

In Board Briefs, we summarize key agenda items and discussion topics from previous Board of Education meetings. Full meeting minutes are usually not available until approved by the Board at a subsequent meeting. The community is encouraged to attend each meeting, and the Board welcomes questions and comments. Previous Board Briefs can be found on the district website [here](#).

March 18, 2019 Board of Education Regular Meeting

After an executive session, a moment of silence was held for the victims of the tragic event in New Zealand, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the regular monthly public meeting was called to order.

Dr. Rogers read a statement on behalf of the Board of Education and himself condemning hate-related vandalism recently discovered at the high school, outlining the District's response and deploring the rise of such incidents both locally and around the world. Board President Tracy Frankel reiterated that the District is doing everything in its power to teach respect and appreciation for one another within the school community and this behavior will not be tolerated.

The third of four Budget Information meetings was held. The meeting focused on the benefits, expenditures and revenue, or funds that support the budget. Dr. Rufo first provided an update the program section of the budget. Two new positions have been added, including a Board-certified behavior analyst for elementary schools and a psychologist/social worker position at the high school to enhance the social-emotional learning of students as well as to provide additional support for post-secondary planning. The budget supports a number of facilities improvements, security initiatives, elementary library re-designs, flexible furniture and equipment upgrades while remaining under the tax cap. The benefits section of the budget includes a decline of approximately \$1.4 million, due primarily to a decline in required pension contributions and the health insurance rate increase being lower than projected. Since 2015-2016, the District has been funding several capital projects with reserves and plans to continue to do so. Dr. Rufo provided an overview of the revenue sources for the District, noting that the proposed tax levy increase is 2.49% over the prior year, which is significantly less than the calculated tax levy cap of 3.33%.

- A Trustee inquired about using reserves and if the reserves were depleted, what the impact on the tax cap would be. Dr. Rufo explained there are several sources of revenue and the District has a very long-term view and uses reserves judiciously, and each year the reserves are replenished. In recent years, some reserves have been allocated for capital projects in order to reduce the need for borrowing.
- A Trustee asked about the increase in expense in the Maintenance of Plant code and if it was related to Phase 2 projects. Dr. Rufo explained larger projects were included as part of the bond and the smaller projects are funded by the budget, thus avoiding the need for borrowing and associated interest costs. These smaller projects, as well as some equipment replacement purchases, are driving the increase.

A Trustee inquired if an "Unfinished Business" section could be added to the Agenda to address unresolved topics from previous meetings. Board President Tracy Frankel replied that the Superintendent's Report and District "Bits and Briefs," the District's e-newsletter, are opportunities to

provide updates to the community, and the Board will be reviewing processes during a workshop in the upcoming month and can review this issue further.

At the conclusion of the Budget Information Meeting, the regular meeting reconvened. The Board approved the minutes from the February 11, 2019 regular meeting. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- The Syosset High School Association for Creative Thespians performed three songs from its recent production of "Mamma Mia," after which cast members introduced themselves.
- Dr. Rogers introduced Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts Michael Salzman who, along with District Music and Art educators, gave a presentation on Music and Art Education in the Syosset Schools. The Arts "Why" statement was presented, which focuses on the purpose of the Arts program to help students develop essential 21st century skills including collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and self-discipline. The presentation outlined examples of students engaging in cross cutting activities centered on music and arts.
 - Board President Tracy Frankel expressed an interest in sharing Syosset's successes and expertise on the Arts on both a local and national level as part of the endeavor to be a "lighthouse" district for other communities to learn from, possibly at the National Association of State Boards of Education's annual conference.
 - Dr. Rogers replied that to avoid a conflict of interest, Mr. Salzman, who is the 2018-19 President of the NYS School Music Association (NYSSMA) and plays a role selecting groups to perform, will wait a year before advancing our District for consideration.
- Dr. Rogers introduced the school district's attorney, Ms. Carrie Anne Tondo, who provided an update on several potential multi-family developments that the District is now actively tracking to in order to project potential impact on the District.
 - Ms. Tondo gave a brief history of the proposed Syosset Park development and discussed the recent article by the Long Island Business News reporting the developer is now considering reducing or eliminating the scale of the residential component of the plan, which has not been confirmed. Should the residential component of Syosset Park be eliminated, it would relieve the District's concerns regarding the projected increase in enrollment and resulting required expansion of facilities, but the construction and environmental concerns would remain.
 - Board President Tracy Frankel asked if the Town would have a new DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) for a change in plans to Syosset Park. Ms. Tondo replied that the process under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) has a provision which allows for a supplement to the DEIS and there are

specific steps and requirements to be undertaken, but it is premature to speculate whether a new application or supplemental amendment would be followed.

- A Board Trustee inquired if the developer has changed. Ms. Tondo replied that the only information available is from the LIBN article, so it is not yet known. The Trustee also asked if the elimination or reduction of housing would impact the need for environmental testing. Ms. Tondo replied that it is too preliminary to answer that question at this time.
- Board President Ms. Tracy Frankel expressed a desire to indicate to the Town that the District would still like the independent testing to proceed regardless of the elimination or reduction of the housing component, and that the District should be provided an opportunity to a full review of a new DEIS or supplement to the existing DEIS as it did with the original to make thorough comments on any new proposal.
 - Board Trustees concurred with sending a letter to the Town in this regard and directed Dr. Rogers to proceed with this action.
- Ms. Tondo also provided information on several other developments in progress, including the Woodbury Country Club, Kensington Estates, Stone Hill at Muttontown, Woodbury Crossing (a commercial development), AVely and Oheka Castle. FOIL requests have been submitted to the Town of Oyster Bay, Town of Huntington (for developments crossing Town borders) and the Nassau County Planning Commission on the current projects to help determine the potential impact to the District. All requested records have not yet been received, therefore the update is based on preliminary information at this point in time. Additional analysis will be provided once all documentation is received.
- Dr. Rogers provided an update on the cost to renovate the Woodbury School building, situated on the corner of Jericho Turnpike and Woodbury Road, which was presented to the Board last spring as an option to consider as part of a four-point plan to address security concerns. The three other components of the plan – hire a Director of Security, create a \$2 million capital reserve and fund it, and allocate \$1 million in spending to the current budget - have all been executed. The fourth point of the plan, which the Board asked for more information on, was to renovate the vacant Woodbury school and relocate some administrative staff there, thus decreasing traffic and visitors to South Woods Middle School. Dr. Rogers outlined two options for the building:
 - Demolition of the building at a cost of approx. \$500,000, which includes remediation so that lead-based paint and asbestos contaminants present in the building aren't released into the environment. Even if the decision was made not to renovate the building, the District will have to address the deteriorating building at some point in time and this cost would be incurred in the future.
 - Renovate the building to code requirements for office space at a cost of approx. \$2.8 million (without an elevator, which is not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act since two main floors are accessible). The difference between the cost of demolishing the

building and renovating it is approx. \$2.3 million, which equates to a cost of approx. \$200 per square foot for office space, which is substantially lower than the new construction cost for school buildings of approx. \$500-550 per square foot.

- Board President Tracy Frankel asked how long the district has to make the decision based on the structural integrity of the building. Dr. Rogers replied that he will investigate with the architects and engineers. Ms. Frankel also requested the District prepare some information for the community to review regarding the building and provide for community feedback. Dr. Rogers stated he would work with the District Public Information Officer to coordinate this effort.
 - A Trustee asked Dr. Rogers to confirm that the Woodbury building would only be used for District staff. Dr. Rogers confirmed that the plan would be to use the building for District functions that generate visitor traffic. The Trustee also asked if construction would require asbestos abatement and what impact that may have on the surrounding areas. Dr. Rogers replied that both asbestos and lead paint abatement would be required, which is included in the expense estimate, and there would be no impact to the surrounding areas since certified abatement professionals must perform the work in such a way as to ensure no toxins escape and air quality testing is conducted immediately following the work.
 - A Trustee asked if the District had a current value of the property and if the move of administrative offices was due to shortage of space. Dr. Rogers responded that we don't have a current appraisal, and although the middle school is not currently tight on space, the space could be put to good use if it was freed up for instructional use. The Trustee also inquired about the best way to communicate to community regarding the options for the building. Dr. Rogers replied that the District would be sure to involve the entire community, not just the parent/guardian community, by using methods of communication that reach everyone, such as a District newsletter and flyers for the senior community.
 - A Trustee expressed a concern about the cost of renovating the building in light of other major expenses the District has undertaken and asked the District to consider other alternatives.
 - A Trustee asked for an explanation of the difference in building codes for student occupancy vs. office staff occupancy. While he did not have the exact specifications, Dr. Rogers explained the code requirements are more robust for student occupancy.
- Dr. Rogers provided an update on the District's research of school start times. Several new options that were identified by the District's busing consultant were outlined, none of which are without disadvantages. The biggest logistical problem is that the elementary school day is shorter than the middle school day, thus any shift in start times would result in overlapping bus runs in

either the morning or afternoon, which makes the shift cost prohibitive. All options are being considered, including some flexibility with the original start times identified, the possibility of merging middle school and high school bus runs, and even the option of having different start times for the middle schools. Dr. Rogers stated the current proposals will be presented to a committee of internal stakeholders for their feedback, and then the District will seek public feedback on the options developed to date. Dr. Rogers stated that there may not be a perfect solution and attaining a later start time for high school students may require some very significant compromises.

- A Trustee asked about the option of the two middle schools starting at different times and how that would impact staffing and after-school activities. Dr. Rogers replied that the time difference would be approximately 10 minutes so the impact would likely be minimal.
- A Trustee asked about the possibility of staggering the start times of the elementary schools.
- A Trustee asked if there is a method for parents to opt-out of receiving transportation if they already plan to drive their students without violating NYS regulations.
 - Dr. Rogers explained that the District has adopted mileage limits which entitle all students to transportation. Dr. Rogers stated that although there are a number of students not using District transportation, the challenge with reducing capacity is on peak ridership times, such as inclement weather days.
- Dr. Rogers provided a preview of the new Syosset Central School District website, which will be mobile friendly, easier to navigate, and have enhanced customizable capabilities, as well as a mobile parent app to be launched shortly after the website.
- Dr. Rogers summarized the results of the indoor air quality testing recently conducted at Syosset High School by the District's consultant J.C. Broderick & Associates. He read the following statement from the report: "The results of the inspections sampling and monitoring performed did not reveal any evidence of significant indoor air quality conditions within the subject spaces. That is, the sampling and monitoring did not reveal the presence of any contaminants in hazardous concentrations."
 - The District asked Walden Environmental Engineering to review the results as well and they concurred that the results do not present evidence of environmental health issues.
 - There are some recommended actions, including replacement of stained ceiling tiles and servicing the school's ventilation system to improve air circulation, which the District will address.
- Dr. Rogers follow-up on a previous Board discussion topic and announced that Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, Dr. Joseph LaMelza, has been designated to represent the District on the MercyFirst Community Advisory group. The selection was made based on the Advisory Group's planned focus on the needs of the children rather than security arrangements.

- Dr. Rogers informed the community that the Choices and Consequences program, presented by the Nassau County District Attorney's office on the topic of impaired driving, would take place the following morning at the high school and Nassau County DA Singas would be in attendance.
- Dr. Rogers announced the Sandy Hook Promise "Say Something" anonymous reporting system will be launched by the end of the month and secondary students will receive training on identifying concerning behavior and ways to report issues of concern.
- Dr. Rogers informed the community about a significant security development to be addressed. Included in the list of Phase 1 capital projects approved by the public was a plan to replace classroom doors in the school buildings with reinforced doors. After the tragic event in Parkland, the District reevaluated all security plans including these door specifications. For the past several months, the District has been evaluating the possibility of installing more heavily-enforced doors with remotely controlled locks that would offer firearms resistance, but still be appropriate for a school environment. No such product was available until the recent approval of a new door technology. The District's security consultant, architects, and engineers have reviewed the product. The upgrade would require public approval to use monies in the Security Reserve Fund created last year and just under \$1 million remaining in the \$20 million Capital Reserve created in 2014., In addition, the District would apply \$1.2 million in State Smart Fund monies allocated to the District. With these identified revenue sources, additional borrowing would not be required.
- The District received a response to its letter to the US Environmental Protection Agency regarding environmental testing results on the former Cerro/DPW site. The EPA replied and sent a copy of the 2018 groundwater monitoring report, which they have not yet posted online. The District sent the report to Walden Engineering to review and they stated the findings are consistent with the testing conducted at the District's monitoring wells. Once the EPA posts the report online, the District will provide the link to the community.
- Dr. Rogers announced the District received notice from its current food service provider, Whitson's Culinary Group, that they will not be renewing the food services contract for next year. The District will be issuing another bid for a food services management company and will work as quickly as possible with an independent consultant and its attorneys on creating new bid specifications.

Audience to the public

- A resident commented on the tax increase over the 20+ years he has lived in the district and the burden of high taxes on senior citizens in the community. He also took exception to the examples of hate-related murders in houses of worship cited by the District in its statement to the public at the beginning of the meeting.

- A resident voiced support of a later start time for the high school and inquired if the elementary school day could be extended with a longer recess incorporated, which may not only help with bus scheduling but also be beneficial to students.
- A resident expressed support for adding “Unfinished Business” to the Board of Education meeting agenda and commented that “Discussion Items” should precede “Audience to the Public.” The resident requested a potential development on Piquets Lane be added to the list of developments under review. Regarding high school start time, the resident asked if it is necessary to provide busing to the houses that are in close proximity to school buildings, especially the high school. Lastly, regarding the Woodbury property, the resident stated it is very important to have parents of students attending Walt Whitman School be a part of the decision process. The resident also asked that traffic on the corner of the property be considered as it is a very accident-prone intersection.
 - Dr. Rogers commented that any change to reduce the availability of busing would require a public vote.
- A resident inquired if the cost of converting the space at South Woods Middle School to usable instruction space was factored into the cost estimate for the option of moving administrative staff to the Woodbury building.
 - Dr. Rogers explained that this expense was not included in the preliminary cost estimate, which focuses solely on the Woodbury building. That cost will be factored in if there is interest in pursuing the option of renovating the building.
- A resident expressed support for converting the Woodbury building into administrative space. The resident also expressed support for shifting the high school start time later and suggested merging bus runs for schools based on location. The resident expressed a desire to move through the investigation phase more quickly. Lastly, the resident expressed a desire to receive more detailed information regarding the budget.
 - Board President Tracy Frankel replied that residents are welcome to attend the Citizen’s Advisory Committee for Finance meetings, which are open to the public and where the budget is reviewed in much more detail and questions can be asked.
- A resident asked why the food service provider Whitson’s withdrew from the contract. The resident also suggested the District host a seminar regarding tax increases so that residents understand the drivers of tax increases.
 - Dr. Rogers explained that while the food service provider entered into a multi-year contract, the District cannot hold them to the full term due to State regulations. The provider has the ability to withdraw. This does not preclude them from bidding again.

- A resident expressed a concern about evacuating students for fire alarms and the reaction to fire alarms during a crisis situation. The resident also expressed support for a later high school start time.
 - Dr. Rogers replied that the District works with its security consultant on drills for various scenarios.

Discussion Items

- The plan for the Woodbury building was scheduled as a Discussion Item but had already been discussed at length earlier in the meeting. Board President Tracy Frankel asked if there was anything to add. A Trustee commented that what is done with the Woodbury building and property should be a community decision, with the District gathering feedback by way of committees, community meetings, and possibly a community vote. Another Trustee agreed.
- A later high school start time was also scheduled as a Discussion Item but had already been discussed at length earlier in the meeting.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to staff appointments, leaves of absence, appointment of substitute staff, tutors, recreation and pool staff, coaching recommendations and additional pay, appointment to extracurricular assignments, appointment of Building Level Web Masters, appointment of Permanent Chairperson, Chief Election Inspectors and Election Inspectors for the School District Budget Vote and Annual District Election on May 21, 2019, the approval of committee meetings and minutes, settlement agreement, re-certification of District Compact plan, approval of student club charters, authorization for special education and nursing contracts, authorization for service contracts, authorization for Request for Proposal, authorization to enter into a Cooperative through U.S. Communities, authorization for piggybacking bid, authorization for change orders, authorization to award bid for gymnasium ventilation, disposal of broken, surplus and/or obsolete equipment and books, and other financial operations of the District.
 - The Board approved the ballot proposition to authorize expenditure of funds to purchase ballistic doors - Proposition 3 Expenditure of capital reserve funds.
 - A Trustee asked what is done with Chromebooks that are no longer able to be used.
 - Dr. Rogers replied that broken Chromebooks are stripped for useable parts, and what we can no longer be used is disposed of.

Next Meeting

- The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2019 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.