upcoming study abroad program in Italy, which commences on August 30th. Additionally, he mentions his intention to return in May to complete his graduation from Orange High School and expresses his eagerness to make a positive contribution to the district following his experience.

Mr. Ballard welcomes Ms. Daney Ramos Lopez as Orange High School student representative for 2024-2025, appointing her as the outstanding candidate and advising her that she will work in conjunction with the team and superintendent's office.

Ms. Johnson warmly welcomed Ms. Lopez and expressed their eagerness to collaborate with her this academic year.

Ms. Johnson proceeds to introduce Dr. Fitzhugh, who presents the Superintendent's Report.

**Summer School Programming:** Dr. Fitzhugh discusses the successful completion of the 2024 summer program and the progress reports received from parents. The academic year is set to begin on September 6th, 2024, with information about start and end times included in the closing letter and school-level communications. School leaders have returned with renewed energy, and much of the discussion is already available online. The September

calendars have been diligently posted, and families can find them by August 14th. The school will continue to monitor and make necessary adjustments as the program has been beneficial for all students.

**Return to Schools:** The menus for September will be released soon, available under short links on the website. Families appreciate advance planning information, and we will ensure timely delivery of this information to ensure everyone has access to the necessary information. The staff will return on September 3rd, 2024, for a convocation at Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation, mirroring last year's greatness. Those on vacation should rest and self-care. The counts will be out on August 26th, but they've already started.

**Important Information:** The superintendent's weekly update will begin on September 9th, with a special edition out tomorrow revealing new administrative staff hired over the summer. Bios of these staff have been inputted into the NICE newsletter. A meet and greet for Haywood Avenue School principal Rochelle Woods will take place on August 19th, 2024, and Cleveland's principal, Mr. Terrance Wesley, will be held the following week, date and location to be determined. The district goals were updated in June 2024 and are available on the website. The superintendent's reports and strategic plan are also available for easy access. Dr. Fitzhugh emphasizes how these updates are crucial for guiding district work and are available for viewing.

**Back to School Nights:** The principals diligently plan back to school nights, ensuring all planning is completed before the summer hiatus. This slide provides dates and locations for these nights, starting in September and running through October 2024.

**Strategic Plan Core Focus Areas:** Dr. Fitzhugh provides a link to the strategic plan and reviews core focus areas, urging staff and families to review it to understand targets before 2026.

- Core Focus Area One: The first core focus area is fostering strong home school community connections.
- Core Focus Area Two: Student universal support ensures students are developmentally ready for grade 12 transition, with benchmarks and milestones guiding growth based on age and grade level.
- Core Focus Area Three: This study examines the relationship between human capital and job-based professional development.
- Core Focus Area Four: Dr. Fitzhugh clarifies how these curricula and instruction are rigorous and relevant in nature.

Dr. Fitzhugh emphasizes the importance of the strategic plan and its core focus areas, ensuring that everyone is aware of our objectives and the methods we will employ to achieve them.

He emphasizes the importance of students' education, highlighting partnerships with schools, the district, and the community. He emphasizes the collaboration for quality education and proceeds with a discussion of the NJGPA test results and AP scores. To do so, he introduces his esteemed Executive Directors, Mr. Scutari and Ms. Harris.

Mr. Scutari discusses the NJGPA and AP results from spring 2024, focusing on math. The slide shows scores from 2023 and 2024, with a difference on the right. The district saw 33.6 percentage of students deemed graduation ready, a 9.6 percentage point increase on the NJGPA exam. Orange High School's percentage rose from 25 percent to 7 percentage points, while STEM Innovation Academy's percentage rose from 95.7 to 2.7 percentage points. This represents a significant improvement in graduation readiness.

Ms. Harris reports a significant increase in English language arts readiness, with over 10 percentage points and 13.5 percentage points in graduation ready students. In 2024, 280 students were recognized as graduation ready, with 234 high school students achieving 12.9 percent improvement. At STEM Innovation Academy, all 45 students were classified as graduation ready, demonstrating the school's commitment to preparing students for graduation.

Mr. Scutari presents a five-year summary of AP scores at Orange High School, covering the period from 2020 to 2024. From 2022 to 2024, there is a decline in percentages, mainly due to a significant increase in student participation in AP exams. This rise in participation suggests greater access to AP courses and an expansion in the variety of courses offered. However, this increase may lead to a learning curve, as many students encounter these courses for the first time and teachers teach them for the first time.

Dr. Fitzhugh reports 123 students participated in the 2023 exam, with nearly 20 more in 2024, as shown in the bar graph.

Mr. Scutari reports a significant increase in student enrollment from 79 in 2022 to 141 over two years. Course performance, particularly in biology, shows a significant improvement with over 43.8 percentage of students achieving passing scores. This impressive outcome is expected to continue in the future, with the instructor teaching it for the first time.

Ms. Harris highlights the high performance of students in English Literature, Spanish Language and Culture, United States History, and World History, with 66.7 percentage and 100 percent respectively achieving a three or higher score, respectively, and 93.3 percent achieving a three or higher score in World History.

Mr. Scutari explains that STEM Innovation Academy offers college-level courses for high school students, focusing on college-level work and assessments. Since 2021, there has been a notable increase in passing rates, and while fewer students participate in exams, their performance has improved.

Ms. Harris clarifies that students at the stem level are taking additional college-level courses not classified as Advanced Placement (AP), indicating that a lower course count does not mean they haven't been participating in college-level coursework.

Mr. Scutari reports a significant improvement in dual enrollment courses, particularly in calculus performance. Previously, the percentage of students achieving a three or higher in calculus at STEM was 12 percent. This year, the percentage has risen to 59 percent. Additionally, the computer science course has seen a significant increase from 63 to 71 percent.

Dr. Fitzhugh acknowledges the tasks everyone has to accomplish and acknowledges the dedicated staff for their efforts in providing necessary educational support. He introduces Mr. Vasquez and invites him to provide an update, as this will be the final superintendent's report before school commencement on September 6th.

Mr. Vazquez discusses the busy summer activities, including various programs and cleaning schedules for custodial staff. The primary objective is to ensure schools are clean and ready for the upcoming term. The maintenance team is actively engaged in painting, cleaning, disinfecting, stripping, and waxing. Despite ongoing programs, efforts are being managed to ensure a hygienic environment. This serves as an update on summer activities.

**Update on 2024 Summer Facility Projects:** Heywood Avenue School has completed a boiler replacement, Rosa Parks has replaced chillers, Park Avenue School has started roof repairs, and Oakwood Avenue School has completed unit ventilators and roof hatches. Orange High School has a new cosmetology room and culinary program transitioning from electric to gas, with progress being made. Roof replacements are underway at the Orange Early Childhood Center, and the roof at John Robert Lewis is scheduled for completion. . All tasks are now completed, and cleaning is underway. Mr. Vazques assures everyone that preparations for the school's reopening are underway, with significant renovations including painting and lighting upgrades. The schools are expected to reflect a multi-million-dollar investment by next summer. Cleveland Street School is finalizing inspections and is ready for relocation, with furniture and floors waxed. Mr. Ballard confirms the building's readiness for occupancy.

Dr. Fitzhugh thanks the school business administrator for collaborating with the school development authority to support Cleveland families, expressing gratitude for their efforts in a building opening not scheduled until 2025.

Mr. Vazquez continues to discuss the progress of various projects, including cosmetology, culinary, and Oakwood Avenue Schools. The cosmetology room has walls, ceiling grids, lighting, and plumbing, while the culinary room has walls, lighting, and plumbing. Oakwood Avenue School is installing new unit vents and integrating a Building Management System for efficient control. Cleveland Street School has completed a playground, windows, hallways, classrooms, and gym floor. The team will address outstanding issues to ensure school opening on schedule.

Ms. Johnson thanks Mr. Vasquez for his assistance and asks about the number of schools fully prepared for reopening in September.

Mr. Vasquez expresses strong confidence in the readiness of the schools and the superintendent's commitment to ensuring the welfare of the students. With some students having been released for the summer, the focus can now shift to cleaning efforts. Furthermore, the district will offer daily updates to the community, staff, and members of the board of education regarding ongoing developments.

The speaker could not be identified due to the audio quality. A question was posed regarding the recent installation of two new roofs on the lower level of the school, as well as the consideration of solar energy options.

Mr. Vazquez indicates that the district plans to install solar panels on all suitable roofs, with a comprehensive survey conducted in collaboration with a roofing vendor. Currently, solar installations are at Park Avenue and Lincoln, but the initiative aims to expand for cost savings and educational purposes.

Ms. Johnson asks which school cannot support solar panels on its roof.

Mr. Ballard mentions that the process of addressing multiple roofs independently was initiated after comprehensive district roof assessments and invites Ms. Jackson to provide further details.

Ms. Jackson states solar panels were installed on 15-year warranty or scheduled roofs on owned buildings, not leased ones.

Ms. Johnson inquires if the roof's inability to support ATO Solar suggests a roof-related issue.

Mr. Ballard suggests that the answer to whether to install solar panels depends on the specific roof's sunlight availability and the amount of sunlight it receives.

Ms. Jackson advises waiting until the roof needs replacement before installing solar panels, especially for roofs with a 15-20 year warranty, to ensure informed decisions, especially when the roof's warranty is already ten years old.

Mr. Ballard concludes by expressing to all that he believes this year has been the most active in district construction in years, with significant projects and significant use of OPM (other people's money). The district's operating budget covers some costs, but a significant portion is funded through external sources such as grant funding and investments. Mr. Ballard expresses pride and satisfaction in the accomplishments and continues preparations for the remaining work.

Mr. Sheriff is requesting confirmation on our plans to open by September, based on the readiness of the gymnasium and related facilities.

Mr. Ballard assures Mr. Sharif that if they obstruct progress, they will remove them from the building, as the superintendent will not allow unprepared buildings.

Mr. Ballard expresses his gratitude to Dr. Fitzhugh and tells all that this concludes their report.

Dr. Fitzhugh advises families to review their social media accounts daily for essential updates. If you have not yet registered for the Genesis Parent Portal, please reach out to [reopeningofschools@orange.k12.nj.us](mailto:reopeningofschools@orange.k12.nj.us) for assistance and assure us that a prompt response will be provided. He advises all that for daily updates, kindly visit the district's website. Dr. Fitzhugh expresses his gratitude to the board members and the community for their continued support and hands the meeting over to the President of the Board of Education, Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson motions to approve the June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Public Board Meeting Minutes.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield Seconded by Mr. Henry  
ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve the June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Closed Session Public Board Meeting Minutes.

**Moved by Mr. Armstrong Seconded by Mr. Henry  
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson inquires of Mr. Armstrong whether he has any updates to share.

Mr. Armstrong highlights significant progress in the special service department, especially for special education students. Adjustments have been made to accommodate them across schools and settings. The district's objectives and requirements for CPAP meetings and parent advisory groups are being discussed. Gratitude is expressed for ongoing contributions.

Ms. Johnson expresses her gratitude to Mr. Armstrong and proceeds with the meeting.

Ms. Johnson motions to open Public Comments.

**Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**  
**ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**Public Comments**

Carla Bachus Hughes, a parent and pre-K paraprofessional, has voiced her concerns regarding a pre-K teacher at Forest Elementary who had previously recommended her for the paraprofessional position. After collaborating with this teacher, she observed significant disorganization and ineffective classroom management. Additionally, she reported instances of physical abuse and questionable practices, including permitting students to watch YouTube videos without any meaningful educational context. Although she was assured about lesson planning and the daily schedule, she was advised to observe another pre-K teacher to better understand classroom dynamics. Carla recognizes that the information she received was misleading and that the teacher in question has tenure and is anticipated to return.

Ms. Kleen requests that Ms. Backus Hughes step into the hallway to further their conversation, as her allotted speaking time has expired.

Ms. Johnson motions to close Public Comments.

**Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**  
**ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to have a Consent Agenda.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT**

Mr. Tarver is concerned about resolutions related to the Energy Savings Plan and Honeywell International, stating that he has not reviewed all relevant documents. He believes that the entire board should receive these documents for thorough review, as each member has the responsibility for their vote. Mr. Tarver suggests postponing the decision until the next meeting. Mr. Tarver raises inquiries regarding the transportation reimbursement procedure for Charter School students, to which Mr. Ballard and Mr. Zachary offer a comprehensive clarification of the district's process, affirming that the district has met its obligations.

Ms. Gravesande additionally seeks the relevant documentation pertaining to the energy plan and assesses the procedures established for supplying the necessary materials for the Board Members' review before the voting occurs. She respectfully inquires whether the resolutions can be postponed until a later meeting.

Ms. Kleen informs Ms. Gravesande and the Board Members that should they choose to vote against any of the resolutions presented this evening, those resolutions will be rescheduled for consideration in September, effectively serving the same purpose as a motion to table them.

Mr. Ballard requests a roll call vote regarding the Consent Agenda.

**G1-G20 - Agreements/Bids/Contracts**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**I – Finance**

**I1- Resolution to Approve the Payment of Bills for August 2024**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (1) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**I2 – I8 Resolutions**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**I9 – I15 Resolutions**

**ROLL CALL (4) YEA (4) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**I16 - Resolution to Approve the 2022-2023 Corrective Action Plan**

**ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**J – Grants**

**J1- Resolution to Accept Fiscal Responsibility for the Fostering Diverse Schools (FDS) Grant for New Jersey Schools Consortium**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (1) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**K – Facility Use Requests**

**K1 - Resolution to Approve the Various Facility Use Requests from the City of Orange Township**

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (2) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**L1 – L8 - Staff/Students**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**M1 – M4 - Other**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

**N1 – N3 – HIB Case Numbers/Home Instruction/Out-of-District Placement for the Month of August 2024**

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson announces the upcoming district and public meetings.

Public Relations Committee Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, September 4, 2024, at 4:00 pm

Orange Board of Education Public Board Meeting – Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 7:30 pm in the BOE

Facilities Committee Virtual Meeting – Monday, September 9, 2024, at 4:00 pm

Curriculum Committee Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, August 27, 2024 at 3:30 pm

Special Education Committee Virtual Meeting – Tuesday, September 3, 2024 at 3:30 pm

Policy Committee Virtual Meeting – Thursday, September 5, 2024, at 4:00 pm

Finance Committee Virtual Meeting – Thursday, September 5, 2024, at 5:30 pm

Human Resource Committee Virtual Meeting – Monday, September 9, 2024, at 4:30 pm

### **Board Comments**

Mr. Tarver requests clarification of resolution I9-I15. He mentions that the vote resulted in a tie of four to four, which means the resolution was not approved. However, we can revisit this matter in September.

Mr. Ballard guarantees Mr. Tarver and the Board Members that the resolutions I9-I15 will be reviewed again in September.

Ms. Johnson motions to have the Meeting Adjourned.

**Moved by Ms. Gravesande Seconded by Mr. Armstrong  
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (1) ABSENT**