

President's report Sept 18, 2024

Good evening, and welcome to our September Board Meeting. By now, many of us have started to settle into the routine of the school year. Teachers are teaching, students are learning, and parents and administrators are juggling. As a board, we are advancing our three goals for this year, which are published on the district's website. This evening, you will hear mostly about our goal to maintain a tax cap compliant budget while investing in instruction and facilities.

Budgets are numbers in a spreadsheet. But more importantly, they are an expression of our values. "Put your money where your mouth is" goes the old saying. So what does the long range financial planning say about our values and priorities?

First, we invest in recruiting and retaining talented teachers. Half of our budget goes towards instruction, and another quarter goes to teachers' benefits. We know learning happens largely through an interaction of a caring and knowledgeable teacher and students who want to understand the world. Staffing Rye Neck schools with the most talented teachers is the single best way to advance our mission to educate.

Second, we invest in facilities. To understand the facilities needs of the District, we commissioned a building conditions survey. Last year, a dedicated and experienced Facilities Team went through the survey and helped the administration prioritize the capital projects. Several of the most urgent projects were done over the summer. Some are part of our ongoing capital investments. Finally, others we need to budget for in the next several years either with existing contingency funds or with new funds.

Finally, we create sustainable budgets. Sustainability means that we devote funds to growing and expanding the programs in our district. Sustainability also means keeping budget increases modest for local taxpayers, who provide nearly 90% of the revenues.

Before I close, I want to recognize the great work of my fellow board members, Liz Yong and Nikki Barker, who are leading our comprehensive policy review. The policy manual is a thick tome, and comparing our policies with the New York State model policies is an enormous undertaking. Thank you so much, Liz and Nikki, for taking on this comprehensive review!