

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 22, 2018 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session and a meeting of the audit committee, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Board approved the minutes from the December 11 meeting. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation Drew Cronin introduced the fall championship athletes and coaches: county champion girls varsity cross-country team, including individual county champion Reilly Seibert; boys varsity soccer county player of the year Clifford Emmerich and boys varsity soccer coach of the year Brett Waxer; boys varsity cross-country state qualifier Justin Depinto; and Nassau zone winners for outstanding physical education and character Jacquelin Tang and Matthew Conforti.
- Baylis School library media specialist Kelly Fokianos and Berry Hill School library media specialist Brandi Jerabek gave a presentation on KidOYO, an online coding program used in grades 2-5 under the guidance of elementary library media specialists. KidOYO teaches young students different coding languages to create projects of interests at their own pace. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers highlighted the benefits of the platform since it allows children to learn algorithmic thinking skills at an early age by using block coding before moving to more sophisticated coding languages.
- Dr. Rogers updated the Board on the District's ongoing research regarding changing high school start times as a strategy to mitigate adolescent sleep deprivation. The District has held two public forums and surveyed both students and teachers regarding the volume of homework. Dr. Rogers said that any change to high school start times would either require significant additional transportation expenditures or adjustments to start times at the elementary and middle school levels. The Board did not make a decision about making any changes, but asked for a timeline of milestones and decision points that would be necessary for the Board to consider in order to have a more complete discussion about changing start times for the 2019-2020 school year. The administration offered to perform further research into similar schools that have changed start times, and reengage the public to provide greater input.
- Carrie-Ann Tondo, Esq. attorney with the District's law firm, Ingerman Smith, reported on the District's research into the Syosset Park mixed-use plan for the former Cerro Wire property and Town of Oyster Bay landfill. Areas of focus included: projected enrollment (the District's independent projections are somewhat higher than those estimated by the developer); potential facility needs (the District determined additional space would be needed at the elementary level to accommodate the increased student

population); and the potential financial impact additional students would have on the District (including how the tax cap and potential granting of PILOT status would affect or limit the associated growth in the tax base). The District plans to review the developer's Draft Environmental Impact Statement once it has been filed with the Town of Oyster Bay.

- Dr. Rogers indicated that bids were scheduled to be opened on Jan. 25 for new security services. Criteria will include increased law enforcement experience for security personnel. The District is also finalizing a bid for upgraded hardware for its surveillance monitoring system. Over the past few years, the District has made a significant investment in upgrading its surveillance infrastructure.
- Dr. Rogers provided a slightly updated version of the tentative 2018-19 academic year calendar presented at the December meeting. The only change involved moving staff development dates in August. The Board later adopted this version of the calendar during the business portion of the meeting. Dr. Rogers also noted that school will be in session on Thursday, May 24, 2017 as a result of the two inclement weather days used for the January 4 snowstorm.
- Following up on an inquiry from Trustee Christopher Di Filippo regarding the use of a \$250,000 legislative grant awarded through Assemblyman Charles Levine's office, Dr. Rogers concluded that this funding could be applied towards renovating the high school science research rooms. This would help defraying some of the costs to taxpayers proposed through Proposition #1 of the Phase II Facilities Improvement initiative. He confirmed that the research rooms are the only projects proposed that met the criteria for this grant.
- Dr. Rogers announced that the District is nearing completion on converting its financial management software system. The new system will allow greater control over staffing and overtime costs. He thanked Deputy Superintendent Adele Bovard, Assistant Superintendent Patricia Rufo and Assistant to the Superintendent Joanne Mannion for leading the transition.
- Dr. Rogers responded to two questions from the December meeting regarding existing window air conditioning units being replaced under Proposition #1 of the Facilities Improvement initiative. A resident suggested temporarily repurposing working units to other District schools as they are replaced by newer units, however Dr. Rogers indicated that the schools do not presently have the electrical capacity to accommodate adding older units as an interim step. In response to Vice President Tracy Frankel's suggestion of donating the older units to a worthwhile cause, Dr. Rogers said that the District is not permitted to donate the equipment, but is permitted to auction it. He also noted that the architects believe the efficiency of the newer units would likely offset the electrical costs of having more classroom coverage.
- In response to an earlier letter authored by the Board of Education, representatives from the Nassau County Board of Elections toured District school properties with administration in an attempt to mitigate the impact of voting conducted on school properties.
- The District is launching a social media campaign to follow and share information about the Feb. 13 Facilities Improvement vote. The Twitter handle is @SyoPhase2Vote.

- Dr. Rogers informed the audience about a Nassau BOCES vote on Feb. 8 that would allow BOCES to purchase the Jerusalem Ave. School currently leased to BOCES by the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District. If Nassau voters approve the purchase, BOCES' annual \$1.4 million lease payment to Bellmore-Merrick would be eliminated. This is a cost shared by all 56 Nassau school Districts. Syosset residents may vote at any Nassau BOCES instructional facility, including the Long Island High School for the Arts in Syosset.
- Dr. Rogers acknowledged the conclusion to the investigation of the vandalism at Syosset High School. The District has met with community members, staff and leaders of different tolerance education organizations to share ideas on what can be done in the aftermath to, as Dr. Rogers put it, "learn, grow, and heal" from the incident.

Report from the Spokesperson of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance

- A representative from the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance reported on the committee's Dec. 14 meeting. The committee discussed enrollment and staff changes in the District; use of the legislative grant through Assemblyman Lavine's office; the Feb. 13 Facilities Improvement propositions and vote, including the timely retirement of old debt; as well as the budget and FOIL processes. The committee is scheduled to meet next on Jan. 24.

Audience to the Public

- A resident inquired about the possibility of the District purchasing flexible/adjustable furniture for classroom use by students. Dr. Rogers said the District is already looking at different brands and types of said furniture. Deputy Superintendent Bovard said ideas are being piloted and the District expects to invest in this type of furniture in the future.
- A parent asked if the District was considering contracting with a new bus company as it researches a possible school start time change at the high school. Dr. Rogers said that the State permits school Districts to renew bus contracts at a state-determined inflation rate, and Districts typically avail themselves of this option to avoid the potential of all bids coming in higher than the state inflation rate. He also said that it would be very challenging for the District to own, store, and maintain its own fleet of buses. The District continues to explore new technologies available to improve student transportation on buses and will review the terms of its existing contract and the current bus routes. The parent also expressed a concern about her own child's lengthy bus route, which Dr. Rogers said the District would investigate.
- A parent offered suggestions on multiple topics including elementary science facilities, the honors math program at the high school and the District policy regarding tutors. Dr. Rogers said the District will be announcing a new science curriculum shortly which will drive the development of elementary facilities for science instruction. The math department continually works to improve the respective curricula.

Discussion Items

- The Board discussed options to address the vacancy created by the resignation of former Trustee Josh Lafazan occasioned by his election to the Nassau County Legislature. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen outlined the options, including the cost impact of holding a special election (estimated at \$30,000-\$40,000) to temporarily fill the seat until the regular May election. Given the estimated cost of holding such an election, and the brevity of the term, the Board unanimously decided to leave the seat vacant until the May election when the balance of the term would be filled by the highest vote-getter in the May Board election.
- The Board discussed the District's liability in relation to Booster Club sponsored activities taking place on school grounds. They cited a recent tragedy in Sachem involving an off-season football clinic. Dr. Cohen had asked Dr. Rogers to review the District liability as it relates to similar outside sanctioned activities taking place on District properties. Both the District's insurance carrier and school attorney indicated that it was unavoidable to be named in liability lawsuits, but that the District's insurance covers community use of facilities. Nevertheless, Dr. Rogers mentioned that the District has identified some process improvements that can tighten up procedures employed when outside organizations use District facilities.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to appointments, transfers, reassignments, resignations and retirements.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to the management of the school District, including committee appointments, meetings minutes; student club charters; and the revised calendar for the 2018-19 academic year.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to purchasing such as bids received, as well as other financial operations of the school District, including service contracts.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, February 12, 2018 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m. A Budget Information meeting will be held at 7:45 p.m. (same location). There will also be a special School District Meeting in conjunction with the Districtwide community Facilities Improvement Vote on Tuesday, February 13, 2018 to formally accept the results of the vote.