

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](#).

September 18, 2017 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the minutes from the August 14 and September 3 Board meetings were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Syosset High School Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante introduced the school's eight National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists for the 2017-18 school year. Seniors Nishant Bhaumik, Melinda Blumenstock, Mathew Chvasta, Bradley Greenberg, Nikhil Jhaveri, Grace Kim, Simar Kohli and Wanlin Li were awarded certificates and congratulated by the Board.
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers provided an update on Phase I construction and other school facility projects that took place over the summer. Facility projects completed over the summer include roofing and flooring at Baylis and Berry Hill elementary schools, an emergency second entrance at Walt Whitman Elementary School and the installation of a temporary boiler at Whitman, with a permanent boiler to be installed in October. For Phase I projects: architectural plans are being created to decommission underground storage tanks. Plans are completed and submitted to the State Education Department for new fire alarm systems, security vestibules, corridor wall glazing and interior doors. Dr. Rogers said the average SED approval timeframe is approximately 30 weeks. Once approved, work will take place during evenings, weekends and holiday breaks.
- Phase II projects were also discussed and entail the remaining work identified in the district's building condition survey, a new traffic loop at the high school, air conditioning solutions, renovated high school science rooms, a new weight room at the high school and the relocation and renovation of the main athletic field and track. Dr. Rogers indicated that parent committees and other community groups would be re-engaged in the communication of Phase II plans and public informational/input forums would be held prior to finalizing a proposal for community consideration.
- Prior to the current year, the district annually prepared enrollment projections. These internal projections showed the District's sustained enrollment drop reaching bottom in 2018-19. But when actual enrollment appeared to reach bottom in the 2016-17 school year, an independent consultant was hired to conduct a study, which projected that enrollment would increase gradually then stabilize after a few years. The study did not attempt to project enrollments from any new developments.
- All nine members of the Board wrote in support for a Town-wide proposal to raise the age requirement for purchasing cigarettes.

- Following a request by the Board, Dr. Rogers prepared recommendations for enhancing residency verification procedures, which will be presented to the district's policy committee for consideration.
- Dr. Rogers addressed the investigation into the anti-Semitic graffiti found on the Syosset High School campus in August, stating that the district is working closely with police. We have been asked not to communicate to avoid compromising their active investigation; thus any public updates will come from law enforcement, not the District. Dr. Rogers has been keeping the Board apprised. Dr. Rogers added that school officials had an initial meeting with local clergy and will be inviting other community leaders to join a larger effort in both the schools and the community.

Audience to the Public

- A parent questioned whether recent graffiti defacing Woodbury homes may be connected to the high school incident. Dr. Rogers replied that since those incidents did not affect school properties, the district is not involved in the investigation. The same resident expressed concerns over buses dropping off students later than expected at one elementary school. Dr. Rogers acknowledged that while it is common for buses to experience schedule problems the first few weeks, most issues should be resolved at this point. Therefore, he encouraged the parent to share her specific concerns with administration, so as to enable the District to target its intervention.
- Another parent questioned the calculation of the high school grade point averages (GPA). His proposal is to start every student's GPA as though they scored at the top of a letter grade ("A", "B+", etc.) range rather than the average. This would essentially add 2.5 points to every grade point average. Dr. Cohen pointed out that any change in grading policy could have unintended consequences and cannot be examined in isolation. Mr. Lafazan suggested that the District look at how other districts calculate numeric averages on transcripts and evaluate the impact of the comparison.
- A parent asked about creating a middle school early bus run. Dr. Rogers indicated he was unfamiliar with the particulars and would research and respond to the resident personally.

Discussion Items

- Ms. Cheng moved and Dr. Cohen seconded that the District underwrite the cost of transporting the Rowing Club to and from practices at Center Island. During discussion Dr. Rogers answered several Board questions: Both the rowing club and ice hockey team as clubs that are not recognized by Section VIII as interscholastic athletic teams. Thus, they would have to be recognized by the District as clubs. It would be unclear what the District's liability would be if the supervision of students occurred by someone not in the District's employ for that purpose. It was unknown whether there were any non-resident team members. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen suggested Dr. Rogers research the matter and speak with the directors for the rowing and hockey clubs to gather more information before a decision is made. Ms. Cheng withdrew her motion.
- A few of the 32 legislative items to be voted on by the New York State School Boards Association at its upcoming conference in Lake Placid were discussed by the Board. These items included giving districts a stronger voice in approving payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS) for businesses; fully funding Foundation Aid, thus providing additional

funding to schools, but not necessarily affluent districts; whether to repeal the tax levy cap; and an accelerated process in the case of revoked certifications. Board members shared different opinions on these issues, ultimately expressing support for continuing the cap as a measure of financial controls, and funding the Foundation Aid as a means to benefit students throughout New York State. Ms. Parker asked Dr. Rogers to clarify that the NYSSBA vote on these policies does not bind this Board or individual members from advocating for their own personal positions with fellow elected officials.

- Dr Cohen asked that the administration facilitate the Board's meeting with parents from the Village Elementary School to discuss concerns over disruptive behavior exhibited by Mercy First students in the neighborhood. Dr. Rogers has also been invited to take part in meetings between Mercy First officials and the Nassau Police Department regarding the safety of the immediate neighborhood, though none have taken place yet.
- Mr. Lafazan called for the installation of surveillance cameras at district schools in light of the recent graffiti incident. Dr. Cohen said while the district has made great improvements in the past several years regarding safety and security, it should be open to considering further enhancements. Mr. Lafazan proposed reviewing the district's character education program. Dr. Rogers asked Deputy Superintendent Adele Bovard to share her summary of the many major existing initiatives at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Dr. Cohen recognized the District's extensive efforts but asked the administration to gather information from all district schools and compile a report on all current character education programs and opportunities for enhancement.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to appointments of coaches, coordinators and staff, staff changes, event judges, and tutors; service providers and the approval of service contracts, committee meetings and minutes, cooperative bidding and purchasing agreements, and other financial operations of the district.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, October 16, 2017 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.