

**NEW JERSEY STATE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION**  
1161 Route 130 North Robbinsville, NJ 08691

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**April 2, 2025**

**Roll Call** - The meeting of the Executive Committee, held on Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at the NJSIAA Administration Building in Robbinsville, New Jersey, was called to order by the President, Russell Petrocelli, at 11:03 am.

The following members were present: Mohammed Abdelaziz, Jeff Baldino, Michael Baldwin, Dr. Carol Birnbohm, Anthony Browning, Carl Buffalino, Mark Cantagallo, Tony Cattani, Jason Corley, Jorge Diaz, Judy Finch-Johnson, Barry Fitzgerald, Natalie Gorman, Dr. Kimberly Gruccio, Kurt Karcich, Howard Krieger, Dr. Michael Kuchar, Greg Lasher, Brendan McGovern, Dr. Anne Mucci, Senator Paul Sarlo, Steve Shohfi, Sheryl Smith, Jeffrey Steele, Dr. Gregory Troxell, Joseph Ursino, Michael Vinella, Dennis Vinson, Paul Vizzuso, Tammy Wagner, Barry Walker, Tripp Welborne, Cynthia Wilks, Assemblyman Wimberly, and Sjoquelyn Winstead. Also present: Colleen Maguire, Executive Director; Paul Popadiuk, Chief Compliance Officer; Tony Maselli, Chief Operating Officer; Al Stumpf, Derryk Sellers, and Sandy Mamary, Assistant Directors; Steven P. Goodell, Esq., NJSIAA Counsel. The following members of the press were in attendance: Jake Aferiat, *NJ Advance Media* and Mike McGarry, *Press of AC*. Also present: Paul Anzano, Esq. of Pringle Quinn Anzano, P.C.

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**Approval of Minutes** - A motion was made by Carl Buffalino, seconded by Jason Corley, to accept the minutes of the February 19, 2025 Executive Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

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**Legislative Update (Paul Anzano)** – The legislature is currently on a budget break. Mr. Anzano updated the committee on three bills he is following closely.

One bill addresses background checks for certain volunteer sports personnel. It is currently being reviewed by the Senate Budget Committee, which Senator Sarlo chairs. A discussion will take place with the sponsor because this proposal is unnecessary since NJSIAA already has an efficient background check process. The second bill, which establishes a task force to examine issues and make recommendations concerning youth sports, including abusive coaching, confrontational parents, and bullying of players, is having a hard time finding a state agency that wants to undertake this proposal. NJSIAA doesn't regulate youth sports so it doesn't make sense for NJSIAA to oversee this regulation. This bill is also currently in the Senate Budget Committee. The last bill Mr. Anzano briefed the committee about is in draft format right now and has not yet been introduced. It changes the current rules for charter school transfers and athletic participation. Mr. Anzano will meet with the sponsor to discuss the proposed changes.

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**Executive Director Update – Colleen Maguire**

**Winter Season Recap** – A three-page summary of winter state champions was distributed. Ms. Maguire thanked NJSIAA staff for their teamwork to host championship events across 13 sports. The winter season culminated with record attendance at Rutgers University for the boys/girls basketball state championships.

**Spring Newsletter** – Yesterday, NJSIAA's April newsletter was posted with important updates and reminders specific to activities that will occur during the final three months of the school year. Ms. Maguire encouraged committee members to share the newsletter with appropriate administrators.

**NJSIAA Annual Meeting Legislation – Final Approval – One Reading – Voice Vote** – The annual meeting will take place on Monday, May 5 at the Pines Manor in Edison. The ballot proposal to adopt a competitive balance formula to public school classifications in the sports of football, boys basketball and girls basketball as approved by the Executive Committee in January, will be split into two separate ballots. Since the proposal's approval in January, NJSIAA hosted two sectional meetings; one in-person on March 12 at the DAANJ Conference; the other virtual, on March 19. The committee then met on March 25 to review feedback and incorporate a few minor changes to the proposal. The final proposal was presented in draft format for approval by the Executive Committee. Ms. Maguire thanked Executive Committee members Judy Finch-Johnson, Carol Birnbohm, Jorge Diaz, Michael Rossi, and Greg Troxell for serving on this committee since last spring.

Discussion took place. Joseph Ursino, on behalf of the Tri County Conference, expressed concerns regarding the proposal's data collection and accuracy. Who is checking if athletes are varsity athletes. It was explained NJSIAA will take care of the rosters and calculating success points (which are derived from nj.com data). But Mr. Ursino wanted to know what happens if a person transfers and it's not recorded. Mr. Popadiuk will review roster lists and find out the details of all roster members. If someone is lying or hiding information, eventually someone will report it and there will be serious consequences. The association is reliant on the integrity of its members.

Mr. Goodell explained why the proposal was broken into two ballots. The first ballot questions the membership if they want to amend the bylaws to allow a competitive balance formula. If they do, ballot #2 polls the membership whether they approve the specific competitive formula presented and approved by the Executive Committee. It is up to the Executive Committee to decide what the formula will look like. It is expected that it will need tweaks after being implemented and tested.

More questions followed. Kurt Karcich asked if playing time is a factor. Ms. Maguire explained that the whole varsity roster gets reviewed, level of contribution will not be assessed. Mr. Ursino asked if there's consideration for more groups since once you get to Group 4 or 5 there's nowhere else to go. Ms. Maguire explained the competitive balance issue with public schools is seen more in the smaller group brackets, but the policy will be reassessed each year- it was written so that the Executive Committee can make changes if warranted. Mr. Popadiuk shared that he collected data from the past two years and found that there were approximately four to five boys basketball teams that will be reviewed across all classification groups, and they may not have all been non-traditional public schools, so it's a small percentage.

**Ballot #1** – A motion was made by Jorge Diaz, seconded by Kurt Karcich, to approve and place Ballot #1, which would amend the Bylaws to allow a public school's classification to be changed based on a competitive balance formula as approved by the Executive Committee and set forth in the Policies and Procedures, on the 2025 NJSIAA Annual Meeting ballot for vote by the membership. Motion carried unanimously.

**Ballot #2** – A motion was made by Barry Fitzgerald, seconded by Judy Finch Johnson, to approve and place Ballot #2, which would amend the Policies and Procedures and adopt the specific competitive balance formula that was endorsed by the Executive Committee this year, on the 2025 NJSIAA Annual Meeting ballot for vote by the membership. Motion carried unanimously.

**NFHS Legal Meeting – April 15 – 16, 2025** – Ms. Maguire and Mr. Goodell will be traveling to Indianapolis the week of April 14 for the annual NFHS Legal Meeting. This conference is a great opportunity to network with colleagues and keep a pulse on issues that other state associations are

facing. Ms. Maguire and Mr. Goodell will give a presentation on the legal arguments and decisions around an incident that occurred during NJSIAA's boys District tournament, which made national news. The temporary restraint that was granted has caused grave concern among other state associations.

**Scholar Athlete Luncheon – May 18, 2025** – On Sunday, May 18, NJSIAA will host its 32nd annual scholar-athlete luncheon. The Finance Committee continues to approve monies in the budget to allow every school's attendees (student-athlete plus two guests) to attend for free. Approximately 400 student athletes were nominated. The association is looking forward to celebrating their success both in the classroom and after school.

**Football NCAA Open Recruiting Period Reminders (April 15 – May 24)** – The NCAA has two open recruiting periods – spring for football and fall for boys/girls basketball. There are specific guidelines that must be followed by all schools, which are found in the Policies and Procedures section of NJSIAA's Handbook. There are two common misunderstandings:

1. Workouts may only occur when a college coach is in attendance – a college coach must reach out to a member high school to request a visit.
2. Workouts are for student-athletes in that school only – coaches cannot combine their teams or invite student-athletes from other schools to participate.

NJSIAA allows these workouts on the school's premises solely to assist student-athletes with recruiting opportunities. Any violations of these guidelines will result in an immediate two-game suspension for the head coach. There have been too many coaches trying to push the envelope, so moving forward, the messaging is zero-tolerance.

**Girls Flag Football Update – Spring 2027** – Girls flag football is growing at the interscholastic level. NJSIAA has a pilot program in place, and Ms. Maguire has been meeting with representatives from the five football leagues and conferences. At the last meeting in January, it was reported that approximately 142 schools will host a girls flag football team this spring (last year it was reported a little over 3,000 girls are participating). The five football leagues and conferences have supported the following timeline to potentially sanction girls flag football:

- o Submit legislation to Advisory Committee – December 2025.
- o If endorsed by the Advisory and Executive Committee, it will be voted on by the membership at the May 2026 annual meeting.
- o Spring 2026 season will be a continuation of the current pilot program, but leagues and conferences will be required to play under NFHS rules. The official rule book is being published no later than June 2025.
- o If approved by the membership, the first sanctioned season will be in Spring 2027.

Ms. Maguire continues to remind the football leagues/conferences and all member schools that upon adoption, girls flag football will be a strenuous sport therefore the policy prohibiting participation in multiple strenuous sports in the same season will be enforced. That means the Class of 2027 and 2028 will not be able to participate in flag football and another strenuous spring sport (all sports with the exception of golf).

Discussion took place. Senator Sarlo asked if there is concern that softball participation will drop with the introduction of flag football. There was this same concern when girls lacrosse was adopted as a new sport in the 90s, and softball is still around. And if numbers do drop, the option to become a cooperative sports program is available to schools. Carl Buffalino asked how it'll affect football in the fall. It doesn't. The two are two separate seasons so a female athlete can participate in both sports. Paul Vizzuso asked about the philosophy of restricting participation in two sports in the same season. It is in place for the

safety and the wellbeing of athletes. Also, some athletes participate in club sports on weekends. This is a practice supported by NJSIAA's Sports Medical Advisory Committee.

**Office Renovation Project** – NJSIAA's building was renovated in the early 1990s to add additional meeting space and has gone largely untouched since so it was time to self-fund some much needed improvements. Last month, the Finance Committee reviewed a proposal for renovating many different areas of the office – these are:

- o Roof – leaks are everywhere
- o Upgrade all lighting to LED – replace ceiling tiles
- o Renovate all bathrooms and kitchen
- o Painting both interior and exterior
- o Replace front vestibule
- o Replace doors in storage receiving areas

The renovations are being self-funded through NJSIAA's reserves. The association is not borrowing monies nor looking for funding. The total project cost is approximately \$600K - \$650K and all costs will be capitalized and depreciated over the asset's useful lives – anywhere from 7 years to 25 years.

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### **Chief Compliance Officer Update (Paul Popadiuk)**

**Eligibility Updates** – Spring sports have begun. Everything in the transfer portal has been running smooth. The Eligibility Committee will meet on 5/1 to review fall sport athletes' age, credit and semester waiver requests.

**Cooperative Sports Program Approvals – One Reading – Voice Vote** – The Cooperative Sports Committee met in February 2025 to review cooperative sports applications for fall sports. The committee approved the following applications:

1. Academy of St. Elizabeth-Morris Catholic Field Hockey
2. Cliffside Park-Ridgefield Memorial Football
3. Lacey-Barnegat Gymnastics
4. Warren Hills-Belvidere Girls Tennis

A motion was made by Kurt Karcich, seconded by Mo Abdelaziz, to approve the four fall cooperative sports programs, approved by the Cooperative Sports Committee in February 2025 for a four-year period starting with the 2025-2026 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

**Disqualification Report – Winter Season** – The winter report was distributed. Though the total number of disqualifications is on par with the last few years, Mr. Popadiuk was unhappy with the increase in coach disqualifications. That number tripled (while the number of student disqualifications went down). Mr. Popadiuk will brainstorm ideas with Leagues and Conference officers in the next monthly meeting. Mr. Abdelaziz asked if there are still fines. There are but it's the first year of doing it, so maybe that will make a difference after a full year of implementation. Mr. Ursino asked if there's data on the disqualified coaches, such as years of experience. Maybe if it's a lot of inexperienced coaches being disqualified then a mentor program could help.

**International Student Committee Update** – The International Committee met on Monday, 3/24 to review the new International Rule that was approved by the Executive Committee last June. Since that time, NJSIAA has received feedback and members of the NJAIS came to speak at the December Executive Committee meeting. Following that meeting, Rutgers Prep sent a letter requesting that full tuition international students be exempt from the rule. The Committee reviewed past NJAIS concerns

and felt that the current rule has made accommodations for all international students by allowing them to participate in sub-varsity sports for an unlimited number of years. It was felt that this addressed the students' social and emotional needs. They also felt the rule applies fairly to all member schools and appropriately addresses issues and concerns brought up by member schools. The committee reread and discussed the letter sent by Rutgers Prep. The committee had concerns about exempting full tuition-paying students from the rule. Overall, the Committee felt it is not fair to exempt students just because of the amount of money they are able to pay as it sets up an issue of haves and have nots. They also felt that it would be difficult to monitor and verify an institution's books, would be difficult to verify if the monies came from (third parties, donations, etc.), and that this rule does help protect students from being displaced due to an increase of international students and keeps the playing field level for all member schools.

The Committee felt that there are no changes or modifications needed at this time. Its recommendation to the Executive Committee is to gather data regarding the incoming transfers through the upcoming fall and then see if any unintended consequences have occurred, or if adjustments need to be made.

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### **Chief Operating Officer Update (Tony Maselli)**

**Baseball Update** – The season is underway and going well. There have already been several extra-inning games.

**Arbiter Sports Transition Update** – There have been multiple training workshops for ADs, admin assistants, officials and assignors as we transition to Arbiter. 4/15 is the day officials can start utilizing the program and registering for next year.

**Public School State Semifinals – 2025 - 2026** – Mr. Maselli shared the results of his survey regarding hosting public school state semifinal games for boys and girls soccer, girls volleyball, baseball and softball. Schools were offered three options to host semifinal games (listed below). Option B was the winner, but Option C was a close second so could be the scenario down the line.

- o Option A – as is. N 1 v N 2 and Central v South – each year the host rotates.
- o Option B – N1 v N2 and Central v South – but the host is the one with the higher power points.
- o Option C – reseed the four teams by power points, no regional matchups. 1 v 4 and 2 v 3 at higher seed.

**BeNice Program Update** – 11,000 coaches out of roughly 25,000 have taken the BENice program, which educates coaches to recognize (not diagnose) signs and symptoms of mental health issues. The course is a one-time requirement and mandatory for all coaches.

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### **Al Stumpf, Assistant Director Update**

**Golf Update** – Sectional championships will take place on 5/6 and 5/7. The boys team and individual championships will be on 5/12 while the girls will play on 5/13, both at Raritan Valley Country Club.

**Spring Track Update** – MileSplit entry forms close on 5/11 for public schools & 5/25 for non-publics. Sectionals will be on 5/16 and 5/17; group championships on 5/30 and 5/31, and the Meet of Champions on 6/4 at Pennsauken HS. Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone may be at the MOC to give out awards.

**Unified Track Update** – Participation in the sport is growing. Last year, 14 teams entered the tournament. This year there are over 30 registered. If it continues to grow, Mr. Stumpf may need to have two sectional meets, prior to the finals. The state championships are scheduled for 5/29 at Franklin HS.

### **Derryk Sellers, Assistant Director Update**

**Softball Update** – The non-public and public championships will be played on 6/11 and 6/13 respectively, both at Ivy Hill Park.

**Boys Volleyball Update** – The finals will be played at South Brunswick HS, on 6/11 (Groups 2&4) and 6/12 (Groups 1&3).

**Wrestling Coaches Clinics** – The wrestling clinic will take place on 5/9 at Princeton University.

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### **Sandy Mamary, Assistant Director Update**

**Swimming and Diving Update** – Post-season meeting minutes are on the NJSIAA website. There was a lot of correspondence addressed at the swimming committee meeting.

**Boys Tennis Update** – All tournament sites have been confirmed and all tournament information is posted on NJSIAA's website.

**B/G Lacrosse Update** – The non-public finals will take place on 6/11, followed by the public finals on 6/13 & 6/14. The public finals will be played at two different sites each day. The sites are not yet confirmed, but tentatively the following schools will host the public finals: Ridge HS, Somerville HS, Hopewell Valley HS and Monroe HS.

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### **Finance Committee Update – Russell Petrocelli**

**Approval of Monthly Checks** – The February 17, 2025 through March 31, 2025 checkbook was approved by the finance committee and all checks were approved per policy before they were disbursed. Kurt Karcich made a motion, seconded by Jeffrey Steele, to approve the February 17, 2025 through March 31, 2025 check registers. Motion carried unanimously.

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**Old Business / New Business** – none

**Report of Counsel (Steven P. Goodell)** – Two weeks ago, the Commissioner of Education heard a case challenging an Eligibility Committee Appeals Committee decision from September. This was the only challenge this year. The Commissioner ruled in favor of the Eligibility Appeals Committee and found that the decision was reasonable.

**Closed Session** – A motion was made to enter closed session by Barry Walker, seconded by Jason Corley at 11:59 am. Motion carried unanimously.

**Adjournment** - There being no further business, a motion to enter open session and adjourn was made by Jason Corley, seconded by Jorge Diaz at 12:33 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Maguire  
Executive Director

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