



**RYE NECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
300 HORNIDGE ROAD
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
FEBRUARY 14, 2024**

Present: President Rebecca Mansell
Trustee Jason Carmel
Trustee Gloria Golle
Trustee Patty Nashelsky
Trustee Erica Wagner
Trustee Elizabeth Yong
Dr. Eric Lutinski, Superintendent of Schools
Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Corinne Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mary Ellen Chiera, District Clerk

I. First Budget Presentation

Dr. Lutinski began by informing the community of the remaining budget presentation dates (March 13th, April 17th and May 8th) and the date of the budget vote (May 21st). He stated that this year there will be three propositions on the ballot. The regular budget vote - Proposition 1, the election of two trustees, and Proposition II - the use of the Capital Reserve Fund.

He reviewed the budget goals which are a commitment to favorable class size, a tax cap compliant budget, maximizing efficiencies in scheduling and personnel, strategic planning, extracurricular opportunities, and a continued breadth and depth of core course offerings. He stated that the proposed budget is \$51,098,031, which is a 2.19% tax levy increase and will be at the tax levy cap. In addition, the projected enrollment for 2024-25 is 1,465.

Next, Mrs. Mahar reviewed proposed revenues, the largest amount coming from property taxes (\$43,459,590), then State aid (\$5,183,441). She explained the components of the tax cap and tax cap calculation - this is the thirteenth consecutive year of tax cap compliant budgets. With regard to the State Aid estimates, Mrs. Mahar stated that Foundation Aid is the largest category (\$3,665,676) and reviewed the ten year Foundation Aid history.

With regard to expenses, Mrs. Mahar advised that salaries and benefits are the largest part of the budget totaling \$37,601,905 or 73.59%. She advised that active and medicare health insurance rates are increasing by a composite rate of 10.5%. Employer retirement

system contributions are also increasing from 9.76% to 10.02% for TRS and from 13.10% to 15.20% for ERS. Additionally, the District is allocating \$300,000 to capital improvements, renovations and upgrades to the high school entrance and the temporary parking lot and bike/walking path at the Middle/High School.

Dr. Lutinski then reviewed the staffing changes for next year. The District will be adding 2.7 positions and losing 3.7 positions which is a \$28,994 impact on the budget. In addition, he advised that the Strategic Plan has been added to the budget. There will be a new \$30,000 budget line to support additional professional development opportunities for staff, and the staffing changes include a permanent building sub to allow teachers to attend professional development opportunities during the school day.

Finally, Mrs. Mahar reviewed Proposition II - Use of the Capital Reserve Fund. It is anticipated that the balance of the Capital Reserve Fund will be \$2,700,000 on June 30, 2024. Its use does not require any additional levying of taxes, but to use the money for project work, the District needs voter authorization. The District would like to use the money to complete some of the work from the 2022 Building Condition Survey which identified all immediate and future building and site work. Mrs. Mahar then reviewed the specific work that needs to be performed at each building and stated that the estimated cost is \$2,700,000 - the amount in the Capital Reserve Fund.

II. Opening of Meeting

President Mansell called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

III. President's Report

President Mansell began by thanking Dr. Lutinski and Mrs. Mahar for providing the first budget presentation and advised the community that despite the Governor's proposed decrease in funding, Mrs. Mahar and the business office have developed another tax cap compliant budget. There will be three additional presentations between now and the budget vote on May 21st and any budget-related questions can be addressed by Mrs. Mahar.

Next, she stated that on May 21st the community will vote on the budget and a proposition to authorize the appropriation of funds from the Capital Reserve Fund. In addition, Rye Neck will elect two members of the Board of Education to serve a three-year term. She and Trustee Nashelsky are reaching the end of their terms. Trustee Nashelsky will not be running for another term. President Mansell has not yet decided if she will run again. She announced that prospective candidates can pick up nominating packets from the District Clerk and can obtain information about being a board member on the website under "Becoming a Board Member" on the "School Board" tab.

Finally, President Mansell stated that Dr. Lutinski will be sharing specifics about Rye Neck's strategic plan, and the Board is looking forward to seeing the plan take shape.

IV. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Lutinski began his report by advising the community that with regard to Strategic Planning, the District's future goals for the 18 month period beginning July 1st have been established, and the work to position the District for a July 1st start is in the hands of the Action Plan Teams who have been meeting and who will be soliciting input to create a

blueprint for each goal. He will continue to share information about the plan in future communications.

With regard to yesterday's snow day, Dr. Lutinski stated that in his December Superintendent's message he had made mention of the possibility of remote learning if the District had an emergency closure. He thanked the teachers and administrators, parents and students for their cooperative problem-solving efforts. He stated that New York State adopted the practice of allowing schools to deliver remote instruction in the face of bad weather, facilities issues, communicable diseases, or a threat against a school. In making the determination for any snow day, he consults the DPW and police, as well as the Sound Shore superintendents, and his decision on Monday evening was based on many factors. Most importantly, the District has a week off coming up, and only 19 school days until spring break after that week off, so a day off on Tuesday would have forced some Middle/High School teachers to make choices that would not favor their students. In addition, remote instruction is part of our safety plan and has a lot of moving parts. Occasional use ensures that our technology and procedures are in place, effective, and provide data for improvement.

Next, Dr. Lutinski advised that the Board recently issued a message regarding the closure of the technology procurement review where they shared the best practices offered by the legal team that conducted the review. He stated that his office has embraced the best practice recommendations that were made and he will soon be offering reactions to the Board that underscore his office's responsiveness to the recommendations and acceptance of their responsibility to always seek improvement in how they exercise their fiduciary responsibilities. Additionally, he will present to the Board how his office can put into place practices that make identifying early notification to the Board about even apparent conflicts of interest.

V. Approval of Consent Agenda

Upon Motion duly made by Trustee Nashelsky and seconded by Trustee Carmel, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approves the following consent agenda:

1. Approval of the Minutes of the January 31, 2024 Board of Education Planning Session
2. Approval of the Minutes of the February 6, 2024 Board of Education Special Meeting
3. Approval of Personnel Appointments, Leaves and Resignation
4. Approval of 2024-2025 District Calendar
5. Acceptance of SEQRA Determination for the Daniel Warren Elementary School, F.E. Bellows Elementary School, and Rye Neck Middle/High School
6. Approval of Change to List of Impartial Hearing Officers
7. Approval of CSE Recommendations
8. Approval of Homebound Instruction
9. Approval of Budget Transfers
10. Approval of Financial Reports

AYES: **All Present**
NAYES: **None**

VI. Financial Reports for Information

The Board was presented with the Warrant Schedule - All Funds for information Purposes.

VII. Communications to the Board

President Mansell reported that the Board has received twelve communications since the last meeting, nine regarding the procurement, one regarding board member conduct, one regarding a personnel matter, and one regarding snow days.

VIII. Citizens' Privilege of the Floor

A community member addressed the Board regarding the procurement review.

IX. Reports - Community School Groups

Student Senate - Dylan Schneider

Student Senate President Dylan Schneider reported that the QR code for students to use to report anonymous issues is now open and displayed on the Senate board and on the monitors located outside of the library and main office. The Key Club and Senate's food drive has been extended for another week in the hopes of obtaining more donations. The theater program will be performing *Beauty and the Beast* in late February. In addition, he stated that many underclassmen are inquiring about community service hours. He reminded all students of the importance of community service and giving back and explained where they could get help logging their hours. Finally, he reminded students about the multiple resources for scholarship opportunities for juniors and seniors.

PTSA - Ruth Homberg

PTSA President Ruth Homberg reported that the PTSA held their social and fundraiser for parents at the Mamaroneck Beach and Yacht Club last weekend at which they raised almost \$11,000. They are now in the process of planning the Panther Party and Fun Run which will be held on April 27th, and they are in the process of selecting a winner of the logo contest.

The SEAC brought in a speaker on February 6th for parents who spoke about how to prepare for the teenage years. Heard in Rye held a virtual event on February 2nd the topic of which was "Rhymes with Corn" and gave guidance on how to talk with children about explicit online content. On March 4th, Dr. Sarah Evans will give a Zoom lecture about Toxins and Forever Plastics in our homes.

The STEAM Committee organized a SkyDome Planetarium presentation on Monday for 5th graders. This week they will be bringing Chemistry Chaos to 6th and 7th graders, and High School students will receive a virtual visit from the Cleveland Museum to talk about Tombs of Ancient China.

Lastly, Mrs. Homberg announced that the General Membership elected 4 officers to form a Nominating Committee to help fill the 34 out of 60 Committee Head positions that are currently vacant and encouraged parents to volunteer.

Booster Club - Tanya Preisser

Booster Club representative Tanya Preisser reported that the Booster Club's Harlem Wizard event was a fun evening for all those who attended. They sold 750 tickets and lots of Harlem Wizards merchandise. The Booster Club received 52% of the ticket sales and 25% of the merchandise sales. In addition, the Junior Class sold concessions and Rye Neck spiritwear and the Booster Club was able to contribute additional funds to the Junior Class in support of the Prom.

In addition, the Booster Club supported winter sport Senior Day celebrations and provided senior athletes and theater participants with newly designed lawn signs. They have increased support to the Theater Department in support of *Beauty and the Beast* and will be hosting concession sales at all three performances.

Mrs. Preisser reported that the Booster Club is starting to discuss spring planning which will support the 2nd Annual Panther Palooza track event in April, the Spring Barbeque in May and the year-end Sports Award ceremonies. They will kick off their scholarship awards program in late March for senior athletes and thespians. Lastly, graduation signs will go on sale in early May.

RNTA - Elizabeth Leifert

RNTA Representative Elizabeth Leifert reported that Daniel Warren celebrated the 100th day of school on February 12th with the Kindergarteners' 100 collection projects displayed in the hallways, parent celebrations and walkthroughs.

F.E. Bellows held writing celebrations and Valentine's Day parties; the 5th grade experienced a Skydome Solar System Enrichment program; 4th grade performed their Winter Concert; all students made Valentine cards and care packages for the senior citizens at Sarah Newman; Mr. Scarantino held a Principal's Conversation for parents; and the PTSA sponsored a Pushcart Players performance.

In the Middle School, the JCK Foundation spoke to 8th graders regarding mental health awareness; the 7th and 8th graders had a virtual visit with the author of the book *Radical Vision: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry*; the drama club began preparations for their musical and voice and acting workshops; and teachers will begin selecting the Student of the Month for each grade.

In the High School the JCK Foundation spoke to students regarding mental health awareness; and the theater department is preparing for *Beauty and the Beast*.

X. Reports - Board of Education

Office Hours

Trustee Mansel and Trustee Wagner will represent the Board at the next Office Hours, February 28, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. Please call the District Clerk by Friday, February 23rd to make an appointment and state your topic of interest.

West/Put Report

Trustee Wagner reported that the WPSBA met on January 22nd to discuss board communication. The meeting focused on results from a communications survey completed by 21 Westchester districts. Topics included board's role in communications,

board office hours, live streaming of board meetings, resolution concerning trustees attending board meetings virtually, meetings with localities, and internal communications.

Audit Committee

Trustee Yong reported that the Committee met on January 25th with the District's claims auditor who reviewed his internal claims audit procedures and provided a report on his findings.

In addition, the Committee reviewed the update from the internal auditor with regard to the current special review project on penetration testing of the District's IT system by the vendor, Thrive, which began on February 6th. Mrs. Mahar also reviewed previous special review projects from the past ten years

Finally, Mrs. Mahar gave a presentation on the District's long range financial planning. The next Audit Committee meeting is scheduled for May 14., 2024.

Policy Committee

Trustee Nashelsky reported that the Committee met on February 8th. They will be discussing some of the agenda items with the full Board at the February 28th Planning Session. In addition, there are a few items that will be up for a first reading at the March Board meeting.

XI. New Business

Approval of Proposition II on the May 21, 2024 Ballot for the Use of the 2022 Capital Reserve Fund

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Carmel and seconded by Trustee Golle, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board hereby adopts and approves the following proposition, which would authorize the Board to appropriate funds from the District's 2022 Capital Reserve Fund, and the Board directs that this proposition be placed on the ballot at the 2024 Annual District Meeting and Election as Proposition No. 2, as follows:

Proposition No. 2

Shall the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District (the "District") be authorized to appropriate funds from the District's "2022 Capital Reserve Fund" in the maximum amount of \$2,700,000, and to expend these funds for the following purposes: (1) paving, fencing and masonry repairs at the District's elementary schools; (2) a new roof for the lower roof of the High School gymnasium; and (3) architect fees to explore: the athletic field layout at the MS/HS, analysis of adding additional capacity for HVAC at the elementary schools, and a potential energy performance contract?

AYES: All Present

NAYES: None

Adoption of Policy 8130.2 - Workplace Violence Prevention

WHEREAS, Policy 8130.2 was presented to the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District at a public meeting for discussion and a first

reading at the January 31, 2024 Board Planning Session; and

WHEREAS, Policy 8130.2 has been presented to the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District at this current public meeting for discussion and a second reading.

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Yong and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approves the adoption of Policy 8130.2.

AYES: All Present

NAYES: None

Acceptance of Donation of Scholarship

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Golle and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District accept the donation of Liviu B. Saimovici Memorial Scholarship which will be awarded annually to two graduating Rye Neck seniors beginning with the 2023-2024 school year in accordance with the criteria established.

AYES: All Present

NAYES: None

XII. Public Comments Concerning Above

There were no comments made by the public.

XIII. Adjournment of Meeting

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Nashelsky and seconded by Trustee Carmel, it was

RESOLVED, there being no further business before the Board that the Board of Education Meeting of February 14, 2024 be adjourned.

AYES: All Present

NAYES: None

President Mansell adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Chiera
District Clerk