## School Ethics Commission Meeting Public Session Minutes

## June 28, 2022

Chairperson Robert Bender called the regularly scheduled meeting of the School Ethics Commission (Commission or SEC) to order at 9:32 a.m.

Notice of the regularly scheduled 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	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Present	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
Absent		X						1

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

#### II. First Public Comment

At the start of the meeting, Chairperson Bender explained to the public (who also accessed the meeting by telephone/video) how the 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.

**9:36 a.m.** Dr. Roderick Knox, Complainant in the matters docketed as C05-22, C12-22, C18-22, and C21-22, noted his attendance, and offered a statement summarized as follows:

Good morning, Commissioners. Good morning everyone who is online. I thank you again for this opportunity to be able to come before you and just voice my

opinion of, voice my concerns so to speak. I understand that I've been here multiple times, but I don't feel like it's a loss.

The things are being done, there's a process happening as a result of, you know, the, the ethics complaints that we have put in. I'm here for C12-22. I'm here for CO5-22, C18-22 and C21-22. I know that I can't speak on those cases because I'm involved with them and I'm not going to. I just want you to know that I'm here for those specific cases. I understand that the ethics Commission, in all the years that you have been compiled together as a board, that you've seen many, many things come, and I don't believe it's a lot of things that come across your board that will surprise you. However, I have to believe that all of the ethics complaints that are at controversy and conflicts at the Commissioner's Office, at OAL level from that, that side, and also the multiple ethics complaints and the OAL that's, that's going to OAL from this side as well.

I, I can't believe that, that Pleasantville is probably the worst situation that is happening in years. And again, I, I'm not a part of the board and I'm sure you've seen many things, but I only can tell you from my involvement of lately the kids have failed miserably. There's some people that graduated from the high school that's been pushed through and they're not really being educated because it's no way they could be educated with the unethical behavior of some board members that are running the school district. Like, you know, gang organization, again, a crime organization. That's how I would say it. And the ringleader is Jerome Page, and is so many ethics complaints, all hearings for this guy, controversies and conflicts.

Issues with, with this guy and I just keep coming back because I don't believe that it's a waste of time. It is going through the process. I appreciate you listening first of all, and I appreciate the, the fact that there is a process and I know that at the end of the day, it's, if we all just follow the process, eventually the outcome that is needed for Pleasantville will eventually happen. So again, I just want to just tell you that this is a great opportunity for me to just voice my opinion on my concerns.

And I thank you for your time.

- **9:38 a.m.** Alyssa Weinstein, counsel on behalf of Respondents in the matter docketed as C87-21, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **9:38 a.m.** Anthony Russo, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C89-21, noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **9:38 a.m.** Anthony Hess, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C28-22, noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **9:38 a.m.** Judith Sullivan, Respondent in the matters docketed as C25-22, C26-22, and C28-22, noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.

#### III. Executive Session

At **9:39 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: C45-18; C60-19; C70-20; C18-21; C85-21; C87-21; C90-21; C12-22; C19-22; C22-22; C25-22, C26-22, and C28-22 (Consolidated); C29-22; C31-22; C48-22; C19-20; C72-21; C89-21; C95-21; C98-21; C03-22; C05-22; C10-22; C17-22; C18-22; C21-22; T23-21; T24-21; T27-21; T32-21; T33-21; A10-22; A11-22; C34-22; C35-22; C36-22; C38-22; C40-22; C41-22; C57-22; T08-21; T09-21; T10-21; T15-21; T17-21; T30-21; T31-21; Doctrine of Necessity submitted by the Middlesex Board of Education; vote to adopt Resolution Delegating Authority to Act Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:28-1.1 et seq.; C06-22; C14-22; C33-22; C24-22; C75-18; C12-21; and update on the status of Chapter 28 regulations; 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	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
No								0
Abstention								0

### Vote

#### IV. Return to Public

At **12:34 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	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

## V. Complaints to Review<sup>1</sup>

C45-18 Motion was made by Jude A. Tanella, and seconded by Richard Tomko, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C60-19 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

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

C70-20 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Richard Tomko, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Commissioner Finkelstein experienced technical issues/difficulties with his speaker/microphone, but was present for the entirety of public session. In lieu of a voice vote, and except as otherwise noted, Commissioner Finkelstein raised his hand, which was visible to Director Whalen and Commission staff as he was on camera.

C18-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

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

**C85-21** Motion was made by Jude A. Tanella, and seconded by Richard Tomko, to draft a decision as discussed.

#### Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

**C87-21** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to draft a decision as discussed.

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

**C90-21** Motion was made by Jude A. Tanella, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote		Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
No								0
Abstention								0

C12-22 Motion was made by Richard Tomko, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to draft a decision as discussed.

### Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C19-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C22-22 Motion was made by Jude A. Tanella, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C25-22/C26-22/C28-22 (Consolidated) Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Carol E. Sabo, to table this matter.

#### Vote

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

C29-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Richard Tomko, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C31-22 Motion was made by Jude A. Tanella, and seconded by Dennis Roberts, to draft a decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C48-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Richard Tomko, to draft a letter decision as discussed.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X		X	5
No								0
Abstention						$X^2$		1

## VI. Decisions to Adopt as Written

C19-20 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	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X		5
No								0
Abstention							X <sup>3</sup>	1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Commissioner Tanella did not participate in the executive session discussion and/or the vote related to this matter due to a conflict of interest.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Commissioner Tomko did not participate in the executive session discussion and/or the vote related to this matter due to a conflict of interest.

C72-21 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

**C89-21** 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	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
No								0
Abstention								0

**C95-21** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

**C98-21** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C03-22 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	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
No								0
Abstention								0

C05-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C10-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as amended.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

C17-22 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	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X		5
No								0
Abstention							X <sup>4</sup>	1

C18-22 Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Commissioner Tomko did not participate in the executive session discussion and/or the vote related to this matter due to a conflict of interest.

**C21-22** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as written.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

Orders to Show Cause<sup>5</sup>

## Training – Board of Education Members

T23-21 This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

**T24-21** Motion was made by Mark Finkelstein, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as amended.

Vote

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

**T27-21** Motion was made by Mark Finkelstein, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as amended.

Vote

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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Commissioner Finkelstein's technical issues/difficulties resolved, and he was able to voice vote.

**T32-21** Motion was made by Mark Finkelstein, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as amended.

#### Vote

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

**T33-21** Motion was made by Mark Finkelstein, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the decision as amended.

#### Vote

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

## VII. Advisory Opinions

**A10-22** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the advisory opinion as written.

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

**A11-22** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the advisory opinion as written.

#### Vote

Vote		Michael Carucci	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
No								0
Abstention								0

### VIII. Administrative Dismissals

C34-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
C35-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
C36-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
C38-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
C40-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
C41-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
C57-22	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T08-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T09-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T10-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T15-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T17-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T30-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.
T31-21	This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

## IX. Other Business

**Doctrine of Necessity submitted by the Middlesex Board of Education.** This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

**Vote to adopt Resolution Delegating Authority to Act Pursuant to** *N.J.A.C.* **6A:28-1.1 et seq.** Motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the Resolution.

#### Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Mark Finkelstein	Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
No							0
Abstention							0

Follow-up on the status of C06-22. This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

**Follow-up on the status of C14-22.** This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

**Follow-up on the status of C33-22.** This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

Follow-up on the status of C24-22. This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

C75-18. This matter was on the agenda for attorney-client privilege discussion related to pending litigation.

C12-21. This matter was on the agenda for attorney-client privilege discussion related to pending litigation.

**Update on the status of Chapter 28 regulations.** This matter was on the agenda for informational purposes only.

#### X. Minutes

Motion was made by Richard Tomko, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adopt the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting (public and executive) conducted on May 24, 2022.

#### Vote

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

#### XI. Second Public Comment

- **12:49 p.m.** Dr. Roderick Knox, Complainant in the matters docketed C05-22, C12-22, C18-22, and C21-22, again noted his attendance, but did not offer any further public comments/statements.
- **12:49 p.m.** Alyssa Weinstein, counsel on behalf of Respondents in the matter docketed as C87-21, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **12:49 p.m.** Anthony Russo, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C89-21, again noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **12:49 p.m.** Anthony Hess, counsel on behalf of Respondent in the matter docketed as C28-22, again noted his attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **12:49 p.m.** Judith Sullivan, Respondent in the matters docketed as C25-22, C26-22 and C28-22, again noted her attendance, but did not offer any public comments/statements.
- **12:50 p.m.** Julio Sanchez, Pleasantville Board member and interested party in the matters docketed as C95-21, C05-22, C12-22, and C18-22, noted his attendance and offered a statement summarized as follows:

I just wanna thank you guys for your continued patience and diligence and looking to the various concerns we have in Pleasantville. Also want to implore you to continue because it's not getting any better. We actually had a special meeting scheduled yesterday that didn't happen where our board president, who has a bunch of ethics violations before you, was trying to get the broker of record overturned so he can give it to his friend.

Uhh, we have him threatening our acting Superintendent, telling her she could be replaced if things don't go his way when she tells him to stay out of day-to-day operations. Like it's just very ugly in Pleasantville. And like I said. We're not crying wolf. We really need you.

# XII. Adjournment

At 12:51 p.m., a motion was made by Dennis Roberts, and seconded by Jude A. Tanella, to adjourn.

Vote

Vote	Robert Bender	Michael Carucci		Dennis Roberts	Carol E. Sabo	Jude A. Tanella	Richard Tomko	Total
Yes	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
No								0
Abstention								0

Submitted by:	
Jeannine Pizzigoni	
Approved by:	
Kathryn A. Whalen, Esq. Director, School Ethics Commission	