

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](#).

January 11, 2016 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session and a budget information meeting, the regular public meeting was called to order and the minutes from the December 14, 2015 Board Meeting were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Director of Athletics, Physical Educations and Recreation Drew Cronin highlighted the successes of fall athletes and athletic teams, including News 12 Scholar Athlete Kylie Marlow, All-State/All-LI varsity football player Mike Elardo, All-State Girls Cross-Country runner Reilly Siebert, Nassau Zone Physical Education award winners Kelly Siebert and Josh Thomas, County champion Girls Cross-Country and Boys Cross-Country teams, Conference champion Girls Soccer and Boys Volleyball teams and Sportsmanship award winner Girls Volleyball. Certificates were awarded to the athletes.
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers announced that Syosset High School's KEN Literary and Art Magazine received first-place recognition in the American Scholastic Press Association Contest for the fourth year in a row. He also announced that five high school students were named semifinalists in the Intel Science Talent Search and that they would be honored at a future Board meeting.
- Dr. Rogers informed the community that, as anticipated, the NYS Board of Regents adopted revisions regarding Algebra II Common Core exams. The administration will further review the changes and communicate with parents to discuss how these revisions will be addressed.
- Dr. Rogers also revisited emergency regulations adopted by the Board of Regents regarding implementation of Annual Professional Performance Reviews. He indicated that a guidance document for compliance is forthcoming from the State Education Department. While Syosset and most other districts received a deadline waiver for developing a new APPR plan, all such current plans are inconsistent with the new regulations and a successor agreement must be developed in the near future.
- In providing an update on the Food Allergy Committee and changes to the Student Health Services policy, Dr. Rogers announced that district staff members will begin to receive training to treat students who are accidentally exposed to food allergens. Additional EpiPens will also be stationed around schools over the next several months as the district researches how to ensure they are accessible in an emergency and properly stored. Dr. Rogers reiterated the need to harmonize practices between the schools and that

future discussions will take place regarding health and safety procedures on the buses.

Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance Update: a committee spokesperson reported that at the Jan. 5 meeting Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Patricia Rufo reviewed the process, projects and timetable for an Energy Performance Contract and Dr. Rogers provided an overview of the district's building condition survey and how some future facility needs can be addressed through the EPC. Dr. Rogers and Dr. Rufo also discussed recent shifts of LIPA properties from the assessments rolls to properties eligible to make Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs). They also informed the committee of the near-zero allowable growth factors that impact the tax cap. In closing, Dr. Rogers assured the committee that he is closely monitoring the Syosset Park development and how it could affect the district.

Correspondence

The Board President mentioned several "well thought out" correspondences submitted by community members regarding Unfinished Business discussion items scheduled for the meeting. Prior to opening the floor to the audience, he also clarified how the Board discusses issues and weighs matters thoroughly to ensure that all issues and community concerns are given a full airing in public. Two other Board members concurred with these remarks and one brought attention to the value of committees in helping the Board reach important policy decisions.

Audience to the Public

- A former member of a district committee took issue with a correspondence that recommended limiting individuals who may serve on a committee and insisted that no one sector of the population be excluded from a committee.
- A representative of the Budget Committee and Council of PTAs expressed appreciation for the Board's commitment to children and urged members to maintain student programs unique to Syosset and continue to address health and safety issues in the 2016-17 budget.
- A resident asked how many firms submitted proposals to serve as the district's independent auditor, pertaining to a resolution that was on the agenda. Six firms applied, three were interviewed.
- A contingent of parents from South Grove Elementary School indicated their support for preserving parent Visitation Days, citing how they enjoyed witnessing their children participate in the many great school experiences.
- A Robbins Lane parent asked if the Board had any suggestions on how to address the issue of elementary students being separated from their friends when they move on to middle school (Students advancing from Robbins Lane and South Grove are split between both middle schools upon reaching the sixth grade). Board members said that the issue periodically resurfaces. Dr. Rogers said he has looked into data regarding the enrollment and demographic impact of changing this practice, but data did not suggest compelling reason to change the practice. While one resident suggested a

rezoning of schools, many Board members agreed that such a measure would require extensive discussion and review. One Board member stated that both middle schools do an excellent job transitioning new students. A parent suggested creating more opportunities for elementary students from different schools to connect before reaching the sixth grade.

- Several parents spoke in support of shifting the high school start time to later in the morning, citing negative impacts of early starts such as lack of sleep, and positives to starting later including the potential for morning extra help and group project meetings.
- A resident questioned how the EPC would be funded and if it would be supported through additional taxpayer funds. Dr. Rogers said several funding mechanisms are options but the choice will not be finalized until the scope of work is complete. However, the EPC guarantees a level of savings to cover the cost associated with the energy efficiency projects, and the contractor must make a cash payment to the district to cover any shortfall assuring that it will not increase the tax burden.

Unfinished Business

- Board members discussed the pros and cons of the current practice of Parent Visitation Days. Cons included safety concerns managing so many people, the overcrowding of classrooms, the burden placed on staff, the impact on working parents and the emotional affect these days can have on certain students. One Board member proposed omitting Visitation Days from the calendar. Another Board member supported keeping them, but expressed openness to modifying the current practice. Many Board members spoke in favor of considering a scaled-back version of the practice. Dr. Rogers offered to gather input from every school and prepare a report for the Board.
- The Board also discussed the possibility of moving the high school start time later in the morning. One Board member cited research, student surveys from other school districts and other supporting factors. She moved to form a committee to look at the feasibility of changing to a later start time. The motion was approved. One Board member expressed concern, citing potential conflicts with athletic schedules, BOCES programs, transportation (buses are shared) as well as the impact on staff and faculty and other schools in the district.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to appointments, transfers, awarding of tenure, district policies, settlements and other financial operations of the district.
- The Board tabled approval of the 2016-17 school calendar to consider conducting classes on Nov. 23.

Next Meeting

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