

## **Hastings-on-Hudson Regular Board of Education Meeting (Monday, November 9, 2020)**

*Generated by Melissa DeLaBarrera on Thursday, November 12, 2020*

### **Members present**

Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

(Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim and Jeremy Galland arrived late)

### 1. OPENING OF MEETING

Action, Procedural: A. 5:30 PM - Call to Order - Expected motion to move into Executive Session for a rescheduled HTA Grievance Hearing and discussion of a safety matter.

- Lauren called meeting to order at 5:31 PM

Expected motion for the Board of Education to move into an Executive Session for a rescheduled HTA Grievance Hearing and discussion of a safety matter.

Motion by Alison Andrus, second by Silvia Robles.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

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

Lauren Berman:

- Welcomed Board Members, presenters, Valerie Henning-Piedmonte, Melissa Szymanski, Maureen Caraballo, and the public.

Procedural: C. Announcements

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Thanked the Board for approving the agreement with Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES for our Public Relations and Communications Specialist, Jason Platzner.
- Jason has already highlighted a couple of stories in our Hastings Happenings.
- Jason has created a form that anyone can use if they want to share a story or event within our district.
- Superintendents throughout the County meet with County Executive George Latimer and Westchester County Health Department every Monday to hear updates and engage in problem-solving around the issues we are currently facing:
  - micro-clusters were discussed since there is a district in Westchester in the yellow zone
  - there are three zones: Red zone, orange zone and yellow zone
  - districts have to figure out a way of testing based on which zone they fall into
  - we are not in one of those zones
  - we are working with our local health dept. and Southern Westchester BOCES to see how we could facilitate testing in the district
  - what it would look like and would it would cost?
  - it would be a requirement should the district fall into one of these three color coded clusters
- Book study - 21 Lessons for the 21st Century - information will be available on our website

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Information: A. Public Comment

Lauren Berman:

- Announced portion of public comment.
- Reminded public the first public comment is for items addressing our agenda.
- Other business can be made at second public comment.
- Please keep comments to 3 minutes.
- State your name and if you are a resident of Hastings.

Stephen Siebert:

- Expressed concern for limiting public comment to 30 minutes going forward.
- Thinks its really important we not cut down on communication but leave it open especially during the age of COVID-19.
- Referenced an article by Doug in April's Harvard Business Review where he references a town hall that went over by an hour and leaders recognizing the importance of hearing people out.
- This was in a business context but more important in a community context to not leave people behind.
- Feels that is what will happen if we cut public comment short.

### 3. PRESENTATIONS

Presentation: A. Compliance Audit Review

Lauren Berman:

- Introduced Suzanne Volpe, Esq. of Keane and Beane the District's Council.

- District has worked with the New York School Board Association (NYSSBA) to do a full compliance review of the district's policies.
- NYSSBA has provided a report that breaks down all of our policies and gives suggestions for reviewing them.
- Dr. Henning-Piedmonte has invited Suzanne to review the compliance audit and make suggestions to use for the policy committee and board to review the district's policies.

**Presentation** by Suzanne Volpe:

- NYSSBA recently completed an audit of all 275 board policies.
- Divided policies into four groups by action:
  - policies that NYSSBA believe may be rescinded
  - policies that NYSSBA believe need further review and revision
  - policies which NYSSBA has updated/expanded
  - policies NYSSBA finds acceptable currently on our books
- NYSSBA recommended that the board consider 17 additional policies for review calling them either new or missing.
- Full review of policy books tend to take 1-2 years.
- 60 policies recommended for rescission.
- First thing they look at is whether a policy is legally required or not.
- If not, the next question is the District abiding by what's in the policy books?
- You can have any policy you want, if it is not legally required by you have to make sure the district is abiding by it, that it's relevant and current.
- Look at what is being recommended to be rescinded
- Have the relevant District departments review them for relevance, if they are current and if they are abiding by them.
- After that review the board can determine what to do with the policies.
- Suggested prioritizing the review and adoption of 17 policies.
- Along with Dr. Henning-Piedmonte reviewed and picked the first 10 they think are top priorities:
  - Accountability
  - School Board Governance
  - Online Distance and Remote Learning Policies
  - Pandemic Planning Policies
  - Fiscal Management
  - Personnel goals
  - Conflicts of Interest etc.
- Policies reviewed and redlined by relevant district personnel, redlined policies are returned to her office for review.
- After red line, policies with their changes are provided to policy committee for review and then it is presented before the entire board for consideration.
- Choice of language and terms: he/she, the student, etc. whatever kinds of language we want to use to be the most inclusive and up to date.
- Consistency of that language to have a coherent policy book.

Lauren Berman:

- Addressed the idea of a new policy being for Pandemic policy.
- This was not something that the board or the district was missing, but rather something that came to be a requirement post COVID-19.

Silvia Robles:

- Asked how often it is generally recommended that a district engage in this process?
- When should we keep it on our target, so we stay on track?

Suzanne Volpe:

- Answered 5-6 years is about right. Also, noticed had policies that were 20 years old and never updated.

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Highlighted the importance of having Suzanne review and provide guidance on policy review.
- Suzanne recommended having pertinent Department review policies to see if they are using them or if they can be including in another policy.
- Policy committee meets once a month, meeting is public and includes Lauren Berman, Jeremy Galland, Melissa Szymanski, Valerie Henning-Piedmonte, Melissa DeLaBarrera and Franziska (Fi) Goodman.
- Process for bringing policies forward would be through a first read, then if there's any need to go back and revise, or give the board another opportunity to think about it, there is a second read and after that, it moves forward.
- Melissa DeLaBarrera will send to NYSSBA who will then upload to Board Docs policy library.

Presentation: B. Introduction to Public Relations and Communications Specialist

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Jason started last week, he is part of the Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES program that allows districts access to expertise, such as Jason to serve as Public Relations and Communications specialist.

Jason Platzner:

- Introduced himself. Pleasure working at Hastings.
- From New Rochelle, attended SUNY Purchase, BA in Journalism in History.
- Worked for a few media organizations, News 12 Westchester, the Guidance Center of Westchester, Burke Rehabilitation and the Governor's Office of Storm recovery storytelling and creating content.
- Has been finding great stories and trying to get a lot of positive stories out.
- Working on expanding our presence online and social media.
- Trying to expand audience and platform.

Lauren Berman:

- Thanked Jason for joining team in Hastings.
- The Board is pleased to have him in this role providing the community with more knowledge of what is happening in our school district.
- Welcomed the opportunity to work together.

Doug Sundheim:

- Looking forward to supporting good news stories being shared to a broader audience.

Jodie Meyer:

- Welcomed Jason to the district.
- Recommended we showcase the wonderful things happening district-wide at the beginning of board meetings.

Lauren Berman:

- Suggested using pieces from the "Our Schools" Presentation to spark stories.
- Hopes community members, students, staff, etc. use the link to connect with and provide newsworthy stories to Jason.

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Jason is here 5 days a week, five hours a day.

#### 4. BUSINESS

Action: A. Business Items

Lauren Berman:

- Item #3 is the Budget Calendar
- Board Members to review and add dates to their calendars

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

Motion by Jeremy Galland, 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. 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 Jeremy Galland, second by Silvia Robles.

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 Jodie Meyer, 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. Amendments

Lauren Berman:

- Amendments are largely to provide coverage for leave requests.
- Thank you to those in district who are providing additional coverage to colleagues.
- That is a testament to the kind of staff we have.

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

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

Action: C. Leaves of Absence

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

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Jeremy Galland.

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

Lauren Berman:

- October 26, 2020 minutes include that the board approved revision to policy 1230.
- Providing a second reading and opportunity for board to discuss the public's approval and disapproval of revisions.

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

Motion by Alison Andrus, second by Doug Sundheim.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

## 7. OLD BUSINESS

Action: A. Second Reading Policy 1230

Lauren Berman:

- The reason the public comment period was being revised was it is atypical for a board not to have a limitation on the board comment period and a model without a limit resulted in meetings exceeding four to six hours.
- District employees on site since 7am working and attending board meetings until midnight.
- Appreciates earlier public comment quoting an article, but that was a business context.
- Comment period not the best way to engage with board, board not in a position to engage and have real dialogue.
- Discussing issues with teachers, building leaders, department chairs, principal, superintendent, central office employees results in more dialogue.
- Unlimited public engagement takes place during Public Hearing,
- We have public hearing at the start of every school year around our safety plan, code of conduct and at the end of the year regarding our budget.
- Board has provided public hearing with unlimited comment around the bond and other big discussions.

Doug Sundheim:

- When big issues come up we almost always have public hearings.
- Rare until COVID that public comment section went over.
- We have to have venues if there is an issue that needs to be discussed or recurring, we never want to shut down dialogue.

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Pointed out there are two 30-minute periods of time for public comment. A full hour dedicated in the policy.
- First 30 minutes is to speak to any item that is on the agenda, 3 minutes per public comment.
- At the end there is another 30 minutes for public comment on any topic, 2 minutes per public comment.
- Revision is specific language delineating the amount of time as well as having it before and after which is common.

Jodie Meyer:

- Concerned with how we will handle situations where more people want to comment than 30 minutes would allow.

Lauren Berman:

- Policy Committee reviewed other districts policies, it's generally first come first serve.
- Not to be stringent, but to set parameters so that we can anticipate the end of the meeting.

Jeremy Galland:

- Residents should email Melissa DeLaBarrera before the meeting if they wish to make a public comment instead of using the raise hand feature - easier to judge who wanted to comment first.

Lauren Berman:

- Next posting of our meeting to include instructions to email if you wish to make a public comment.

Silvia Robles:

- Reminder to the public that it is the board's intent to hear all public comments with an open mind and incorporate them so we have an orderly and structured meeting that is productive and respectful of everyone's time.

Presentation: B. Construction Project

Maureen Caraballo provided an update of construction work via [Slides Presentation](#).

Farragut complex roofing update

- Roof will be completed by mid November
- Parapet walls have been removed and reconstructed
- Test samples are being taken from the cornice this week
- Shared before and after photos of brick walls

Farragut Complex Boiler:

- Installation of two brand new boilers
- Entire room painted and floor sealed
- New exit steps
- Shared before and after photos of boiler room

Doug Sundheim:

- Thank you to Maureen and Joe and whole team for shepherding it through. Looks great.

Jodie Meyer:

- Thanked Joe - especially during COVID to get this all done. Glad it was done before there was a major disaster that forced us to do it.

Lauren Berman:

- Thank you to Maureen and Joe and all the folks that helped to move these projects forward.

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Thank you Maureen and Joe and entire team working behind the scenes diligently to make this happen.

Maureen Caraballo:

- Thanked the community for their support of critical infrastructure projects.

## 8. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

### Information: A. Second Public Comment

David Zweig:

- School closure policies are very confusing to a lot of parents.
- Issue with clarity and communication from the district
- What guidelines specifically recommend closing an entire school for a suspected case?
- Feels a complete closure for a suspected case indicates a complete failure in our model.

Jennifer Destin:

- Expressed her concern with limited public comment to 30 minutes.
- Feels doing so will limit the opportunity for marginalized groups to be heard by other boards in the future.

Steven Siebert:

- Concerned that policy was adopted before public comment.
- The public should decide what issues matter.
- If board determines what issues are important, not listening to community.
- Asks board to reconsider.

Candice Aloisi (emailed comment read by Melissa DeLaBarrera):

- Concerned with the detrimental impact of excessive screen time.
- Requests the district limit unnecessary screen time and limit it to remote learning days only, no online work outside remote class.

Mohini Shapero-Arditi (emailed comment read by Melissa DeLaBarrera):

- Would like clarification on protocols for the decision to close the entire school for one possible case.
- Everyday the school goes remote is a challenge for her son.

Bryan Pocius:

- Hastings resident - expressed same concern about school being closed for one case.
- Concerned with lack of books - too much screen time.
- When is a decision going to be made to open up schools full time.
- Working families need to know when they need to take their kids out and put them in private schools.

Brian Jacobs:

- Echoed all comments that were made - online resources are not school, they are video games and should not be assigned as work instead of textbooks.
- Expressed concern over lack of timeline to get kids back into school full time
- What benchmarks need to be met and what is the timeline?

Joshua Saltzman:

- Requested the board have a presentation as to why school cannot open or what it would take to open.
- Wants to know what is guiding the decisions to close.

## 9. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

### 10. ADJOURNMENT

#### Action: A. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Doug Sundheim, second by Jeremy Arnon.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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