

Minutes of Tuesday, October 13, 2020 Virtual Public Meeting of the Orange Board of Education
held at 6:00 pm.

Tyrone Tarver is presiding over tonight's Virtual Meeting.

Ms. Guadalupe Cabido Ms.

Brenda Daughtry (Absent)

Ms. Sueann Gravesande

Mr. Derrick Henry

Ms. Shawneque Johnson

Ms. Cristina Mateo

Mr. Siaka Sherif

Mr. Tyrone Tarver

Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield

ROLL CALL (8) PRESENT (1) ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT:

- Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh II, Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. Adekunle James, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Ms. Shebra Dismuke, Executive Director of Human Resources
- Ms. Jessika Kleen, School Board Attorney with the firm of Machado Law Group

Mr. Tarver motioned to have the meeting adjourn back into closed session to go over confidential matters at 6:09 p.m.

Moved by Shawneque Johnson. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande.

ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

At 7:58 p.m. Mr. Tarver motioned to re-open public meeting.

ROLL CALL (5) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

FLAG SALUTE

PRESENTATIONS

Superintendent's Report
Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh II, Superintendent of Schools

BOARD MINUTES

September 8, 2020 Public Meeting

Moved by Siaka Sherif. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

September 8, 2020 Closed Meeting

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

September 17, 2020 Special Closed Meeting

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

September 17, 2020 Special Public Meeting

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum Committee

- Ms. Cabido shared a summary on the Reading Buddies resolution. It will support reading learners K-12. This takes place during the school day hours.
- Concentric Education Solutions, Inc. will perform Student Family Wellness Checks for pre-identified high school students.
- Ms. Cabido mentioned the "Green School" status at STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges, which encompasses reducing environmental cost, improving the health of our staff and students, and offering environmental courses.
- Ms. Cabido shared a few updates to the curriculum guides.
- With the latest grants, the district will now offer one-to-one devices for all students.

Finance Committee

- e The district was awarded a COVID Relief grant in the amount \$683,165.
- Ms. Gravesande also shared the good news that the district earned an award from the Association of Schools Business Officials International for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2019.

Facilities Committee

- COMCAST Broadcasting set-up is still in process. The district needs to obtain more equipment to complete the installation.
- The projects at both Cleveland Street and Orange High school is still ongoing. The high school project should be complete by July 2021, and the Cleveland Street project by summer of 2022. ● Mr. Tarver spoke about the power disruption at OHS during October 5th through October 23rd. This will delay the teacher's Phase II return to the building.

- Boilers are installed and ready for October 15th
- Mr. Tarver briefly mentioned the pending development the township is proposing. This potential project will be built near the Oakwood Avenue Community School.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Deanna McDowell Brooks stated she is writing to express her support for Dr. Fitzhugh's extension. As a parent, she is impressed with his zeal for education. He motivates his entire staff to be dedicated. His teamwork approach is evident in the state's scoring. She looks forward to the continued success of the district going from good to great.
- Charles Connley Jr. states the board should approve Dr. Fitzhugh's extension. His child attends STEM Academy and she always talks about Dr. Fitzhugh. His daughter stated she sees Dr. Fitzhugh often, and he is always motivating the students to do their best. She feels he has made her school better.
- Samantha Crockett stated she has a son in the district. She is writing in support of extending the Superintendent's contract. She has attended the board meetings over the last two years, and she appreciates Dr. Fitzhugh transparency. She appreciates his commitment to reaching the goals he sets, and the positive culture he has brought to the Orange Public Schools. He is a man of integrity and hopes he will stay on beyond the five-year extension. She recalls meeting with Dr. Fitzhugh last year to discuss the district's academic performance and to answer parents' questions.
- Tisa Singleton shared that in a past meeting, a parent requested workshops for parents to aid them in the technology changes. Her niece and nephew have switched from google meets to zoom meetings. It is confusing and complicated. She inquired if guardians can receive lessons on how to use these various applications/programs.
- Dr. Fitzhugh responded informing the public that the district held workshops in spring 2020 for the various platforms the district is utilizing. Additionally, the district uploaded videos on the district's website. The district will continue to hold parent informational sessions. Dr. Fitzhugh noted that one of the district's technology coordinators, Dr. Harlem held one in September.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Superintendent's Report: Dr. Fitzhugh rendered a presentation on the graduation rate. He shared the new pathways for graduation.
- Dr. Fitzhugh shared district updates including Phase II learning, over \$18 million in scholarships earned, donated computers from a \$219,000 grant, and the district's "High Performing Status" on the NJQSAC. Dr. Fitzhugh commended Dr. Powell for her work on the Apple and Rutgers Partnership to aid our students with the Computer Science track, as well as Dr. Russo in obtaining Chromebook from a separate grant.
- Dr. Fitzhugh shared the news that the district was presented with an award from the Association of Schools Business Officials International commending the district on outstanding financial reporting for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2019. Dr. Fitzhugh commended Mr. James and the business office for all of their hard work.
- Mr. James dedicated the award to the late Mr. Akindele Ayodele. He went above and beyond this year to ensure the district receive this award. Mr. James also commended his staff for their efforts.
- December 1, 2020 is the deadline for the board's self-evaluation.

- Home instruction hours are based upon the need of the student. If for medical reason, the hours are based on however many hours is required to reach the curriculum goals. If it is for disciplinary reasons, it is ten hours in-person and ten guided hours for a total of twenty hours per week. The hours designated for students with a disability is based on how many hours is needed for them to meet their IEP goals.
- Platt Psychiatric Associates LLC also provides services to staff members who may need it. ● The district had the pleasure to have the NFL organization come and film two NFL "Greats" at Bell Stadium. The NFL donated \$5,000 to the district.
- Ms. Gravesande made a suggestion to have policy resolutions under its own heading.

Board Comments during the hearing to approve the resolutions for Superintendent's Five-year Contract: -

- Mr. Sherif expressed his support for Dr. Fitzhugh's newly proposed five-year contract. He believes Dr. Fitzhugh will need the five-year period to move the district to great and compete with other great districts.
- Ms. Johnson supports Dr. Fitzhugh newly proposed five-year contract. She stated Dr. Fitzhugh did not receive merit pay last school year. Additionally, Dr. Fitzhugh does not have an assistant superintendent. Dr. Fitzhugh has worked countless hours and weekends to ensure the district is ahead of the curve during the pandemic.
- Mr. Wingfield shared that Dr. Fitzhugh is admired by neighboring districts for his work for the COVID-19 district plans. Dr. Fitzhugh is a great leader.
- Ms. Mateo stated the community loves Dr. Fitzhugh. He embodies the motto "From Good to Great".
- Mr. Tarver shared that he admires Dr. Fitzhugh's work ethic; however, he has a problem with the amount and length of the contract. Mr. Tarver said he has an issue with the contract being revised after only one year of service. The contract is \$1.4 million over the five-year period. It is an above-average salary. If approved, Dr. Fitzhugh will be among the top 25 highest paid superintendents in the state, while the district is ranked as one of the bottom 15-20% school district in the state. Orange is a small district and the salary does not match. He does not have a problem with revisiting the contract revision after next year where the district has had more time to evaluate his performance; possibly, when the district has some assessment results from during the time of his leadership. Mr. Tarver is in disagreement with merit goals being excluded from the five-year contract. Mr. Tarver also shared he feels that the community should have been involved in the development of Dr. Fitzhugh's contract. He believes that board has excluded the community's input/voice on many occasions when they could have been involved. ● Dr. Fitzhugh shared with the community that he did not accept merit pay in his first year because he wanted to gift those funds to the district. Additionally, he shared that his goals are the district goals; they are not separate and apart.
- Ms. Cabido requested Mr. Tarver to stop comparing the board to the township's leadership. She expressed that the board is not trying to exclude the community. She expressed that the other board members have plans that are not implemented because the other board members do not have a voice. Ms. Cabido noted that the board had approved the position of an assistant superintendent whose salary was around \$150,000; however, the position will not be filled due to the budget cuts. There are some other districts where the superintendent receives a car. Dr. Fitzhugh cannot be compared to other districts. The community of Orange Township is different from other districts; it has its own challenges.

- Ms. Kleen noted the County Executive Superintendent approved Dr. Fitzhugh's contract. Therefore, his salary is not far above the average, otherwise it would not have been approved. It is in line with those with a similar District Factor Group (DFG). Dr. Fitzhugh works hard. He is a wise leader. He only reaches out to the district attorney when he needs to.
- e Mr. Sherif, shared that the community elected the members to make decisions on their behalf. The community can trust the accountability of the board. The community had an opportunity to comment on Dr. Fitzhugh's revised contract, and all the responses were positive.
- Mr. Henry expressed his disagreement with the new contract. He feels it is the right issue but wrong time. Mr. Henry believes the board should wait until the district returns back to a normal baseline before discussing a new contract. He expresses that right now is a bad time, but something the board can reconsider possibly next year.

Other Board Comments:

- The district received five donated fire kindles from a young woman from the community, Haneen Arafat, to aid the educational goals of the district.
- Ms. Gravesande inquired about a "thank you" card or something tangible, to show acknowledgement and appreciation to those who donated to the district. Mr. James coordinates those efforts on behalf of the district.
- Mr. Sherif noted that since he has been on the board, Mr. Tarver has not attended any of the association's training. He questioned if Mr. Tarver was qualified to lead the board. Mr. Tarver responded that the virtual conference conflicts with his schedule. He is not the first board member who could not attend due to their personal schedule.
- Mr. Tarver expressed his disapproval with the naming of the early childhood center. He believes the community should be involved.
 - Mr. Wingfield informed the community that it is not mandatory. The community elected the board members to make decisions on their behalf and the board members listens to the community. He believes that the community values their decision to accept the building name suggested by Dr. Fitzhugh.
 - Dr. Fitzhugh shared his premise around the naming of the school. He shared that the community was given a chance to share their thoughts during one of the past facilities committee meeting. Dr. Fitzhugh commended Mr. Tarver for adding the matter as an agenda item for that meeting.

Other Board's General Comments:

- Ms. Gravesande requested Mr. Tarver to explain his flyer pertaining to campaigning for the upcoming election.
- Mr. Tarver expressed that the board should not discuss election items at an official board meeting. His position as board president and board candidate are two separate items. ○Ms. Kleen informed Mr. Tarver he could not campaign on information that he was privy to as board member.
- Mr. Tarver responded that he did not list any matters that the board discussed in executive session. The board discussed these matters during public board meetings. The community is aware of these listed items from past meetings, even from when he was not a board member.
- Mr. Tarver shared with the board that his statement that he "identified hundreds of thousands of dollars in board liabilities and lost revenue" was referring to the board's decision to allow the township to use district facilities for town events and programs. This dates back to 2018, 2019,

and 2020. The board requested Mr. James to calculate the cost associated with the events that the board was financially responsible for since the township did not pay for the associated cost. Mr. James shared the amount with the public during public board meetings. Mr. Tarver disagreed with allowing the township to

use the district's facilities because of the associated liability and expense. Mr. Tarver initiated the discussion on the matter, which led to the associated resolutions.

- Ms. Kleen recommended that Mr. Tarver remove statements he previously published on his flyer.
- Ms. Cabido spoke on Mr. Tarver's statement that he "informed orange parents of misleading student achievement reporting". She stated that the statement is questioning the integrity of the superintendent and the district's administrators.
- Mr. Tarver clarified that this statement refers to reported student data from back in 2016-2018. He noted he discussed these matters with the community during that period.
- The board expressed that the flyer suggest these events occurred during the 2019-2020 school year. Dr. Fitzhugh shared he thought this was pertaining to his leadership.
 - Ms. Kleen informed Mr. Tarver that he cannot mention the liability aspect on his flyer because that is information that he obtained as a board member. It is private information.
 - Mr. Tarver clarified that he was referring to potential facility damages the district was exposing themselves to during these events.
 - Mr. James expressed that the flyer makes it seem that he was embezzling money.
 - Mr. Tarver stated he would issue clarifications and dates with the various newspapers.
- Ms. Johnson expressed Mr. Tarver is misleading the community. He is not a leader. He makes it difficult to be a board member because he questions everything. He treats the other board members as if they are incompetent. He shares negative messages with the community about the board members and the superintendent.
- Ms. Mateo suggested Mr. Tarver campaign on his involvement with the accomplishments of the district. She commended this thoroughness. However, his current campaign might push community involvement away rather than bring the community together. His statements might cause parents to want to withdraw their children and send them to another district.
 - Mr. Sherif expressed that Mr. Tarver should submit his resignation letter. He believes Mr. Tarver actions are disgraceful. His campaign statements violates his position as the board president. Mr. Sherif noted that the community has put their trust in the board to safe-trust the funds of the district and Mr. Tarver has spent over \$3,000 in legal fees for matters that did not pertain to their children's education.
- Mr. Wingfield noted that one of the former board presidents, Patricia Arthur shared the principle of the board; it must move as a whole. The president speaks for the whole board. The majority rules. If the president disagrees, they must still speak for the majority. The president must speak positively on the majority stance.
- Mr. Tarver stated that there were multiple lies that were stated today. He requested board members to provide tangible proof of their allegations. He stated, he never mentioned ending employment with Dr. Fitzhugh. He does not believe Dr. Fitzhugh is a bad superintendent. He noted that if there is something he does not agree with, he shares it with Dr. Fitzhugh. The board members and the public can look at his social media platforms, and will not find any statements that spoke negatively about the board or the officials of the district.

- Mr. Tarver stated that as the president he has only tried to ensure that the board operates according to the by-laws.
- Dr. Fitzhugh thanked the board members who voted for his contract revision. He noted that one of his staff took offense. They felt it was about them. ●Schedule a policy review meeting on October 27 or 28, 2020
Moved by Mr. Sherif. Seconded by Mr. Wingfield.
ROLL CALL (6) YEA (1) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

Motion to close Public Comments
Moved by Siaka Sherif. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande
ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

BOARD RESOLUT'ONS

NEW BUSINESS

A20-044

Moved by Sueann Gravesande. Seconded by Jeffrey Wingfield.
ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

A20-045

Moved by Derrick Henry. Seconded by Jeffrey Wingfield.
ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

A20-046

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande.
ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

820-028 THRU 820-033

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif.
ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

C20-055

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif.
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Jeffrey Wingfield)

C20-056 THRU C20-059

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

D20-015 THRU D20-018

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

20-012

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

20-033

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Shawneque Johnson.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

20-034

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif.

ROLL CALL (5) YEA (1) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Sueann

Gravesande)

20-035

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande.

ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

G20-037 THRU G20-040

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido.

ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

G20-041

Moved by Sueann Gravesande. Seconded by Shawneque Johnson.

ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Jeffrey Wingfield)

G20-042

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif.

ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Guadalupe Cabido)

G20-043

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande.

ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Siaka Sherif)

G20-044

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande. ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Shawneque Johnson)

G20-045

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Sueann Gravesande. ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Derrick Henry)

G20-046

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido. ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Sueann Gravesande)

G20-047

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif. ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Cristina Mateo)

G20-048

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Guadalupe Cabido. ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

G20-049

Motion to remove.

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Cristina Mateo. ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (Tyrone Tarver)

G20-050 THRU G20-052

Moved by Jeffrey Wingfield. Seconded by Siaka Sherif. ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN

H. Case Numbers

Home Instruction Cases

None.

Out-of-District Placement Cases Vs

None.

H.I.B. Cases Substantiated Vs

None.

HUMAN RESOURCE AGENDA

Motion to adjourn Public Session.

Moved by Sueann Gravesande. Second by Guadalupe Cabido.

ROLL CALL (8) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN