



A letter to the Florham Park Community
from Board of Education President, Nicholas Ritrivi

As members of the Florham Park Board of Education, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve our community and students. Our Board and School District have undergone a great deal of change in recent years. As such, I would like to take this opportunity to reintroduce our Board of Education members and share some information about interacting with the Board. The newest member of the Board of Education is Brian Perillo. Alita Thomas, our Board Vice President, and Kristina Heinold are our longest serving members, now in the third-year of their second term on the Board. I am the Board President and am in the first-year of my second term along with Board members Yvonne Cali and Fabienne Crimi. Last but not least, Linda Rozek is in the second-year of her second term on the Board.

You can find additional information about each of us, which Board committees we serve on and how to contact us, on the Florham Park Public Schools website at <https://www.fpbs.org>

Role of the Board of Education

The Board of Education is a non-partisan representative body. You, the people of Florham Park, have elected us to represent the community's interests to the School District and to ensure that all aspects of the District are run well. Our priority is working to advance student achievement for all students to prepare them for life, high school and eventual career. The power of the Board of Education lies within the group. Individual Board members have no legal status other than that of any citizen, except when sitting with other Board members in an official meeting. As individuals, Board members cannot make decisions for the Board, take actions for the Board, or speak for the Board, unless the Board has authorized them to do so. Although we are elected officials, we serve without obligation to any political party, but rather focus on the needs of the children of Florham Park.

It is the responsibility of our Board to make sure our District is well run. We have two mandates: (1) we set policy and governance for the District; and (2) we manage one employee – Dr. Steven Caponegro, our Superintendent. We take our responsibility to Florham Park's children very seriously. Each member of our Board is deeply focused on the well-being of our children and on achieving academic excellence at all levels of our District.

From full day Kindergarten, new and improved academic offerings in many subjects including ELA and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) to brand new lockers and roof improvements at Ridgedale Middle School, we are proud of the strides the District has made, especially in recent years. We also look forward to the forthcoming capital improvement projects, made possible by the recent passage of the capital improvement bond referendum this past November. Upcoming capital projects include, among other things, HVAC in instructional areas, renovations to computer and STEAM labs and boiler and roof replacements across our three buildings. More information on the approved referendum can be found here: <https://www.fpbs.org/referendum> and a full list of our projects with timeframes can be found at this link on the District website: https://www.fpbs.org/referendum/project_schedule.

The Florham Park School District's staff is our most valuable asset and we deeply appreciate their dedication and professionalism. We also want to thank the Florham Park Parent-Teacher Association, the Florham Park Education Foundation, other school volunteers, all of our parents, our taxpayers and the Borough Council and Mayor Mark Taylor for their critically important contributions. The Florham Park Schools are so much better because of your ongoing dedication and efforts.

Interacting with the Board of Education

When addressing your interests or concerns within the District, Florham Park parents and students should follow an escalation process, often referred to as the "chain of command". This model is the same in any public school. The first point of contact for any issue is always the appropriate teacher. If there is no satisfactory resolution, from that point, escalation would be to the appropriate principal/supervisor. If the concerns are still not addressed, the issue can be escalated to our Superintendent. From there, the Board of Education is the final point of escalation. The NJ School Board Association explains this best:

"[c]oncerns of individuals in the community which are brought to the attention of a Board member cannot be acted upon by that Board member, but are referred through established channels, such as Board President and/or the Superintendent. When the chain of command is used properly by citizens and Board members, communications are improved and the Board of Education can act as final arbiter on issues which have not been resolved at other steps in the chain."

As members of the Board of Education, it is our responsibility and first priority to advocate for ALL children in our school community. Any individual issues you have are always important to us, though we are restricted in our ability to address any specific child's issue.

Board Meetings

The purpose of a Board of Education meeting is to take official, formal action on the business of the Board and the District. **The Board meets on a regular basis at the Board Offices at Ridgedale Middle School for its Curriculum Work Session on the third Monday of each month at 5:30 PM and at the Board Offices at Ridgedale Middle School for its General Public Meeting on the fourth Monday of each month at 7 PM.** These meetings are open to the public. The Board's full meeting schedule can be found at this link on the District website:

https://www.fpbs.org/board_of_education/meeting_information/2020_meeting_schedule_and_board_minutes

The full Board is only able to meet and discuss Board business at these meetings. We invite and encourage the public to attend our meetings to listen to us conduct our work. Every meeting includes an open public comment period, where members of the community can speak to us. We value the opportunity to hear from the community during these sessions.

Thank you for your engagement with the Florham Park Board of Education. We look forward to the continued success of the Florham Park School District.

Nicholas Rittrivi