

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**September 20, 2021**

**The Verona Board of Education of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey,**

**convened in regular session on September 20, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.**

**The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jorge Cruz. A statement was made that the meeting had been properly advertised in the designated newspapers and the agendas were posted at the appropriate locations.**

**The following members of the Board were present: Mrs. Lisa Freschi, President, Vice President, Mr. Timothy Alworth, Mrs. Pamela Priscoe and Mrs. Sara Drappi, and Mr. Day. Also present was Dr. Rui Dionisio, Superintendent and Mr. Jorge Cruz, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary**

**There was 1 member of the public present. There were 0 members of the press present.**



REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA – 7:30pm  
VERONA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM  
September 20, 2021

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reading of Meeting Notice
4. Roll Call Attendance
5. Superintendent Report
6. Public Comments on Agenda Action Items
7. Discussion Items
8. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions
9. Public Comments

NOTE: The next scheduled Public Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, September 28, 2021** beginning with a Confidential Session at 5:30 pm and 7:00 pm Public Session in the Verona High School Auditorium.

**1. Call to Order: 7:33 PM**

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Reading of Meeting Notice**

This meeting is being conducted in compliance with the open meeting session that the Verona Board of Education passed a resolution at its annual reorganization meeting held on January 5, 2021. The meeting set forth the schedule of its regular meetings which resolution was within 7 days of passage. The schedule was sent to the Verona Cedar Grove Times, the Star Ledger, the Township of Verona and the VEA. Postings of this meeting setting forth the time location and agenda were posted at the Verona Board of Education Office and on the Verona Public Schools district website. The Verona Board of Education operates under a consent agenda format, any board member has the right to have an item pulled to be voted upon or discussed separately. Copies of tonight's agenda and resolutions have been made available to the public and press.

**4. Roll Call Attendance**

Mr. Alworth	<u>  X  </u>	Mr. Day	<u>  X  </u>
Mrs. Drappi	<u>  X  </u>	Mrs. Freschi	<u>  X  </u>
Mrs. Priscoe	<u>  X  </u>		

**5. Superintendent Report - Dr. Rui Dionisio -**

It is my pleasure to announce Ms. Julia Albretsen as the new Supervisor of Humanities for the Verona Public Schools District. Ms. Albretsen is no stranger to our Verona family, as she has served our students and community as both an elementary and middle school teacher. Ms. Albretsen is committed to building a positive and vibrant culture of learning alongside a highly collaborative team. She believes deeply in the Verona Public Schools District's mission to inspire our students to be creative, critical thinkers and compassionate global citizens.

Ms. Albretsen joined the Verona Public Schools District as an elementary teacher at Brookdale Avenue School. As a teacher in the primary grades, Ms. Albretsen fostered the development of the whole child, promoting a love of learning amongst her students through a child-centered, constructivist approach. Ms. Albretsen studied the reading and writing workshop model alongside teachers from around the globe through the Columbia Teacher's College Reading and Writing Workshop Project summer institutes. To best support the needs of all learners, Ms. Albretsen pursued graduate certification as an Orton-Gillingham multi-sensory reading teacher through Fairleigh Dickinson University. Ms. Albretsen has engaged in many curriculum-revision projects, including the revision of the fourth-grade literacy curriculum using the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework to include rich, responsive learning opportunities for students with hyper-linked resources

for quick access to anchor charts, rubrics, and exemplar student work samples to best support teachers.

As a sixth-grade literacy teacher, Ms. Albretsen joined the H. B. Whitehorne Middle School staff in the Carnegie House. She led professional learning opportunities for staff on the latest instructional technology tools and the balanced literacy framework. While completing her master's program, Ms. Albretsen conducted an action research project around the impact of teacher self-efficacy on the use of technology in instructional practice.

Ms. Albretsen was the recipient of a grant from the Verona Foundation for Educational Excellence (VFEE) in 2018, which supported the implementation of flexible seating within her classroom. She sought to create student learning spaces to complement current best practices in teaching and promote collaborative learning, problem-solving, and hands-on instruction. Ms. Albretsen is an advocate for student voice and choice.

During her tenure, Ms. Albretsen has served on various committees to improve curriculum and instruction. She is a valued member of the Curriculum Council, District Evaluation Advisory Committee, and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee. Additionally, Ms. Albretsen has served on the Future Ready Schools team and Strategic Planning Sub-Committee on Professional Development. As a Verona community member herself, Ms. Albretsen has served on the Verona Public Library's Diversity Task Force.

Ms. Albretsen received her bachelor's degree in elementary education and English from The College of New Jersey. She earned her master's degree in educational leadership from Montclair State University. Ms. Albretsen is excited to continue to contribute to the Verona community in her new role. Please join me in congratulating and welcoming Ms. Albretsen as our new Supervisor of Humanities.

**Board President Report - Mrs. Lisa Freschi -**

The Verona Public School District is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Lydia E. Furnari as Interim Superintendent. Dr. Furnari has dedicated her 37-year career to serving students, with a focus on supporting schools in attaining their goals keeping students at the center.

Dr. Furnari holds a B.A. in Music Education and an M.A. in Supervision and Administration, both from Montclair State University, as well as a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. Dr. Furnari began her career as a music teacher with the Paterson Public Schools and then the Montclair Public Schools. After 14 years in the classroom, Dr. Furnari moved on to administration as Principal, and then Director of Elementary and Secondary Education with the Elizabeth Public Schools. She then served as an administrator in the area of Curriculum and Instruction with the Montclair Public Schools and as Assistant Superintendent in the South Orange-Maplewood School District. In 2014, Dr. Furnari became Superintendent of the Franklin Lakes Public Schools District. Since her retirement, Dr. Furnari has served as Interim Superintendent with the Green Township School District and the Lafayette

Township School District. Dr. Furnari also serves as an adjunct professor with Caldwell University, as well as a professional developer and educational consultant. She is also a member of the Board of the American Heart Association for the Northwest region. Dr. Furnari, her husband Russell, and their family reside in West Caldwell, NJ.

During her discussions with the administration and members of the Board of Education, Dr. Furnari shared that her personal and professional goals center on rigor and high expectations that benefit all students in Verona with high-quality standards in education. The Board of Education believes that Dr. Furnari's expertise in leading schools and developing leadership skills in others makes her the right person to guide the Verona Public Schools District as we seek our next Superintendent. Dr. Furnari will begin as interim superintendent in early November 2021.

"I am honored to have been chosen by the Board as Interim Superintendent of the Verona Public Schools and look forward to serving the staff, students, and families of Verona." Dr. Furnari will begin the process of transitioning to the District over the next several weeks.

**6. Public Comments on Agenda Action Items - None**

**7. Discussion Items - None**

**8. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions**

**9. Public Comments - None**

Motion by: Day

Seconded by: Priscoe

**Be it RESOLVED the approval of Resolutions # 1 - 2.**

Mr. Alworth X                      Mr. Day X

Mrs. Drappi X                      Mrs. Freschi X

Mrs. Priscoe X

**RESOLUTIONS**  
**September 20, 2021**

The following resolutions have been recommended by the Superintendent to the Board of Education.

**PERSONNEL**

#1      **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the following pending pre-employment paperwork:

**1.1      New Hires**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Current Location/ Position/Salary</b>	<b>New Location/ Position/Salary</b>	<b>Effective Date on or about</b>
<b>Julia Albretsen</b>	HBW / Language Arts / \$57,200	District / Supervisor of Humanities / \$100,000	Oct. 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

#2      **RESOLVED** that the Board approve Dr. Lydia Furnari as the Interim Superintendent of Schools at a per diem rate of seven hundred dollars (\$700) effective on or about November 9, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION IF NECESSARY**

**RESOLUTION TO ADJOURN**

#3      **RESOLVED** that the Board meet in private session, from which the public shall be excluded, to discuss the topics of negotiations and personnel or potential litigation which private discussion is being held pursuant to Section 7b and 8 of the Open Public Meeting Act. The matters under discussion will be disclosed to the public as soon as final decisions are made and voted upon.

Motion by: Priscoe

Seconded by: Alworth

Mr. Alworth      X  

Mr. Day          X

Mrs. Drappi      X                        Mrs. Freschi      X  

Mrs. Priscoe     X  

**All in Favor:**   AYE  

**All Opposed:**   None  

**This meeting is adjourned at 7:45 P.M.**