

**New Paltz Central School District Board of Education  
Special Meeting September 27, 2017 – District Office 6:30 PM  
MEETING MINUTES**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 5:34 PM by Michael O'Donnell, Board President.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

QUORUM CHECK

Brian Cournoyer  
Alison Easton  
Michael O'Donnell  
Kathy Preston  
Sophia Skiles-5:45 on speaker phone, arrived at 6:02 PM  
Teresa Thompson  
Matthew Williams

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Maria Rice, Superintendent of Schools  
Michelle Martoni, Deputy Superintendent  
Richard Linden, Assistant Superintendent for Business

**ROLL CALL**

ROLL CALL

The roll was called as reflected above.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion made by Teresa Thompson and seconded by Brian Cournoyer to move into Executive Session at 5:35 PM for the purpose of discussing proposed, pending or current litigation and discussing the employment history of a particular person.

**DISTRICT CLERK PRO-TEMPORE**

DISTRICT CLERK PRO-TEMPORE

Board President, Michael O'Donnell, appointed Maria C. Rice as District Clerk Pro-Tempore for the Executive Session portion of the meeting.

Out of Executive Session - Motion made by Alison Easton and seconded by Matthew Williams that the Board return to Public Session at 6:30 PM. Motion carried 7 to 0 with 7 members voting.

**CALL TO ORDER**

CALL TO ORDER

The Public Meeting was called to order at 6:38 PM by Michael O'Donnell, Board President.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

QUORUM CHECK

Brian Cournoyer  
Alison Easton  
Michael O'Donnell  
Kathy Preston  
Sophia Skiles  
Teresa Thompson  
Matthew Williams

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Maria Rice, Superintendent of Schools  
Michelle Martoni, Deputy Superintendent  
Richard Linden, Assistant Superintendent for Business  
Dusti Callo, District Clerk  
Members of the Public and Press

**ROLL CALL** The roll was called as reflected above.

ROLL CALL

**PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

PLEDGE

## **RACIAL EQUITY INITIATIVE**

➤ **Welcome (5 minutes)**

- Michael O'Donnell, Board President

The following remarks were read by Board President, Michael O'Donnell

*Welcome, everyone.*

*As board members we have all sworn an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of New York. The US Constitution claims to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, and secure the blessings of liberty. The NY Constitution states that no person shall, because of race, be subjected to any discrimination in his or her civil rights by any institution.*

*We are failing to live up to our oaths, and as long as we continue to allow institutional racism to persist within our schools, unchecked, we will continue to fail. And let us not be naive enough to believe that systemic racism does not exist in New Paltz. It most certainly does.*

*This is an uncomfortable truth, but let us recognize that, for most of us within this district and within this community, discomfort is the worst consequence we will suffer from a systemic structure of racism that elevates the interests and welfare of individuals that fit the social construct of whiteness over all others.*

*Systemic racism is pervasive and ubiquitous. It infects every minute of every day and takes up residence in every corner of every classroom, every hallway, every bus, and every young mind entrusted to this institution.*

*To combat systemic racism we need solutions that work on the same level -- they need to be pervasive and ubiquitous. We need a mass movement of teachers, administrators, staff, parents, community members, and students to work collectively, District-wide, in the pursuit of progress. We must endeavor to move beyond the concept of being non-racist and toward a culture of anti-racism -- a movement away from a passive, internalized personal journey and toward a continuous, affirmative, and active effort to dismantle institutional racism. We need to address this issue as if lives depend on it -- because they do.*

*There will be resistance to this effort, and it won't be carrying a tiki torch or a confederate flag. It will come in the form of a smile. It will speak in neutral language. It will come from outside and within this District. The largest threat to this initiative will not be overtly offensive actions, but rather, indifference. Whiteness carries many privileges -- among them the exclusive and ever-ready option to retreat from the realities of racism at a moment's discomfort.*

*That is why I am going to make the audacious request for patience. Institutional racism has a system of defenses centuries in the making -- it will take time to penetrate and dismantle that system. It may seem like I'm asking people of color in our community to continue to endure pain to allow for the most privileged among us to catch up. I am. I wouldn't ask if I could see any other way, and I sincerely apologize for my request. If a pathway comes to light that is not so unfairly burdensome I will swiftly advocate for a change of course.*

*How will we ever know if we are making progress? How will we measure success? I'm analytical by nature, so naturally I'd want to see some numbers, some kind of metric to measure progress, but I don't think that will work in this case. Progress will only be made when change is deeply, truly, and emotionally felt by people of color in this community. It will be measured in spontaneous outbursts of hope and the absence of distress. When it comes to gauging the impact of racism we need to stop litigating the case and start listening.*

*The stakes are very high. Failure could lead to damage that takes years or decades to repair. Success on this front would mark the most consequential improvement this school district in a generation, or, perhaps, ever. Let us seek success by being united, vigilant, honest, and brave.*

*Thank you.*

➤ **Introduction**

- Maria C. Rice, Superintendent of Schools

- **Presentation**
  - Natalie McGee
  
- **Board of Education Questions for the Presenter**
  
  
- **Questions from the Community**

Following a lengthy discussion by members of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, and community members, the board and Superintendent indicated that as the racial equity initiative continues, a dedicated page on the District website will be created and additional avenues of communication between the district and the community will be explored to involve and keep the community informed. The Superintendent thanked the community members for their comments and feedback, and announced that the next meeting to discuss the racial equity initiative is scheduled as part of a Superintendent Dialogue on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at 7:00 PM.

**ADJOURN**

ADJOURN

Motion made by Kathy Preston and seconded by Matthew Williams that the Board adjourn at 9:20 PM.  
Motion carried 7 to 0 with 7 members voting.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dusti Callo  
District Clerk