

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](#).

### **February 11, 2019 Board of Education Regular Meeting**

After an executive session, followed by attendance at the PTA's Reflections Awards ceremony and the Pledge of Allegiance, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. Board President Tracy Frankel thanked the Syosset Council of PTAs for their work in organizing the PTA Legislative Breakfast, where elected officials, mental health professionals, and members of the education community came together to discuss the important issue of mental health in education. Ms. Frankel also thanked the Chinese-American Association of Syosset (CAAS) and the Chinese Culture Society student club for their invitation to attend the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration, which was a beautiful and enriching day.

The second of five Budget Information meetings was held. The meeting focused on the Program component of the 2018-19 budget, which addresses salaries for teachers and support staff, special education, textbooks, equipment, instructional technology, athletics, co-curricular activities and several other expenditures.

Dr. Patricia Rufo, Assistant Superintendent for Business, provided several updates to the community since the first budget presentation given last month. The District was given a lower rate from the Teacher's Retirement System than the preliminary estimate, and due to being under the tax cap last year, there is a carry-over of approximately \$274,000 from last year. The current estimate for the calculated tax cap is now at 3.33%.

The 2019-2020 Budget will continue to support all the instructional programs and continue to deepen the K-12 curriculum alignment in science, math and ELA. Also included in the budget is the continuation of Teacher's College Reading & Writing Workshop, coding initiatives including KidOYO, and interactive boards that are being piloted this year. Staffing levels are expected to remain relatively stable for next year at this time but are subject to change based on enrollment and the needs of our students.

Later in the meeting, Dr. Rogers pointed out three factors that could impact the tax cap and the proposed tax rate; which are the state aid amount, debt service amount and Board and community meetings that have not yet been held. The State doesn't finalize their state aid numbers until April 1, though the District is required to file with the Comptroller on March 1. Newsday typically publishes what is filed on March 1 even though it is not final, thereby publicly announcing a number that is not finalized.

- It was suggested by a Trustee that the District make it clear to Newsday that the number provided on March 1 is preliminary. Dr. Rogers indicated that because Newsday reports the data in tabular form, it may not be clear to the public that the numbers are not final.

At the conclusion of the Budget Information Meeting, the regular meeting reconvened. The Board approved the minutes from the January 14, 2019 regular meeting and January 30, 2019 meeting. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and approved.

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

- Dr. Rogers introduced research facilitator, Ms. Veronica Ade, who provided an overview of the Regeneron Science Talent Search competition and announced the 2019 Scholars, Serena Lee, Spencer Pugach, Michael Wang, and Finalist Thomas Lam who will be traveling to Washington D.C. in March to compete for a \$250,000 prize. The students presented their winning research projects to the Board, for which they each won a \$2,000 prize with \$2,000 going to the high school as well. A representative from Senator James Gaughran's office was present to acknowledge the students' achievements.
- Dr. Rogers introduced school social worker Ms. Lauren O'Rourke, who presented a new program recently brought to the high school named "Bring Change to Mind." This is the first Chapter on Long Island, spearheaded by high school students Sally Hooey, Amanda Brophy, Madison Kramer, Jessie Rosenbaum and Jeffrey Bolnick. The goal of the program is to help teens understand mental health topics and end the stigma often associated with mental illness. The group is planning several events to further spread awareness of mental health issues. The students announced they were invited to the Nassau County Youth Wellness Summit in March to be educated further on mental illness.
  - Dr. Rogers congratulated and applauded the group on the work they have done on this important topic.
- Dr. Rogers reported on the final meeting of the Security Advisory Committee meeting that took place on January 15 on the topic of District Communications during emergency situations. The comments and feedback from all the meetings will be compiled and a report summarizing the work of the Committee will be provided to the community shortly.
- Dr. Rogers provided an update on the carbon monoxide event that took place at South Grove. The review of the incident is currently underway. Dr. Rogers stated that there were carbon monoxide detectors in place in the building around the primary heating source, but not in the gymnasium which was serviced by a heating unit separate from the main system. Dr. Rogers provided a summary of the actions taken in response to the incident, including addressing the immediate problem which involved closing all schools to do a complete review of the facilities and implement any changes that needed to be put into place, and the secondary step of evaluating the incident and reviewing why the existing systems of oversight did not function properly. Dr. Rogers explained there is a multi-layered approach in place that involves in-district and out-of-district resources designed intentionally with redundancy to reduce the possibility of something being overlooked. Unfortunately, these resources weren't enough, and therefore a full review of what went wrong is necessary. Dr. Rogers commented that it will take time to do this work well and methodically. The process will involve many steps, including a review of

documentation, procedural reviews, and conversations with external agencies, and it would not be effective to comment on any of the steps independently.

- A Trustee suggested that some staff members, possibly custodians, carry portable carbon monoxide detectors.
- A Trustee asked for confirmation that all schools were closed during the repairs, as opposed to just one, which Dr. Rogers confirmed.
- Dr. Rogers stated the Town of Oyster Bay made an announcement last week on the status of independent testing, the goal of which is to determine if there are any residual contaminants on the site of the proposed Syosset Park development. The Town has not progressed as quickly as originally planned, and therefore the deadline of January 31, 2019 for comments on the test results has been postponed. The Town stated in a letter to the District that they have selected an independent firm to conduct the testing, but it appears the contract with the firm is not yet executed. The hope is that a timeframe for test results will be provided after the contract is signed. The District plans to use its existing contract with Walden Environmental Engineering to aid in interpreting any test results from the independent firm and from any other governmental agency that may conduct testing.
- Dr. Rogers informed the Board that he was contacted by Mr. Jerry McCaffery, President/CEO of MercyFirst, who notified him of the plan to create a MercyFirst Community Advisory Group. Mr. McCaffery asked if the District would like a representative on the Committee. Dr. Rogers recommended Mr. Ray Farrell, Director of Security, as the representative for the District and asked the Board for feedback.
  - A suggestion was made by a Trustee to provide two representatives to address both security and mental health concerns, though it is unclear if two representatives can be sent from the District.
  - A Trustee asked if a social worker would be on the Committee.
  - It was suggested by a Trustee that we inquire what the topic of the meetings will be in advance and send an appropriate representative based on the subject matter to be discussed.
  - Dr. Rogers stated he would reach out to Mr. McCaffery to see if more than one representative could be sent and if not, if our representatives should be rotated based on subject matter.
- Dr. Rogers reminded the community that the first voter registration opportunity will be taking place at H.B. Thompson on March 5 from 3-7 p.m. Dr. Rogers also informed the community that all districts in Nassau County have all been instructed by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York that they need to put together an electoral process that is bilingual in both English and Spanish, which includes printing of all election materials and communications regarding the election, irrespective of what may be the most commonly spoken languages in any individual District.
- Ms. Bovard provided an update to the Board on the PTA meetings that took place to discuss the shift from PTA Lunch to school food service. Ms. Bovard first thanked the PTA for their work and

dedication in serving lunch to the students. She then identified three categories of feedback from parents:

- There is a concern over the quality of food provided. The District has been in conversation with the food service provider about improving quality and they have agreed to visit the schools to discuss menus, offer tasting opportunities and collect feedback. Also, elementary students will have the opportunity to provide input into the menus.
  - Secondly, parents would like to see alternate volunteer opportunities. The Central Office has been in discussion with elementary school principals to identify consistent opportunities for parents to volunteer across the buildings.
  - Lastly, there is a concern over the lost revenue from the PTA lunch fundraiser. The District asked the Units to develop their budgets, after which the data will be reviewed, and discussions will take place on how the District can assist in helping the PTA continue to provide opportunities for the students.
- Ms. Bovard also mentioned that some parents expressed concern about food deliveries to students from outside vendors related to safety and inequity among students. Ms. Bovard commented that there will continue to be a two-way conversation on this topic.

#### *Report from the Spokesperson of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance*

- Dr. Rufo reported on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance, whose representative was unable to attend the meeting, and provided an overview of the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Reports of the Internal Auditor were reviewed including the Risk Assessment Update as of June 30, 2018. The Inventory Tracking control risk assessment was reduced to low from moderate after the District implemented recommendations. An in-depth review of the Procurement and Claims processing was performed with generally no exceptions, except it was noted that the District was implementing a new accounting system and putting procedures into place to ensure all required 1099s are issued. The Administration and Capital budget were also reviewed. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on February 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at South Woods Middle School.

#### *Audience to the public*

- A resident asked if the school lunch aides are CPR certified and if not, could there be at least one staff member in the lunch room that is certified. The resident also expressed a concern about an incident that took place on a bus and the unavailability of video from the surveillance camera on the bus.
  - Dr. Rogers explained CPR training was made available to staff on a voluntary basis. The District is exploring making it a requirement for lunch room monitors.
  - Dr. Rogers commented that the technical requirements of adding cameras to the buses are substantial, and the District had committed to having the cameras fully operational by the end of the school year. The District is pushing to have the cameras operational as

quickly as possible. Dr. Rogers also mentioned that we have put additional resources in place, such as the availability of bus monitors in limited circumstances.

- A resident expressed a concern that the Town of Oyster Bay did not pick an independent testing firm (but rather a remediation firm) to do the independent testing at the proposed Syosset Park site. The resident stated that a State agency performed testing in October and the results have not yet been released. The resident also asked if a response to the letter the District sent to the NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation on December 3 regarding the test results has been received.
  - Dr. Rogers stated the District shared the news of the Town's actions regarding the selection of the independent firm with the community.
  - Dr. Rogers reaffirmed his comments from the November 2018 Board of Education meeting that it is the intention of the District to comment not only on the test results, but also the methodology behind them, once any results are released.
  - Dr. Rogers stated he has not received a written response to the letter written to the NYS DEC, though as the District indicated at the August 28, 2018 Board of Education meeting, the District has asked Walden Environmental Engineering to maintain contact with the DEC on the District's behalf.

#### *Discussion Items*

- A Trustee asked about the retention of parent email addresses after students graduate and suggested the District continue to send communications to parents if they wish to receive them.
  - Dr. Rogers said that this is possible, but we would need to research a few details including what type of information should continue to be shared.
  - A suggestion was made by a Trustee to include information in the community newsletter on how residents could receive more information from the District.
- A Trustee asked if there could be an opt-in process for parents who wish to receive information prior to their children starting school.
- A Trustee suggested that any information sent to community members without children in the schools be kept at the District-level rather than school-level.
- A Trustee asked if paper notifications could be available for people who may not use email.
- Lastly, a Trustee suggested that a "Subscribe" button be included on the new website being developed so that community members can opt-in to receiving the e-newsletter District Bits and Briefs.
  - Dr. Rogers commented that a mobile phone app will be launched along with the new District website, which could possibly be used for the purpose of subscribing to information, including calendars.

#### *New Business*

- Various resolutions were approved relating to staff appointments, leaves of absence, appointment of substitute staff, tutors, coaching and recreation personnel, the approval of

committee meetings and minutes, approval of student club charters, authorization for special education and nursing contracts, authorization for service contracts, approval of the destruction February 13, 2018 cast ballots, authorization for contracts for Federal Part B funds, authorization for various capital projects, acceptance of a donation, disposal of broken, surplus and/or obsolete equipment and books, and other financial operations of the District.

- A Trustee inquired about hiring non-staff members for coaching positions. Ms. Bovard explained that the preference is always to hire internally but if there isn't anyone available, the position will be posted externally. There is an interview process and candidates are vetted just like any other employee.
- The Board approved the scheduling of the budget public hearing, budget vote and Board of Education election, including establishing the time and election districts and polling locations for the Tuesday, May 21, 2019 vote. The public hearing was scheduled for Monday, May 13.

#### *Next Meeting*

- The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, March 18, 2019 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.