

SYOSSET BOARD MEETING NOTES

Monday, January 12, 2015

PRESENTATIONS:

Superintendent Dr. Thomas Rogers

Dr. Rogers introduced Athletic Director Drew Cronin, who updated the board on recent developments in athletics, including an acknowledgement of all the fall varsity athletics teams who had successful seasons: the varsity football team; the girls and boys cross-country teams; the girls soccer team, the girls tennis team; and the girls swim team. Cronin introduced each team's head coach, who presented certificates to each athlete, some of whom set personal records and earned individual county and state achievements. The athletes shook hands with the board members.

Cronin also apprised the board on his work through the first half of the school year, including teacher and coach evaluations, end-of-season reviews, meeting with coaches at practices and attending athletic events. He also updated the board on the district's physical education program and the success of the new on-line registration option for the recreation program.

Introductory Budget Meeting

Dr. Rogers and Dr. Patricia Rufo conducted the introductory meeting for the 2015-16 budget with a PowerPoint presentation. This is the first of five budget meetings scheduled to take place until the budget vote on May 19, 2015.

This year, the goal is to preserve student opportunities while maintaining fiscal health. Some of the budget issues discussed included major budget drivers including: the tax cap, pension costs and health insurance increases, and the state's technology bond act.

Dr. Rufo stated that this year there will be some relief in the rates paid for Teacher Retirement Services (TRS), but that could be offset by the rise in health insurance and provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

The presentation included a refresher on what the tax cap really means, how it affects the tax levy (which the district controls) and how that levy is allocated to actual tax bills (which the County assessor controls).

Dr. Rufo broke the budget into sections: capital, administrative, program and revenue. The January meeting focused on the capital portion of the budget, which includes custodial services, building maintenance, building security, debt services and interfund transfers. The presentation indicated that in the security section of the capital budget, there could be a significant hike in expenditures as the district looks to upgrade security equipment and increase patrols in response to some incidents.

Future budget presentations will discuss the administrative, program and revenue portions of the upcoming budget.

KEN Magazine

Dr. Rogers took a moment to acknowledge that the Syosset literary magazine, KEN, won first place from the American Scholastic Press Association. This is the second consecutive year KEN has received a first-place recognition. The organization judges student literary magazines on content coverage, organization, design, presentation and creativity.

Presentation on Work-Based Learning Program for Students with Disabilities

Mary-Lou Sapienza, assistant director of pupil personnel, gave a presentation on the Work-Based Learning Program for Students with Disabilities, which exists to provide support for students transitioning out of secondary school and into the workplace or college. Ms. Sapienza also introduced Sue Botta, one of the teachers in the program.

The presentation discussed how work-based learning helps provide a foundation for students to learn their communication and teamwork skills so they can be better prepared to enter the workforce. The class places students in various jobs within the school district; the students transition to other sites such as Applebees and Old Navy as they become ready.

Field-Testing

Dr. Rogers updated last month's discussion on field-testing, a practice the State Education Department uses to develop new questions for future standardized tests. The previous discussion included an option from the state to instead conduct on-line field tests for the national PARCC exam. However, after careful consideration, the district decided to decline pursuing that option because it would not significantly reduce the amount of time consumed by field-testing.

Following up on the Board's directive from its December meeting, Dr. Rogers sent letters urging the State Legislature and Governor to allocate \$8 million in funds to the New York State Education Department that would allow field-test questions to be embedded into standardized tests and eliminate the need for field-testing altogether. Those letters have been sent and can be viewed on the district website under the Board of Education tab of the homepage. The district will update the public on any progress.

Discussion Items:

Trustee Gershon raised the possibility of changing the day of the week on which board meetings are held from the traditional Monday to possibly Thursday. In discussion, Trustee Lafazan indicated the change would be a hardship for him during months when college is in session. Trustee DiFilippo requested an evaluation of the academic calendar to determine what potential conflicts would exist with other committee meeting obligations and sporting events. Dr. Cohen tabled the matter since all current dates are set until June.

Trustee Lafazan asked to discuss attending National School Boards Association conference this March in Nashville, Tennessee. Although the board is finalizing a new policy on national conference attendance generally, they discussed the need to act sooner to obtain favorable hotel and airfare rates, the cost of attendance (approximately \$3,000 per person) and the fiscal constraints of the district. Trustee Lafazan moved to establish funding for this year's conference but limit attendance to three board members. President Cohen seconded and the motion was adopted.

BOARD APPROVED:

- Medical leave of absences for staff
- Approval of staff changes
- Appointment of permanent substitute staff
- Appointment of tutor staff
- Appointment of recreation program employees
- Winter sports coaching recommendations in track and girls basketball (middle school level)
- Additional pay for fall sports coaches that experienced extended seasons due to playoff berths
- Acceptance of the minutes submitted from the Committee on Special Education
- Acceptance of the minutes submitted from the Committee on Preschool Special Education
- Approval of student club charters
- Disposal of broken, surplus and/or obsolete equipment and books
- Authorization for refunding bond of \$2.2 million

END OF NOTES