



**Hastings-on-Hudson  
Regular Board of Education Meeting  
Tuesday, November 7, 2023**

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**Members present**

Silvia Robles  
Alexander Dal Piaz  
Damaris-Lois Lang  
Jodie Meyer  
Theresa McCaffrey

**1. OPENING OF MEETING**

A. [Call to Order](#)

- Meeting called to order at 6:06 PM

**2. OLD BUSINESS**

A. [Volunteer Fire Fighter Exemption](#)

- Alex Dal Piaz provided background on a law passed in New York State last year, offering partial tax exemptions for volunteer firefighters and ambulance corps. He highlighted the decline in volunteer numbers over the past 20 years and the increased call volume.
- Maureen Caraballo presented a memo outlining the details of the tax exemption, emphasizing its minimal financial impact. The proposal included criteria such as a minimum service requirement of two years and considerations for lifetime exemptions. Currently, 29 members in the village receive this credit, with an anticipated growth in numbers.
- Alex Dal Piaz emphasized the fortunate robust participation in the community compared to others in New York State facing challenges in volunteer recruitment. Maureen Caraballo added that the school district heavily relies on the fire and ambulance services.
- Dr. Lang expressed support, seeking clarification on the passing of exemptions to family members. Maureen Caraballo clarified the criteria, including passing it to a spouse only if the volunteer dies in the line of duty.
- Jodie Meyer expressed pride in supporting community members and asked if the proposed 10% cap on exemptions was the maximum allowed. Maureen Caraballo confirmed the cap as per the state.
- Alex Dal Piaz invited Chief Brian Schnibbe and ex-Chief Jim Safarty to provide additional insights. Brian Schnibbe emphasized the volunteer nature of the fire department, its annual call volume, and the positive relationship with the school. Jim Safarty highlighted the importance of the legislation for recruitment and retention in the face of declining volunteer numbers statewide.
- The board expressed appreciation for the volunteers' dedication and support for the proposed tax exemption. The Board plans to bring the proposal to a public hearing on December 19 for further discussion and adoption.

**3. REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT**

A. [Update & District Highlights](#)

- Dr. McKersie shared highlights from his three-day visit to Bronxville. He highlighted their 10-year-old Bronxville Promise and emphasized the importance of clear visibility and faculty ownership. He also mentioned a personal reflection on Veterans Day to be shared on Thursday, emphasizing the importance of honoring veterans and finding commonality in times of difference.

[Click here to view Superintendent Report](#)

**4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

A. [Report from Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction](#)

- Dr. Szymanski provided an update on discussions about the war, which are actively taking place in all middle and high school social studies classes. Topics of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are being explored in middle school Courageous Conversations classes. Jenice is meeting with elementary school teachers to help create Spark lessons on religious bias. Additionally, Dr. Szymanski updated the board on the use of ARP Esser funding received a couple of years ago, highlighting its allocation for universal screeners (Star Renaissance and Panorama), the DEI coordinator role, and our math interventionist position. Approximately \$125,000 remains to be spent this year.

### **POHL: Authentic Learning (SS Curriculum Inquiry)**

Melissa Szymanski met with Greg Smith, SS Department Chairperson, to continue planning for the upcoming social studies inquiry work. In alignment with the POHL goal of amplifying authentic learning opportunities, this work will begin with a look at what the department is already doing well in the area of authentic learning as related to the social studies practices. The faculty will be taking an appreciative inquiry approach, highlighting exemplary areas of practice, celebrating the tasks and pedagogical approaches that led to student success, and using them as a springboard for enhancement. The department would like to consider the role of AI in student learning and assignments.

Melissa also met with Amy Cazes and a social studies inquiry team at the elementary level. Rather than entering through the lens of the practice standards, the entry point for enhancing authentic learning at the elementary school will be the social studies content standards. This differentiated approach makes good sense, given that content is typically the focus at the secondary level while practices are typically the focus at the primary level.

The inquiry work is scheduled to begin November 27.

### **POHL: Restorative Practices**

Kamillah Dawkins, Jenice Mateo-Toledo, Peter Scotch, the building principals, and Melissa Szymanski met to finalize the professional learning plan for our first cohort of Restorative Practices instructional leaders. While professional learning around facilitating restorative circles will take place with Duke Fisher, Kamillah and Jenice will be facilitating pre-session work using the anchor text Better than Carrots or Sticks to prime the faculty with "look fors" specific to what to do, how to do it, and why it is important.

### **Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia**

The war is actively being discussed in all middle school and high school social studies classes, though to varying degrees. The topics of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are being explored within middle school Courageous Conversations classes. Jenice Mateo-Toledo is meeting with elementary school teachers to create Sparks lessons focused on religious bias.

### **Gender Work**

Center Lane will be working with Hillside elementary school over the course of 5 sessions starting in late November. This work will be focused on revising lessons and planning for a presentation to parents. The middle school and high school are in the process of finalizing their professional learning in this area. Once the planning for all three buildings has been finalized, there will be a presentation to the Board of Education.

### **NYSED Desk Monitoring Review**

Hastings was chosen for a Desk Monitoring Review by NYSED related to our ARP ESSER funding. While this audit will not take place until March, we began the process of gathering evidence this week due to the amount of evidence that we are required to provide to the State in order to demonstrate compliance with the indicators.

### **ARP ESSER Funding**

In accordance with our ARP ESSER plan, funding has been used for Universal Screeners (STAR Renaissance and Panorama), the DEI Coordinator role, and our math interventionist position. This grant runs through September 2024. We have approximately \$125,000 remaining to spend this year and we intend to use this funding for the same purposes. We wanted to provide the opportunity invite any questions or comments from the Board and/or the public.

- Maureen Caraballo provided two updates. Firstly, the solar installation on the buildings is scheduled to begin on December 1. Notifications will be sent out to inform people about potential construction activities, and regular updates on the schedule and completion will be provided to the board. Secondly, she announced the Annual Senior Citizens Dinner on December 13, coinciding with the winter concert dress rehearsal. Board members are invited to attend, and the event, including a show and holiday dinner, is a well-attended and popular tradition in the community.

## 5. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. Public Comment
- No public comment

## 6. BUSINESS

### A. [Business Items](#)

1. Richard Smith, Piano Tuning services for the District, invoice.
2. Amanda Morrill, Drumming services for the 7/8th grade production of GODSPELL in 2023, invoice.
3. Andrew Viverito, Bass playing services for the 7/8th grade production of GODSPELL in 2023, invoice.
4. Mike Rubino, Guitar services for the 7/8th grade production of GODSPELL in 2023, invoice.
5. Learning Laboratories, Restorative Practices Professional Development, invoice.
6. Tax Certiorari Settlements - Denham for the Assessment year 2022 and Kezema for the Assessment years 2019-2021.
7. Budget Calendar.
8. Warrants.
9. Donation to accept two Forza Soccer Target Practice/Training Nets from Peter Brower.
10. Academy Bus Co., Athletic and Field Trips transportation contract.
11. Academy Bus Co., Regular and Special Education Pupils transportation contract.
12. Approve the use of tax certiorari reserve to increase budget in the amount of \$8,426.85.

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the business items.

Motion by Jodie Meyer, second by Theresa McCaffrey.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

### B. [Placement and/or Services for CSE and CPSE](#)

RESOLVED, that upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Education, the Board accepts the classifications and arrangements for the placement and/or services for the 2023-2024 school year:

CSE: 12105, 10590, 12427, 11350

CPSE: 12607

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Special Education, the Board of Education accepts the classifications and arrangements for the placement and/or services.

Motion by Damaris-Lois Lang, second by Jodie Meyer.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

## 7. PERSONNEL (CONSENT AGENDA)

#### A. [Approve Consent Agenda](#)

Resolution: RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 7B through 7E as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 7B through 7E as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Theresa McCaffrey.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

#### B. Appointments

1. Alyssa Winter, appoint to Per Diem substitute teacher district wide effective November 8, 2023 for the 2023-2024 school year.
2. Amiah Washington, appoint to Student Observer at Hillside Elementary School and Farragut Middle School during the month of November, 2023.
3. Schedule B appointment requests as per attached spreadsheet. ([Enc](#))
4. Martha Polstein, Special Education teacher at Farragut Middle School, appoint to additional .2 Special Education Reading Instruction teacher at Farragut Middle School effective November 8, 2023 for the 2023-2024 school year.
5. Alise Brkich, appoint to position of part-time School Monitor effective October 26, 2023.
6. CSEA Auxilliary Personnel, recommendation to appoint the following as School Website Coordinator for the 2023-2024 school year:  
Jessica Greco - Hillside Elementary School  
Michele Avila - Farragut Middle School  
Alison O'Leary - Hastings High School
7. CSEA Auxiliary Personnel, recommendation to appoint the following as District Website Coordinator for the 2023-2024 school year:  
Adriana Beaudreault  
Melissa DeLaBarrera
8. Denia Freiberg, returning per diem substitute teacher, re-appoint effective November 13, 2023 for the 2023-2024 school year.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the appointments.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 7B through 7E as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Theresa McCaffrey.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

#### C. Amendment

1. Anthony Scioscia, amend Regular Substitute appointment date at Farragut Middle School as follows: September 18, 2023-October 31, 2023.
2. Geoffrey Terilli, amend appointment from Column I to Column II, Step 8, effective November 8, 2023.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the amendments.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 7B through 7E as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Theresa McCaffrey.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

#### D. Resignations

1. Anne Kennedy, School Monitor at Farragut Middle School has provided notice of resignation effective October 27, 2023.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accept the resignations.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 7B through 7E as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Theresa McCaffrey.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

#### E. Leave of Absence

April Browne, Visual Arts teacher at Hastings High School has requested a leave of absence as follows: FMLA with pay October 10, 2023-November 20, 2023. FMLA without pay November 21, 2023-January 1, 2024, Parental leave without pay January 2, 2024-January 31, 2024. She will return to work on February 1, 2024.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the following leaves of absence.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 7B through 7E as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Theresa McCaffrey.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

## 8. MINUTES

### A. [Approval of Minutes](#)

1. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of October 24, 2023.

RESOLVED that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of October 24, 2023.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

## 9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. [Facilities](#)

- Maureen Caraballo provided an update on the facilities committee's progress. The focus is on phase one of the plan, including the Hillside boiler, maintenance projects, and consideration for a building addition. The architects and engineers are refining details and estimating costs. There's a shift in the timeline, with a potential bond vote in April rather than February. The athletic director discussed the turf field project, and community input will be actively sought. Cost estimation will be rigorously addressed, and there may be opportunities to use other reserves for certain aspects. Specifics about costs for classroom build-outs and special education spaces will be discussed in detail during future facility committee deliberations.

### B. [Policy](#)

- The policy committee provided an update of their last committee meeting wherein they discussed the district code of conduct and identified areas for improvement. One significant concern was the definition of race, which members felt needed refinement. Additionally, inconsistencies were noted between the list of definitions and the rest of the document, requiring a correction and a subsequent public hearing. The discussion also touched on restorative practices, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach throughout the document and avoiding potential political implications. The committee clarified that while adjustments are necessary, they are not major changes, and the fundamental discipline guide remains intact. The revised code of conduct will go through the policy committee before returning for a public hearing and board vote.

## 10. POLICIES

A. [First Read](#)

Policies for First Read:

- Policy 6710 - Purchasing Authority

**11. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT**

A. Second Public Comment

- No public comment

**12. AGENDA REVIEW**

A. [Agenda Review](#)

- November 20th
  - Budget Work Session
- December 5th
  - Update on the 2024-25 School Calendar
- December 19th
  - Firefighter Exemption Public Hearing

**13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS**

A. [Comments](#)

- Dr. Lang asked how responsive the school calendar will be to cultural or religious observances. Dr. McKersie noted the plans to begin introduce the draft calendar in December. He mentioned the importance of community feedback through a survey to understand priorities regarding cultural and religious observances.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

Action: A. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Damaris-Lois Lang, second by Jodie Meyer.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

*Melissa DeLaBarrera*

**Submitted by:**

**Melissa DeLaBarrera**

**District Clerk**