



**HIGH BRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, June 5, 2025**

**High Bridge School District Vision Statement**  
**Creating an environment that fosters a love of learning and critical thinking.**

**1. OPENING OF MEETING - 7:00 PM - Meeting began at 7:03 pm**

**Required Notice of Open Public Meeting**

Being duly posted at the following locations: High Bridge Middle School and Elementary School main offices, High Bridge Borough Hall Office; and advertised, in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, in the following newspaper: Hunterdon County Democrat, this meeting will convene at the High Middle School, 50 Thomas Street, High Bridge, NJ 08829. The Board will only accept public participation from those who are physically in attendance, as per Policy 0168. Please notify the board if you intend to record this meeting.

**Date:** Thursday, June 5, 2025

**Time:** 7:00 pm

**No formal action will be taken.**

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3. ROLL CALL by Caryn Rinehart, Acting Board Secretary**

Caitlin Bowring	<i>Present</i>
Gregory Hodges	<i>Present</i>
Robert Imhoff	<i>Present</i>
Michael McCasland	<i>Present</i>
Colleen Poles	<i>Present</i>
Cynthia Sharkey	<i>Present</i>
Karyn Gove	<i>Present</i>

Additional Members Present: Dr. Gregory Hobbaugh, Superintendent  
Caryn Rinehart, Acting Board Secretary

**4. PRESENTATION & RECOGNITION ITEMS**

**4.1. High Bridge School District Community Information Session (Attachment: BOE Presentation)**

*President Karyn Gove welcomed everyone and explained the reason for the community meeting.*

*Vice President Robert Imhoff began by asking that questions be held until the end of the presentation and proceeded to review and explain the PowerPoint presentation.*

*Karyn Gove spoke about state regionalization funding conditions.*

*Presentation ended and the floor was opened to the public for questions/comments.*

## **5. PUBLIC AND BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND DISCUSSION SESSION.**

*Michele Lee - Asked for clarification about a remark made during the presentation about a lawsuit over an IEP. Robert Imhoff explained, as an example, if we are sending students to another school district and IEPs are not properly followed, a lawsuit may be filed against High Bridge because they are the resident district.*

*Michele Lee - Commented about applying for a refund of a portion of the lost state funding and how the funds were not returned.*

*Robert Imhoff explained that the district did receive some of the cut funding back.*

*Karyn Gove further explained that the funds returned could only be used for programs/items that are not recurring. The funds could not be used to hire a teacher because that could not be sustained in the future.*

*Michele Lee - In reference to the free preschool: how does this benefit High Bridge residents? There is space at the elementary school, suggesting that we concentrate on K-8 and move everyone to the elementary school.*

*Robert Imhoff addressed that there was not enough space in that building to house all the K-8 students.*

*Gregory Hobbaugh further explained that the preschool grant is 100% funded by the State and is at no cost to the residents. As a district, we are able to offset some of the other fixed costs (custodial, electricity, etc.) by allocating a portion to the preschool grant. If we end the preschool program, the district would have to bear 100% of those costs.*

*Curt Nowell - Asked the Board if they have considered going back to K-5/6 and sending out grades 7-8?*

*Karyn Gove explained that it was not cost effective.*

*Michele Lee - Commented on how she feels there's more that the schools can do to reduce costs and questioned the school climate and referred to her child's experience.*

*Toby Wodder - remarked about the impact of having a school in the community. And praised the school and staff. Questioned what would be built if the middle school was sold.*

*Fredy Leyton - Commented that he has children in the district and have found their teachers to be very responsive. They came to High Bridge for the small school district. Asked about the progress of regionalization or shared services.*



*Karyn Gove explained that we are joining NHV for the grant and if approved, it would be about 2 years until the study is complete. Grant application has no upfront cost and the results are non binding.*

*Robert Imhoff explained that once the study is complete, the BOE would not be solely responsible for acting on the recommendations. Funds would be spent to hold a special election and send it to the voters and residents of High Bridge to make that determination.*

*Lauren Hamlin - Asked about the "unique needs that High Bridge has that may not be met" referred to in the presentation.*

*Karyn Gove and Robert Imhoff both referenced the Special Education program in High Bridge and the individual needs of the students. Also commented on the ability to join extra curricular activities in a larger district. 90% of current High Bridge Middle School students are involved in some sort of extracurricular activity. In regards to entering into a send/receive situation, the BOE looked at if our students would be getting anything better by going somewhere else. Would their education be enhanced or would it simply be paying tuition to someone else.*

*Curt Nowell - Ask about enrollment numbers; are the numbers declining?*

*Gregory Hobaugh explained that with the preschool students, our enrollment is flat, however, the state does not include preschool in funding, so yes, our enrollment numbers are declining.*

*Curt Nowell - Asked if this was a trend going forward.*

*Karyn Gove explained that is why we are applying for the grant to get the data.*

*Michele Lee - Do we have data about how many special education students are not High Bridge residents?*

*Gregory Hobaugh confirmed that we have no out of district placements. 100% of our special education students are being educated in our program.*

*Resident - Asked if special education is our strength, can we bring students in and receive tuition?*

*Robert Imhoff - It is always a possibility.*

*Gregory Hobaugh - We have to look at the classroom population to be sure any incoming students are a fit with the program.*

*Curt Nowell - Asked if we are sending any students out? Do we have resident students leaving the district as choice students?*

*Gregory Hobaugh - We currently have no out of district placements and yes we have students who attend other districts through the choice program.*

*Margaret Shlimbaum - In regards to the feasibility study, does it take into account student's experiences or wellness or is it all just numbers?*

*Gregory Hobaugh explained that the Hunterdon County Superintendents just met with one of the people involved in the study done for Belvidere. They look at curriculum, demographics, finance, and take all that into consideration when making recommendations, not so much individual student needs.*

*Kelly Matos - Asked if there is a state law that mandated student to teacher ratio? Also asked about the number of classes per grade level.*

*Karyn Gove explained there was no state mandate but the BOE has a policy on class size and that all the enrollment and class section information is listed in each regular session agenda. She encouraged the audience to attend Board meetings.*

*Rob Staley - Inquired about the possibility of making additions to the elementary school to house all students and sell the middle school.*

*Robert Imhoff explained that all options were on the table, however it may be difficult to add onto the elementary school due to land situation and underground mines.*

*Michele Lee - Stated that Bethlehem Township had agreed to merge.*

*Katie Franks - Remarked that as a resident of Bethlehem, there has been no notification of merging. She praised the district staff, especially the Special Education teachers. Noted that many of the staff have been in the district for many years.*

*Kelly Matos - Asked about the potential for elementary school students to move to the middle school.*

*Karyn Gove - No.*

*Freddy Leyton - Commented that his former school district held summer programs. Asked if there was something like that available here or is it not in the budget?*

*Gregory Hobaugh - No it is not in the budget as of right now.*

*After hearing no more questions/comments, the audience was thanked for attending.*

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

**Board President called for a motion at 8:30 pm, Michael McCasland moved, seconded by Cindy Sharkey to adjourn the meeting.**

*Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.*

*Respectfully submitted by,*



*Caryn Rinehart, Acting Board Secretary*