

Dear valued Region 14 members,

In an effort to increase transparency between the Region 14 Board of Education and members of the public, and to counter rumors and speculation, this is the first of a regular newsletter from the Board. The newsletter will contain current news and clarify information sought by members of the public.

### 1. **March 5th District Meeting:**

- **Two BOE vacancies opened in early February with the resignation of two long-serving members.** Former Chair Janet Morgan of Woodbury stepped down for reasons of family health and Vice Chair Pam Zmek stepped down citing “differences with current administration”. We see these two members off with gratitude and appreciation for their many years of public service.
- BOE vacancies are to be filled within 30 days at a scheduled district meeting. Both the nominations for candidacy and the voting will take place on **Friday March 5<sup>th</sup> starting at 6pm at the Mitchell Elementary School**, 14 School Street, Woodbury.
- Woodbury and Bethlehem voters will each choose one person to fill two vacancies on the eight-person board. Because of health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, **the March 5th nominations and brief statements by candidates can take place either in-person or via Zoom**, using the link <https://ctreg14-org.zoom.us/j/93662549977> (meeting ID 936 6254 9977, phone (646) 558-8656).
- **Voting will take place in-person only at the MES school gymnasium.** Polls will close two hours after the final nomination. Due to covid-19 restrictions, only 100 individuals will be allowed in the voting area at any time. Masks and social distancing are mandatory.

### 2. **Return to full-day School:**

A meeting between the interim superintendent and members of the Region 14 administrative team is scheduled this Wednesday, February 24, with the only item on the agenda being the return of Region 14 students to a full school day.

### 3. **Interim Superintendent:**

After two back-to-back closed sessions totaling nearly seven hours, the Region 14 Board of Education moved unanimously on February 18th to place Superintendent Joseph Olzacki on paid administrative leave. While the Superintendent of Schools is on paid leave to allow for a performance investigation, the Board has named Mr. Wayne McAllister, Region 14 retired Director of Finance, as the interim superintendent of schools. Mr. McAllister will be compensated at the hourly rate of \$37.50, totaling a weekly rate of \$1,500.

#### **4. Sports-related news:**

- Moving forward two parent/guardian spectators will be allowed during the home basketball games.
- NHS Gymnastics and swim teams are currently working on a return to play.

#### **5. Region-14 staffing:**

The Board of Education is tasked with hiring the Superintendent of Schools for Region 14, assessing the performance of the superintendent, passing the annual budget and overseeing that the region's policies and mission are upheld and followed. BOE members do not get involved in the district's daily operations, including decisions related to staffing. That being said, it is important to understand that both the budget and binding union contracts guide staffing decisions.

#### **6. COVID officer:**

The position of district COVID officer is mandated by the state at this time. A state grant that paid for Mr. Harutunian's tenure as COVID officer has ended a few weeks ago. Since the district is looking to mitigate the pay for this position, the responsibilities of COVID officer will be reviewed and filled in-district. We thank Mr. Harutunian for his long hours and dedicated service in keeping our schools COVID safe.

#### **7. Free Lunches:**

Due to COVID-19 regulations school lunches are now federally-funded and are available to all students, free of charge.

#### **8. Budget season:**

This year, additional strain is placed on the district's budget due to COVID-19-related expenses as well as a scheduled 3.25% increase in teacher's salaries and added special-education costs. Please look out for more information regarding this important topic.

As always, we welcome your input, your questions and your suggestions.

Please stay safe, stay warm and stay positive,

Members, Region 14 Board of Education

George Bauer, James Crocker, Jonathan Kapstein, Michael Devine, Carol Ann Brown and Tikva Rose