

Hastings-on-Hudson Regular Board of Education Meeting (Wednesday, October 14, 2020)

Generated by Melissa DeLaBarrera on Thursday, October 15, 2020

Members present

Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Meeting called to order at 7:37 PM

1. OPENING OF MEETING

Action, Procedural: A. 6:30 PM - Call to Order - Expected motion to move into Executive Session to discuss current litigation. Expected motion for the Board of Education to move into an Executive Session to discuss current litigation.

Motion by Jeremy Arnon, second by Silvia Robles.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles

Not Present at Vote: Jodie Meyer, Jeremy Galland, Alison Andrus

Information: B. 7:30 PM - Regular Board of Education Meeting - Public portion opens.

Welcome by Lauren Berman.

Welcome to Melissa DeLaBarrera as the new District Clerk. Welcome to the Board Trustees and to Valerie and Maureen. Melissa Szymanski will be joining us later in the session.

Lauren announced there will be a presentation from PKF O'Connor Davies, and asks the public to use the first public comment for items exclusive to what is on the agenda and the second public comment section for open comments.

Procedural: C. Announcements

Valerie: As per the governor's order to all police departments in the state of New York, the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson formed a Police Reform Committee which she was invited to be a part of. Tonight was their first meeting. Numerous community members are participating with various backgrounds to review policing strategies, limited use of force, studies addressing systemic racial bias, awareness, and escalation training.

Newly formed group by two Hastings parents "Parenting Children of Color". They will introduce themselves to the Board at our October 26 or November 9 Board meeting. Valerie & Tesfa are both a part of this committee, which emerged out of the social unrest that occurred over the summer. Committee to focus on working with the school system and community on issues of social justice and equality.

This month launches National Principals Month and tomorrow is the end of National Hispanic Heritage Month, which is a recognition of the contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans to history, culture, and achievement in the US.

A number of chats have been organized for the upcoming months:

- PTSA & SEPTA Superintendents Chat collaborative once a month on Wednesdays
- Students Time to Talk About Racism Chat which is once a month
- Regular Superintendents Chat with Melissa S. and Valerie
- Faculty and staff conversation about Becoming an Anti-Racist Chat

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Information: A. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. PRESENTATIONS

Presentation: A. Year end Audit Report

1. Audit Presentation by Susan Barossi, Partner at PKF O'Connor Davies

2. Supplementary Presentation by Maureen Caraballo

Comments:

Jeremy Arnon: Thanked Maureen for putting everything together. Underscored the fact that the Covid savings are not yearly savings. We will likely see a jump in expenses over the next year because we are going to get back to what the baseline was. At some point, a year down the road, we can net out what we think the actual increase was versus the Covid related increase.

4. BUSINESS

Action: A. Business Items

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

Motion by Doug Sundheim, second by Silvia Robles.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: B. Placement and/or Services for CSE and CPSE

RESOLVED, that upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Committee on Special Education, the Board accepts the classifications and arrangements for the placement and/or services for the 2020-2021 school year:

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Alison Andrus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

5. PERSONNEL

Action: A. Appointments

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

Motion by Alison Andrus, second by Jodie Meyer.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: B. Amendments

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

Motion by Jodie Meyer, second by Alison Andrus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: C. Leaves of Absence

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the leave of absences.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Doug Sundheim.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: D. Resignations

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

Motion by Alison Andrus, second by Silvia Robles.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

6. MINUTES

Action, Minutes: A. Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of September 30, 2020

Motion by Doug Sundheim, second by Alison Andrus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

8. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

Information: A. Second Public Comment

Gabrielle Lesser (former Board president) - read the following letter she submitted earlier today regarding capital investment in Hillside.

"To the Editor:

The Hastings School Board should be commended for continuing to move forward with the capital investment in Hillside in the face of unwarranted and inaccurate criticism.

We have underinvested in Hillside for decades. The current plan represents necessary improvements to provide the learning environment and facilities that are standard for many Westchester school districts and that Hastings has been needing for a long time.

It is not surprising that capital improvements are uncovering unforeseen challenges, when we have invested so little for so long. That is why we have contingencies. It is not the reason to stop the investment.

Critics imply that the need for these improvements will change due to COVID-19. We would like to point out that by the time these improvements are completed, COVID-19 is highly likely to be a controlled virus with both effective treatments and vaccines. And even today, based on last month's CDC data, small children face similar or less risk from COVID-19 than from the flu. For those who argue against large gatherings in schools, we ask if that means they never intend to go to a basketball game, a concert or Broadway. Because the risks are orders of magnitude greater to the adults in those settings.

Finally, some have argued that delay is more fiscally responsible. This couldn't be further from the truth. The state is expected to subsidize much of this investment. But going forward, state budgets are going to be extremely pressured and there is no guarantee that this co-investment will be available if we delay. The odds are delay will cost us more (potentially much more) than moving forward.

Change is hard everywhere, but we have a way in Hastings of making it even harder on ourselves. Voices of negativity and conservatism often seem to swamp a positive, future-oriented community. And even after votes are decisive and actions approved, there are some who desire to undermine and re-legislate.

Fortunately, our school board seems to be listening to the entire community, not just the negative voices, and putting the interests of our children first. Hastings-on-Hudson is an amazing village. Let's move forward to give our children schools that match it."

9. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Jeremy Galland: We have to make a decision moving forward. If we are going to make any changes to Hillside in particular. I think our students continue to fall much further behind two other school districts, Chappaqua and Bronxville. They have had 30 days of full instruction. We need to look at why we drew the line at kindergarten and could not extend it to 1st or even 2nd grade.

After school programs are continuing to operate and are not as popular as usual. Board will look at it in October to make sure that our two particular Hillside after-school programs remain viable for this year and future years.

Alison Andrus: Update on Student and Board Liason meeting from October 13. Both Dr. Henning-Piedmonte and Melissa Szymanski were present. Kids first mentioned Flex Wednesday, adding to the information Melissa Szymanski is collecting about what is working and what could be improved. They wanted to talk about ideas to increase school spirit, ex. Green and Gold Day competitions, a raffle of Hastings merchandise, Socially Distanced Olympics, fundraising for school scholarships, etc.

Lauren Berman: Really appreciates the phone messages about healthy habits from Hastings. The positive messages to encourage good habits are welcome.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Action: A. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Doug Sundheim, second by Alison Andrus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus