



**Wednesday, October 11, 2023  
Regular Public Board Meeting  
Orange Preparatory Academy of  
Inquiry and Innovation Auditorium  
Roll Call 6:00 p.m.**

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Minutes of Wednesday October 11, 2023, Public Meeting of the Orange Board of Education held at 6:00 pm.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

- Ms. Shawneque Johnson, President
- Ms. Sueann Gravesande
- Mr. Derrick Henry
- Ms. Samantha Crockett - **ABSENT**
- Dr. Fatimah Turner
- Mr. Siaka Sherif - **ABSENT**
- Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield
- Mr. David Armstrong
- Mr. Tyrone Tarver

**ROLL CALL (5) PRESENT (2) NOT PRESENT FOR ROLL CALL (2) ABSENT**

**ALSO PRESENT:**

- Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh II, Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. Jason Ballard, Business Administrator
- Mr. Lamont Zachary, Assistant Business Administrator
- Ms. Jessika Kleen, School Board Attorney with the firm of Machado Law Group
- Mr. Oluwatitofunmi (Tito) Oshuntolu, Student Representative

**2. FLAG SALUTE**

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**A. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**1. *Recess Into Executive Session – Closed***

Motion to convene into Executive Session. Will Recess until 6:45 pm but no later than 7: 30pm.

**Moved by David Armstrong, Second by Jeffrey Wingfield.**

**Final Resolution: Motion Carried**

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Derrick Henry, Siaka Sherif, Fatimah Turner

**ROLL CALL (5) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (0) NOT PRESENT AT VOTE: (4)**

**2. *Return to Open Session***

Ms. Johnson motions to close the Executive session and move into a public meeting.

**Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield, Second by Derrick Henry.**

**Final Resolution: Motion Carried**



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Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Derrick Henry, Fatimah Turner, Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (0) NOT PRESENT AT VOTE: (2)**

## **B. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT - OLUWATITOFUNMI (TITO) AYODELE OSHUNTOLU**

Ms. Johnson re-open the public meeting and introduced Oluwatitofunmi (Tito) Oshuntolu, Student Representative for his speech.

- Mr. Oshuntolu highlighted that his sights are set on future college and career prospects. He is deeply committed to making sure that students always remain at the heart of our school district's promises. He is resolute in his determination to leave a positive and lasting impact on his underclassmen, emphasizing the importance of every student's voice and perspective. He is also grateful to the Board of Education for recognizing the significance of this role and for implementing a rigorous selection process to become student representative.
- He highlighted the importance of recognizing that Orange School District has done a commendable job providing an array of resources aimed at aiding students in the learning journey, particularly when it comes to enhancing their academic performance at home. One noteworthy initiative is the TutorMe website, which grants students access to tutors from all corners of the globe, offering 24/7 assistance from the comfort of their homes.
- He exemplified the district's dedication to ensuring that students have the support they need to succeed. In addition to his own success, he witnessed numerous classmates benefiting from TutorMe services.
  - Brianna Johnson's experience with TutorMe shows the transformative impact by utilizing the platform for physics, Brianna not only mastered the subject herself, but also became a valuable resource for her peers.
  - Similarly, Anays Perlera Tobar's success story with Tutor Me, underscores his versatility. By using the platform to critique her essays, she was able to enhance her writing skills and ultimately achieve higher grades. This personalized feedback and attention to detail have undoubtedly contributed to Anays' academic growth.
  - In Tito's personal experience, he could attest to the effectiveness of the TutorMe website before using it. He received a bad grade on his biology exam. However, after using the resources available on the website and going over key concepts with his teacher, Mr. Santiago, he improved significantly, and scored a hundred percent on the exam.
- He noted that the students are the ones who show up every Monday to Friday occupying the school desk. They experience firsthand the ins and outs of the school day, their viewpoints, the challenges they face, and their unique needs offer invaluable insights for enhancing their educational journey to establish a more conducive learning environment.
- He noted that there are specific areas where the district can make notable improvements.
  - It starts with the first day of school. Ensuring that students have their schedule sorted out is paramount. This prevents issues like missed classes, which should not be happening because all time is valuable.
  - Additionally, in today's climate, giving priority to safety and security measures is of utmost importance. Being vigilant and proactive in this regard safeguards the wellbeing of both students and staff.



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- o Active engagement from parents is another vital factor. Without their support and collaboration, the educational process may not reach its full potential. Involving parents in their child's education not only provides a robust support system, but also fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility.
- He highlighted that there needs to be College & Career readiness in the early stages of high school vs. Junior & Senior year. Students need to have early access to thorough information about college choices and potential career paths during their academic journey. By offering resources and guidance on college readiness, we can equip students to make well-informed decisions about their future. This strategy not only enhances the quality of our school's college acceptance rate, but also guarantees that every student has the chance to pursue higher education and attain their professional aspirations.
- He assured that he will provide regular updates from a student's perspective each month. Anyone who wishes to reach out to him can do so via his email. As the student representative, he is here to speak candidly to tell it how it is and to ensure that the voices of our students are heard loud and clear.
- Dr. Fitzhugh thanked Tito's parents for their work in-district and for their stellar work as parents.

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**C. SUPERINTENDENT'S PRESENTATION**

Ms. Johnson introduces Dr. Fitzhugh for his Superintendent report.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh II, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Fitzhugh greets the community and staff.

Dr. Fitzhugh provides the community with a presentation of district highlights such as:

- **Student of the Month for September 2023**

Name of School	Student of the Month	Name of School	Student of the Month
Central Elementary School	Ava Frederickson	Orange High School	Josena Noel
Cleveland Street School	Aaron Dufresne	Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation	Fenix Rayne Donaldson
Forest Street School	Juliette Santa Maria	Park Avenue School	Jacob Ruballos
Heywood Avenue School	Joshua Eastman	Rosa Parks Community School	Dacheleer Evra
Lincoln Avenue School	Katherine Abundez Nava	STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges	Mark Rodriguez
Oakwood Avenue School	Oluwateniola Abatti	Twilight U	Kamora Blair

- **WORLD TEACHERS DAY ON OCTOBER 5, 2023**

- o World Teachers' Day took place on October 5, 2023. This day marked the anniversary of the adoption of the 1966 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. It sets standards regarding the rights and responsibilities of teachers for their initial preparation, further education, recruitment, employment, and learning conditions.



- o The Orange Public School District celebrates our teachers who work diligently to ensure the children get a quality education. Dr. Fitzhugh thanked the teachers in the auditorium and at home.

- **OCTOBER IS NATIONAL PRINCIPALS MONTH**

- o Dr. Fitzhugh recognized that the month of October is coined National Principals Month and thanked all the principals for their continued tenacity and support of staff and students within the school district for National Principals Month.

- **NJSLA, NJGPA DATA REPORT**

- o Dr. Fitzhugh, II introduces Mr. David Scutari, Executive Director of the Office of STEM Focused Learning. Dr. Fitzhugh covered the ELA section of the NJGPA graduation Ready, the comparative from 2022 to 2023. Mr. Scutari covered the mathematics sections of the NJGPA graduation Ready, the comparative from 2022 to 2023.

- o **Dr. Fitzhugh, II notated the following:**

- **NJGPA - ELA**

	Valid Scores 2022	Graduation Ready 750-850 (2022)		Valid Scores 2023	Graduation Ready 725-850 (2023)		Difference
		#	%		#	%	
<b>OHS</b>	260	30	11.5%	324	184	57%	<b>+45.5%</b>
<b>STEM</b>	43	29	67.4%	28	28	100%	<b>+32.6%</b>
<b>District</b>	303	59	19.5%	352	212	60%	<b>+40.5%</b>

- Dr. Fitzhugh, II acknowledged that the district does have more work to do. We want a hundred percent across the board for all of our scholars. We are moving in the right direction, but we do have more work to do as a community.

- o **Mr. Scutari notated the following:**

- **NJGPA - MATH**

	Valid Scores 2022	Graduation Ready 750-850 (2022)		Valid Scores 2023	Graduation Ready 725-850 (2023)		Difference
		#	%		#	%	
<b>OHS</b>	259	53	20%	331	61	18%	<b>-2%</b>
<b>STEM</b>	43	40	93%	28	26	93%	<b>0%</b>
<b>District</b>	302	93	30%	359	87	24%	<b>-6%</b>



- **ORANGE HIGH SCHOOL - ATHLETICS**

- Dr. Fitzhugh, II introduces Mr. Frantantoni, Assistant Principal of Academics & Athletics at Orange High School.
- Mr. Frantantoni gave a breakdown of his Athletic Support Staff. Himself, Ms. Pia Frazier, Athletic Assistant. Mr. Edwin Vasquez, Manager of Facilities and Grounds & Security. Ms. Maribel Montalvo, Administrative Assistant, and Ms. Margarita Morphin, Athletic Trainer.
- Mr. Frantantoni explained that people ask why athletics, education-based athletics is something that is always coming up in many, many school districts. One of his philosophies is that athletics is a vehicle. It provides student athletes with many opportunities that don't always afford non-athletic students. Provides opportunities to grow, to learn, to achieve, and to fail in a safe place. Another philosophy, as a coach, is we either win or we learn. So whether we win, it's a learning opportunity, but I don't always see a loss as a loss. It's an opportunity to learn and to grow. Athletics over time helps to build a lot of these life skills. A lot of these soft skills we need later on in life. Leadership, teamwork, communication, perseverance, and grit and sportsmanship.
- Research has shown that students who are involved in athletics have a higher GPA, less absences from school, less disciplinary issues, more likely to go to college, more likely to receive other opportunities at the college and university level.
- Even though athletics is the vehicle, academics is the engine. He always tells his student athletes that academics always come before athletics. A student may be a very good athlete on the field, but without that education and that academics backing it up, that vehicle is not going to take you very far. So quality education is what we're really striving for.
- Mr. Frantantoni listed the athletic offerings for the school year:
  - **Fall:** (Football (V - JV - F); Boys Soccer (V - JV); Girls Soccer (V); Girls Volleyball (V - JV); Cheer
    - Girl Tennis (JV-new for 23-24) - The Office of Innovation and the USTA has been doing a lot of work with tennis at the youth level and at OPA & they are looking to implement it at OHS)
  - **Winter:** Girls Basketball (V - JV); Boys Basketball (V - JV -F); Wrestling (V); Indoor Track B & G (V); Cheer
  - **Spring:** Softball (V); Baseball (V); Boys Volleyball (V - JV); Outdoor Track B & G (V); Boys Tennis (JV - new for 23-24);
    - Girls Flag Football (V - new for 23-24) - We have been working with the New York Jets as a liaison, they are helping us out with developing that program. Apply for some grants to help with some funding. It should be good to go for the spring for girls. Flag football eligibility issues often come up when we talk about athletics.
    - The NJSIAA, the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association is the governing body of athletics in New Jersey.

- **ELIGIBILITY:**

- To be eligible for athletic competition during the first semester (September 1 to January 31) a pupil must have passed 25% of the credits (30) required by the State of New Jersey for graduation (120), during the immediately preceding academic year.
- To be eligible for athletic competition during the second semester (Feb. 1 to June 30), a pupil must have passed the equivalent of 12.5% of the credits (15) required by New Jersey for graduation (120) at the close of the preceding semester (Jan. 31). Full-year courses shall be equated as one-half of the total credits to be gained for the full year to determine credits passed during the immediately preceding semester.



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- o Completion of the Athletic Registration process on the OHS Athletics Website covers the items listed below every school year: <https://www.orange.k12.nj.us/domain/93>
- o At Orange High School, it's not always just the credits. It is a privilege to participate in athletics. It's not a right. We want to make sure that our student athletes are holding up their end of the academic bargain. A GPA of at least 2.0 cumulative GPA as well as those 30 credits.
- o There are multiple forms and information that OHS collects for the state, reviewing opioid use, steroid use, sportsmanship, etc. Physicals are done every year, with doctor clearances.
- o If a student is below a certain threshold, we have student academic athletic tutors for our student athletes this year. We also have the new Tutor Me program, which provides all students, not just student athletes with free live tutoring on a 24 hour basis.

- **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- o **Boys Soccer:**
  - *Conference Champions 2021*
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2021*
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2022*
- o **Girls Soccer:**
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2021*
- o **Boys Basketball:**
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2022-23*
- o **Girls Basketball:**
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2022-23*
- o **Wrestling:**
  - *Merlin Senat was the first OHS wrestler to achieve a hundred career wins. That's not something that's very easily accomplished, especially starting out as a freshman. That means a student has to win at least 25 matches every year. He was a District 9 and region 3 Place Winner. He made it down to the State Tournament in Atlantic City the first time in 20 years.*
- o **Track:**
  - *Group 3 Boys 4 x 100 Meter Relay Sectional Champions 2023*
  - *Multiple NJSIAA Group 3 Championship Qualifiers 2023*
  - *Multiple SEC Liberty Conference Champions & Place Winners 2023*
- o **Softball:**
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2021*
  - *Conference Champions 2022*
- o **Boys Volleyball:**
  - *Conference Champions 2022*
  - *NJSIAA Tournament Qualifier 2022 & 2023*

- **Class of 2021**

*Avg. GPA - 2.78*  
*\$2.4 million in combined scholarships*

- **Class of 2022**

*Avg. GPA - 2.81*  
*\$2.1 million in combined scholarships*



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- **In SY22-23, student-athletes were ~20% of the total population (261/1251)**
  - MP1 Honor Roll - 67 received honors (out of 260 total -25%)
  - MP2 Honor Roll - 58 received honors (out of 257 total - 22%)
  - MP3 Honor Roll - 60 received honors (out of 224 total -27%)
- **Class of 2023 - Senior Student-Athletes**
  - 90 total - 69 at OHS
  - Average GPA of 3.09
  - Over \$6,000,000 in accumulated scholarships
- **Class of 2024 - Student-Athletes**
  - Average GPA of 3.06
- **Class of 2025 - Student-Athletes**
  - Average GPA of 3.02

- ❖ **Jalen Phillips** - SFC Steve DiGregorio Young Man of the Year Recipient 2023
- ❖ **Gideon Antwi** - Essex/Hudson National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame Scholarship Recipient 2023
- ❖ **Ca'Moore Jones** - SEC Scholar-Athlete 2023
- ❖ **Roderica Adeclat** - SEC Scholar-Athlete 2023
- ❖ **Mohammed Yasin** - SEC/Yogi Berra Museum Best Teammate Award 2023
- ❖ **Brianna Ajawuihe** - NJSIAA Scholar-Athlete 2023

- **FACILITIES UPDATE**

Dr. Fitzhugh introduced Mr. Vasquez, Manager of Buildings and Grounds and Mr. Ballard, School Business Administrator. Mr. Vasquez gave the monthly report.

- Custodial staff is back on their split schedule.
- The Facilities team has hit the ground running to ensure we conduct walkthroughs with the building administrator to see and address issues first-hand before they become a problem.
- The district utilizes the Brightly reporting system to track all work order requests for repairs.
- We have two shifts, morning and evening shift. That's to ensure that the schools are clean and disinfected for the next day. Ensure that everything's getting ready for the schools.
- During the month of October, Facilities will continue to meet with the Schools Development Authority and Terminal Construction to make sure that there is progress related to the Construction at the Orange High School renovation and the Cleveland Street School Projects.
  - **Heywood Avenue School** - A dance floor was installed in the trailer. Despite shipping delays, progress is being made. The floor was completed the weekend of October 7th.
  - **Cleveland Street School** - On September 21, 2023, the Facilities team, accompanied by our Superintendent, Dr. Fitzhugh, visited the construction site of Cleveland Street School. The purpose of their visit was to meet with the Schools Development Authority and select colors for the new gymnasium. Additionally, they went on a walkthrough of the site to observe the progress made so far. The district has tentative deadlines for when that first students should be back in that building, which again was September of 2025. We are happy to say that we are moving at a much more expedited pace and should hope to have





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our staff and students back in that building prior to September of 2025. The facilities committee will be invited to tour the building with Facilities, so that they could get a more hands-on experience of what exactly is taking place in the building.

- **IMPORTANT UPDATES**

- **October Calendars:** Dr. Fitzhugh highlighted that the October calendars are already on the websites of each school. So parents can plan accordingly.
- **Superintendent's Weekly Update:** Dr. Fitzhugh highlighted that the Weekly Update still goes out. He thanked Ms. Boyd for redesigning the update so it's more user-friendly. Ultimately, the Weekly Update gives information and a catchment to the community. If you have any suggestions, please email [reopeningofschools@orange.k12.nj.us](mailto:reopeningofschools@orange.k12.nj.us).
- **District Goals and the Strategic Plan Reminders:** The district goals and strategic plan are the guiding force in the development of the Orange Public School District. You are encouraged to review each plan and ask questions related to development of the whole child as well as the district's partnership with families.

This concludes the Superintendent's report.

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**D. BOARD MINUTES**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve September 13, 2023, public meeting minutes.

**Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield, second by Sueann Gravesande.**

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Derrick Henry, Fatimah Turner

Abstain: Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Siaka Sherif

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

Ms. Johnson motions to approve September 13, 2023, closed meeting minutes.

**Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield, second by David Armstrong.**

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Derrick Henry, Fatimah Turner, Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT**





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**E. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Ms. Johnson motions to open public comments.**

**Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield, second by Sueann Gravesande.**

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Derrick Henry, Fatimah Turner, Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote : Samantha Crockett, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT**

- **Takeynah Sawyer - Lincoln Avenue School, Orange Education Association:** Stated that
  - in response to recent changes, OEA respectfully disagrees with key points from the last board meeting including:
    - Their stance on supporting Dr. Fitzhugh
    - Acknowledging collective contributions and STEM success
    - Advocating for fiscal fairness and equity - It is the combined contributions of educators, support staff and administrators that drive progress. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done, especially considering the diverse challenges faced by many other schools, including systemic issues and compensation discrepancies. Lastly, we firmly believe that unwarranted compensation gaps are systematic of systemic issues, but we stand against these disparities and advocate for equitable pay structures. We are committed to retaining our educators and ensuring that these issues do not force them to migrate to other districts, which currently compromises the quality of education. Therefore, we come to the negotiation table in good faith and will continue to work towards a future where all students in our community have the opportunities they deserve.
  - Dr. Fitzhugh thanked Ms. Sawyer for her commentary and thanked her and Mr. Flournoy for meeting with him last week about the student growth objectives.
- **Patricia Arthur - 45 Year resident of Orange:** Ms. Arthur is concerned about the issues that were advertised in the paper. An email she received about the Orange school district and the voting of the Superintendent's contract two years before it's up and the increase of \$1.6 million dollars on the back of the taxpayers in Orange. Wanted to know if this contract was done in the public and was the public aware of this contract being signed in the public in the September 13th meeting. She saw the second and third grade scores for 2023, but there is nothing to compare them with for 2019 - 2022. A lot of the goals that were set for the district have not been met. She is requesting the OPRA for a copy of the Superintendent's previous contract, and his contract that was just signed in September.
  - Ms. Johnson asks Ms. Kleen, School Board Attorney, to answer Ms. Arthur's question.



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- Ms. Kleen stated the following:

"I'm going to talk first about the article that was put into the local talk. Unfortunately that article was negligent and it was wrong in many aspects. The first aspect was that the article said, I personally told teachers, staff and members of the public that they could not speak about the Superintendent's contract. That is false. I never told a soul they could not speak about Dr. Fitzhugh's contract. It never happened. Second. Second, it reported that Vice President Gravesande voted yes on Dr. Fitzhugh's contract. That is incorrect. Vice President Gravesande abstained because she has a family member who is an employee in the district and finally in what I can only assume was an attempt to cause discontent around the community. The paper reported that this auditorium, which holds almost 900 people, was packed full of people waiting to speak and that they were denied the opportunity. That is also false. There were less people there than there are now. There were maybe 20 people at 6:00 PM which was the advertised time for the hearing on the Superintendent's contract. I don't think there was more than four people here and when we opened it up for people to discuss as we advertised we would at 6:00 PM no one came up, no one wanted to discuss his contract."

"I had asked the newspaper to publish a retraction because their information was false and they have published a partial retraction. They acknowledged that I didn't tell anyone they couldn't speak and they acknowledged that Vice President Gravesande abstained, they seemingly ignored my request for them to retract their statement that this auditorium was full of 900 people regardless. So to answer your question, yes, we advertised in the paper as required by law that there would be a hearing to discuss the Superintendent's contract at 6:00 PM. At 6:00 PM we opened up the hearing to discuss the contract. No one who was present wanted to speak. We then adjourned the hearing, voted on the contract and went into closed session. When we came back out from the closed session, we again opened up to the public just as we did right now and asked if anyone had anything they'd like to say to the board. Not one single person came to the podium."

"With respect to your goals, I think you asked a question about were all the goals met? I can tell you that a lot of board goals are ongoing in terms of what they are. So some of them are about training that individual board members have to do. As I'm sure we can't really force every board member to go to every training, but as far as I'm aware, everyone has met their requirements for board training. There was an additional goal set for group activities for the board. I think some of those have not quite happened yet. I don't know if there are any other specific questions."

"And then just finally before I stop talking, the Superintendent's contract was posted on the district's website. I don't know if it's still on the website, but we can make sure if it's not that it gets reposted, but I'm also sure that if you send me an email I'll send you the contract. It's public record so it's no problem. Okay. The 1.6 million is again, all I can assume is intentionally being overstated. 1.6 million over five years. It was not a \$1.6 million raise. And remember, every Superintendent contract has to be approved by the Department of Education. The State Department of Education reviewed his contract and said it was within the fiscal guidelines, meaning we're not allowed to even offer Superintendents an outrageous amount of money. It has to be within the norm. Dr. Fitzhugh's contract amount is well within the mean and it was approved by the Department of Education. Thank you."



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- Dr. Fitzhugh, II stated that he will do a presentation on the goals from the previous year just so everybody can at least see how much progress we did in fact make.

Mr. Tarver wanted to address the public comments. He stated that Board members can address anything. Anytime they want just as long as they don't go over the time limit.

Mr. Ballard reminded Mr. Tarver that he had to wait and that once the public concludes their public comment, then Madam President will open the period for the board members to discuss.

- **Elyssa Pierre-Le Bris - Heywood Avenue School Parent:** Concerned about the recent change of Vice Principal Murphy from Heywood to assist with another school, and if consideration to have that leave replacement rotated amongst various principals or vice principals to support that school rather than leaving Heywood without a Vice Principal. Also concerned about a large turnaround rate of teachers at Heywood and what is being done to retain the good teachers but also to attract more viable teachers at Heywood to replace those who do decide to move on.
  - Dr. Fitzhugh, II commented that ultimately the retention strategy is always to ensure that we have job fairs and conversations, etc., but more importantly, we just had a conversation with a group of paraprofessionals who are interested in elevating. The district is going to work with them to ensure that they could be part of a different part of the infrastructure as well the organization as it relates to the administrative changes. He is studying what needs to be done, and will give a full report next month.
- **Kirby Smith - Heywood Avenue School Teacher & Parent:** She is asking the district to bring Mr. Murphy back home to Heywood.
- **Heywood Avenue Community:** Why only 15 days notice given for Mr. Murphy's leave, trying to understand the rationale of leaving Heywood with only one admin. Will Heywood be notified if/when of his return? "On behalf of and in the best interest of our Heywood family, we ask you to please bring Mr. Murphy home to where he belongs."
- **Jennifer Mooney - Teacher at Heywood Avenue School:** Felt that this move was not handled with consideration or transparency as teachers. The community and parents are asking for Mr. Murphy's return.
- **Tesa Singleton, 467 Fairview Avenue:** Asked about the updates with the Chartwell. Also concerned about Cleveland Street School and the exact date to reopen. She received a letter from the city council stating that it is going to be September, 2024, even though Mr. Ballard stated previously that the BOE is hoping for January 2025.
  - Ms. Johnson clarified that the city is the city. The school district is the school district. The city can not promise anything that is governed by the school district. The district administrators have a better understanding of when they will know when Cleveland is done and we will keep everyone updated.
  - Ms. Johnson asked Dr. Fitzhugh to speak on the status of Chartwell. Dr. Fitzhugh, stated that he, Ms. Gravesande and Mr. Armstrong have been doing tours of Chartwells during the lunch periods. Ms. Gravesande & Mr. Armstrong gave updates.



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- Ms. Gravesande stated that she did an unannounced visit to STEM with Dr. Fitzhugh. She sat and ate the food and then afterwards spoke with the students in the cafeteria to get their input on the meals. She felt that we are still not there, but we are getting there. There were favorable responses from students, so it's a work in progress. They are in communication with Chartwells that they will continue to do unannounced visits as board members with Dr. Fitzhugh.
- Mr. Armstrong confirmed that all of his visits were unannounced and he ate the meals at every location that he visited.

Mr. Ballard stated, "What I'm trying to explain to the public as there was a question directly from Ms. Singleton to the Superintendent, by default the Superintendent asked the board members to respond to that question regarding the food because he wanted their perspective to be heard. Mr. Tarver, you will absolutely have your opportunity to speak, but this question was posed to the Superintendent and he proxied his response to the board members. That's the only reason why they spoke. We're not trying to keep you quiet, but the moment public comment is done, you will have your opportunity to speak. We still have other people from the public who would like to speak and that's the process that we're going to move forward with."

- **Heywood Avenue Parent - Seven Oaks Resident:** First time at the board meetings. Will be coming back to the next meeting. Embarrassed at the way that the board members are arguing and cutting one another off. Feels the board may need to re-vote the people and relook at everything that's being done because we want to know where their money is going. As residents of Seven Oaks, she feels that they make up the difference in everything else that is going on in the city. Any resident that comes up to the podium should be respected and listened to because we pay a lot of taxes in this town and a lot of our money is being squandered and just given to people. She is going to be vigilant about it because she needs to know where her tax money is going.

Mr. Ballard thanked everyone for their comments. He stated the following, "I'm going to briefly state something on the record and then I'll turn it over to Madam President so she could get input from the board. But before every meeting there's a statement that we read that basically states, every person that approaches the podium for public comment gets a maximum of three minutes. So we are timing the amount of time that each person is speaking. In some instances, some of you were going over that three minute allotment and we cannot arbitrarily allow more time for one person than another person. In fact, some of the conversation up here took almost five minutes because of the back and forth. The way the process is supposed to work is we're supposed to listen to all of the public comments, which is why you see us writing notes. Once we write those notes down at the end of the public comment session, we are then supposed to respond to whatever questions we deem appropriate at that point in time, whether we have information or if we don't, then the president will then allow for members of the board to then address, which is the reason why I asked Mr. Tarver to stop so that we could get through the public comment portion to allow everyone the equal amount of time for them to speak."

- Ms. Kleen, Board Attorney stated, "I think it's just also important to note there is a process to board meetings. The board president is the chair. She is in control of the meeting. It's not accurate to say that every board member can control the meeting because they cannot by our own rules and the state's rules and our own board policies, the board president is in control of the meeting. So when she asks someone to



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stop speaking, they are supposed to stop speaking. If they continually talk over her, it's that person who is out of order. She could actually call them out of order and remove them from the meeting. She has that power. That is her role as a board president. She also has the authority to send that particular issue to somebody else."

"So for example, when someone asked a question and she asked me to respond to it, only the board president can do that. The board president can say, I can't answer that question, but this person can. And then ask that person to respond. I know how sometimes it seems like maybe it doesn't, but the last person who just spoke indicated that it seemed like the board president was not being fair and was talking over people. The reverse is actually opposite. It is actually true. She wasn't talking over Mr. Tarver, she was trying to get him to stop talking and that is her role to keep control of the meeting. She gets to decide who speaks. She's elected by the other members of this board that is pursuant to board policy, as I said in state law. So I just want to make it clear to everyone that the president is not doing something that she shouldn't be doing and she isn't acting outside of her own authority. That is her role in these meetings to make sure that we can have them, that the public, your time to talk is sacred. It's supposed to be your time. We're not supposed to be interfering or interrupting you. This is your time and it's her job to make sure that you get your time. Thank you."

Mr. Ballard read the first motion by Mr. Winfield, properly seconded by Mr. Armstrong to close public comment, and also noted that Dr. Turner would like to address the board as a member of the public.

Ms. Johnson (OBOE President) stated that the board would like to redact the first motion.

Mr. Ballard clarified. There is a motion to rescind the initial motion by Dr. Turner and seconded by Mr. Wingfield to keep public comment open.

Mr. Ballard motions to rescind the motion to close public comment and leave public comment open .

**Motion by Fatimah Turner, second by Jeffrey Wingfield.**

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Fatimah Turner,

No: Tyrone, Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Derrick Henry, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (1) NAY ( ) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT(1) NOT PRESENT AT VOTE**

Ms. Kleen, Board Attorney, stated, "Dr. Turner, before we begin, I just want to make it very clear to everyone. I don't think you've ever done this before, so I want to make sure this is clear. Board members are allowed to come and speak in public as public members. Whatever Dr. Turner says right now, she's not saying as a board member and is not a representative of the Board of Education. She's saying it in her own private capacity as a member of the public."



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- **Fatima Turner - 2 Ross Monica Court, orange, New Jersey (East Ward):** Came to speak as a resident of Orange. Completely, utterly embarrassed by this board. All homeowners in the city of Orange Pay taxes. I pay taxes. Raised three children in the city of Orange, and not one of her children currently attends the Orange School district. She feels that the schools weren't equitable. More time, energy, and money have gone to the highest paid taxpayers in the South Ward. She would like for equity in all of our school district so the parents who don't make as much money can get an Administrator like Mr. Murphy. She joined the Orange School Board on behalf of all single moms so that they can have the same experiences as the rest of the students and the parents in this district.

Ms. Johnson motions to close public comments.

Motion by Sueann Gravesande, second by Jeffrey Wingfield.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Fatimah Turner, Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Derrick Henry, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT (1) NOT PRESENT AT VOTE**

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## **F. BOARD RESOLUTIONS**

Ms. Johnson motions to consent agenda, including the HIB cases and the Human Resources Agenda.

- Ms. Gravesande commented that we need to discuss why we are here in the first place. Student achievements. She is very happy to see that there are resolutions to help the students with their calculus preparing for the AP course and more internship opportunities for our students. She feels they need more exposure in the workplace. She would like to see more of this if we can expand beyond Kean and other universities. A need to partner with the city as it relates to whenever they're having their contracts to put in the contract to have a portion of our students having internship opportunities, whatever businesses that they're bringing into this city. Possibly reaching out to our neighboring city to see if we can have some sort of impact there to get exposure first for our students. and also the dual enrollment program between the Orange Board of Education and Essex County College.
- Mr. Wingfield abstained from anything dealing with Montclair State University.
- Vice President Gravesande abstained from anything related to Jeremy Gravesande.



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#### **District Meetings - Public**

1. Public Relations Committee Virtual Meeting - Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at 4:00 pm
2. Orange Board Education Public Board Meeting - Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., held at Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation, 400 Central Avenue, Orange, NJ, 07050. Will Recess until 6:45pm, but no later than 7:30pm

#### **District Meetings - Closed**

1. Curriculum Committee Virtual Meeting - Tuesday, October 31, 2023 at 3:30pm
2. Facilities Committee Virtual Meeting - Monday, November 6, 2023 at 3:30pm
3. Policy Committee Virtual Meeting - Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 4pm
4. Finance Committee Virtual Meeting - Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 5:30pm
5. Human Resource Committee Virtual Meeting - Monday, November 6, 2023, at 5:30pm

#### **Motion by David Armstrong, second by Jeffrey Wingfield.**

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, David Armstrong, Sueann Gravesande, Fatimah Turner

Abstain: Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: Samantha Crockett, Derrick Henry, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT (1) NOT PRESENT AT VOTE**

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#### **G. BOARD COMMENTS**

Mr. Tarver stated the following: "I just turned back on first. Ms. Arthur, thank you for your comments concerning that newspaper article that you discussed. The only board member's comments that were mentioned in that article were mine. They were not comments to the newspaper and they weren't responses to the newspaper. Those comments were taken from my board comments on the board meeting that happened on September 13th. So those are direct quotes and excerpts from that meeting. So it wasn't a separate interview that happened. And if you actually read the article and get on Facebook and look at the September 13th meeting, all of those words in the paper, I don't think the newspaper took all of my comments and all of my transcript from what I said, but everything there was said at the meeting. So it wasn't a separate interview or anything regarding your concern about the goals and where you can double check to see where the goals were met. On the district website, we have all of the educational goals. And on the district website in Goal one, it has subsections two through five, which say which criteria is supposed to be met. For math, it says we're supposed to meet 60% growth with the i-Ready Diagnostic NWEA, MAP District benchmark assessments and select performance tasks. It pretty much says the same thing for ELA and it says almost the same thing for science, but I'll address science also."

"All of that data was published at the June 14th board meeting. The video was shown, the slides were shown. Anybody can go back to that video and see that if you're looking for 60% growth across the board, it was not met. So when I made those comments at that September 30th meeting, it wasn't my assessment, it was put together by the district and presented on video at that board meeting. So if you hear any other board members saying that





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goals were met, just go review the video because it is public knowledge and it's accessible by the public. So I didn't just pull that out of thin air."

"Regarding part four of goal number one, the science assessment, again, the NJSLA scores that were shown here. Well in general, anytime the NJSLA scores come out, they're published the first week of April every year. The board doesn't present that data until usually October, which is four or five months later, whatever number of months later. But it's public by the state the first week of April. And I've been making comments on those NJSLA results since May I believe. But in particular, and just quickly we talk about the science assessment. Excuse me, I'll address the science assessment and shucks, but within those results with the science assessment, only the fifth grade, eighth grade and 11th grade actually take the science assessment test. Alright? We had a total of 1009 students take the science assessment and only 85 passed in the fifth grade. There were 389 students in the fifth grade that took the test."

"Only 31 passed in 11th grade. 299 students took the test. Only 48 passed in the eighth grade. 321 students took the test, only six passed. Alright? So it's all in the data. All of this stuff is public. That's why I made those comments at the, excuse me, September 13th board meeting and all of the comments were made before we voted. That was my argument to not prematurely extended the Superintendent contract two years ahead of time. I also said during that meeting, let's wait another year or two to see what the progress is before we give to me a premature five-year extension. It was not calling for the Superintendent to get fired or anything. I said we need further review. Alright, again, anybody can look at the September 13th meeting and see my comments. And if you want proof of what I said at that meeting, look at the June, excuse me. Yeah, look at the June 14th video and you'll see everything was presented there. Everything I said about the finances that's in the yearly audits. One audit is on the board website. The other audit for this past year has not made it to the board website for some reason, but all of the audits are available on the state website. So if you go to the state website and download both years audits, you'll see that there were major deficiencies in the finances with the school district. I made a comment about the bond ratings."

"That's not posted on the district website, but anybody can open a free account to standards in poor who actually gives our credit ratings. And if you open that free account and you do a search for orange public schools, you'll see where our credit rating is and you'll see that we actually missed a bond payment. We actually dropped our credit rating. So like I said, I don't pull this stuff out of thin air. All of this stuff is public. All of this stuff is posted. The majority of stuff is actually posted by the district. So when we post something in June, and then two or three months later, there's still board members coming up here saying that we met our goals. It's kind of crazy. I don't get it. You're a former board member yourself and I believe a former board president. So the process, like I said, I don't get it as far as the protocol of this meeting. I'm glad what Ms. Kleen said that Ms. Kleen said that the board president runs the meeting. But again, there are only nine elected state officials up on this school board. And all of us have equal say and equal power. If the board president does want to cut off a board member, it should only be if the board member is not following the rules. Alright? But it just should not be a random cutoff that should not be allowed."



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“The only other person that has a guaranteed voice to speak is the Superintendent because he’s an ex-official board member. So he has a guaranteed voice to say what he wants to say, but he’s still a non-voting board member. But nobody else up here, no other employee up here has the right to cut off a board member when they’re saying something or instruct the person conducting audio to turn off my microphone. They don’t have that authority. So there is not one board member on this board that has not been a board member for less than two years and still the basic rules of board meetings, Robert’s rules, which are the guidelines to our board meetings and the policies that we vote on every year are not being followed. I don’t care what anybody says. I got a copy of everything. If you want, I give you my book of Robert’s rules if anybody wants it.”

“And I’ll point out to certain sections where people and residents and parents can clearly see that the rules aren’t being followed to the T. Like I said, we can have disagreements on what we believe should be conducted or what we agree on whether the district is exceeding or not. But even when I was board president, when you were board president, when Lidell Carter was board president, maybe Mr. Griffith, I think he served as board president and years and years and decades before the five of us were board presidents, the rules were followed. Everybody had equal guaranteed voices. That’s not happening now. So people, I don’t know if they need more training or they need to re-review what our meeting protocol is, who actually has authority to carry out certain actions during board meetings. That all needs to be reviewed. There’s a lot more to say, but right now I don’t have anything else to say. I hope that I answered your questions, Ms. Arthur, and if anybody else ask questions, I can address them after the board meeting. Thank you”

“Dr. Fatimah Turner stated, “As a board member, I can say that I’ve participated in all the trainings that I was required to participate in. But one thing that I’m not sure that they cover in training, but I know just because I was raised that way, is propriety and decorum. And I don’t think as a board and collectively, we are showing decorum. Everything should be done in decency and in order and it’s not being done that way. And as I said, as a resident, it’s embarrassing. Ms. Arthur, you know that we hold you in the highest regard. You know that you are a gem. So us or the board president trying to adhere to the three minutes is all in respect because I’m scared of you. So I don’t want no beef. I want to repeat as a board member, it’s my goal to create an equitable school district. Not one school is better than or more important than the other. We need an equitable school district. We want to come together and raise the entire district from good to great. With that being said, I want to thank Ms. Sawyer for your comments. You made a comment that it wasn’t just Dr. Fitzhugh who did the work, if you recall, I said that. I said one thing he did do was create a heck of an admin team and a heck of a team to carry out the duties. But just like the admin team, and I think that I give you guys credit and the teachers, the parents, the school support staff, I give you guys credit for all the accomplishments.”

“We all have to take accountability for our deficits as well. Dr. Fitzhugh, you put people in order. It’s not just him. We all have to be accountable for Mr. Tarver has some good points. I don’t agree with his tactics. I don’t agree with the way that he delivers the things that he delivers. But if we have some things that we need to fix, it’s not just Dr. Fitzhugh, he has a whole admin team who also has staff and support staff and the board. We all are accountable for raising this district from good to great. We all have to do our due diligence. We all have to do our jobs. It’s all of us. If we keep pointing fingers at each other, we’re not going to get anything done. We all need to look at ourselves in



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the mirror and we all need to stop trying to, as I said earlier, I am a doctor of philosophy. I'm not going to go try to do brain surgery because I'm not qualified. We all need to stay and do what we are qualified to do so that we can bring this district where it needs to be and stop trying to step on each other's toes. I also want to point out that in case people didn't realize, but the board, all of us up here, we do not get paid. This is voluntary. So I think the last person said something about paying our salaries, but we don't get paid going to walkthroughs, facilities, taste and Chartwell, foods going to all the things that we do, we do outside of getting paid. We don't get paid. We volunteer to do this work. And most of us do it because we love it. I actually love this school. I love the city of Orange. I love the residents. I love the school board, and I want to see us succeed. And I think that y'all should share Mr. Murphy. Geez. Okay. I think y'all should share Mr. Murphy."

"Mr. Wingfield stated, "I would like to say let's clone Mr. Murphy. Maybe that would Right? Could do that. If we could, I would. I suggest it. He seems to be very desirable. With that being said, Patricia Arthur, former Board President, I honor and respect you with all my heart. In fact, I believe serving with you on the board, nine years ago, we as our Board President, initiated the STEM Academy, Innovative Academy of the Oranges. And we should celebrate that being a school that is comparable. My thought is that it's comparable to any charter school outside of the district. I believe that is the initiative we created and why we created the STEM Academy, science, technology, engineering, and Math here in the district. We should celebrate the fact that we expanded the high school and with that expansion, we integrated a robotics room."

"Not many people are aware of that, but we integrated a robotics room in the high school with several science labs and an alternative gym, and expanded and renovated the cafeteria and expanded the parking for our teachers to retain being a graduate of Orange High School. I'm amazed and wish we had that renovation when I was in high school. But also we need to celebrate Heywood Avenue School Elementary School being recognized in 2021 as a Project Lead The Way School, a distinction that the school has maintained up until today. We need to celebrate that Forest Street Elementary School is officially awarded the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Thank you, Dr. Cook. We also need to celebrate the fact that Cleveland Elementary School is in its final stages of completion. And when I was in school, I attended Cleveland Avenue School. And with that being said, it will be phenomenal, the architecture, the basement. If you've ever been in a basement before, you couldn't stand in the basement. Now not only can you stand in the basement, but we added classrooms and there's a media center and restrooms, which did not exist when I was in school. Also, we need to celebrate the fact that this administration over the last couple of years, have obtained and acquired over \$50 million for all of our seniors who graduated. That's an accomplishment that never existed before. Dr. Fitzhugh and I think these are things that we need to celebrate. I'm not saying everything is great, but we're working to accomplish for our students. So no one can say that we're not volunteering our time to accomplish something for a school district that I went to. We are. And that's where my heart lies. Thank you President. Thank you."

Ms. Gravesande stated, "As a board member, we have a few, just a few power, and one of them is voting. And I want you to take note tonight. Five of us sitting here today, approve the agenda. Had one of that five abstain. The agenda would not be approved. Take a minute and let that digest. If I had been an individual who disagree, probably maybe with one item here, am I going to vote or abstain so that you don't get your salary or that teacher doesn't get hired?"



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That is something that we need to look at. I might disagree with what Dr. Fitzhugh is doing, but I have to look at the collective. At the end of the day, we have students, we have teachers to pay, we have staff to pay, administrative staff to pay. We have families to take care of. And I might not agree with Dr. Fitzhugh, but I'm going to come to Dr. Fitzhugh with a few solutions. I'm not an expert. Like Dr. Turner said. We are not experts, but we are professionals. We are professionals. Some of us have masters on this board, some of us have doctorates on this board. We brought our expertise here to help Dr. Fitzhugh and to add to that article that was published, the article review did not mention any solution. And I've mentioned this before, over and over. If I'm going to highlight a problem, I'm going to come. What is my solution? There was no solution in there. How are we going to improve our SAT scores? What are we doing as a board member and something else we need to add? If the students are failing, nine of us here contribute to that. Each of us here contributes to that. Not one, not two, but nine of us contribute to that. So it is our responsibility as board members to help Dr. Fitzhugh and his staff and ultimately help the student to succeed. Thank you."

Ms. Johnson moves to have the meeting adjourned.

**Moved by David Armstrong, second by Sueann Gravesande.**

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yea: Shawneque Johnson, Jeffrey Wingfield, Samantha Crockett, Sueann Gravesande,  
Fatimah Turner, Tyrone Tarver

Not Present at Vote: David Armstrong, Derrick Henry, Siaka Sherif

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT (1) NOT PRESENT AT VOTE**