

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](#).

### **June 11, 2018 Board of Education Meeting**

After an executive session and the Pledge of Allegiance, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. The minutes from the May 7, May 9 and May 15 meetings were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Oath of Office was administered to newly elected Board of Education Trustee Chris Ulrich

#### *The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items*

- South Woods Middle School student government representatives Jillian Hooey and Julia Zheng gave a report on student activities that have led to the school's recent "No Place for Hate" designation by the Anti-Defamation League. The program is designed to create inclusive school communities by promoting unity and respect, and empowering schools to reduce bullying and expressions of bias. Students signed a Resolution of Respect, created their own 'Blueprints for Life' in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his famous "What's Your Life's Blueprint" speech, and experienced the South Woods as One interactive museum created by the school's Action, Acceptance & Awareness Club in celebration of diversity, human rights, acceptance and cultural awareness.
- Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation Drew Cronin highlighted Syosset High School's championship teams and individual athletic accomplishments: Teams honored were the Varsity Boys Tennis team (Nassau County and Long Island champions); the Varsity Girls Golf team (Nassau County and Long Island champions); and the Varsity Boys Spring Track team (Nassau County champions). The Boys Lacrosse team also finished as runner-up in the County championship game. Individual honorees were: Varsity Boys Lacrosse team members Daniel Ochs (All-American, Nassau County Defenseman of the Year) and Maxwell Verch (All-American, Nassau Long Pole Midfielder of the Year); Varsity Girls Lacrosse team members Amanda Alejo (Academic All-American) and Taylyn Stadler (All-American); Varsity Girls Spring Track team member Reilly Siebert (All-American, County champion, State qualifier); Varsity Boys Tennis team members Eli Grossman (All-State, County champion, All-LI), Preet Rajpal (All-State, County champion, All-LI), Zachary Chan (All-State, County champion) and Justin Oresky (All-State, County champion); Varsity Boys Spring Track members Justin DePinto (State qualifier), Andrew Lafferty (State qualifier), Hunter Pick (State qualifier) and Ross Reddock (State qualifier); and Varsity Girls Golf member Malini Rudra (LI Player of the Year, County Champion, All-State). Girls Varsity Golf coach Steve Naranjo was also named Coach of the Year.
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers congratulated the Syosset Council of PTAs for winning the 2018 Jan Harp Domene Award for Diversity and Inclusion from the

National Parent Teacher Association in recognition for their work to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion in the Syosset School District community.

- Dr. Rogers reported that recent testing for radon performed at South Grove over the Memorial Day weekend indicated levels to be below the action threshold set by the EPA. He also indicated that soil testing on the site will commence shortly, beginning with vapor testing as the school year comes to a close, followed by soil testing after school is adjourned for the summer.
- Dr. Rogers also announced that a timeline for capital construction projects is being posted online to allow interested residents to track the progress of projects in Phases I and II of the Districtwide facilities improvement initiative.
- In accordance with the District's ongoing research into benefits of delaying school start times and the logistical/operational challenges such a shift would cause, Dr. Rogers proposed the engagement of a consultant to the Board to conduct a study and present options to the District over the next several months.
- As part of an updated residency policy, all fifth- and eighth-graders advancing to middle school or high school, respectively, will now be required to re-register. Dr. Rogers indicated that the process will be streamlined in a fashion similar to the current online Kindergarten registration system, where most of the work can be done online to re-register. However, in-person appointments will still need to be made with the Registrar to provide original documentation to confirm residency.
- Dr. Rogers talked about the Smart Schools Bond from November 2014; The District had planned to use those monies for the vestibules but may need to redirect the money for something else, because Albany still has not approved of the plan after 12 month State approval process.
- Dr. Rogers discussed challenges with the state approval process. It takes approximately 42 weeks for the State to approve proposed work to be done to the District schools. Dr. Rogers continued to explain that it is often necessary to do asbestos abatement, which can further delay jobs as schools need to be vacant for several days to perform the work.
- Dr. Rogers provided a comprehensive update of the District's recent security initiatives, encompassing Phase I, Phase II, and District-funded facilities projects, as well as staffing, procedural and student support enhancements.
  - Facilities projects reviewed include: security vestibule construction; enclosing open-air walkways at Syosset High School and South Grove Elementary School; upgrading classroom doors and locks to the latest State specifications; new wireless door locking hardware for automated locking control; replacing glass corridor walls with security- and fire-rated wall material; replacing aging alarm panels; access card reader installation on exterior doors; door ajar monitoring

systems; new surveillance system infrastructure along with the addition of 136 new cameras; perimeter fencing; wayfinding maps for first responders; segregation of SHS gym and auditorium spaces for after-hours events; outdoor signaling systems to indicate emergency situations; installation of air-conditioning to eliminate the need for window units and/or open windows; and construction of an outdoor bathroom facility near the new stadium to allow the high school to remain locked during athletic events.

- Staffing updates include: the addition of a Director of Security with 28 years NYPD experience and training in active shooter response; doubling the number of security guards from 17 to 34; adding an evening security shift at SHS; replacing Summit Security with Wisdom Security; requiring guards to have a law enforcement background; and the addition of a psychologist and a social worker for the 2018-2019 school year.
  - Procedural improvements include: enhanced coordination with the Nassau County Police Department including implementation of the RAVE panic button app and police access to District surveillance cameras in the event of an active emergency; new visitor protocols requiring government-issued IDs, appointments and escorts for all visitors; an electronic visitor management system that scans IDs against sex offender and District databases; chip-enabled staff badges; and student ID badges enabled with ScholarChip technology to track attendance.
  - Dr. Rogers also shared research on the feasibility of social media monitoring, metal detectors, and armed school safety personnel. (Note: News 12 erroneously reported that the District had adopted a proposal to implement metal detectors.) Dr. Rogers spoke about the Homeland Security Officer who has been assigned to Syosset, and that there will be High School badges in the fall for entrance to the school and classes. He also said that drills will be planned to occur during inconvenient times. Audience members appreciated the recommendation to give suggestions.
- Board Trustee Chris DiFilippo inquired about the material of the current interior doors and if it is possible to retrofit the doors with bullet-resistant material. Dr. Rogers explained there are two types of bullet-resistant material: film, which will keep the glass from shattering but will not stop a bullet from penetrating; and ballistic-rated glass, which is extremely expensive and not typically used in schools according to our architect. Dr. Rogers said he would follow up with the Executive Director of Operations on the door material. Mr. DiFilippo also asked about using the planned weight room building as a shelter site should students need to remain in a safe location for a period of time. Dr. Rogers confirmed this location was designed to be used in this capacity.
  - Board Vice President Tracy Frankel inquired about why the NCPD's plan to have patrol officers visit schools more often only included one visit per shift. Dr. Rogers replied that he cannot speak for the NCPD but is appreciative that this is a significant enhancement in police presence on campuses.
  - Board Trustee Susan Parker inquired about the new electronic visitor management system and asked how the procedures would be applied to after-school hours and evening events. Dr. Rogers replied that the District is in the process of working with its

security consultants to research best practices and that these procedures would be subject to fine-tuning refinement once in place.

- Board Trustee Andrew Feldman inquired if air conditioning and/or exhaust systems are planned for the middle school gym as well as the high school. Dr. Rogers replied that the middle school gyms were not included in the plan for air conditioning, but rather will be cooled by fans. Mr. Feldman also inquired if the outdoor bathroom facility to be built will be adequate for athletic events or if visitors will have access to the new weight room. Dr. Rogers replied that the outdoor bathroom facility should be sufficient for events. However, for very large events, if the outdoor facility is inadequate, the weight room could be used as it will have the ability to be segregated from the rest of the high school.
- Board Trustee Rob Gershon inquired about the effect metal detectors might have on school start times. Dr. Rogers replied that students can move through the detectors efficiently if they are not set off, but if a student fails the first screening (forgot to remove keys, cell phones, etc. from pockets), it slows the process down significantly. Realistically, an average of 4-5 students per minute would be able to pass through the detectors. The high school student population would require at least eight detectors and even then, lines would form.
- Board Trustee Susan Parker inquired how backpacks and metal items are scanned, such as keys and cell phones. Dr. Rogers replied that school districts typically do not use X-ray machines, therefore it would be a visual inspection, similar to entering a concert.
- Board Trustee Anna Levitan inquired what the responsibilities of the added school psychologist are and what building he/she will be located at. Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Service Dr. Joseph LaMelza replied that the added position is at the secondary level at the high school and at HBT, and will aid in the development of the overall plan to monitor students for positive behavioral intervention as well as support a systematic approach to address mental wellness.
- Board Vice President Tracy Frankel inquired if metal detectors were evaluated for the high school only. Dr. Rogers replied that the administration conducted its initial research to give the Board an estimate of cost and an example of how it might be implemented. Should the Board wish to include all schools, the estimate would be scaled up accordingly. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen asked that all schools be included in the evaluation.
- Board Trustee Chris DiFilippo asked if the District could test the metal detectors or run a pilot prior to investing in the full amount of machines needed. He also stated his preference that the metal detectors be operational during after-school hours. Dr. Rogers replied that it is possible to visit other schools with metal detectors installed to observe their process. In addition, he pointed out no technology is foolproof and should instead be viewed as a risk reduction initiative.
- Board Trustee Carol Cheng agreed the District should observe schools where metal detectors are being used, particularly during student arrival and after-school hours.
- Board Trustee Chris Ulrich inquired if there has been an analysis of the location of the metal detectors. Dr. Rogers replied that should the Board decide to proceed with further analysis, the District would employ our architects to determine the best layout, taking safety regulations for emergency egress into consideration. Mr. Ulrich also asked if there will be an operator verifying students' identity as they swipe their IDs through

the attendance kiosk. Dr. Rogers confirmed all kiosks would have to have an operator verifying the student's picture as they swipe through to confirm the student is in fact using their own ID.

#### *Audience to the Public*

- Residents expressed various opinions on school safety. A parent who conducted a survey of some residents advocated for more parental, teacher and police involvement on District security initiatives. The parent also suggested the District pursue additional bullying prevention training for bus, lunch and playground monitors, some type of social media monitoring and an anonymous tip line, and different lockdown procedures.
- A student recommended that students have the opportunity to provide input into District safety planning and suggested that some students currently feel unsafe at the high school and would appreciate more communication from Administration.
- One parent endorsed the hiring of trained armed security personnel while another expressed that she didn't support armed guards and would prefer the use of metal detectors. Another parent expressed support for asking teaching staff to carry a concealed weapon.
- A resident requested a more direct name or department in the County or at State level to whom residents may write advocacy letters.
- Some parents requested more public involvement in the security initiatives taking place. A parent advocated for the formation of a committee in which community members participate and that is open to the public.
- Some parents suggested that hiring additional psychologists and social workers was a more effective use of funds than other facility-related measures, in order to address bullying and student mental health concerns that could lead to in-school violence. A parent requested an investigation of adding bullying prevention to the curriculum.
- A resident who has lived in the District for 50 years said that the community is the safest it has been in 50 years, and that the District needs to continue early detection for bullying and student mental health concerns that could lead to in-school violence.
- One resident said the District should be more proactive in communicating its security initiatives on a regular basis.
- One parent thanked the Board for expressing opposition to the Syosset Park development and urged the Board to advocate for an extension of the July 31<sup>st</sup> comment period deadline, to allow more time for the new environmental consultant who will replace H2M to conduct an evaluation.

#### *Discussion Items*

- Board of Education President Dr. Michael Cohen said the District would seek direction on the use of metal detectors from its new Director of Security and security consultant. Vice President Tracy Frankel said any consideration given to the use of metal detectors should be factored in to the District's study into new school start times and how metal detector use might impact start/delay start times.

- The Board discussed the practice of hiring retired law enforcement personnel as school security staff as it pertains to compensation and limitations placed on their earnings as retirees.
- The Board approved the formation of an Advisory Committee on Security and said that the format of the committee would be determined at a future date.
- The Board also discussed how to lengthen the absentee ballot process for residents voting out of town/state on the annual school budget and Board of Education election. At the advice of counsel, the District normally mails out absentee ballots immediately following the deadline for Board candidacy withdrawal. Dr. Rogers said he would speak to the attorney about the possibility of moving up the absentee ballot mailing date.

#### *New Business*

- Various resolutions were approved relating to compensation, staff appointments and assignments, and leaves of absence.
- An amended Benefit Trust Fund Agreement between the Syosset School District and the Syosset Teachers Association was approved. A separate Side Letter Agreement between the District and the CSEA was also approved.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to the management of the District, including committee meeting minutes, policies, student club charters, the appointment of Board of Registration members for the 2018-19 school year, the establishment of a Districtwide Safety Team and the certification of the May 15 budget vote and trustee election results.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to financial operations of the District, including the issuance of Tax Anticipation Notes, limits to the allotment of reserve funds, agreements, service contracts, cooperative bidding, the disposal of obsolete equipment and books and the acceptance/rejection of bids and service contracts. Among these were the acceptance of rebids on school door hardware (Districtwide) and roof replacement projects at Robbins Lane Elementary School and Harry B. Thompson Middle School.

#### *Next Meeting*

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Tuesday, July 10, 2018 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.