

School Ethics Commission Special Meeting Public Session Minutes

February 25, 2022

Chairperson Robert Bender called the special meeting of the School Ethics Commission (Commission or SEC) to order at 9:38 a.m.

Notice of the special meeting was provided to the State House Press Corps and the Secretary of State, and filed as required by the Open Public Meetings Act.

I. Roll Call

Roll Call	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Present	X	X	X ¹	X	X		5
Absent						X	1

Also, in attendance were Kathryn Whalen, Esquire, Director, Office of Legal Affairs and School Ethics; Jeannine Pizzigoni, staff member; Jaclyn Frey, Laurie Fichera, Erin Herlihy, and Hasib Haque, Deputy Attorneys General (DAsG). Everyone in attendance at the special meeting participated via telephone/video.

II. First Public Comment

At the start of the special meeting, Chairperson Bender explained to the public (who also accessed the special meeting by telephone/video) how the special meeting would be conducted. More specifically, Chairperson Bender explained that the public would be afforded the opportunity to provide public comment regarding his/her case; the Commission would then adjourn to executive session (on a different conference line); the Commission would return to public at approximately 12:00 p.m.; at that time, members of the public would be afforded another opportunity to provide public comment in connection with his/her case; and then the Commission would vote on matters pertinent to its business.

Director Whalen also advised the public as follows: individuals wishing to provide public comments/statements during First and Second Public Comment must be speaking about matters on the Commission's agenda; anyone wishing to provide public comments/statements about a matter not on the agenda should reserve their public comments/statements for New Business; anyone offering public comments/statements about a matter on the agenda is asked not to relitigate the merits of their case as the Commission's review of matters is limited to the written submissions; and everyone in attendance is asked to exercise an appropriate degree of decorum as this is a public forum.

¹ After resolution of technical issues, Commissioner Finkelstein joined the special meeting at 9:45 a.m. in public session. Of note, Commissioner Finkelstein departed the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

9:41 a.m. Jeffrey Merlino, counsel representing Respondents in the matters docketed as C68-20, C71-20, and C83-21, noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

9:41 a.m. Laurie Weber, Complainant in the matters docketed as C68-20, C71-20, and C35-21, noted her attendance and offered a statement, summarized as follows.

“Thank you and good morning. Two complaints that I filed are scheduled for a vote on Initial Decisions this morning, along with another for probable cause. I’m grateful that the School Ethics Commission makes it possible for ordinary citizens, like me, to bring these matters to light and I thank you for the opportunity to comment on one of those cases this morning, C68-20. I don’t think this is going to cross the line into relitigation, but please feel free to stop me if I’m making a mistake here. While I realize that this matter is already at the point of adopting the Initial Decision, I wanted to add something to the public record.” At this time, Director Whalen offers the following information: “If a matter and factual information and evidence is not in the record, it is not something that can be considered by the Commission in reviewing the Initial Decision or adopting it.” Ms. Weber continues, “there was information that was clearly not presented at court and judging by what I read in the decision and from what you’re telling me, am I allowed to just say that there is evidence that exists?” Director Whalen notes that she is not permitted to offer legal advice. Ms. Weber continues again, “I had presented evidence and it didn’t, it was, it seemed, apparent in the judge’s decision that something was overlooked, and I don’t think it’s going, it’s not going to bear any weight on the, on what the judge decided. It’s just something I wanted to clarify. If you don’t think that’s appropriate, I will stop.” Director Whalen notes, “I will try to answer your question with a statement that I’m not sure is entirely responsive and just say that again, if it’s not in the record, it’s not something that the Commission can consider when reviewing the Initial Decision and if something was overlooked by the judge, that’s really a procedural and an appellate issue and it’s not really appropriate for the Commission to hear it.” Ms. Weber states, “Got it. Ok. Then I’m going to just cut to the chase and thank you. I’m, I don’t have anything to add to the, to a comment on that particular case then. But again, I do want to thank the Commission. This is an extraordinary experience as a member of the public to be able to see something happening and presented and get the kind of support to be able to present it. I do appreciate that. So, thank you very much.”

Before concluding, Ms. Weber asked one more procedural question about her matters and Director Whalen stated, “in the interest of time,” she would address Ms. Weber’s question when the public comment portion of the meeting concluded, and the Commission adjourns to executive session.

9:44 a.m. Elyse Sanchez, Respondent in the matter docketed as C02-22, noted her attendance, and stated she would reserve her comments/statements during the “new business” portion of the public comment session.

9:44 a.m. Sharon DeVito, Complainant in the matters docketed as C61-21, C62-21, and C64-21, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

9:45 a.m. Dr. Roderick Knox, Complainant in the matter docketed as C92-21, noted his attendance, and stated:

“Thank you very much. Good morning again everyone. Uhm, I want to first start off by just saying a few numbers and then I'm going to make my statement, Ok, C49-21, C92-21, C16-22, C18-22. You know, I have brought four of the Complaints on Jerome Page during this school year and this is not including the multiple complaints filed by our Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, which totals around, about ten ethics complaints filed on Mr. Page this year, this school year, alone. They have to go. Violations range from blatantly violating the Code of Ethics for a Board member, where he's not doing the right thing. Wants to run the district as though he is the Superintendent and or conducting day-to-day operations as though he is the Director of Operations. Using intimidation, harassing you in the hope of the Board members, which he took, not following any ethics policies, ignoring ethics opinions and basically darn right doing whatever he wants, abusing his authority and acting just like a thug or monster. Mr. Page ignores board attorneys. He ignores the opinions of the Ethics Board, which was written because of Mr. Page. He ignores the Rice policies, as well as his own policies by when he became a board member. Mr. Page has instructed the acting Superintendent to, undo, strictly, and, undo, do things unethically and has used bullying tactics to ensure that she does whatever he wants her to do. Mr. Page just threatened staff members, he has bribed others, abusing what it means to be a Board member. He has been a tyrant, caused chaos and disruption to an already fallen, disenfranchised school district. His behavior has poured out into the schools where students have had front row seats to this tyrant and his loud disclaimer that he's a Board member or the Board president. He has allowed known convicted felons to sway his decision, and it has pushed their agendas, dismantling our school district. The things I mentioned sounds like a horror movie, ... but sadly, it is not. So, you can imagine the impact that this behavior is having on our kids and on our, on their education. And I'm just really speaking of the hell that has happened this school year, not really withstanding all the complaints in the previous years by other administrators or other superintendents or other staff. The Commission has to ask the question, can everyone in all complaints filed against this individual in the last 15 years, all be wrong? It can't really. Can we really afford not to do something to remove this cancer that is spreading and killing the hopes of our children? The Commission is the only hope at removing this tyrant from our district and from ever affecting any of the school districts in New Jersey. I thank you for your time.”

9:50 a.m. Alyssa Weinstein, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C15-21, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

9:50 a.m. Thomas Whittles, Complainant in the matter docketed as C23-21, noted his attendance, and made the following statement: “Yeah, ... I am on the agenda for today and I just had a quick question because I'm not sure I understand the processes. I'm doing this all pro se, uhm, I am on the agenda with a decision to adopt as written for case number C23-21 and then it says PC review. I did not receive any notice that I was going to be on the agenda for today. That's why I'm following up to, to see what that even means and I, I could certainly hold my public comment until new business later, but I just didn't understand what the PC review stands for.”

Director Whalen advised Mr. Whittles that, as with Ms. Weber, his questions will be addressed when the Commission adjourns to executive session. Mr. Whittles then thanked Director Whalen.

9:51 a.m. Rick Norris, an interested party in the matters docketed as C92-21 and C02-22, noted his attendance and stated his comments would be “more appropriate” if stated during the “new business” portion of public session.

9:51 a.m. Caroline Chaudry, counsel on behalf of one of the Respondents in the matter docketed as C44-21, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

III. Executive Session

At **9:52 a.m.**, the following **Resolution** was read:

Whereas, the Open Public Meetings Act (*N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.*) authorizes the Commission, a public body, to meet in Executive Session under certain circumstances; and

Whereas, the Open Public Meetings Act requires that the Commission adopt a Resolution at a public meeting to go into Executive Session; and

Now therefore be it resolved that, consistent with the provisions of *N.J.A.C. 10:4-12(b)*, the Commission will adjourn to executive session to discuss matters which, by statute, are regarded as confidential and also to discuss matters possibly involving litigation, specifically: C35-20; C46-21; C62-21; C64-21; C72-21; C75-21; C79-21; C83-21; C86-21; C92-21; C02-22; C67-20; C68-20; C71-20; C15-21; C23-21; C35-21; C37-21; C44-21; C45-21; C47-21; C48-21; C50-21; C52-21; C56-21; C61-21; A02-22; C65-21; C67-21; C97-21; update on the status of C49-21; update on the status of C51-21; update on the status of C60-21/C68-21/C69-21/C71-21/C73-21/C74-21/C77-21/C78-21/C80-21/C81-21 (*Consolidated*); update on the status of C84-21; update on the status of C88-21; DAG Haque to provide status update in connection with C16-20; DAG Fichera to present settlement offer in connection with C68-20; DAG Herlihy to present update on the status of C36-19; adoption of Resolution of Suspension in connection with T23-21; adoption of Resolution of Censure in connection with T07-20; and adoption of Resolution of Suspension in connection with T31-21; and

Now therefore be it further resolved that the Commission will return to open session to conduct business at the conclusion of Executive Session.

Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss the matters set forth in the foregoing Resolution.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X		5
No							0
Abstention							0

IV. Return to Public/Second Public Comment

At **12:11 p.m.**, a motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to return to public session for the purpose of receiving public comment/testimony, and to vote on matters discussed in Executive Session (as appropriate).

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X		5
No							0
Abstention							0

12:11 p.m. Jeffrey Merlino, counsel representing Respondents in the matters docketed as C68-20, C71-20, and C83-21, again noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:11 p.m. Laurie Weber, Complainant in the matters docketed as C68-20, C71-20, and C35-21, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any further comments/statements.

12:11 p.m. Sharon DeVito, Complainant in the matters docketed as C61-21, C62-21 and C64-21, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:12 p.m. Alyssa Weinstein, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C15-21, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:12 p.m. Caroline Chaudry, counsel on behalf of one of the Respondents in the matter docketed as C44-21, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:12 p.m. Dr. Natakie Chestnut-Lee, interested party in the matters related to Pleasantville Board of Education, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:12 p.m. Julio Sanchez, Pleasantville Board member and interested party in the matters docketed as C49-21 and C51-21, noted his attendance, and stated he would reserve his public comments/statements for the “New Business” portion of the meeting.

12:13 p.m. Anthony Russo, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C44-21, noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:13 p.m. Anna Walter, did not have a matter docketed, noted her attendance and just wanted to offer public comment regarding a situation she experienced. Director Whalen advised Ms. Walter that she could offer her comments/statement during the “New Business” portion of the meeting.

12:13 p.m. Courtney Bracken, did not have a matter docketed, noted her attendance and stated she was just listening.

12:13 p.m. Alexis Knox, noted her attendance, and stated she was just listening.

V. Complaints to Review

C35-20 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein²	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ³		1

² Commissioner Finkelstein left the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

³ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

C46-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ⁴		1

C62-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ⁵		1

⁴ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

⁵ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

C64-21 Motion was made by Michael Carucci, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ⁶		1

C72-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ⁷		1

⁶ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

⁷ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

C75-21 Motion was made by Michael Carucci, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ⁸		1

C79-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ⁹		1

⁸ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

⁹ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

C83-21 Motion was made by Michael Carucci, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ¹⁰		1

C86-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ¹¹		1

¹⁰ Commissioner Tanella did not participate in the executive session discussion and/or the vote of this matter due to a conflict of interest.

¹¹ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

C92-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a letter decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ¹²		1

C02-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Michael Carucci, to draft a letter decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X			3
No							0
Abstention					X ¹³		1

¹² Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

¹³ Although present for the duration of the meeting, Commissioner Tanella experienced technical difficulty with voice voting until approximately 12:19 p.m.; therefore, his vote during the period of this technical difficulty was noted as an abstention.

VI. Decisions to Adopt as Written

C67-20 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X ¹⁴		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C68-20 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C71-20 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

¹⁴ Commissioner Tanella's technical difficulty was resolved and, therefore, was able to participate in voice voting.

C15-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C23-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C35-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

C37-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

C44-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to table this matter.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

C45-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C47-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C48-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

C50-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

C52-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X ¹⁵					1

C56-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

C61-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

¹⁵ Commissioner Carucci did not participate in the executive session discussion and/or the vote of this matter due to a conflict of interest.

VII. Advisory Opinions

A02-22 Motion was made by Jude A. Tanella, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to adopt the advisory opinion as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

VIII. Administrative Dismissals

C65-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

C67-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

C97-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

IX. Other Business

Update on the status of C49-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

Update on the status of C51-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

Update on the status of C60-21/C68-21/C69-21/C71-21/C73-21/C74-21/C77-21/C78-21/C80-21/C81-21 (Consolidated) This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

Update on the status of C84-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

Update on the status of C88-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

DAG Hasib Haque to provide a status update in connection with C16-20 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only, and discussed in executive session.

DAG Laurie Fichera to present a settlement offer in connection with C68-20 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only, and discussed in executive session.

DAG Erin Herlihy to provide a status update in connection with C36-19 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only, and discussed in executive session.

Adoption of Resolution of Suspension in connection with T23-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the Resolution as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

Adoption of Resolution of Censure in connection with T07-20 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the Resolution as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

Adoption of Resolution of Suspension in connection with T31-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the Resolution as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

X. Minutes

Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting (public and executive) conducted on January 25, 2022.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X			X	X		3
No							0
Abstention		X					1

Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the minutes of the special meeting (public and executive) conducted on February 4, 2022.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

XI. New Business

Director Whalen also advised the public as follows: individuals wishing to provide public comments/statements regarding New Business may now do so, and everyone in attendance is asked to exercise an appropriate degree of decorum as this is a public forum.

12:30 p.m. Elyse Sanchez, Pleasantville Board member and named Respondent in the matter docketed as C02-22, again noted her attendance, and offered the following statement:

“Today I come to you as a concerned, lifelong resident of the City of Pleasantville. A parent of five children that are in the District, the president of the league for the district that houses 349 students. We need help, we need help, we need help. We have had the same people on this Pleasantville School board creating dysfunction and disruption at the expense of the education of our children. I cannot stress to you guys, we need help. I’m asking you guys to, for a moment, put yourself in our shoes for a minute. Look at it as if it was your children and your children’s education. We have outside entities taking over our school Board who continuously run our Board President. We have, and with the amount of evidence that proves this. Again, all I say to you guys today is we need your help. Thank you.”

12:32 p.m. Dr. Roderick Knox, Complainant in the matter docketed as C92-21, again noted his attendance and stated he stands by his original public comments/statements.

12:32 p.m. Thomas Whittles, Complainant in the matter docketed as C23-21, again noted his attendance and offered the following statement:

“I filed these charges back in July and the process has been very enlightening to me and I am glad we have this process, but I just want everybody to know that I stand by my complaint with regards to Commissioner Abedrabbo. I also understand that since my filing, there have been multiple other filings through the City of Clifton Board of Education and as the sitting President of the Municipal Drug Alliance, my name has been dragged into them on several different occasions. I’m not sure if this Commission has seen any of them or looked at any of them, but I just want the Commission to know that my case clearly stands on the facts that Mr. Abedrabbo, as a sitting Board member, endangered the welfare of students and I don’t have any involvement with any of the other Board members and the Board member’s ethics charges. It’s really messy. I’m sticking by my charges that were filed in July after Project Graduation. I’m not involved in any other nonsense that goes on at that Board. I just want the Commission to understand that my claim is still the, you know, the endangerment of the children on Project Graduation and I thank this Commission for their time and effort that they put into this, Thank you.”

12:34 p.m. Rick Norris, concerned individual for the Pleasantville Public Schools, again noted his attendance, and offered the following statement:

“I would like to speak on the subject matter being, Pleasantville Board President Jerome Page of the Pleasantville District. I have six bullet points that I would like to review with the body, if I can. It was about September 28, Mr. Jerome Page had made an unauthorized visit in several schools in the District without contacting the Superintendent, at that time, Dr. Chestnut-Lee, it’s just common courtesy to let the Superintendent know that a Board member is coming onto the premises or common courtesy and professionalism that somebody is coming on the property. He just disrespected, some of the staff members, he was asking staff members about personal items. So, the Superintendent was called to handle this action, and Mr. Page, and he continues to disrespect her. That’s point number one, bullet number one. Bullet number two; unethical behavior as a Board member. He mentioned personnel by name. We had a Board meeting and Mr. Page had mentioned Dr. Chestnut and Dr. Knox about being Riced and talking about personnel matters in open forum. That’s not protocol. He was advised by the attorney at the time, Mr. Lester Taylor, to cease and desist his actions. He kept talking about Ricing Dr. Chestnut and Dr. Knox, which is a violation. Bullet three; Mr. Page had created a coup to oust Board President, Mr. Julio Sanchez, at the time to be voted out by the majority of the Board because he has some personal issues with him. The Board voted Mr. Sanchez out as President, putting in their own President. The County Superintendent, Mr. Bumpus, told them that it was unethical and illegal, and they still went through with it. At the same meeting, real quick, Dr. Chestnut-Lee, was replaced or tried to be replaced by, at that present time assistant school principal, Mr. Chapman, who, I’m not sure if he’s

certified to be Superintendent, but anyway that was done at the meeting. Bullet four; at one time when I was on the Board, I was just committee chair of facilities. Mr. Page, I, was late coming to the meeting and he tried to run my meeting from his car while I was on the phone and when he got to the door of the building, to the committee meeting, he was very, very late. I had ended my meeting. He didn't follow protocol, he walked past security, Mr. Knox and the rest of the security team had to be called to try to calm Mr. Page down because he wanted to run my meeting. Mr. Page lied and said that Dr. Knox pushed him, which he didn't. We have security cameras to verify he didn't touch him. The Acting Superintendent, which is acting now, Miss Farkas, came and we took Mr. Page upstairs and I let him, I discussed with him, my committee meeting minutes, but that still wasn't good enough. Then bullet number five; Mr. Page has continuously allowed outside entities to interfere with Board business. According to District policy and District bylaws and protocol, no Board member is supposed to share any type of Board business with outside entities as a Board member ... He violated that at the same meeting. There was an outside entity that was sitting in the audience, this young man instructed, Mr. Page was the Board President now, to dismantle the Board meeting one by one. We would have a quorum, so when the public session was up to be entertained, it was not entertaining because we didn't have a quorum. When Mr. Page has been the prior President of the Board of Education for Pleasantville, he received a letter on May 1, 2013, from a Mr. Robert Bender, who was the chairperson of the Ethics Commission, stating to Mr. Page that if you have any type of conflict of interests you have to recuse yourself from voting against Superintendent Dr. Chestnut-Lee, which he voted against her and that caused a whole lot of problems and I have a little summary of the letter that Mr. Bender had sent Mr. Page." At this time, Director Whalen asks Mr. Norris to summarize his statement and informs Mr. Norris that the Commission has a copy of the letter he is referencing. Mr. Norris concludes, "To sum up everything, as a former Board member, I'm very displeased and very alarmed that our District is being ran by a Board President who's being told what to do by outside entities. I am asking you guys to look into all of this so we can save the integrity of the District and the growth of our children and protect our reputation and allow our school District to continue to grow and flourish. Thank you so much."

12:42 p.m. Caroline Chaudry, counsel on behalf of one of the Respondents in the matter docketed as C44-21, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:42 p.m. Dr. Natakia Chestnut-Lee, an interested party in the matters docketed as C92-21 and C02-22, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:43 p.m. Anthony Russo, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C44-21, again noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

12:43 p.m. Julio Sanchez, Pleasantville Board member and interested party in the matters docketed as C92-21 and C02-22, noted his attendance and offered the following statement:

“My name is Julio Sanchez, I’m a current Board member, City of Pleasantville. We’ve been bombarding you guys with speech on the troubles that we have in our District and I can’t overstate the need for emergent intervention by you guys. If you pay attention to the local news, there was a story that came out yesterday where a sitting City Council member was caught interfering on the Atlantic City Council meeting via Zoom and instructing that Council member on what to say. That’s relevant to us because that very same member is interfering with our school District and causing division on the Board and basically corruption. We have advisory opinions from you guys. We have seasoned Board members that are well aware of bylaws, Robert’s Rules of Order and ethics, and they are in violation of every single last one of them purposely to satisfy their own personal political interests, and to basically turn our District assets over to people who’ve been previously convicted of corruption. I can’t, like I said, I can’t overstate the need for you guys to do something quickly. I’m sure the number of ethics complaints from our District that are before you now, have been covered before. Over the past few months we have problems, and you haven’t deemed any of them frivolous. I think the longer these things continue to happen, the more peril and the more people damaged and damage to our District. So, I understand that there is due process, but I would ask you guys to take the Complaint coming before you from the Pleasantville School District extremely serious and act on this as soon as possible. Thank you.”

12:47 p.m. Courtney Bracken, a concerned citizen, noted her matter was not on the agenda and she wanted to discuss a matter related to the Deptford Board of Education. Ms. Bracken offered the following statement:

“I had a public comment concerning the Deptford Board of Education members. I had four police officers called on me and I was escorted out with my 9-year-old son at the time. The mask mandate is up for discussion at board meetings and I brought that to their attention and they still proceeded to throw me out for not wearing a mask at the meeting. As I was being thrown out, there were several Board members that screamed out and made baby crying noises at me, one of them being Lou Randazzo, and I intend to file a complaint against him for his unprofessionalism. I was just wondering, I know you guys can’t answer this, but why across New Jersey have board meetings had different policies or rules when it comes to masks being worn after school hours? Even if it is on school grounds, I understand that, but the Executive Order was only written for students and staff during school hours. There is no Executive Order that tends to masks mandated or having to be worn during meetings. So, I am just wondering why my First Amendment was taken away from me that night and I was not able to have public comments.” Director Whalen responds, and states, “You’re right, we are not going to be able to respond to that, but we appreciate your comments.”

12:51 p.m. Commissioner Roberts offers the following statement: “I would just like to say the Commission appreciates the input from the public concerning all these cases and specifically cases involving Pleasantville. The Commission takes these matters very seriously, but the process for adjudicating these cases needs to be followed, and that is sometimes not as quick as some would prefer. But we thank you all for your comments and we appreciated them.”

Thereafter, a motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to draft correspondence to the Department of Education.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

12:52 p.m. Chairperson Bender offers the following statement:

“I think the members of the public can see that we’ve had volumes of papers that we’ve dealt with that had taken a lot of time and effort by not only the members of our Commission, but certainly by the staff and I know the papers that I received last week were delivered by a postal service and it was very heavy. We do have a lot of concerns that we have throughout the State. We’re trying to do our very best, but we also have a process that we follow and statutes that we must enforce. We can’t enforce everything, only by the school ethics law and by the Code of Ethics for School Board members. But we are trying to do our due diligence and in reading and trying to make the best decisions possible regarding, basically for the students of our State. So, with that in mind, I would certainly like to commend the staff for their hard work and also the Commission members for their attention to detail on these concerns. With that in mind, do we have a motion to adjourn.”

12:53 p.m. *Commissioner Tanella offered the following statement: “I’d like to apologize to the public and to the staff for the technical difficulties before.”*

XII. Adjournment

At 12:54 p.m., a motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adjourn.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X		X	X		4
No							0
Abstention							0

Submitted by:

Jeannine Pizzigoni

Approved by:

Kathryn A. Whalen, Esq.
Director, School Ethics Commission