

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](#).

### **October 18, 2018 Board of Education Regular Meeting**

After an executive session, the Pledge of Allegiance, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. The Board approved the minutes from the September 17, 2018 meeting. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and approved.

#### *The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items*

- Syosset High School Principal Dr. Durante introduced Student Senate President Sahil Rustami, who provided a report on the many activities at the high school that have taken place to kick off the school year; including Open House, freshman elections, the Cystic Fibrosis telethon, the blood drive for American Red Cross, and the events leading up to Homecoming including Spirit Week, the Pep Rally and carnival. Mr. Rustami reported that a number of students attended a School Safety Forum hosted by the NCPD and held at Hofstra University. Topics covered included school security, substance abuse and cyber-bullying. Mr. Rustami also reported that two members of Syosset Forensics Speech represented the United States at a competition held in Hawaii and won the competition.
- In acknowledgement of New York State School Board Recognition Month, Syosset Council of PTAs President Meryl Bolnick publicly thanked the nine members of the Board for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the children and their leadership role in making Syosset a top public school system in the nation.
- A report on the annual School District Audit was provided by Ms. Jill Sanders, CPA, Partner from Cullen & Danowski. Ms. Sanders provided what is known as an unmodified opinion on the financial statements, which is the highest level of assurance that the financial statements fairly present the financial condition of the school district for the year ending June 30, 2018. A risk assessment was performed, and the internal control structure was reviewed. It was concluded the District has very good internal controls in place over financial transactions. Ms. Sanders noted several accomplishments by the District including the following:
  - The implementation of new software including WinCap.
  - The refinancing of debt from November 2017 that resulted in savings of approximately \$279,000.
  - The Capital Reserve fund approved in 2014 was fully funded, and the plan of work for Phase 1 is being executed.
  - The community approved two propositions in February 2018; one related to energy efficiency improvements and the other for the Capital Improvement Projects, known as Phase 2. The District was able to use savings from capital reserve funds, so the full amount will not have to be borrowed.

- A Security Capital Reserve fund was established in May 2018. The District was able to fund \$2 million of the \$5 million cap from budget savings.
- The District has very good financial controls.

The auditors will also be providing a Federal Single audit by March 31, 2019 and has rendered draft report in the extra-classroom activity area fund area.

- An overview of the redesign of the Elementary School Report Card was given. The District has been engaged in an extensive process of redesigning the elementary-level report card so that it better aligns with the work being done in the classroom and better reflects student growth throughout the school year. The new report card is standards-based and specific to each grade level, allowing the District to better communicate student achievement, measure learning against a standard and refine the instructional practice. Parent Guidance documents were created for each grade level, and are available on the District website along with the redesigned report card templates.
- Dr. Rogers provided the Board with an update on the investigation into live-streaming of Board meetings. Topics reviewed included technical capabilities as well as regulatory issues such as ADA compliance, records retention, FCC compliance, student musical performances, and students with photo objections.
- Ms. Nora Brew, an environmental consultant from Walden Environmental Engineering, presented results of the ground water testing conducted at the South Grove campus. The results confirmed the initial conclusion that the school is safe based on results from a preliminary screening sample that were presented at the August 28 Special Board meeting prior to the August 31 deadline for comments on the proposed Syosset Park DEIS. Subsequently, the standard protocol was followed for developing the wells and conducting the sampling. Important findings:
  - Neither the screening sample, nor the properly developed well samples showed any VOCs – the group of compounds that could pose a health hazard on the surface – that exceeded government standards.
  - Although the screening sample showed some SVOCs – a class of contaminants that do not rise through the soil column and thus do not pose a risk at the surface – the properly developed well samples detected no SVOCs in excess of government standards.
  - The developed samples were also tested for additional contaminants and metals which detected some levels that would make this water unfit for drinking without treatment. However, the District has been informed that this is not the source of our drinking water and there is no other means for this water to reach the surface. Thus, these contaminants do not pose a hazard.
- Dr. Rogers updated the Board on the District’s work in researching a change to school start times. A consultant hired by the District last April recently completed an analysis of the busing operations and provided the District with three options for changing start times based on the performance metrics they observed of the current operation. The options presented achieve a later high school start time, but present significant unpalatable compromises. Therefore, the

District has asked the consultant to develop additional options, which will be presented to the community once available.

- Dr. Rogers outlined the two new processes implemented by the District to maintain assurance of residency, which include the following:
  - Families who establish residency in part through a lease must provide a new form of proof once the lease term has ended.
  - Children in 5th or 8th grade must have their residency re-verified as they progress to middle or high school.

The District has created an online re-verification application to streamline the process, though families will have to make an appointment with the Registrar in order for the District to verify original documents. Affected families will be contacted by email with further instructions. Dr. Rogers also provided an overview of what actions the District takes in carrying out residency investigations when warranted.

- Following the Superintendent's report, the Board asked several follow-up questions regarding school start times and residency verification.

#### *Audience to the public*

- Legislator Joshua Lafazan presented the Board with Citations in recognition of School Board Appreciation Month. He commended the Board for their dedication to the children of the Syosset community and for serving with integrity and honor.
- A representative from the Syosset Rowing Club thanked the Board for its support of the Club and for providing after-school bus transportation service.
- Several residents stated concerns regarding the Mercy First facility, including the safety of the community and the impact on first responders. They requested the Board facilitate a community forum for all interested parties to discuss the impact of the Mercy First facility in light of the "Raise the Age" legislation.
- A resident expressed concerns related to a change in school start time and the impact on traffic.

#### *Discussion items*

- The Board discussed the test schedule for students at the high school and the impact of test "black-out days" when staff are asked to refrain from scheduling tests, such as religious holidays for which the District is not closed and the day following an extended weekend. The months of September and October are particularly impacted by this practice. To aid in alleviating the issue of multiple exams in the major subjects occurring on the same day, the practice of test black-out days will be reviewed.

- Board Trustees discussed the disruption caused by students leaving the Mercy First facility. The administration was asked to facilitate a meeting with Mercy First officials as was done 2 years ago in conjunction with the Village School PTA. (Note: Mercy First officials subsequently agreed to such a meeting and are currently arranging a date and location.)
- The Board discussed the wait times associated with parent/teacher conferences and asked Dr. Rogers to investigate some options for a better system to allow parents to meet with all the students' teachers without an excessive wait time.

#### New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to staff appointments, leaves of absence, tutors, special assignments, service providers, extracurricular assignments, coaching, an appointment to tenure and the approval of committee meetings and minutes, acceptance of independent audit report, authorization of service contracts, authorization for rejection of bid, authorization for appointment of Special Counsel, and other financial operations of the District.

#### *Next Meeting*

- The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, November 19, 2018 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.