

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](#).

### **April 20, 2017 Board of Education Meeting**

After an executive session, the district held its fourth budget information meeting. Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Patricia Rufo provided a breakdown of revenues (tax levy, state aid, local revenues such as PILOTs, appropriated fund balance and restricted reserves) and how they support the school district budget. She also covered the calculation of the District's tax levy limit of 2.24% and the proposed tax increase of 2.12% for the proposed 2017-18 budget. On the facilities front, Dr. Rufo reiterated the plan to fund roof replacement projects at two elementary schools through transfers of unspent funds from the 2016-17 budget to the 2017-18 budget.

In addition, she addressed Proposition No. 2 which will appear on the ballot – a proposal to use up to \$7.7 million from the Capital Reserve (which currently contains \$14.1 million) to pay for the first phase of health and safety facility projects recommended as part of the district's Building Condition Survey and Security Audit.

Thereafter, the regular Board meeting was called to order. The Board approved the minutes of the March 20, 2017 meeting. The Treasurer's report was delivered and approved.

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

- Syosset High School Student Senate President Carly Battipaglia gave a report on various happenings at the school, including the search for a new prom venue, the progress and expansion of the Breaking Borders program with the Freeport and Elmont School Districts, and the recent successes of Syosset DECA, the Forensics Society and the varsity tennis team. Carly also provided information on important upcoming events, including Student Government elections, the biannual blood drive and Bravefest. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers praised Carly for all of her leadership this year.
- Members of Flip Chip, one of four new Virtual Enterprise International classes/teams at Syosset High School this year, were introduced, along with their teacher, Matthew Fiasconaro. The team won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the United States in the VEI National Business Plan Competition held on April 3 at the Microsoft Technology Center in New York City. Flip Chip also won a gold award in the Best Booth category and a silver award in the Best E-Commerce Website category at the International Trade Show, which was held in conjunction with the NBPC.
- Science Coordinator Raymond Loverso gave a presentation on the Next Generation Science Standards and how the Syosset schools have already begun to design programs to align with them. This includes developing more interdisciplinary STEM projects at the elementary and middle school levels, providing more K-12 opportunities in robotics and coding and developing more crosscutting electives at

the high school while also building on the successes of the science research program. In response to questions from the Board, he observed this would include encouraging more students to perform their research in school rather than at off-site facilities by enhancing and rehabilitating lab facilities at the high school. He also said that hiring teachers with more diversified qualifications is helping to create a more interdisciplinary program.

- In referencing a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that addresses strategies for implementing more structured physical activity during school recess, Dr. Rogers said that Syosset's recess program is aligned with many of the recommendations in the report. He said the district is working to design professional development opportunities for staff to further enhance the recess experience, consistent with the report's recommendations.
- Dr. Rogers mentioned that the District is working with Nassau BOCES on a number of enhancements to its technology infrastructure and planning, including a new five-year technology device replacement plan to keep Syosset's investments current.
- As the District nears the conclusion of a major rewriting of its policies, Dr. Rogers indicated that the next step is to implement a new on-line policy manual that is more organized and user-friendly than the one currently on the website.
- Dr. Rogers informed the community that a series of brief videos will be created to inform residents about Phase I facilities projects to be undertaken in the district's schools should voters approve Proposition No. 2. He also thanked PTA members who provided input into making these videos.
- Dr. Rogers said a plan is being developed in conjunction with the local fire department to improve emergency vehicle access to the Walt Whitman Elementary School campus. This follows concerns expressed by the PTA, whose members also provided several suggestions.
- Dr. Rogers also made a number of announcements: school will be in session on Thursday, May 25 due to the use of a snow day earlier in the year; on May 8 voter registration will be held at South Woods Middle School between the hours of 4 and 8 pm; and six Syosset High School students won first place at the Long Island Science and Engineering Fair, qualifying them to compete at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair to be held in Los Angeles, CA in May.

Board Member Report: A Board member provided an update from the National School Boards Association Conference in Denver, CO where he attended workshops and spoke with Board of Education members from throughout the country. Key topics addressed at the conference were: the underrepresentation of females and minorities in the field of computer science and the need for recruitment strategies; the evolution of career and technical education from traditional vocational education and how it should be treated as a catalyst to appeal to all students; the need for schools to provide better higher education preparation and foster more partnerships with local colleges and universities based on the high number of enrollment in remedial classes, as well as high college dropout rates; and concerns over how Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos may use provisions in the Every

Student Succeeds Act (which gives states greater flexibility to direct federal funds) to promote her agenda of supporting charter schools and school vouchers.

Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance Update: a spokesperson reported that over the course of its last two meetings the committee had discussed: cost drivers in the proposed budget, including the rise of health insurance premiums and a decline in the district's teacher retirement system obligation; the county property assessment system; the tax levy limit calculation and how it pertains to Syosset; Phase 1 projects to be voted on in Proposition No. 2 which authorizes use of the Capital Reserve; the state aid increase for 2017-18; various budget codes; contractual increases in the budget; and how staffing changes will not impact the overall number of full-time equivalent instructional staff.

#### *Audience to the Public*

- A parent suggested that the district consider selling the 2.4-acre parcel of property at 456 Woodbury Road to the North Shore Land Alliance, an organization that would preserve the land for open space and possible educational purposes such as farming. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen asked Dr. Rogers to meet with the organization to understand their approach. The parent also suggested that the district's Technology Workgroup consider looking at private schools in its research on how others use technology for instruction, and in particular the use of STEM labs for elementary student use. Dr. Rogers said the district continues to implement STEM education at the elementary level and has implemented Makerspaces in several buildings as areas to inspire creativity, innovation, and scientific exploration. The district continues to assess existing labs at the high school as well.
- Another parent inquired about how the Next Generation Science standards will affect current high school students. Dr. Rogers referenced Mr. Loverso's presentation earlier in the evening and in particular the creation of multi-disciplinary ("cross-cutting") electives. The State's assessment system has not caught up with the new standards, so electives in particular represent an opportunity to build exciting courses that leverage the new standards without the pressure of State assessments aligned to the old standards. He complimented the different academic departments that are already collaborating on comprehensive experiences across disciplines.

#### *Discussion Items:*

- Dr. Cohen offered his thanks to the middle school principals and all of the faculty who worked over the past year and a half to develop eighth grade math and science offerings for students. He encouraged the District to remain conscious of serving these students well into the future.
- The Board discussed the possibility of taking a unified or majority position in order to facilitate future advocacy on the issues of school vouchers and/or charter schools. It was one Board member's view that competition could potentially influence public schools to perform to higher levels, and that vouchers make the school choice option more viable for parents. Others spoke with concern about

these education alternatives diluting funding for public education generally. Dr. Cohen observed that the point of greatest consensus concerned funds potentially being redirected away from Syosset specifically and public education more generally. Consistent with the Board's previous advocacy on the topic, he asked Dr. Rogers to focus the Board's concern on the potential financial threat charters and vouchers pose.

#### *New Business*

- Various resolutions were approved pertaining: to coaching, election, event judge and staff service appointments; committee minutes; the abolishment, adoption, re-adoption and reading of multiple policies; service contracts; contractual obligations; equipment retirement; and the acceptance of a donation.
- The Board voted to approve the Nassau BOCES administrative budget for the 2017-18 school year and voted in support of three unopposed candidates for the Nassau BOCES Board of Education.
- The Board adopted a proposed district budget of \$223,702,174 for the 2017-18 school year to be presented at a public hearing on May 8 and for voting on May 16. The Board also approved the School Property Tax Report Card for 2017-18.
- The Board approved a "Refunding Bond Resolution" that refinances outstanding debt at a lower interest rate with a projected savings of \$238,000 over the remaining life of the bonds.
- The Board extended the Superintendent's contract until June 30, 2019 (2 additional years) with a 1% increase in compensation effective July 1, 2017.
- The Board approved the appointment of a consultant for up to 30 days to assist with the transition from Finance Manager software to the WinCap finance and personnel software platform.
- The Board approved the district's participation in an inter-municipal cooperative agreement for student transportation services with participating Nassau County schools.

#### *Next Meeting*

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is Monday, May 8, 2017 at 8 p.m. at South Woods Middle School. The fourth public budget information meeting and hearing will commence at 7:30 p.m., prior to the regular meeting.