

**DEMAREST BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**PRELIMINARY BUDGET and REGULAR SESSION MEETING MINUTES**  
**County Road School – Media Center**  
**March 18, 2025**  
**7:00 P.M.**

I. OPENING

- A. The meeting was called to order by President Holzberg at 6:00 pm.
- B. Present: Brillhart, Cantatore, Choi, Fein, Governale, Lee, Holzberg.  
Absent: None  
Also present: Mr. Fox/ Superintendent and Ms. Kelly Business Administrator/ Board Secretary

II. ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. The Board determined it will enter into executive session for the following reasons:

- 1. Residency
- 2. Student discipline

- B. It was moved by Cantatore seconded by Governale and approved by unanimous voice vote of those present to approve the following resolution to enter the executive session:

**WHEREAS**, in order to protect the personal privacy and to avoid situations wherein the public interest might be disserved, the Open Public Meetings Act permits public bodies to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which certain matters are discussed;

**WHEREAS**, the length of the closed executive session is estimated to be thirty minutes, after which the Regular Public Meeting will reconvene and proceed with business where formal action may or may not be taken;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that consistent with the provision of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b), the Board of Education will now adjourn to executive session to discuss items stated above; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board hereby declares that its discussion of the aforementioned subjects will be made public at a time when the public's interest in disclosure is greater than any privacy or governmental interest being protected from disclosure.

- C. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Governale and approved by unanimous voice vote of those present to convene executive session at 7:20 P.M.

III. REOPEN PUBLIC MEETING

- A. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee to reopen the Regular Meeting to the public at 7:21 P.M.
- B. President Holzberg read the following announcement:  
The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Demarest Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted at the Borough Hall and at the Middle School and by notifying in writing two newspapers: The Record and The Suburbanite.

IV. FLAG SALUTE

A. President Holzberg led the flag salute.

V. ROLL CALL

Present: Brillhart, Cantatore, Choi, Fein, Governale, Lee, Holzberg.

Absent: None

Also present: Mr. Fox, Superintendent and Ms. Kelly Business Administrator/ Board Secretary

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS

A. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Governale and approved by unanimous voice vote of those present to approve:

- February 11, 2025 COW and Regular Meeting Minutes
- February 11, 2025 Executive Session Meeting Minutes

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

Cresskill Cares.

VIII. BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

None at this time.

IX. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Fox reviewed the following:

- SSDS report for period 9/1/24-12/31/24:

School Name	Incidents	Other incidents leading to removal	HIB trainings	HIB programs
County Road	0	0	17	1
Middle School	3	5	9	1
Luther Lee Emerson	0	0	27	1
District Wide			3	1

- DMS news is definitely worth a view. Thank you to Mrs. DiMartini and her students.
- Interviewed for DMS Press by two of Ms. Heffler's students concerning the effects of COVID.
- DMS addition update - the windows are in, and the brick will be done by the end of this week. The next step is the interior.
- The PTO Gala took place on Friday at the Alpine Country Club, and a tremendous amount of money was raised. It was a wonderful evening. Mr. Fox thanked the PTO members.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None at this time.

XI. OTHER REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. Superintendent Fox reviewed the following for Mr. Regan:

- Geography Bee
- PTO Book Fair
- Bergen County Prosecutor
- Musical 'Descendants'

B. Principal Mazzini reviewed the following:

- Kindergarten readers
- Harlem Wizards visit
- Lunar New Year
- 100 Days of School celebration
- Read a thon sponsored by the PTO
- Read Across America Week
- Author visit with Gita Varadarajan
- Upcoming: end of the second trimester, first-grade show, CRS Me & My dance, report cards available online, LLE Me & My dance, Principal's challenge

XII. REVIEW OF AGENDA

A. Board members reviewed the items.

XIII. PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)

- A. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Governale and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to open the meeting to public comment.
- B. There were no comments from the public.
- C. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to close the meeting to public comment.

XIV. ACTIONS

A. Instruction – Staffing

1. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the provisional employment of the following substitute teacher(s) for the remainder of the 2024/2025 school year, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator. Employment status would become effective upon candidate's compliance with P.L. 1986, c. 116 (revised 6/30/98) and N.J.S.A. 19A:6-7.7.
  - Ryley Dargan
  - Louis Napolitano
2. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve Kathleen Heckel, substitute nurse effective March 27, 2025 through March 31, 2025, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
3. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the request of Staff ID No.: 10312752 for paid sick leave from April 7, 2025 through June 20, 2025, unpaid FMLA from September 1, 2025 through November 21, 2025, extended unpaid leave November 24, 2025 through January 30, 2026, returning to work on February 2, 2026, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.

4. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the provisional employment of Louis Napolitano, leave replacement teacher BA, Step 2, for staff ID No.:, effective April 7, 2025, for the remainder of the 2024/2025 school year, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator. Employment status would become effective upon candidate's compliance with P.L. 1986, c. 116 (revised 6/30/98) and N.J.S.A. 19A:6-7.7.
5. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following mentees/mentors, for the remainder of the 2024/2025 school year, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

<b>Mentee</b>	<b>Mentor</b>
Isabella Liguori	Sharon Dippolito

6. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the modification of December 17, 2024, resolution A.4. approving the request of Staff ID No.:10313087 for paid sick leave from February 04, 2025 through March 07, 2025, unpaid FMLA/NJFLA and extended leave from March 10, 2025 through June 06, 2025, unpaid extended Childcare leave from June 9, 2025 through June 20, 2025, returning to work on the first day of the 2025/2026 school year as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
7. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following teachers as chaperones for the overnight student field trips in the amount of \$225.00 per person, per night, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.

<b>Fairview Lake</b>
Kaylee Babasade
Andrew Cole
Bridget DiMartini
Karleen McDermott
Joseph Polvere
Carl Quillen
Jon Regan
Vincent Romeo
Ali Sumereau

8. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve a non-domiciled tuition agreement with the Harrington Park Board of Education for the 2024/2025 school year, plus the cost of related services, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

<b>Student ID</b>	<b>School/Program</b>	<b>Tuition</b>	<b>1: 1 Aide</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Term</b>
2330394552	ERI at DMS	\$29,198.00*	No	No	03/10/25-6/30/25

\*pro-rated

9. It was moved by Fein, seconded by Choi and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve Chloe Finkeldey, student teacher to observe at Luther Lee Emerson School, not to exceed 10 hours, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.

**B. Instruction – Pupils/Programs**

1. It was moved by Brillhart, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following field trip(s), as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

Location	Month/Year	Grade/Group
Bergen Performing Arts Center Englewood	April 2025	5th grade
Edison Academy Magnet School Edison	April 2025	Math team

**C. Support Services – Staffing**

1. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to accept the retirement of Brenda Gensone, paraprofessional at County Road School, effective May 1, 2025, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
2. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to accept the resignation of Patricia Schweizer, Food Service Coordinator, effective April 18, 2025, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.

**D. Support Services – Board of Education**

1. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following request for facilities use on the following dates, in accordance with policy 7510, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

Event	Date(s) and time	Location
Borough of Demarest Summer Recreation Camp	June 20, 2025 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM or 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	LLE gymnasium, APR and two classrooms
Borough of Demarest Summer Recreation Camp	June 23, 2025 - August 1, 2025 Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM	LLE gymnasium, APR, two classrooms, fields and playground, kitchen area with use of fridge, library/media center
PTO CRS Principal's Challenge	April 1, 8, 22, 29, 2025 May 6, 13, 2025 3:15 PM- 4:15 PM	CRS APR and fields
PTO LLE Principal's Challenge	April 1, 8, 22, 29, 2025 May 6, 13, 2025 7:30 AM - 8:00 AM	LLE APR, gymnasium and fields
PTO 5K bag pick up	May 13-16, 2025 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM	CRS APR
PTO 5K race	May 18, 2025 5:30 AM - 1:00 PM	CRS APR and outdoor property
PTO Musical - cast party	March 21, 2025 6:30 PM - 10:00 PM	DMS cafeteria

2. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the attendance of the following workshops, with all hotel, meals and travel reimbursed at the statutory rates per NJ OMB guidelines, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

Name/Title	Event	Registration Fee
Antoinette Kelly	NJASBO Annual Conference	\$500.00

Business Administrator/Board Secretary	June 4, 2025- June 6, 2025 Atlantic City	
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3. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the Student Safety Data System (SSDS) for the reporting period of September 1, 2024 to December 30, 2024, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
4. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to adopt the following resolution to acknowledge the service of Cynthia Paspalas as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

**WHEREAS**, Cynthia Paspalas dedicated her time and services to the children of Demarest and the Demarest Board of Education, and

**WHEREAS**, her dedication served as a model of service to the community,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Demarest Board of Education does hereby extend its appreciation and gratitude to Cynthia Paspalas in recognition of her 22 years of dedicated service to the Demarest Board of Education.

5. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve Frank Mazzini as Affirmative Action Officer (AAO) for the 2025/2026 school year, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
6. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the Affirmative Action Team to conduct a needs assessment and develop a Comprehensive Equity Plan for the 2025-2028 School Years, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
7. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following vendor for evaluations for the remainder of the 2024/2025 school year, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

Dr. Morton Fridman	Psychiatrist (Hebrew speaking)
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8. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to acknowledge the results of the following HIB case numbers as discussed at the March 11, 2025 meeting, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

2425-32
2425-33
2425-34

9. It was moved by Lee, seconded by Cantatore and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to the modified 2024/2025 school calendar, as attached, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.

**E. Support Services—Fiscal Management**

1. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to confirm the February payrolls as follows, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

February 14 \$544,072.55

February 28 \$516,453.98

2. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve March 18, 2025, bill list as follows, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

<u>Subtotal Per Fund</u>	<u>Amount</u>
11 General Current Expense	\$ 561,636.07
20 Special Revenue Fund	\$ 30,941.81
21 Student Activity Fund	\$ 43,842.00
30 Capital Projects Fund	\$ 635,033.60
40 Debt Service Fund	\$ 592,250.00
60 Cafeteria Fund	\$ 15,202.33
Total Bills:	\$1,878,905.81

3. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following resolution, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

Receipt of Certification from Board Secretary

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:20-2.13 (d), I, Antoinette Kelly, certify that as of February 28, 2025, no budgetary line item account has obligations or payments (contractual orders) that, in total, exceed the amount appropriated by the district Board of Education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8 and 18A:22-8.1.

4. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following resolution, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

Certification of Board of Education

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:20-2.13 (e), we certify that as of February 28, 2025 after review of the secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district official, to the best of our knowledge, no major account or fund has been over-extended in violation of NJAC 6:20-2.13 (b) and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

5. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to acknowledge receipt of the February 2025 Report of the Board Secretary, A148 and the Report of the Treasurer, A-149, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
6. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to confirm the following budget transfer for February 2025, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

**To:**

<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
11-000-219-390	Child Study Team-Other Purch Prof & Tech Services	668.80
11-000-219-610	Child Study Team-General Supplies	59.00
11-000-221-580	Improvement of Instruction Services-Travel	292.00
11-000-252-580	Administrative Information Technology-Travel	288.00
11-000-261-420	Required Maintenance-Repair and Maintenance	389.00
11-000-266-420	Security-Repair and Maintenance	759.00
11-000-266-610	Security-General Supplies	246.00
11-000-270-162	Student Transportation Services-Salaries	500.00

11-190-100-340	Regular Programs-Purchased Technical Services	8,916.00
11-230-100-580	Basic Skills-Travel	50.00
<b>Total Transfers In</b>		<b>12,167.80</b>

**From:**

<b>Account Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
11-000-219-890	Child Study Team-Misc. Expenditures	727.80
11-000-221-390	Improvement of Instruction Services-Other Purch Serv	292.00
11-000-252-340	Administrative Information Technology-Purch Tech Serv	288.00
11-000-261-610	Required Maintenance-General Supplies	389.00
11-000-263-420	Grounds-Repair and Maintenance	1,005.00
11-000-270-390	Student Transportation Services-Prof & Tech Services	500.00
11-190-100-610	Regular Programs-General Supplies	8,916.00
11-230-100-610	Basic Skills-General Supplies	50.00
<b>Total Transfers Out</b>		<b>12,167.80</b>

7. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve change order #7 with Daskal, LLC., for the Demarest Middle School Gymnasium, NJDOE Project # 1070-040-23-1000, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

This change order is the result of additional work done to remove and infill previously unknown seepage pits.

Original contract contingency sum	\$250,000.00
Net change of previously authorized change orders	\$85,782.07
Contract contingency sum will be decreased by this change order in the amount of	\$76,154.51
New remaining contingency sum including this change order will be	\$88,063.42

Original contract sum was	\$7,161,000.00
Net change by previously authorized change orders	0.00
Contract sum prior to this change order	\$7,161,000.00
contract sum will be increased by this change order in the amount of	0.00
New contract sum including this change order will be	\$7,161,000.00

8. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve payment application #12, in the amount of \$632,658.60 to Daskal LLC for the Demarest Middle School Gymnasium addition, NJDOE Project # 1070-040-23-1000, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator.
9. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of Demarest, upon the recommendation of the Chief School Administrator, approves the following preliminary 2025/2026 school year budget using the 2025/2026 state aid amounts and authorizes the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to submit the preliminary 2025/2026 school year budget to the Executive County Superintendent for approval within the statutory submission date:

General Fund	\$21,930,500
Special Revenue Fund	409,651
Debt Service Fund	611,700



Total Appropriations                      \$22,951,851

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Fund tax levy of \$18,260,500 is approved to support General Fund Expenses and \$611,700 is approved to support the Debt Service Fund Expenses for the 2025/2026 school year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the budget is approved to include use of Enrollment Adjustment in the amount of \$521,729. The adjustment is intended for the addition of new staff members including salaries and benefits, equipment, and supplies and materials to support the increase in enrollment and to support the increase in health benefit costs. The needs identified in the use of Enrollment Adjustment must be completed by the end of the 2025/2026 budget year and will not be deferred or incrementally completed over a longer period of time; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the budget is approved to include budgeted withdrawal from Maintenance Reserve in the amount of \$200,000 for required maintenance expenditures.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the budget is approved to include budgeted withdrawal from Capital Reserve – Excess Cost and Other Capital Projects in the amount of \$1,000,000 for the following projects:

- Demarest Middle School Partial Roof Replacement
- Demarest Middle School Fire Alarm System Replacement
- Demarest Middle School Gym Addition
- Luther Lee Emerson School Cafeteria/APR Renovations

10. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to approve the following resolution, as recommended by the Chief School Administrator:

WHEREAS, the Demarest Board of Education recognizes school staff and Board members will incur travel that promotes the delivery of instruction or furthers the efficient operation of the school district; and WHEREAS, in accordance with school district Policy No. 6471 the Board of Education establishes per N.J.A.C.6A:23A-7.3, for regular district business travel only, an annual school year threshold of \$1,500.00 per staff member for the 2025/2026 school year and where prior Board approval shall not be required unless this annual threshold for a staff member is exceeded in a given school year (July 1 through June 30); and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education established a maximum amount of \$35,000 for the 2024/2025 school year and incurred travel and related expenses as of February 28, 2025, in the amount of \$13,317.73 for the 2024/2025 school year; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education approves travel and related expense reimbursements, in accordance with school district Policy No. 6471 and N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.3, to a maximum expenditure of \$35,000 for all staff and board members for the 2025/2026 school year.

**XV.    PUBLIC COMMENT**

- A. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to open the meeting to public comment.
- B. There were no comments from the public.
- C. It was moved by Cantatore, seconded by Governale and approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present to close the meeting to public comment.

**XVI.   NEW BUSINESS**

None at this time.

XVII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. There was no motion to enter the executive session.

XVIII. ADJOURNMENT

A. It was moved by Choi, seconded by Lee and approved by unanimous voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 P.M.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antoinette Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Antoinette Kelly  
Business Administrator and Board Secretary