

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 they are approved by the board members 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](#).

December 14, 2015 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session, the meeting was called to order and the minutes from the Nov. 16 Board Meeting were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers welcomed the Syosset High School boys *a cappella* group Choral Pride and the girls *a cappella* group The Adelettes, who performed songs under the direction of Kristen Howell.
- Dr. Rogers introduced Syosset High School Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante, who read the names of the school's 33 seniors who were recognized as Commended students by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation based on their scores on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in 2014. Dr. Durante and Assistant Principal Raymond Gessner awarded certificates to those students in attendance.
- Student Council representatives from South Woods Middle School provided an overview of some of its activities, including the Thanksgiving food drive, a Halloween walkathon, a peer leader conference, recycling efforts and participation in "Take the Bus to School Day" to help reduce the carbon footprint by encouraging the use of mass transit.
- Dr. Rogers briefed the community on his meeting with the elementary and secondary Student Cabinet. Topics of discussion included bullying, cyber-bullying, quality of food, restrooms, science curriculum and the use of technology in schools.
- Representatives from the district's architect H2M gave a presentation on possible site improvements designed to alleviate traffic congestion in the vicinity of the high school campus. Proposed improvements included traffic controls and markings, the widening of Southwoods Road, creation of a dedicated bus lane and a parent student drop off area, a student walkway and other measures to better define ingress/egress and control the flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Dr. Rogers pointed out that current site conditions would necessitate some of the projects discussed and that multiple financing mechanisms would be considered.
- Following a request at a recent Audience to Public session, a list of elementary student assessments has been developed and will be made available to parents via the district website. Dr. Rogers thanked the principals for their help.

- Dr. Rogers touched on emergency regulations adopted by the NYS Board of Regents earlier in the day regarding how school districts implement Annual Professional Performance Reviews. After looking over the state's overview presentation, the new regulations seem to represent substantial change but he cautioned a more thorough review was needed.
- Dr. Rogers indicated that a decades old law that shifts properties owned by LIPA from the assessments rolls to Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) is finally being implemented by Nassau County. Properties qualifying for PILOTs within the district represent about \$4 million of the district's tax levy and while this year's budget will not be affected, Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Patricia Rufo will closely monitor PILOT-eligible properties and how they may affect the district in future years.
- Dr. Rogers said that some recommendations resulting from a security audit have already been put into place and that the district will host a forum on security at a future date in the spring.

Athletic Committee Update: a Board member reported on the last meeting, where several questions were addressed including comparability of girls and boys athletic facilities (including the present state of locker rooms) as well as opportunity regarding participation of different sports among girls and boys. Additionally, architects are preparing a new master plan for the high school athletic fields and community sentiment for fundraising in support a new turf field will also be gauged.

Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance Update: a member of the committee reported that they reviewed the district's audited financial statements and discussed the new GASB statement regarding TRS/ERS liability as well as the district budget and how it relates in actual dollars, financial reserves and the building condition survey. She indicated that future committee agenda items would include discussions on the proposed Energy Performance Contract, Syosset Park, LIPA properties that qualify for PILOTs and the property tax cap.

Audience to the Public

- Another member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance thanked the Board for posting the audited district financial statements on the website.
- A community resident requested confirmation on the feasibility and the effectiveness of the possible traffic improvements near the high school campus that were discussed earlier in the meeting. Dr. Rogers assured the public that traffic engineers employed by both the District and the Town have reviewed and offered input to the architect's recommendations.
- Multiple parents lauded a proposed change to the Student Health Services policy, as recommended by the Food Allergy Committee, to increase the availability of EpiPens at the schools. Many of the same parents expressed reservations regarding the recommendation to identify reduced-allergen tables in the cafeterias, citing concerns that students might be segregated or

that food allergens might be more widely dispersed. Dr. Rogers pointed out that recommendations in the policy strive for consistency between schools which will inevitably require changes and that the policy's goal is to reduce exposure to allergens at locations that present the greatest risks to affected students. He added that students will not be forced to sit at certain tables and that flexibility exists within the policy that will be further refined through administrative regulations. A Board member asked parents to exercise patience with the policy and assured them that the committee's recommendations represent a framework for administrative guidelines that can be more nimbly tailored/adjusted in the future. Two other Board members affirmed this in their comments.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to appointments, transfers, reassignments, resignations, retirements, district policies, bids received and other financial operations of the district.
- Two Board members commended their colleagues on the Board for taking the lead by developing and approving a policy for transgender students well ahead of the time when all districts in the state will be required to approve similar policies.

Discussion Items

- The Board approved Jean Fichtl of the Franklin Square and Sewanhaka School Districts as its nominee for New York State School Boards Area 11 Director.
- The Board tabled discussion items on parent visitation and high school start times to allow for ample time to discuss these issues at the January meeting.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is Monday, January 11, 2016 at South Woods Middle School, beginning with a budget information meeting at 7:30 p.m. followed by the regular Board of Education meeting at 8:00 p.m.