

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
(Official)

November 19, 2020  
Elizabeth, New Jersey

The combined regular agenda and business meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on November 19, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. The Meeting was previously noticed to be held in the Multipurpose Room of Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education School No. 51, 544 Pennsylvania Ave., Elizabeth, New Jersey 07208. However, in light of the public health emergency caused by coronavirus and the Governor's Executive Order reducing the allowed capacity for indoor gatherings, the Elizabeth Board of Education will conduct the meeting remotely using on-line platform technology without providing a physical meeting place.

Board President Diane Barbosa presented the following statement at 6:44 p.m.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is a combined regular agenda and business meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting using an online platform was sent to The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on November 10, 2020. In addition, this notice is posted on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of 500 North Broad Street, and pursuant to this act, a copy has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

There will be an online public portion for citizens to address the Board. Participants for the public portion must register online up to the start of the meeting so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The public participation form states the name, email, and phone number of the person who wants to comment. Members of the public who prefer not to or do not have the means to participate using the online platform may continue to participate by emailing statements relative to agenda items and/or educational matters to the Secretary of the Board at [kennedha@epsnj.org](mailto:kennedha@epsnj.org). All statements received will be read into the record during the meeting's public comment portion. All emails must be submitted and received by the Secretary of the Board up to the start of the meeting and, as is always the case, must include the public member's full name for the record. Each statement submitted by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes. Emails received but not read after the 60-minute duration will be spread in full in the Official Board Minutes of this meeting."

Present: Charlene Bathelus, Maria Carvalho, Iliana Chevres, Nathalie Hernandez, Jerry Jacobs, Rosa Moreno-Ortega (arr. 6:50 p.m.), Stanley Neron (arr. 6:55 p.m.), Stephanie Pestana, Diane Barbosa – 9

Absent: None

Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Chief of Operations Francisco Cuesta, Co-General Counsel Jonathan Williams, Esq. of DeCotiis, Fitzpatrick & Cole, LLP, and members of the community were present via an online platform.

Mrs. Barbosa welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mrs. Barbosa asked everyone listening to stop and take a deep breath and reminded everyone that whether you are a parent, student, staff member, administration team, Board member, Superintendent, or community member that we have made it through eight months of the most undesirable, unexplainable pandemic that we have ever seen. Mrs. Barbosa congratulated and thanked everyone and stated that never to forget to take that deep breath and we will continue on as we have been.

Mrs. Barbosa presented the President's Focus. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we will have a topics of interest section about concerns that have been brought to us from parents, teachers, and students. Mrs. Barbosa stated that there are four particular topics of interest for tonight including graduation credits, help desk hours for IT, health insurance information for employees, and the P-EBT program.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that she is tremendously grateful for our team. Mrs. Barbosa stated that our food services team members officially reached 1.5 million meals that were served through our Elizabeth Public Schools Grab-n-Go Breakfast and Lunch Program. Mrs. Barbosa stated that when we started, we had sixty workers at eight sites in March and had to navigate unprecedented circumstances to make it work. Mrs. Barbosa stated that now we have 267 workers making meals at 30 different sites to provide an immensely valuable service to our families and that was one of our biggest concerns that we focus on is having our children fed. Mrs. Barbosa stated that as of November 16<sup>th</sup>, we have officially served 1,630,000 meals keeping our children healthy and strong. Mrs. Barbosa stated that on November 9<sup>th</sup>, we have successfully opened our in-person instruction for our autism program in schools. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the work and time that went into this is out of this world and it took a great amount of preparation and diligence by so many and we made it happen. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we wanted to try it, we made it successfully happen for the parents that chose to have their children sent to school for the autism program. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we are so excited to welcome the students back and possibly welcoming back more students in our special education program, responsibly as we reopen our schools with placing health and safety first and that is our pledge. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the next step of Phase 2 will only take place if all those things align with the mandates of our local and state officials as well as the metrics we analyze to help guide our decisions. Mrs. Barbosa stated that as we reach those decisions we will be sure to share with all our learning community so that you understand what comes next. Mrs. Barbosa stated to all our team members, Superintendent, central administration, instructional supervisors, support staff, operational staff, and especially teachers that she is grateful for the sacrifices and extraordinary efforts that they have made to keep our children learning and growing. Mrs. Barbosa stated that those sacrifices have become significantly more important since remote learning began in March, eight months ago, continuing to meet and exceed expectations. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she can't thank everyone enough for all that they do to keep education going. Mrs. Barbosa recognized the Elizabeth High School Marching Band that was able to do its full 2020 program, *We Will Never Disappoint*, for the first time in front of family and friends on Williams Field. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the Elizabeth High School Boys Varsity Soccer Team has excelled on Williams Field making another deep run in the State Tournament with three wins. Mrs. Barbosa stated that it was a great job by all for our autism program, marching band, and boys soccer team. Mrs. stated that November 11<sup>th</sup> our district was closed in observance of Veteran's Day and on behalf of the Board of Education, thanked all of our past and present servicemen and servicewomen from Elizabeth and across the United States who are currently stationed throughout the world for the personal sacrifices they have made to help protect our country and our freedom. Mrs. Barbosa stated that with Thanksgiving coming and the pandemic that continues to have significant impact in our community in our daily lives she feels especially inspired to share her gratitude for so many who have helped to keep our students succeeding, to our families who have helped our children at home, mentally and socially you have been doing a wonderful job through all of this and she is thankful and proud of each and everyone of you and keep up the great work. Mrs. Barbosa wished everyone a healthy, happy, and safe Thanksgiving.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that the first topic of interest is technology and asked Superintendent Hugelmeyer to provide information.

Superintendent Olga Hugelmeyer stated that if any parents have issues with the iPads at the preschool level or laptops in grades kindergarten through high school, they are able to access the district webpage to find information on our Reopening Plan, Phase One, and Technology. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that when you access that box, it brings you right to the first page of the overview. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated to the families that if they are experiencing any technology issues with your laptop or iPad with internet connectivity, then please contact our technology support hotline at (908) 436-5065, send an email to our help desk, or submit a ticket by logging in to your child's school email and password and parents will be provided with an appointment if needed for service at our Drive-Thru Help Center located at our high school. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that this is just a friendly reminder for our families that if you have any technology issues we are here to help and there are a variety of ways that you can reach our department.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that she would like to present information on parent sessions and updates to the credits required for graduation. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented the Upgrades to the EPS High School Graduation Requirements Policy 6146 which are effective September 1, 2020. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide with the parent orientation sessions on November 24, 2020 and December 2, 2020. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the parent orientation sessions for November 24<sup>th</sup> for ninth grade is from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., tenth grade is from 1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., eleventh grade is from 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., and twelfth grade is from 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the parent orientation sessions for December 2<sup>nd</sup> for ninth grade is from 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., tenth grade is from 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., eleventh grade is from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and twelfth grade is from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the presentation will be recorded and available via the district website for viewing at a later time. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide for student orientation and stated that all students will receive an orientation on the revised changes to the district graduation requirements from their school's administrators and school counselors between November 24<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the minimum credits needed to graduate. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the minimum credits to graduate for the Class of 2020 was 140 credits. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the minimum credits to graduate has been reduced and for the Class of 2021 the minimum amount of credits is 120 credits, the Class of 2022 is 120 credits, Class of 2023 is 120 credits, and the Class of 2024 is 120 credits.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the credit requirements for the content areas including language arts literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, financial literacy, physical education, health and safety, visual and performing arts, 21<sup>st</sup> century life and careers or career-technical education (CTE), world languages, and electives. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credit requirements for language arts literacy is unchanged for 20 credits and course examples include English, English Honors, ESL, and Advanced Placement English Literature. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credit requirements for mathematics is now 15 credits which is 5 credits less and the course examples include Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and higher mathematics. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credit requirements for social studies is unchanged for 15 credits and the course examples include 10 credits in United States history (per N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1 and 2) and 5 credits in world history. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credit requirements for science is now 15 credits which is 5 credits less and includes 5 credits in laboratory biology/life science, 5 in an additional laboratory/inquiry-based science (i.e. Chemistry, environmental science, physics) and a third laboratory/inquiry-based science. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credit requirements for financial literacy is unchanged for 2.5 credits. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credits for physical education, health and safety is unchanged for 16 credits and is required during each year of enrollment per N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7, and 8. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credits for visual and performing arts is unchanged for 5 credits and the course examples include drawing and painting, chorus, concert band, and photography. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credits for 21<sup>st</sup> century life and careers or career-technical education (CTE) is unchanged for 5 credits and the course examples include music technology, commercial photography, and automotive technology. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credits for world languages is unchanged for 10 credits and course examples include Spanish, French, and Italian. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credits for electives vary based on the student's interest and include guitar, computer science, and advanced placement psychology which are just a few of the many electives offered. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that the credit requirements for Elizabeth High School Frank J. Cicarell Academy include five additional credits in world language which is unchanged and was a previous requirement and a senior project which is unchanged and was also a previous requirement.

Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing the grade/class status by credits. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that grade 9 freshman is from 0-29 credits, grade 10 sophomore is from 30-59 credits, grade 11 junior is from 60-89 credits, and grade 12 senior is 90+ credits. Mrs. Hugelmeyer presented a PowerPoint slide showing an example of class schedules by grade level. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that an example for grade 9 is English I, Geometry/Algebra II, Environmental Science/Physics, World History, Physical Education/ Health I, Elective/World Language I, Elective II (Art/CTE), and Lunch. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that an example for grade 10 is English II, Algebra I Advanced/Algebra II, Chemistry/Biology, US History I, Physical Education/ Health, Elective I/World Language II, Elective II (Art/CTE), and Lunch. Mrs. Hugelmeyer stated that an example for grade 11 is English III, Algebra II/PreCalculus/Calculus, Chemistry/Biology, US History II, Physical Education/ Health, Elective I/World

Language III (EHS Only), and Lunch. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that an example for grade 12 is English IV, Physical Education/ Health IV, Financial Literacy, Elective I, Elective II, and Lunch.

Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing some of the questions that parents may have. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the first question is how do these changes impact a student's schedule and stated that the reduction of credits from 140 to 120 is essentially the reduction of a minimum of one class period per year from a student's schedule. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that traditionally a student would participate in 9 class periods in a day bringing the total to 40 credits and with this change a student will participate in 8 class periods per day for a total of 35 credits. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the next question is how do these changes impact college preparedness or college applications and explained that the Elizabeth Public Schools is continuing to maintain a rigorous course curriculum and catalog and students wishing to participate in courses beyond their requirement will still have that opportunity. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the course catalog continues to meet the requirements for college preparedness and college admission and our counselors will continue to help our students craft a college profile that fits their individual needs. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the next question is what happens if I already have 120 credits and I am only a junior and explained that credits are not the only requirements to meet the State Department of Education and the Elizabeth Public Schools graduation requirements. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that while many juniors may have the credit requirements for graduation, they will be missing other components to satisfy the graduation requirements including, for example, a fourth year level course, English IV, physical education IV, financial literacy, community service, and potential individual courses. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that another question is can I still take additional years of math and science as an elective and explained that each high school develops their course schedules based on the needs of students' requests. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that students will be able to continue to request additional math and science courses such as AP Calculus, AP Statistics, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, or AP Physics. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that another potential question may be can I still take advanced placement classes. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that the Elizabeth Public Schools is maintaining its commitment to offering highly rigorous college level courses and that includes advanced placement. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that all of our high schools will continue to offer advanced placement courses. Mrs. Hugelmeier presented a PowerPoint slide showing a 2020-2021 School Day (Optional) and stated that for this school year the schedule had been set prior to this pandemic from 7:30 a.m. to 2:18 p.m., early release for grade 12 students (seniors) will be no earlier than Period 7 - maximum of two (2) periods before end of the day, and early release for grade 11 students (juniors) will be no earlier than Period 8 – maximum of one (1) period before end of the day. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we are still following our four-hour schedule as required this school year and our principals and guidance counselors are following very closely the course completion of our students. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that between November 24<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup> there will be additional information regarding this revised graduation policy. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that this concludes the presentation.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked Superintendent Hugelmeier for the information. Mrs. Barbosa asked Mrs. Hugelmeier to explain the community service for this year.

Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we are being very supportive of our students this year considering we are virtual and made an announcement this week that we are extending virtual learning through February 5<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that at this present time we are waiving the community service and this is what we did last year when we were faced with this pandemic from March through June. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we are continuing to communicate with our families so that our families understand that this requirement is being waived for this school year.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that a topic of interest is the P-EBT and asked Mrs. Hugelmeier to speak about the program.

Mrs. Hugelmeier explained that the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) is a federal initiative and is not a state initiative. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that it opened toward the end of the last school year and the window closed at the end of August. Mrs. Hugelmeier explained that the district was

required to provide information and the federal program was responsible for sending out the cards. Mrs. Hugelmeier stated that we do not manage the program.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the Food Services Department has had a lot of calls because people have gotten the cards and now they have not gotten a card to continue the program. Mr. Kennedy stated that, as Mrs. Hugelmeier said, we were required to submit the list of free and reduced lunch students which happened back in March. Mr. Kennedy stated that our Food Services Department has made inquiries and what we are hearing is that the program has ended in Elizabeth. Mr. Kennedy stated that why Elizabeth is no longer included in the program is hard to understand but that is the answer we are getting from the State.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that the next topic of interest is for our employees and Board members to understand the health insurance program. Mrs. Barbosa introduced George Mouded, Economic Planning Group, and Chris Brazzano, Acrisure, LLC, to present an overview on the new health insurance program being offered.

George Mouded, Economic Planning Group, stated that on July 1, 2020 Governor Murphy in a collaborative effort with the NJEA signed PL 2020 Chapter 44 into law. Mr. Mouded stated that the goal of this was to reduce healthcare contributions for certain school employees who elect this newly created plan, New Jersey Educators Healthcare Plan or the Garden State Healthcare Plan which is going to follow next year. Mr. Mouded stated that the significance of this new healthcare plan is the contribution change to a percentage of salary instead of the current Chapter 78 law. Mr. Mouded stated that after this came to be the appointed team at Acrisure, led by Chris Brazzano, worked very hard with our current medical providers which is Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield and our prescription provider which is Benecard to create plan designs set forth by the guidelines of the law. Mr. Mouded stated that Chris Brazzano and his team rolled out the Elizabeth Board of Education equivalent of the Educators Plan and began the enrollment period on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Mouded stated that Chris Brazzano is going to present more details about the program.

Chris Brazzano, Acrisure, LLC, stated that this is a special enrollment process which was dictated by the new law that was enacted July 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Brazzano stated that the biggest part is the affirmation process and having every employee complete the forms. Mr. Brazzano stated that there were three orientation meetings this week via Zoom with question and answer periods. Mr. Brazzano stated that his staff is available to answer all questions and they can be sent to [ElizabethBOE@acrisure.com](mailto:ElizabethBOE@acrisure.com). Mr. Brazzano explained that there are currently six plans in place and they are not being eliminated. Mr. Brazzano stated that we are adding the Elizabeth Educators Plan as the law states we must. Mr. Brazzano stated that the plans are designed for everyone's individual needs. Mr. Brazzano stated that the enrollment period began five days ago and ends December 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brazzano explained that the form needs to be completed for an option to remain in the current health benefits program.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked them for the information and asked when the forms are due.

Mr. Brazzano stated that the forms are due by midnight on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Jacobs spoke about the EBT program and the State said Elizabeth is no longer a participant.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the determination is on a per school basis and they told us that our schools did not qualify for the program. Mr. Kennedy stated that it is surprising since we have such a large population of free and reduced lunches.

Mr. Jacobs asked if they put it in writing because he is surprised as well. Mr. Jacobs asked if we can find out about our neighboring cities such as Jersey City, Newark, Paterson to see if they were excluded as well and if not, then how come we were.

Mr. Kennedy responded that is something that needs to be done.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he hopes we can get a definitive answer because he heard there were two or three rounds and we have residents that were concerned about getting these benefits.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that Mr. Kennedy is looking into it and will report back.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked Board President Barbosa. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she appreciates how President Barbosa started the meeting with the President's Focus and expressing the topics of interest and concern including credits for graduation, help desk, insurance, and EBT benefits. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she is proud of President Barbosa for the development and start of the meeting.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for the comments and asked if any Board members had any questions or concerns.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that her first and last concern is the health and safety of us all. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the health and safety of our staff and students is very important as we go through. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we are currently in discussion with our Board, Superintendent, and unions with the holiday season coming up. Mrs. Barbosa stated that they do understand and get daily numbers in our areas and surrounding areas and we are very alert to everything that is going on around us and we constantly find ways to make it better. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the holiday season coming up we are closely monitoring how we are going to address it because it has been our topic of conversation throughout these last few weeks. Mrs. Barbosa stated that it worries her and she asked everyone to stay vigilant to take the right protocols with yourself, with your family, and everyone whether you are coming to the workplace or at home with your children to keep your immune system as strong as you can. Mrs. Barbosa stated God bless us all as we enter this phase and go through it. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the final decision will be further discussed and know that we hear you, we live it with you, we understand and care about each and every one of you. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we have been in discussion with the unions and we will be in discussion to find the best approach for this holiday season. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we will continue these discussions and come back with more information.

Mrs. Barbosa presented the following public participation statement.

“At this time, the meeting is open for public comment to those who have registered with the online participation form prior to this session. I shall call individuals to participate based on the order of the sign-in. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes. No individual is able to yield their time to another individual. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually. The following rules for public participation shall apply: time limits will be strictly enforced, no personal attacks on individuals, no vulgar or indecent language, a person may address the board no more than once during a single meeting, speakers should refrain from naming individuals, and comments or questions posed during public participation will not be debated. As a reminder, this is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.

If the 60 minute public comment period expires before all registered online participants have been called, remaining participants can email their statements to the Secretary of the Board at [kennedha@epsnj.org](mailto:kennedha@epsnj.org) and they will be spread in full in the Official Minutes of this meeting. The Secretary of the Board will read into the record all emails that have been submitted up to the start of the meeting. Each statement submitted by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration.”

Mrs. Barbosa called twice upon the first public participant, Tatiana Rodriguez, to address the Board. Tatiana Rodriguez did not respond.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, Kason Little, to address the Board.

Kason Little stated that the Board doesn't care about the staff and doesn't speak to the union.

Ms. Bathelus responded that his comments are not true.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked him and called upon the next public participant, Juliet Meneses, to address the Board.

Juliet Meneses spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Maria Lorenz, to address the Board.

Maria Lorenz spoke about the lack of communication.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Luckerlie Barthelus, to address the Board.

Luckerlie Barthelus spoke in support of the student success center.

Mr. Neron stated that this will be discussed in private session and is a decision of financing.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Yulieth Sanabria, to address the Board.

Yulieth Sanabria spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Kenyl Veris, to address the Board.

Kenyl Veris spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Miriam Ayala, to address the Board.

Miriam Ayala spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Katherine Beltran, to address the Board.

Katherine Beltran spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Lesmar Macabe, to address the Board.

Lesmar Macabe spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked him.

Mrs. Barbosa called twice upon the next public participant, Wilme Rodriguez, to address the Board. Wilme Rodriguez did not respond.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, Lina Larrotta, to address the Board.

Lina Larrotta spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Christina Moreira, to address the Board

Christina Moreira thanked the Board President for creating a platform to address topics of concern and stated she is happy that the Superintendent presented information on the graduation requirements.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Danna Chacon, to address the Board.

Danna Chacon spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Ester Carrera, to address the Board.

Ester Carrera spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her and called upon the next public participant, Christian Franco, to address the Board.

Christian Franco spoke about the student success center.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked him for his comments.

Mrs. Barbosa called twice upon the next public participant, Diana Benenaula, to address the Board. Diana Benenaula did not respond.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, John Griffin, to address the Board.

John Griffin, EEA President, stated that he looks forward to more communication with the Board and Superintendent. Mr. Griffin stated that a letter was sent to the Superintendent on October 30<sup>th</sup> requesting staff work from home to further reduce the spread of the virus. Mr. Griffin read the letter and stated that no one has called to discuss the letter.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked him. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she had a conversation today with him about this situation and she brought it to the Board for discussion for the best way to keep everyone safe and keep education going.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, Leonardo Caramazana, to address the Board.

Leonardo Caramazana, EEA Vice President, spoke about the accountability, responsibility, and the role of Board members and stated that the Elizabeth Board of Education has not finalized the contract bargaining agreement and has not provided copies of it to PERC as required by law.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked him and stated that it is a legal matter and we will look into this.

Mrs. Barbosa called upon the next public participant, Melissa Wells, to address the Board.

Melissa Wells, teacher, spoke about the problems with virtual teaching.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for her comments and called upon the next public participant, Nicholas Nicoletta, to address the Board.

Nick Nicoletta, EEA 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, spoke about the problems with virtual learning and presented data from a staff survey concerning poor communication, lack of support from administration, and the social and emotional problems associated with virtual learning.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked him and called upon the next public participant, Fatima Singleton, to address the Board.

Fatima Singleton stated that there is too much homework for the students.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for her comments and called upon the next public participant, Michelle Santos, to address the Board.

Michelle Santos thanked the Board for opening the schools for the autism program and stated that there should be limited staff in schools.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked her for her comments.

Mrs. Barbosa stated that the public participation session has exceeded 60 minutes. Mrs. Barbosa stated that public participants who did not have an opportunity to speak may email their statements to the Secretary of the Board at [kennedha@epsnj.org](mailto:kennedha@epsnj.org) and they will be spread in full in the Official Minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Kennedy stated that he received emails prior to the start of the meeting from people who did not want to participate in the audio portion of the meeting which will be spread in full in the Official Minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Blair Monroe:

“This year my children will not see their Grandparents for Thanksgiving. This is particularly sad, as their beloved grandfather is 81 and had a heart-attack this summer. It is, however, for exactly this reason that we will not be able to visit him. As a family we have rigorously quarantined: my wife stays home, my children all learn from home, everyone has given up any hobby which could expose them to contamination. We no longer go out to dinner, there is no more drama club or dance class, we do not have playdates or inter-family game nights. We have done everything in our power to protect our family. But there is one vector of exposure we do not have control over: it is the requirement that I drive into Elizabeth daily to do a job I can just as easily (and more effectively) do from my own home. I hate that I am forced to choose between loyalty to my workplace and fidelity to my father-in-law. I have known the man since my own father died when I was 18 and I have hardly seen him this past year because the act of visiting could potentially sicken and kill him. If I and my family were able to isolate ourselves for just two weeks we could visit him without worry of contamination. Unfortunately, this is not within my power to arrange; It is, however, within yours. I humbly ask that you take care of the employees, and the families of the employees, who for years have labored on behalf of this district. Please give us the ability to protect our families and loved ones by allowing us to do our jobs remotely. It is too late for Thanksgiving as the deadline to quarantine for it has past, but it is not too late for Christmas. So I ask you: Will you be the Board of Ed who stole Christmas? Or will you do right by those who depend on you, recognize their needs, and allow us to teach remotely from the safety of our own homes? The choice is your – I pray to god your make the right one. Thank you.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Stephen Polchinski:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional

staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Lydia Collins:

“I am writing the board regarding the increased rise of Covid cases and I am hoping this email will be shared for consideration during tonight’s board meeting.

For teachers and support staff who do not have accommodations, I am urging the board to consider allowing a work from home option over the holidays to decrease the potential spread of the virus. Our district as a whole has had multiple cases already, and it seems logical that during the holidays, it will continue to rise. To be exposed at work now would mean that hard working educators and support staff would be quarantined during the holidays. Considering the particular difficulties that our community has faced as a whole, we truly need this time of reconnecting to find strength and solidarity to face what 2021 has to bring.

Thank you for considering this and for reading the email.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Laura Smith:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. My job can be done just as well from home and I am keeping myself, my family and others safe. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request. Thank you so much for your time and understanding in this matter.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Jennifer Hart:

“I write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. Overnight from this Tuesday into Wednesday, there were 147 new cases in the city of Elizabeth. With the holidays approaching and people gathering together or traveling out of the area that number is going to increase dramatically. Just this week, after two days of students returning to the classroom at school 26, a class had to be quarantined for two weeks because of multiple cases of COVID-19 in the classroom. This kind of exposure and repeated closures will create a disconnect for students and staff and will not promote a continuity of instruction.

In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who can work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. Current research reported today in the New York Times states that while surface cleaning is good and should continue, it is the coronavirus droplets that get carried through the air and into the ventilation systems that are a main concern in the spread of this disease. Therefore, keeping the teachers and support staff in segregated rooms within the buildings is not keeping the staff safe. Allowing our members to work from home would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually, some more than once, because of Covid and we have received no response to our request. I urge you to do the responsible thing by giving due consideration to the number of requests you are receiving and take action today. Thank you.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Carmela Melillo:

“I hope that this email finds you and your families well.

I’m writing to you today to request your continued support to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic increase in Covid-19 cases all across New Jersey. In an effort to keep everyone safe, I formally request that all instructional

staff who could work remotely, do so for the remainder of 2020, and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would greatly reduce building populations, minimize exposure, and hopefully help slow the spread of this disease. Thank you for your time.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Hedy Stern:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020, and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid. Please keep the health and safety of our Team members your highest priority, and allow those who can work remotely from home to do so throughout the remainder of 2020. Thank you for your support.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Rebecca Kornblum:

“I am writing to you tonight out of extreme concern for the health and safety for the Staff and Students of the Elizabeth Public Schools district. As numbers continue to rise, the district has continued to have staff in the buildings, and has now started to return students into the buildings as well. Please look at the science. Your staff want to be safe and healthy. Let us work from home - where we can have less stress and fear of being exposed by a coworker. The administration should realize that we deserve a safe working environment. It is almost on a daily basis that another school is being closed because an adult entered the workspace carrying the COVID-19 virus. My only exposure to coronavirus was while working in your school building. Meanwhile, you continue to conduct your board meetings virtually. Think about how unethical, immoral, and inappropriate this appears from the outside looking in. Please reconsider so that your staff can be safe and remain healthy. Let us work from home so this spread of coronavirus is slowed.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Mieko Inghilleri:

“I write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently, as schools continue to be closed within the district due to positive cases and parents/students continue to report cases within the community, my place of employment being one of them. In an effort to keep our members safe, I formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request. As a teaching professional, I feel that I should be entrusted and empowered to do my job from the safety of my home, especially since we are not planning to bring back the regular education population of students until February the earliest. The excuse that we need to be in school to "return to a sense of normalcy" is alarming, because what I feel being back in an empty classroom teaching at a computer screen all day is far from normal and can be done anywhere with a wifi connection. There is literally no reason to force us back into building to teach remotely. This causes unnecessary anxiety and stress commuting into a build without students to teach.

Secondly, most of us are commuting a minimum of 30 minutes each way into the building. I travel an hour each way. This year requires an unprecedented amount of time dedicated to planning and adapting lessons to the virtual environment, building online classrooms/platforms/assignments, assessing, grading, parent contacts, interventions, and the list goes on. I have been spending 12-15+ hours a week outside of my contracted prep time to be an effective educator in the given circumstance. Instead of wasting the time commuting to work, that time could be used to accomplish some of the aforementioned tasks. Since our school has closed and we are working virtually the last two days, my stress and anxiety levels have gone down significantly and I have been able to use the commuting time to work instead. I am also saving gas

money which is important since many of us are losing extra income from not being able to work the AM/PM/bus duties etc. There are many teachers working from home for medical and child care reasons, and they seem to be doing just fine so the rest of us will be able to manage working remotely from home as well.

Please be empathetic to this. We are all trying our best. Please do the right thing and go fully remote for all instructional staff that can work virtually from home. We do not need to take unnecessary risk coming into empty classrooms.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Anju Chhibber:

“I just want to make a humble request to EBOE to allow teachers to work from home as numbers are rising. Teachers who are reporting to school are at risk of getting exposed and transmit. Teachers can perform their duties from home too. For the safety of all please consider our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Debra Stallone:

“I’m writing you today to request your continued support in my journey to protect the lives of my students, my family, and my community. There has been a dramatic rise in COVID cases recently. In an effort to keep everyone safe, I am requesting that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020. This would prevent exposure to all teachers and hopefully slow the spread of the disease.

I am unwilling to jeopardize the health of my family by entering school buildings when I can efficiently perform all the tasks necessary to teach my students from the safety of my home. Thank you for your continuous support and understanding.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Briana Helm:

“I write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. Overnight from this Tuesday into Wednesday, there were 147 new cases in the city of Elizabeth. The city has 1,467 reported open cases. With the holidays approaching and people gathering together or traveling out of the area that number is going to increase dramatically.

Just this week, after two days of students returning to the classroom at school 26, a class had to be quarantined for two weeks because of multiple cases of COVID-19 in the classroom. This kind of exposure and repeated closures will create a disconnect for students and staff and will not promote a continuity of instruction.

In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who can work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. Current research reported today in the New York Times states that while surface cleaning is good and should continue, it is the coronavirus droplets that get carried through the air and into the ventilation systems that are a main concern in the spread of this disease. Therefore, keeping the teachers and support staff in segregated rooms within the buildings is not keeping the staff safe. Allowing our members to work from home would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually, some more than once, because of Covid and we have received no response to our request. I urge you to do the responsible thing by giving due consideration to the number of requests you are receiving and take action today.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Marisa Catena:

“My name is Marisa Catena, and I am a teacher in the district. With the rise of COVID-19 cases within the state of New Jersey, and specifically in Elizabeth, I am very concerned about the health and safety of myself, colleagues and autism students who are being required to teach and learn in person.

When our health and safety were at risk in October, Elizabeth teachers taught virtually from home for 2 weeks. To date, COVID-19 cases are at an all-time high since the spring of 2020, and schools within the

Elizabeth school district continue to shut down daily due to COVID-19 cases and exposure. I believe the running number is 26 schools and 2 administrative buildings since the beginning of September. Based on the decision to close in the past in combination with the rise of COVID-19 cases, it does not seem logical to require teachers, faculty, staff and now autism students to continue to report to work and school in person. I believe we, the Elizabeth Public School community, deserve an explanation from the Board of Education, Superintendent and Elizabeth Board of Health. We are going beyond our usual duties as teachers, faculty, staff, students, and parents to maneuver this situation the best we can. The daily stresses of teaching and learning have been magnified by technology issues and lack of interpersonal relationships, but even more so, the anxiety of risking the health and lives of ourselves and those we encounter (colleagues, students, family members). Statewide, districts are choosing to teach and learn remotely. Every time I hear of another district choosing to do so, I feel a sense of anxiety, fear and then anger at the Elizabeth Public School Board of Education and Superintendent for choosing to prioritize our appearance in buildings devoid of students over our physical and mental well-being. At a time when we need to create a supportive environment, this type of angst is not good for morale. I am left wondering, as I imagine many of us are, if I will be the next one to get sick. To wake up and go to work with that fear every morning is dehumanizing and unjust. While I long to teach my students in person, I do not believe it is safe. Safety should be the priority for the best teaching and learning practices.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Nicola Jeffery:

“I am writing this email to express my growing fear about working in a school building during the height of a global pandemic. While I understand that the Covid positive cases that have caused some building to temporarily close were not contracted from schools, it doesn’t ease my fears as the number of positive Covid cases and deaths continue to rise.

I suffer from high blood pressure, anxiety, and asthma. I never requested special accommodations because I feel there are many other employees who suffer from more serious health issues who probably needed them more. I was also not too concerned about working from school at that time. I no longer feel this way. I am shocked that the district seems to be intent on having kids return to classrooms in February despite the fact that buildings seem to be closing daily. I feel it can’t possibly be safe for students to return while building continue to close due to adults being infected with Covid. I am also really upset that I drive to work daily to sit in a classroom to teach virtually when I can do the identical job from home. I know I am safe in my home. I no longer feel safe teaching from school. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Laura Lynne Mucci:

“As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently with no evidence of abatement. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually, and some on more than one occasion. Given the number of staff members who have tested positive for COVID and/or been asked to self-quarantine because of possible exposure, it is even more critical that immediate action be taken to protect the lives of our students, our staff, our staff’s families, and the community.

I stand with the Elizabeth Education Association to formally request that all instructional staff who can work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Barbara Meigh:

“As an Elizabeth Public School employee, I request your continued support and ask you to consider how to better protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth.

As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. Many of us live in towns which are identified as hotspots, and yet we are being asked to come into our schools and empty classrooms, which are located in a city with a Covid testing site because it too has high Covid cases. Does that make sense?

In an effort to keep our members, families and communities safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts, if they too cannot work from home.

This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees who may bring it home and spread Covid, instead of contributing to reducing the curve. In my mind, this makes more sense.

To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.

Please consider the employees and family members who have experienced Covid personally. Why endanger anymore lives when we have options?"

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Michael Dayton:

"We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Desiree Villano:

"We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Melissa Llano:

"We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff including classroom assistants and child developmental assistants, who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and every day, their is another school closing. Please consider our request. I thank you for your continued support."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Debbie Spiegel:

"I am writing you all of you to today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been an increase in COVID recently in our community and in the state of New Jersey as well. To keep all of us safe, I am formally requesting that all instructional staff who could work remotely be able to do so for the remainder of the 2020 school year and to allow support staff to work in staggered shifts. As you are aware, this would minimize exposure to everyone and hopefully help to prevent or slow the spread of this horrible disease.

I have been a teacher in the district for 19 years. I love my job more than any of you could understand. I teach pre-k, and teaching virtually is not the way I expected or could want. I need to feel safe teaching virtually, and I do not feel safe coming into my building daily. I'm scared, and I can do my job effectively from the safety of my own home. Please consider the request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Marisa Meola:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.

I would like to add that everything I do in the building I can do from home and actually, more easily. My internet wifi is better and faster at home than it is here at school 5. We have been sent home twice to teach due to Covid infections since the beginning of school. During both of those times, I experienced no problems at all. It is actually frustrating sometimes here at school due to the internet issues. Thank you for your consideration in this matter during these difficult times. May we all stay safe and healthy.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Jenifer Joseph:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid.

The permanent damage to vital organs

(heart, lungs, and possible brain damage) are terrifying.

Never having the same lung capacity and level of physical activity is one of many possible permanent side effects.

Death

The loss of us to our families would be devastating!

Many of us are the head of household support and the family couldn't afford to live in the house, pay bills, pay insurances, ect.

Not worth the risk

Cases in NJ yesterday over 4,000 a day and 27 deaths.

Some people are losing more than 1 family member. Unimaginable!

Newark is right next to Elizabeth and a hotspot. It is worse now than in April and we were in full lockdown then.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Dina Zayas:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, the EEA has formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid, and we have received no response to our request.

This is unacceptable and endangering the lives of so many people, all while the job can be done while working safely at home. What are you waiting for...Someone to get seriously ill and die? This is not a game. Please address this issue promptly.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Annice Benamy:

“I write you today to request your continued support in the journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently especially in Union County (<https://dailyvoice.com/new-jersey/union/schools/covid-19-5-nj-schools-report-outbreaks-this-week-including-one-with-23-cases/798194/>) . In an effort to keep our team members safe, I formally request that all instructional staff be allowed to work remotely if s/he wants to at least until February 2021 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. I also request that special education students NOT be allowed to return to the buildings for instruction because of their health issues. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and there has been no information regarding this matter to the Team members. In the past, the Elizabeth Board of Education was transparent regarding important issues. I am disappointed that the relationship between the Elizabeth Board of Education and Team members has not shown to be positive. I hope you will resolve this matter prior to Thanksgiving vacation next week. Positive and transparent leadership is needed during this critical time.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Jenna Cipolla:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.

I am concerned about having to commute to work to spend time in my classroom – while I am able to spend much time in isolation in my own classroom, I still have to touch all of the same surfaces as everyone else who enters and exits the building, and it is a risk. I am an essential employee who is capable of performing all of my job duties from home – please don’t confuse my hesitation to work in the building as an unwillingness to work. I am putting in more hours than ever to maintain creative and interesting lessons for my classes, but I don’t feel like it’s necessary to put myself and others at an unnecessary risk when the positivity rates are spiking at numbers we haven’t seen in months. Please – for the safety of myself and thousands of others – close our buildings until 2021 and let us get through the holiday season in safety.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Sandra Toll:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.

Teaching virtually from the school building is less effective than teaching from home -due to the unnecessary stress it causes, the poor WIFI signal, the lack of stability due to closings not to mention the added risk of exposure. Please make the health and wellness of your workforce a priority.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Yoselin Nunez:

“My Name is Yoselin Nunez. I am an employee of Elizabeth Board Of Education. I am very concern about students safety, my safety and my family safety too . I live in Elizabeth and my children they attending to Elizabeth public school and it’s incredible the number of students that have been positive to the Covid beside others cases that I have known. I formally requested that the staff who could work remotely do so until the cases start decreasing.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Kimberly Golden:

“As you are aware, Covid cases throughout NJ continue to climb. In Elizabeth alone, the positive test cases are alarming. Over the last several weeks, multiple schools in Elizabeth have had to be shut down due to positive staff members.

Since this pandemic impacted our lives back in March, I have been one who has taken great care in minimizing my exposure to this virus. I don't go out socializing, I don't go to restaurants or on family outings, I keep my trips to the grocery store brief and at very early hours to reduce exposure for myself as well as my family.

I have been a teacher in Elizabeth since 2009. Even though we all crave normalcy and would like nothing more for our students to be back in our classrooms, this is not the time to continue to expose staff members or students to increased risk.

The holiday season is here - many of us have been looking forward to this time so we can bring some joy into our homes. It would be crushing to wind up quarantining from our families because of the unnecessary exposure that was placed upon us.

I am imploring you to consider all staff work remotely until after the holidays and winter break.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Jessica Coyne:

“I was wondering how it is fair to have special education students return in December when the holidays are approaching, whereas, the general education students are not returning until February. I am home on medical so I am wondering how learning will take place. Will I have to go into the school, or would I be able to work, remotely? I am already susceptible to getting COVID because I experience an immunodeficiency. But I guess it is okay because to you, my life is disposable. My fiancé teaches at a behavioral school and had a case in his class, so they had to shut down and quarantine. If that happens again and I must quarantine for being in close contact with my fiancé, would I be able to teach from home? If New York City schools are shutting down, why aren't we? Cases are rising, this is not right.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Ellen Glynn:

“Good evening. I am writing to you on behalf of my colleagues of the Elizabeth School District. I urge you with the rising COVID-19 infections to allows staff to work from home. Having our buildings filled with teachers and staff daily is unnecessary risk during second wave. Everyone would be safer at home. We have already seen so many of our buildings close do to COVID infections this fall and know the devastation we went through in the spring. I appreciate the safety measures you put into place and the care and concern when buildings are closed but it is a frequent occurrence and will become increasingly frequent as the City of Elizabeth, Union County and the State of NJ infection and death rates rise, especially with the holidays upon us. We hope that people are responsible with holiday celebrations, but we can truly only be accountable for our actions not those of others. Bringing staff into the buildings after holiday celebrations and travels will raise the risk for everyone, even those who are taking measures to ensure their own good health and safety. Please reconsider your stance on staff in the buildings and allow our district members to work safely from home.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Paul Reines:

“As cases in New Jersey are skyrocketing, and in schools too (just last night, both of my children’s schools, in different districts, announced cases in the schools – one resulting in closure), and we have had dozens of cases in Elizabeth schools with no students present:

1)Why are EPS teachers required to report to buildings? Would you dispute that this is an unnecessary risk with little or no tangible benefit?(I could understand if buildings were open for faculty who need a place to concentrate/focus, but for those who don’t need that and can be equally productive at home, why not let them be at home?)

2)The New York Times reports (a report focused on Hong Kong, for reference) this morning that “deep cleaning” is of little use in buildings. The airborne nature of Covid is what is most relevant, and along with that, improvements to ventilation and filtration systems are critical. In an old building like Hamilton and throughout the district, what has been done or is being done to improve ventilation and reduce our risk of contagion should we be back this winter? I have inquired before in writing (before the school year started, actually) and not received a response from administration nor have I heard or seen any announcements about this.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Ken Mak:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Christine Maresca:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Marissa Sprofera:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Anna Kroik:

“I write you today to request your continued support in protecting the lives of our students, employees, thier families and community members in Elizabeth. There has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. To keep our members safe, I would like to request that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. I submitted a letter from the doctor indicated that I am in High risk for COVID-19, my husband is as well, but I did not hear any confirmation from the central office allowing me to work remotely. With increased cases I am putting my husband and myself in a great risk continuing working in person. I plead you to take additional steps and find the solution that would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent the spread of the disease. Thank you to all board members and our educational leaders who always listen to our voices and concerns. God Bless!”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Stephanie Cottrell-Sganga:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Grace Serralheiro:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.

27,29, 51, and the Welcome Center have closed due to Covid since Monday. The warehouse, the Mitchell Building, and 26 have had partial closures this week as well. Almost 30 of our buildings have shut down to date, some closing more than once. We are not asking for us to not do our jobs, we are asking for us to do our jobs safely from our homes. If it has not been safe for students to return, why would it have been safe for us? Most of us educators (who also have children at home) STILL do our jobs. But you are risking our own families now too. Let us work safely....give us peace in our minds. We can not rely on one another to social distance and wear masks outside of school and its showing with numbers increasing. I know parents...and students with Covid currently...I currently have family members in the hospital with it. We need to feel safe too. We as teachers were NOT "phased in" as the students will be and it does not make sense if we have the capability to still do our jobs from home. We hope that you will make the right and safe decision for all staff members.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Rebecca Wood:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Fern Perez Gani:

“We write you today to request to your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize to our employees, and hopefully prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Adrian Cordona:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in

Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Kelly Edmonds:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Anne Maria Calzolari

“I am writing out of concern for all Team Members of the Elizabeth Board of Education. More than 25 schools have been closed because of Covid cases and that is without students. While I understand that cases were not necessarily the result of contact in schools, the fact that members are entering schools and might be spreading the virus unknowingly is dangerous and shows disregard for our safety.

Additionally, I have been home for more time than I was in the building because my school has shut down for a total of four weeks. The anxiety and stress of going back and forth and wondering if the building is safe or if I'll encounter someone who is not as compliant as I am, is exhausting.

Does the district not trust its staff to work from home?

Does the district think they cannot keep a watchful eye on staff from home?

Does the district think educators and staff are better equipped at school? For the latter, I can tell you we are not. Many educators are working at a deficit at school because of wifi issues, outdated computer equipment.

Why is the board not considering having all Team members work remotely for the remainder of 2020? If it is not safe for students, how can it be safe for staff?”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Thomas Noniewicz:

“We have just surpassed 250,000 deaths in the United States of America, and we are showing no signs of the rates of infection slowing down with 11% positivity rate in NJ. The numbers do not lie, I see NO reason to continue to Jeopardize the HEALTH & SAFETY of the Educators or Staff members by continuing to remotely teach from within the Buildings in which we attend. NYC has a positivity rate of 3% and is shutting down, We are nearly 4 times that rate and put ourselves at risk every time we step out our front door, God forbid somebody has an accident and must be brought to a hospital (Which again are be over whelmed with covid) you will be placed in a hospital with no room and INFESTED with covid. I have NOT left my house for anything other than Essentials since our shutdown began on March 16<sup>th</sup>, I have missed Communion, Confirmations and Birthdays of my Nieces and Nephews trying to do what is right. Now with the Holidays a week away and I am going to miss more time that I should be spending with Family. This will be the First time in my 48 years of life that I WILL NOT see my family on Thanksgiving. It is breaking my heart. As everyone is becoming “Covid Fatigued” and letting their guard down because they are getting fed up with the mandates with masks and how many people can gather in one place, Well guess what Covid doesn't care if you are tired of doing the right thing!!!! It will only thrive and Prey on our Weakness. Covid is not going anywhere soon so I feel it is our duty to be part of the Solution and NOT the SPREAD. After all the Holiday gatherings that most will still attend how much worse do you think this is going get? Everyday that I leave for work my “Anxiety Level Goes Through The ROOF” and I have a Panic Attack as soon as I get to the parking lot where I don a FULL FACE RESPIRATOR with a MIRA P3 Filter which is the only way I feel safe enough to enter the building and

then straight to my office and lock the door. It is time to Buckle Down. 2020 has been Absolutely Awful and the World may never be the same again, but we need to Stay Strong and Adapt while we await the vaccine. So that being said I for one DO NOT want to be part of the “Science Experiment” and feel The entire District should Be Closed. With the Cold and Flu season upon us we should At Least be given the OPTION to teach Remotely from the Safety Of Our Homes to ensure that our students will also be Safe in their homes. By doing the RIGHT THING we are going to take an Abundance of Stress away from the Medical Field so that we can try to Get this PANDEMIC under control. We All need to Do what is necessary to help The United States of America to Get Back to some Sort of Normalcy. We need NOT become Lax we need to take the Proper Precautions Moving forward and keep the Safety and Well Being of our District protected. In Complete Angst.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Laura Vendemia:

“Treat people the way you want to be treated”, I write this letter has a proud Elizabeth educator. Here we are nine months into this crazy pandemic as I sit in my freezing cold classroom with a hat, gloves, sweatshirt, and jacket. Why you ask? Well I want my window open as my room is in a basement of a school where I only have one window that opens 7 inches. The rest were blocked off to have AC. This is how I feel safe and it is what it is to me these are the measures I need to take to feel safe. I WANT things to be normal as does everyone else. I will be there when the children come back in person !! I never wanted a computer job!!! I love being a teacher it brings me joy daily. I have adapted to remote learning and feel my students are learning and progressing ! I go above and beyond daily to educate my students, but I can do this from the safety of home while the students too are safe. I am here from my students no matter my location; it should not matter. Remote is remote ... I ask that the variables of the virus be taken seriously for all staff members; The numbers are getting higher and higher and having thousands of people travel into the city of Elizabeth just seems unnecessary for all parties. Please think about all the families that have and will be impacted with spread getting wider.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Benjamin Marcune:

“I write to you with hope that logic and compassion will prevail today. Due to the dramatic increase in Covid cases in our district, it is getting increasingly dangerous for the employees to report to our respective work sites. Besides the physical danger that exists, there is also a very damaging mental stress that we are all experiencing.

We teachers are a very altruistic people, who if called upon would willingly risk their safety, if it would be for the cause of helping our students. However, teaching to an empty classroom benefits no one, but instead does harm to our mental and physical health which in turn results in a diminished benefit for the students.

Please agree with the EEA’s position on this. This is all temporary, and when we make it through these dark days, we will be the stronger for it and most thankful for an administration that shows it really does care about both students and employees alike. Much gratitude for your consideration.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Cory Banta:

“Good evening, as an educator in this district it is my personal preference to work from my classroom, however, I believe it should be the choice of each of us daily whether we work from home or come into the building while most of our students remain on remote learning. I am deeply concerned about the way the district has handled our safety thus far. How can you say it's safe to bring back any population of children when you haven't been able to protect us up to now? 23 schools have had to close, including mine. To make matters worse when these closures happen it's carried out as a clandestine operation. I was notified with a school wide email sent from the Superintendent after school hours that starting the next day, we would be working remotely for two weeks. No meeting was scheduled for anyone to address our questions and concerns, no one knew about it outside of our single school community. In the district in which I reside whenever there is any positive case in any aspect of the school community, we receive a notification the same day, even though the district is on fully remote learning. Why is that not happening here? Does the community know how poorly we are doing from keeping COVID out of our schools even WITHOUT the children in the buildings? Why not? Why is everything so secretive and why have even some people that were near someone who tested positive for COVID never contacted by

anyone from the county? Risks with our personal health are ours alone to evaluate and either take or deny. Please stop being ruled by your overall feeling that when teachers are WORKING at home that they are somehow relaxing and popping chocolates. Working from home and certainly working remotely is harder and more challenging than anything we have faced thus far. It's time we were protected as the valuable and necessary asset we are."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Marcelo dos Santos  
"Every morning I wake up and fill our required Covid checklist and read, hear or watch reports on the growing number of Covid-19 cases in the state of New Jersey. September 9th there were around 330 cases. A mere month later we were at 865. That number has been dwarfed a couple times over by the 2,058 cases reported on November 9th and nearly doubled only nine days later with 4,054 cases yesterday, 11/18/2020. Yet, everyday it seems like the Elizabeth school district ignores the alarming increase in the numbers of new cases in the state and pushes on with the same agenda. My building has been closed now for it's second week and the third time since September because of positive cases. This has also happened to many of the buildings in the district. While the checklist is a tool, it' become more than apparent that it isn't preventing the virus from entering the buildings and endangering our well being until after potential exposures have occurred. This tactic will eventually imperil the overall quality of instruction throughout the district if and when a large number of teachers become infected with the virus and it's various array of symptoms and health outcomes.  
Will someone please explain the logic and strategy the EBOE has in stored for it's employees in the face of the growing numbers, since it is our wellbeing and health that are at stake every time we set foot inside a school building? Looking forward to your reply."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Cathy Velaj:  
"I write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently, as schools continue to be closed within the district due to positive cases and parents/students continue to report cases within the community, my place of employment being one of them. In an effort to keep our members safe, I am asking for you to consider that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request. As a teaching professional, I feel that I should be entrusted and empowered to do my job from the safety of my home, especially since we are not planning to bring back the regular education population of students until February the earliest. The excuse that we need to be in school to "return to a sense of normalcy" is alarming, because what I feel being back in an empty classroom teaching at a computer screen all day is far from normal and can be done anywhere with a wifi connection. There is literally no reason to force us back into building to teach remotely. This causes unnecessary anxiety and stress commuting into a build without students to teach.  
This year requires an unprecedented amount of time dedicated to planning and adapting lessons to the virtual environment, building online classrooms/platforms/assignments, assessing, grading, parent contacts, interventions, and the list goes on. I have been spending 12-15+ hours a week outside of my contracted prep time to be an effective educator in the given circumstance. Instead of wasting the time commuting to work, that time could be used to accomplish some of the aforementioned tasks. Since our school has closed and we are working virtually the last two days, my stress and anxiety levels have gone down significantly and I have been able to use the commuting time to work instead.  
Please be empathetic to this. We are all trying our best. Please do the right thing and go fully remote for all instructional staff that can work virtually from home. We do not need to take unnecessary risk coming into empty classrooms."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Ann Marie Arifaj:  
"I write you today to request your support to protect the lives of Elizabeth's students, employees, and community members. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. To keep

all employees safe, I ask that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid. The EEA has been working tirelessly to request this safety measure but has yet to receive a response from the Board of Education. Please put the safety and well-being of all team members as the top priority during this global pandemic. I have been a dedicated teacher in this district for the past 19 years and would like to be treated as an essential employee who can have the choice to teach from the safety of my home in order to keep my family and myself safe. I urge you to do the responsible thing by considering the number of requests you are receiving and take action today.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Marilyn Tavormina:

“We, as Teachers, implore you to consider our request to work from home. School is supposed to be a “safe place” but it has not proven to be safe for us. Recently, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases and at least 30 of our buildings have been shut down for Covid-related illnesses at one point or another. Elizabeth has become a hot spot. Additionally, other cities have also had a rise in Covid cases and have also become hot spots. Do you know that we have teachers coming from those cities as well? Please know: we WANT to do our jobs. We WANT to teach. We also want to be safe. Superintendent Hugelmeyer and Elizabeth Board of Education members, we can’t emphasize enough that we are not disposable. The EEA has formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to all employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. We appeal to you to consider our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Jon Lippi:

“Please consider this request to allow all instructional, and licensed support staff such as Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, CST members, School Psychologists, etc, to work remotely for at least until January. Please also allow support staff to work in staggered shifts. The constant round robin of closing and reopening schools is disruptive, affects morale and increases anxiety for those still working in their buildings. I understand the abundance of caution we have already taken, however regardless of our faculty and administrators following protocol we are still in a constant pattern of reopening and closing again. Add to this, the increasing COVID numbers in the State. Some school districts are at least instituting 1-2 weeks of totally remote learning after Thanksgiving.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Sarah McGlone:

“I write you today to request your support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. The Governor says that ‘in-person learning is safe when the appropriate protections are in place’. What appropriate protections are currently in place as teachers and staff report to the buildings? Whatever protections you consider to be appropriate, are clearly inadequate as the number of positive cases continue to rise among teachers and staff and the number of school buildings requiring closures increases daily. This ‘data’ tells us that it is NOT safe for anyone to be in-person. To keep our members safe, the only reasonable solution is to allow all instructional staff who could work remotely to do so for the remainder of 2020 and to allow support staff to return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. Besides the issue of our health and safety, there is also the issue of common sense. What sense does it make to force willing, hardworking teachers to take an unpaid leave of absence because of childcare or health issues? This is not only cruel, but it is also illogical. It creates monetary hardships for our members and logistical nightmares to replace/cover these teachers. The hardship then falls on everyone else in the building who is already stressed, overwhelmed, and exhausted with their own responsibilities. The hardship also falls on the students. It is hard enough for them to be learning remotely, and then for them to have the inconsistency of substitutes and replacement teachers is only setting them up for further stress and frustration. You say that you make your decisions with the best interest of the staff, students, and community in mind. I think it’s time for you to prove it. What’s best for us all is for you to allow us to work where we have the least possibility of

exposure and the maximum opportunity to perform our jobs while also caring for our families. Considering our unwavering hard work, dedication, and determination, it's the least you can do for us."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Mildred Linares:

"I am concerned about the safety of everybody. I do not feel safe going to the school right now and imagine how the students feel."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Lana Nguyen:

"I am writing tonight to express my concerns with the situation that teachers are being placed in teaching from the buildings. I am told the buildings are safe to enter and teach from but, I have seen no proof of that. I have seen vents with no filters and rooms with dirt and dust on the furniture. Our custodians are doing their jobs; but it seems they are not supplied with the correct materials to do so. When will this be remedied so it is safe to return?"

While I understand the importance of the students being back in the classroom and having in person learning, I also understand the importance of keeping the students and staff safe from this virus. Science illustrates the upward spiral of the disease will continue through the winter. The more people in one place, the higher the risk of passing the infection to others. With that in mind, why are the teachers gathering indoors?"

As a person who has personally experienced the virus along with my entire family, I am concerned about gathering with anyone but my closest family. Indoor gatherings have been limited to TEN people by the governor and gathering with people outside your family is discouraged. I am concerned about what will happen when our students return and in person learning will resume. That form of gathering is exactly what spreads the virus. This meeting is still virtual, if it is so safe for the staff and students to return to the school buildings, why are you not meeting in one of your buildings?"

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Linda Hurff:

"I am writing today to request your support in our journey to protect the health, safety and well-being of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases in our area recently and continues to rise daily. Our schools have had and continue to have closures due to Covid cases. These repeated closures are not good for our students or staff. As schools close without prior notice, we continue to provide instruction to our students from our home. The job that we are doing in an empty classroom can and is being done from the safety of our homes. These constant interruptions and building closures is disrupting to both our students and staff. The constant worry of "will my school be next" is causing stress and anxiety.

In an effort to keep our members safe, we have requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations minimizing risk of exposure to all and help reduce stress and anxiety, providing a continuity of instruction as the health, safety and well-being of students, employees, and community members remains a priority."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Kerilyn Saltarelli:

"I am writing to you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. To keep members safe, the EEA formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and the EEA has received no response to the request.

I would personally like to ask that considerations be given to staff members who would like to spend time with their family for the Holidays. Some of us have been quarantining for 8 months and would like to safely visit family and have time to follow quarantine protocol before going back into the buildings. Thank you for your time."

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Marianne English:

“I write you today to request the Board of Education support in the quest to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth.

As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Co-vid cases recently.

As of November 18, 2020 New Jersey Statistics is reported as:

4,063 new cases for a Total of 289,562 cases

Daily Percent Positivity is 10.88%

To keep the Elizabeth Public School employees safe, I hope you will consider having all instructional staff work remotely from the safety of their homes, for the remainder of 2020. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our building staff, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid.

In conclusion, teaching from home should be an option for teachers between now and the new year especially with the upcoming Holidays/ Family gatherings. Elizabeth School system should follow the protocol set forth by Colleges/Universities.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Lara Filippello:

“I write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Kerry Tempone:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.”

Mr. Kennedy received the following email from Joany Rivera:

“We write you today to request your continued support in our journey to protect the lives of our students, employees, and community members in Elizabeth. As you are aware, there has been a dramatic rise in Covid cases recently. In an effort to keep our members safe, we formally requested that all instructional staff who could work remotely do so for the remainder of 2020 and that support staff return to staggered shifts. This would dramatically reduce building populations, minimize exposure to our employees, and hopefully help prevent or slow the spread of the disease. To date, twenty-six schools and two administrative buildings have been shut down individually because of Covid and we have received no response to our request.

If no change occur, your staff will feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, depress, and plain and simple worry that he/she will be sick and bring it to the family. We are asking for your support on this matter and see us as ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND NOT DISPOSSABLE WORKERS.”

Since there were no other participants for public speaking and no other emails received, Mrs. Barbosa closed this portion of the meeting.

Mrs. Barbosa introduced Supervisor of Anti-Bullying/EEOC/Affirmative Action/Guidance Peter Vosseler to present the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Investigative Results and the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Self-Assessment.

Supervisor of Anti-Bullying/EEOC/Affirmative Action/Guidance Peter Vosseler stated that pursuant to Board Policy 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) and New Jersey Statute 18A:37 the results of each investigation shall be reported to the Board of Education no later than the date of the next board meeting following completion of the investigation, and include: 1) Any services provided; 2) Training established; 3) Discipline imposed; or 4) Other action taken or recommended by the chief school administrator. Mr. Vosseler stated that at the next regularly scheduled meeting after Board members receive the report of HIB investigations, the statute requires that the Board issue a decision in writing to affirm, reject, or modify the Superintendent's decision pertaining to the cases that were reported to the Board members at the last meeting.

Supervisor of Anti-Bullying/EEOC/Affirmative Action/Guidance Peter Vosseler stated that we are required by state law to present the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying self-assessment two times per year. Mr. Vosseler stated that tonight he is presenting a report, *Assessing Our Performance Under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights*. Mr. Vosseler stated that the schools complete the self-assessment at the end of each school year and tonight he is presenting the results for the 2019-2020 school year.

Mr. Vosseler stated that a No Bully Zone is important and in Elizabeth, we believe that every child has the right to go to school and to get an education no matter what size, shape, color, race, disability, or financial background he/she has. Mr. Vosseler stated that that no child should ever be made to feel that school is a place where he or she will be degraded, demoralized, singled out, hounded, discriminated against or taken advantage of in a vulnerable situation.

Mr. Vosseler stated that a rubric was developed by the State to aide districts in assessing the school's efforts and improving their Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights programs. Mr. Vosseler stated that the rubric was designed to be a growth model and to be used to enhance programs at schools and districts and consists of eight core elements and twenty-six indicators with each indicator having a score of zero to three points. Mr. Vosseler explained that the first core element deals with programs, approaches, and initiatives and whether they are designed to create a better school climate. Mr. Vosseler stated that the second core element is training on our policy and includes looking at who we have to train, making sure our policy includes the protected classes under the law, and that we discuss the policy with students in an age appropriate manner. Mr. Vosseler stated that the third core element is about staff instruction and training programs and there is a requirement in the law that in every five-year cycle certified staff have to get two hours of HIB training and suicide training. Mr. Vosseler stated that the Anti-Bullying Specialists have to be able to meet with the Anti-Bullying Coordinator during school time and to be able to receive training during that time. Mr. Vosseler stated that we have to be able to provide professional development to the school safety and climate team, which is a group that oversees the process at each school, and that school leaders have also received the appropriate information. Mr. Vosseler stated that the fourth core element is curriculum and instruction and although it does not have a lot of indicators within this core element it is important because it is assessing how the school is providing appropriate instruction within the curriculum and whether the school and district are observing the Week of Respect which is the first full week in October. Mr. Vosseler stated that the fifth core element is regarding HIB required personnel and whether there is an Anti-Bullying Specialist and that we go beyond the requirement by also appointing an Alternate Anti-Bullying Specialist in each school. Mr. Vosseler stated that it assesses whether we met the minimum requirement of meetings which we do and surpass and that the school safety and climate team met in the appropriate manner. Mr. Vosseler stated that the sixth core element is whether we have implemented the district's procedure for reporting HIB and all the required elements that go along with it and whether we have the procedure to put in new information into older cases. Mr. Vosseler stated that the seventh core element is our actual procedure and this deals a lot with timelines and did we meet all the timelines including doing investigations within ten school days and sending the results to the superintendent within the two days of the completed investigation. Mr. Vosseler stated that the last core element is HIB reporting and is there a system for our staff to report things. Mr. Vosseler stated that our HIB assessment scores are on the main website and each individual school website.

Mr. Vosseler explained the scoring and that zero is for not meeting the requirements, 1 is for partially meeting the requirements, 2 is for meeting all the requirements, and 3 is for exceeding the requirements. Mr. Vosseler stated that to meet and exceed the requirement there are a lot of indicators on

the rubric that the school has to meet. Mr. Vosseler stated that the highest possible score is 78, which means that every indicator was scored a 3 and they have exceeded every indicator. Mr. Vosseler stated that a score of 52 means all of the indicators were met. Mr. Vosseler stated that our schools this year ranged from 56 to 73, and all thirty-six schools scored a 56 or more which is meeting the requirements. Mr. Vosseler stated that the average score across all the schools becomes the district score which is 66 and is up from 65 for the 2018-2019 school year.

Mr. Vosseler stated that the self-assessment process is that all of the school safety and climate teams complete the self-assessment. Mr. Vosseler stated that they input the information on the NJ DOE website and the results are then presented to the public. Mr. Vosseler stated that then we receive approval from the Board of Education as well as assurances from the Superintendent. Mr. Vosseler stated that after that is completed we submit all of our self-assessments to the NJ DOE for the school year and after it is approved, then the results are uploaded to our websites. Mr. Vosseler stated that at the next Board meeting a second presentation is required by state law to present the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying self-assessment. Mr. Vosseler presented PowerPoint slides showing the scores for each school and stated that the HIB self-assessment for the school year shows how well our district is implementing the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights.

Mr. Vosseler stated that the highlights of our work to date include an annual Week of Respect, district training for our team members, state training for the Anti-Bullying Coordinator, and guest speakers who address different aspects of anti-bullying at the schools. Mr. Vosseler stated that we have contracted with the community program called Breaking the Cycle and also contracted for cyber-bullying and internet safety training to all of our students from the Union County Prosecutor's Office. Mr. Vosseler stated that we also have HIB character education programs, Positive Behavior Supports in School (PBSIS), Generation Text Online, Panorama Education, Bully Busting Curriculum, Harmony Power Awards, and Relationship Violence Prevention Training. Mr. Vosseler stated that this is the eighth year that we are using the HIBster reporting system which is a streamlined way to process the incidents in a most efficient manner.

Mr. Vosseler stated that the work ahead of us is to analyze self-assessments by school, ensuring ongoing parental involvement on our School Safety/Climate Teams for all of our schools, focus on working with the School Safety/Climate Teams in improving school climate at all schools, focus on providing the most effective and appropriate interventions and consequences for each HIB investigation, implementing and proactively addressing Social Emotional Learning/HIB Character Education programming for all schools, and piloting the Panorama Education – Social Emotional Learning Program. Mr. Vosseler presented a PowerPoint slides showing the artwork and activities in the schools to create a positive atmosphere. Mr. Vosseler asked if there were any questions and if there was anyone who would like to comment on tonight's report. There were no questions or comments.

Mr. Neron excused himself from the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

The President requests a motion to go into Private Session to consider matters exempt under the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically for discussion of personnel, contracts and legal matters. The Board will reconvene in public and may add to the agenda.

A motion was made by Mrs. Hernandez, seconded by Mrs. Pestana, to go into private session at 9:09 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Bathelus, Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Hernandez, Mr. Jacobs, Mmes. Moreno-Ortega, Pestana, Barbosa – 8

Negative: None

Mr. Neron returned to the meeting at 10:00 p.m.

Ms. Bathelus excused herself from the meeting at 12:00 a.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Neron, seconded by Mrs. Chevres, to reconvene in public session at 12:08 a.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Hernandez, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mmes. Pestana, Barbosa – 8

Negative: None

Mrs. Barbosa stated that they spent a numerous amount of time discussing a topic that was very important to us and that we already had discussed. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we brought it to the table again to get a better understanding of the best thing and the right thing to do in maintaining the safety of not only our students but also our team members. Mrs. Barbosa stated that as we look ahead, we have our first holiday, Thanksgiving, coming up which is concerning considering the amount of coronavirus cases in our community continue to climb. Mrs. Barbosa stated that it is a big concern and it is better for the school district to work fully virtual particularly the week after the holiday. Mrs. Barbosa stated that to maintain the safety of our students and team members, the district will work fully virtual for one week after Thanksgiving from Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup> to Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, with the exception of essential staff. Mrs. Barbosa stated that after that week the staff will return to work on December 7<sup>th</sup> in a combination of remote and a staggered schedule and we will continue that indefinitely. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we are always keeping our health and safety at heart and we will continually reassess. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we have discussed this with some of our unions so that they fully understand. Mrs. Barbosa stated that more information and full details will be put in a memo to our team members tomorrow.

Mrs. Pestana excused herself from the meeting at 12:15 a.m.

Mr. Neron stated that we spent a considerable amount of time deliberating the decision that we needed to make tonight. Mr. Neron stated that he wants the community to know that we hear you loud and clear, we hear the parents, students and more importantly our staff who are on the front line every day. Mr. Neron thanked the Superintendent, administrative staff, teachers, principals, counselors, and especially our special needs division who have been working very hard to not only make dreams come true but provide light at the end of the tunnel during this arduous time of our world's history in this pandemic. Mr. Neron stated that the decisions that we are making are not easy or simple but they are complicated and no one has the right answers. Mr. Neron stated that, unfortunately, it is trial and error for the entire nation and when we look at big cities like New York City and the City of Newark, small districts, and districts in the middle of America everybody is struggling with what is best to do right now. Mr. Neron stated that we believe we are coming up with the best decision with safety in mind first, choosing life over death and making sure that we can preserve the lives of all the residents in our community and especially our most precious cargo which is our students. Mr. Neron stated that our children are our most precious jewels of our community and we need to preserve them in every way possible. Mr. Neron stated that academically, we are still working on perfecting a virtual model to work and trying to provide all the necessary supports virtually. Mr. Neron stated that it is important for the community to know that we don't often talk because you can't have too many chefs in the kitchen. Mr. Neron stated that you have to have one key chef in the kitchen and that is why we stand behind our President and Superintendent and allow them to lead. Mr. Neron stated that we get behind closed doors to do what we need to do and come out with a concerted effort and thought. Mr. Neron stated that with all the chefs in the kitchen we would be talking over one another and not getting anywhere and we have to work with order and we have to work in order. Mr. Neron stated that this is difficult and stated to the union and he wants the union to be very clear, that we as Board members work tirelessly to fight for you, we want to work with you, we want to communicate with you, we want to talk with you, and we hear you. Mr. Neron stated that we are not on two different teams and that we are on the same team. Mr. Neron stated that he wants to be clear about that. Mr. Neron stated that this whole idea of this adversarial relationship is nonsense and it should not exist. Mr. Neron stated that we all work for one common goal and that is for the greater good to really accomplish the goals and needs of our community. Mr. Neron stated that a lot of the teachers have been working for us for many, many years and we have to support them, we can't leave them out there and we have to stand with them and by them. Mr. Neron stated that when we make these decisions we have them in mind but then you have the children that have tons of needs, and the parents that have lots of needs so it is a lot when decisions have to be made. Mr. Neron stated that we have to make sure that people can get a meal at home and be able to feed their family and pay their bills. Mr. Neron stated that it is a lot for everybody to take into consideration when we make

these decisions. Mr. Neron stated that moving forward, our President has done everything she can to communicate with the union and we support her for doing that. Mr. Neron thanked Board President Barbosa for working with the Superintendent and the administrative staff to make sure everybody is communicating. Mr. Neron stated that we were challenged with it prior to Covid and now we have Covid so you can imagine that the challenge has become tenfold. Mr. Neron stated that he wants to be very clear to our students who have been emailing us and reaching out about the student success center that he believes we are working on a resolution and asked for their patience. Mr. Neron stated that we are working on it and we will figure something out to provide the necessary support. Mr. Neron stated that Covid has brought additional challenges to our counselors and he knows that our counselors are making sure that they communicate with every student especially on the high school level to make sure they are keeping up with their grades and preparing for college. Mr. Neron stated that he always shares the story of his life and what he went through in school and a counselor told him he couldn't go to college. Mr. Neron stated that he vowed that if he ever became a Board member that he fought day in and day out to make sure that our counselors would stand with our students so that they can get to college and never be told no and create opportunities for them. Mr. Neron stated that success after high school is all about opportunity and not everyone may be able to go to college but we have to create the opportunity for those doors to be open. Mr. Neron stated that if there is a need to support our counselors, then we need to better enhance what they need help with. Mr. Neron stated that for the student success center, the choice is either adopting that model, continuing with that model or finding enough support so that our students can continue working together and creating a community where the opportunities are there. Mr. Neron stated that we know the type of population that we serve and we seek first to understand then to be understood and that is so important in our community and we get that as a Board. Mr. Neron stated that he wanted to make those points clear and they spent hours upon hours talking about this and that it was necessary and just for everyone to hear this. Mr. Neron stated that your voices are heard and we care and are concerned and that we stand with you day in and day out.

Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked Board President Barbosa and stated that she made history by starting this meeting today with the topics of interest and announcements. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega thanked the Superintendent, Secretary of the Board, and Chief of Operations, Co-General Counsel, and everyone behind the scenes for their hard work and dedication. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that she is proud of the communication today and can say that today the Board of Education listened to the community. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that it was long because they discussed every comment from this meeting. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that tomorrow you can say that the entire Board listened to us. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega stated that we will work together with everyone, with the union, and with every member. Mrs. Moreno-Ortega reminded everyone to wear their masks and social distance.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked them and stated that they discussed for a long time the aspects of this concern. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she doesn't want to have anyone left behind and extended her gratitude to everybody. Mrs. Barbosa stated that the autism program is something that they didn't think they could have and they were able to give the choice to the parents. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we tried and just like anything, each of us individually fights for the good of the community and the good of the students. Mrs. Barbosa stated that it makes her happy and gives her fuel to know that we spent hours trying to work out the best plan and previously spent hours with the union because that is what this Board wants to do and that is what this Board is about and that is what this Board tries to do. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she always says let's make it work. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we need to be comfortable with our decision to make it work taking care of our students because we are parents, we are neighbors, and we are friends to each other. Mrs. Barbosa stated that more information and details will be given to our staff tomorrow. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we wanted to announce this today to give everyone time to understand the period that we are going into. Mrs. Barbosa stated that she wanted to reiterate the health and safety of everyone and that it needs to start with us and then it trickles down into our community.

Mrs. Barbosa asked if the Board members had any questions or comments on the agenda items.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked the Union County Freeholders for giving us funds through the CARES Act that provides for Covid-related elements that we have encountered.

Mr. Neron commended the retirees who worked for our district for so many years and the service they provided us with for many, many years. Mr. Neron stated that we salute you for the dedicated years of service to the Elizabeth Board of Education.

Mrs. Barbosa added the following to the agenda.

Minutes of the Meetings of October 15, 2020  
Secretary/Treasurer's Report for the Month of September 2020  
Personnel Report  
Tuition Report  
Superintendent's Report – Considerations  
Superintendent's Report – Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Investigative Results  
Authorizations Report  
Finance and Accounting Report – Authorization to Pay Vouchers, etc.  
Supplemental Finance and Accounting Report – Transfer of Funds  
Award of Contracts Report  
Miscellaneous Communication – None  
Claims List  
Resolution – Approving Acquisition and Lease Purchase for Five School Busses  
Second Reading of Revised Policies for 5132 School Uniforms and 6146 Graduation Requirements  
Resolution – Adoption of Revised Policies  
Resolution – Transfer of Capital Reserve Funds  
Resolution – Approving Renewal of Contract with Max Plumbing and Heating, Inc. to Provide Snow Plowing/Removal Services for 2020-2021 School Year  
Resolution – Adoption of Revised Policies  
Resolution – Transfer of Capital Reserve Funds  
Resolution – Approving Renewal of Contract with Max Plumbing and Heating, Inc. to Provide Snow Plowing/Removal Services for 2020-2021 School Year  
Resolution – Settlement Agreement – N.G.  
Resolution – Settlement Agreement – E.P.  
Resolution – Settlement Agreement – C.L.  
Authorization Report – Donation of 100 Turkeys by Councilmen Carlos Torres and Nelson Gonzalez for Woodrow Wilson School No. 19 families

The second reading was done of the following revised policies:

5132 Policy	School Uniforms
6146 Policy	Graduation Requirements

Mrs. Barbosa asked for a motion and second to accept the agenda.

A motion was made by Mr. Neron, seconded by Mrs. Carvalho, that the above be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Carvalho (abstain- Personnel Report – N.A., Authorizations Report – City of Elizabeth, Councilman Carlos Torres, Councilman Nelson Gonzalez), Chevres, Hernandez (abstain- Authorizations Report – County of Union), Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron (abstain- City of Elizabeth, Councilman Carlos Torres, Councilman Nelson Gonzalez), Mrs. Barbosa – 7

Negative: None

Mr. Neron reminded everyone to be safe during the holidays and keep in mind all the necessary social distancing that we do especially during the holidays. Mr. Neron stated that we want to see you again and celebrate future holidays with you preferably in a new normal in the years to come.

Mr. Jacobs wished everyone Happy Thanksgiving. Mr. Jacobs reminded everyone to wear their masks even inside with their families and stated that he hopes to see everyone soon.

Mrs. Barbosa thanked Superintendent Hugelmeyer for working with them to always do the best for this district. Mrs. Barbosa wished everyone Happy Thanksgiving and stated that she is going to end the same way she started asking everyone to stop and take a deep breath. Mrs. Barbosa stated that we should love everyone because we love you. Mrs. Barbosa said God bless you, God bless the Elizabeth Board of Education and we will keep on going through this together.

On a motion by Mr. Neron, seconded by Mrs. Hernandez, the meeting was adjourned at 12:44 a.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Carvalho, Chevres, Hernandez, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mrs. Barbosa – 7

Negative: None

Harold E. Kennedy, Jr.  
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary