

WEST MILFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

46 Highlander Drive
West Milford, NJ 07480
(973) 697-1700
www.wmtps.org

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2024**

Mrs. Claire Lockwood, Board President, called to order the Special Meeting of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m., in the Macopin School Cafeteria. She asked for a moment of silence, led the flag salute, read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement, and reminded everyone in attendance to silence or turn off their cell phones, and note the locations of the emergency exits.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT

In accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, a public notice of this meeting has been sent to Board Members, all district Schools, the Herald News, the Suburban Trends, the Record, the Messenger, West Milford Town Hall, the County Superintendent's Office, the Board Attorney, Cablevision of Warwick and West Milford TV77; and posted in the Administration Building. Copies of the Board Meeting Calendar Resolution were provided to all local media, Town Hall, Township Library, and all district schools.

MR. WILLIAM SCHOLTS, BOARD SECRETARY, CALLED THE ROLL:

TRUSTEE	ATTENDANCE	TRUSTEE	ATTENDANCE	TRUSTEE	ATTENDANCE
Mrs. Racano	Present	Mrs. Dwyer	Present	Mrs. Romeo	Absent/Arr. 7:19 p.m.
Mrs. Jurgensen	Absent	Mr. Cytowicz	Present	Mrs. Van Dyk	Present
Mrs. Marquard	Present	Mr. Lippe	Present	Mrs. Lockwood	Present

ADMINISTRATION	POSITION	ATTENDANCE
Dr. Lydia Furnari	Interim Superintendent of Schools	Present
Mr. William Scholts	Board Secretary/Business Administrator	Present
Mr. Daniel Novak	Director of Education	Absent
Dr. Derek Ressa	Director of Special Services	Present
Andrew Brown, Esq.	Board of Education Attorney	Present

There were approximately 12 members of the public in attendance.

VI. PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of the meeting is to appoint a Superintendent of Schools, effective July 1, 2024.

Mrs. Lockwood addressed the community with a statement:

"First off, we would like to apologize to the community for the delay in releasing the Agenda. We had the intention of doing a full transparent release of who the candidate is once we received final approval from the County. This took a little longer than we expected. We received the approval today. A lot of time and effort went into the task of finding our next Superintendent. We would like to thank Mrs. Kathleen Helewa, Educational Consultants, for all that you did to get us to this point. Your expertise and professionalism were evident throughout this process. I would also like to thank Mr. Scholts and my fellow Board members who were part of the Superintendent's Search Committee, for all of the days, nights, and months that you committed to this very important process. Finally, thank you to our community for your feedback and completion of the input surveys. They gave us important data to draft a strong candidate profile to try and guide us in finding the best candidate for the District. Because of the large number of applications we received, twenty-nine (29) in total, we were able to narrow the pool to nine (9) very strong candidates, all of whom showed exemplary qualities. Dr. Brian Kitchin, throughout the three (3) interviews, stood out and impressed all of the Board members with his student focus, his achievements in building teacher and administrator capacity, his financial acuity, his commitment to the community, and his ability to build strong relationships. He comes to us with almost sixteen (16) years of experience, almost ten (10) years as a Health and Physical Education teacher in a regional school district, four (4) years as a Middle School Principal, and the past two (2) years as a Superintendent. His doctoral dissertation was a correlational study between self-esteem and academic achievement. We are delighted to have on our Agenda for approval tonight a dynamic, innovative, and visionary leader."

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT REGULATIONS

At all regular meetings, two opportunities are provided for citizens to make comments. The public comment period will be scheduled after the President's Report. The second comment period will be scheduled after New Business. During the first opportunity for public comment, citizens are invited to comment on subjects on the agenda items only. During the second opportunity for public comment, citizens may comment on all other general topics. At the discretion of the presiding officer, public comments may be permitted at other times.

Please remember this is a public meeting. Anything you say will be a public record. As a result, pursuant to law, the Board of Education cannot respond to you publicly concerning certain matters, such as those regarding an individual student or personnel. If there is a matter that you wish to remain private concerning personnel or students, please contact the Superintendent's Office. Public comment periods shall also be governed by the following rules:

1. Persons wishing to speak must, upon being recognized, rise, sign in, and state their names and addresses.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT REGULATIONS - Continued

2. Each speaker shall be limited to five minutes. The Board Secretary will note the time. A speaker who has not finished in the allotted time will be directed by the presiding officer to summarize quickly and relinquish the floor within 30 seconds (Bylaw 0167).
3. Comments shall be limited to issues. If personal remarks or discourteous statements are made, the presiding officer shall require the speaker to stop.
4. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer. No participant may address or question Board members individually.
5. Questions requiring investigation shall be referred by the Board to the Superintendent's Office for consideration and later response. A participant may be asked to submit such questions in written format.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEMS (PLEASE SIGN IN)

All speakers will have five (5) minutes to speak until a period of thirty (30) minutes transpires. Before speaking, please state your name, group affiliation and address for the record. Members of the public who have requested to speak prior to the meeting will be recognized by the chair first. After speaking, all speakers are asked to sign the register provided and give their full name, group affiliation, and their address.

All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer. No participant may address or question Board members individually.

All speakers are expected to have read the statement within the agenda regarding the regulations concerning public comments.

Members of the public are reminded that they are legally responsible and liable for their comments.

Mayor Michele Dale, West Milford. Mayor Dale expressed that on behalf of the entire Township's Governing Body, it is her honor and privilege to welcome our new Superintendent, Dr. Brian Kitchin, to the District. She expressed her gratitude to the dedicated members of the Board of Education for their relentless effort and commitment throughout this rigorous process and search for the proper candidate to fill the vital role of the Superintendent. She also expressed that the Board's hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed, and she commended each of the Board members for their unwavering commitment to our District. She stated as we welcome our new Superintendent, it is crucial that we continue to work together as a unified team towards a common goal, the goal of success and well-being of our students. She expressed that the role of the Superintendent is pivotal in shaping the future of our school district, and it is imperative that we support him with all of our being and collaborate with our new leader to insure that our schools thrive and excel. She is confident with Dr. Kitchin at the helm, and with the dedication and passion of our teachers, staff, parents and community members, we will continue to build upon a strong foundation of excellence. She asked that we embrace this new chapter with optimism, enthusiasm, and a shared commitment to working together towards a brighter future.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEMS - Continued

Motion by Mr. Cytowicz, seconded by Mr. Lippe, to close Public Comment.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

IX. MOTION BY MR. CYTOWICZ, SECONDED BY MRS. DWYER, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA, AS PRESENTED.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

SPECIAL ACTION

X. PERSONNEL/STUDENT AFFAIRS - Mrs. Lynda Van Dyk, Chairperson

NOTE: All appointees recommended for employment will meet the New Jersey State law requirements for the criminal history review prior to their start date.

Motion by Mrs. Racano, seconded by Mr. Cytowicz, to approve the following agenda item #1:

1. **BE IT RESOLVED**, the West Milford Township Board of Education appoints **DR. BRIAN KITCHIN**, to the position of Superintendent of West Milford Township Public Schools, effective July 1, 2024, at the annual salary of \$205,000.00.

NOTE: Pending fingerprint and medical clearance.

ROLL CALL FOR ITEM #1:

TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE
Mrs. Van Dyk	Abstain	Mrs. Racano	Yes	Mrs. Dwyer	Yes
Mr. Cytowicz	Yes	Mrs. Romeo	Absent	Mrs. Marquard	Abstain
Mrs. Jurgensen	Absent	Mr. Lippe	Yes	Mrs. Lockwood	Yes

The **MOTION PASSED**.

Motion by Mrs. Racano, seconded by Mr. Cytowicz, to approve the following agenda item #2:

2. **BE IT RESOLVED**, the West Milford Township Board of Education approves a contract with **DR. BRIAN KITCHIN**, Superintendent of West Milford Township Public Schools, effective July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2029.

NOTE: Contract has been approved by the Passaic County Interim Executive County Superintendent.

X. PERSONNEL/STUDENT AFFAIRS - Mrs. Van Dyk, Chairperson - Continued

2. (Continued)

ROLL CALL FOR ITEM #2:

TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE
Mrs. Van Dyk	Abstain	Mrs. Racano	Yes	Mrs. Dwyer	Yes
Mr. Cytowicz	Yes	Mrs. Romeo	Absent	Mrs. Marquard	Abstain
Mrs. Jurgensen	Absent	Mr. Lippe	Yes	Mrs. Lockwood	Yes

The **MOTION PASSED.**

Mrs. Lockwood congratulated Dr. Kitchin as the new Superintendent of Schools.

Dr. Kitchin addressed the Board and the community. He thanked Mrs. Lockwood for sharing some of his educational background with the community. He also wanted to share with the community who he is as a leader. He spoke about his relationship with the Board and looks forward to working with all of the Board members. He thinks it is very important that their relationship is collaborative, which begins with communication from his side to make sure that the Board understands what is going on in the District because he is the bridge between the Board and the schools. He spoke about the leader he is with Administration and staff, and feels it is important that he recognizes that his role is not to step in and know everything, but his job is to recognize the collective strengths of the community and of the staff as a whole. He recognizes that the staff in this District has centuries of collective experience, and feels that tapping into that is really important for the success of the District. He also recognizes that we can help each other learn and grow in challenges that may arise. As a leader in the community, he thinks it is really important that people recognize that we are partners with the community, the families, and the District in raising these young men and women, and making them productive members of society. He expressed that not a single person in this community cares more about the success of our schools than our parents. He feels it is our job to give parents comfort in the trust that they give us in educating their children by showing them all of the wonderful things we are doing and demonstrating success in educating their children. Lastly, his view on the students of this District which is the reason we are all here. The students are the most important part of a District and he stated one of his favorite quotes, "prepare the child for the path, not the path for the child," and feels this really holds true in Education. He feels that if we arm students with the tools to take challenges on, then they can meet any challenge with success, including reading, writing, math, science, social interaction and problem solving, which is all part of the education that West Milford should be striving to put forward for our students. It is our job as a Board, as staff, and as administration to make sure we are carrying that out and keeping the focus on students. He is very excited to start working in this District, and he genuinely appreciates that the Board has faith in him to be the District's new next school leader.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA OR NON-AGENDA ITEMS (PLEASE SIGN IN)

All speakers will have five (5) minutes to speak until a period of thirty (30) minutes transpires. Before speaking, please state your name, group affiliation and address for the record. Members of the public who have requested to speak prior to the meeting will be recognized by the chair first. After speaking, all speakers are asked to sign the register provided and give their full name, group affiliation, and their address.

All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer. No participant may address or question Board members individually.

All speakers are expected to have read the statement within the agenda regarding the regulations concerning public comments.

Members of the public are reminded that they are legally responsible and liable for their comments.

Kathleen Helewa, Reinman Road, Warren, New Jersey. She is the owner of Kathleen Helewa Educational Consultants, LLC, the firm that helped guide the Board through the search process. She expressed that she is very happy to be here this evening, on such an important night in the District's history. She congratulated the Board and Dr. Kitchin, and she wants to assure our community that this Board did excellent work and did everything right. She stated that the non-conflicted Board members that were able to participate listened to their stakeholders, listened to the candidates, and listened closely to each other, and did their work beautifully. She feels their decision will yield wonderful results for West Milford students. She wished Dr. Kitchin the best of luck, and she thanked Dr. Furnari, Mr. Scholts, and Mr. Winston for all of their help. She also thanked the Board for the opportunity to address them.

Motion by Mr. Cytowicz, seconded by Mr. Lippe, to close Public Comment.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

Mrs. Lockwood asked Board members if they wished to speak.

Mrs. Dwyer explained that the Board interviewed many wonderful candidates, and she was so impressed by Dr. Kitchin because of his educational motivation and his commitment to us from the very beginning. She expressed that she has a lot of respect for him, and looks forward to great things in West Milford. She looks forward to scores soaring, and looks forward to good relationships between him and our staff.

Mrs. Van Dyk stated that unfortunately she was conflicted and was not able to participate, but just hearing Dr. Kitchin speak this evening has brightened her day. She is very excited about the new chapter for West Milford and she is looking forward to working with him. She expressed that his philosophy of the relationships between all of the stakeholders excites her to know that we will be moving forward with someone who truly cares about the education of our students.

Minutes for the Special Meeting of March 28, 2024

Mr. Cytowicz stated that during his tenure on the Board, there have been ups and downs, and this was no different with an Interim Superintendent and now a Superintendent. He was asked to have an open mind and feels he delivered that. He indicated that during this process, the Board grew stronger and he feels more connected with his fellow Board members because they had the opportunity to be candid and discuss the future of the school district. He is thankful that they were guided by Mrs. Helewa during this process, who held them together professionally and cordially, and solid work was done. He feels this was a huge learning experience and thanked his colleagues and Mrs. Helewa. He also wished Dr. Kitchin the best of luck.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION

The Board determined there was no need for Executive Session.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Cytowicz, seconded by Mr. Lippe, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

VOICE VOTE:

All in Favor.

MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

**William Scholts
Board Secretary**