

In Board Briefs, we summarize key agenda items and discussion topics from previous Board of Education meetings. Full meeting minutes are usually not available until approved by the Board at a subsequent meeting. The community is encouraged to attend each meeting, and the Board welcomes questions and comments. Previous Board Briefs can be found on the District website [here](#).

May 7, 2018 Board of Education Meeting

After a meeting of the audit committee, an executive session and the Pledge of Allegiance, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. The minutes from the April 17 and the April 30 meetings were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Director of Science, K-12 Ray Loverso gave a presentation on the District's progress in integrating more STEM and STEAM projects and providing greater opportunities in robotics and coding, as well as integrating more cross-cutting electives at the high school. Berry Hill fifth-grade teacher Katelin Bivona and two of her 5th grade students, Amanda Axelrod and Zachary Brivio, shared their enjoyment of developing carnival style games, which required problem solving, communication and teamwork. Village library media specialist Trish Sergi and student Sanjana Iyer talked about their experiences using the online coding platform KidOYO, utilizing Hatch and Python platforms, as well as Ozobots. H.B. Thompson teacher Tom Kleint and 6th grade student Arya Tooley talked about the benefits of using the LEGO MINDSTORMS Virtual Brick programming tool with EV3 programming languages for higher-level programming of robot movements. The EV3 curriculum engages students in collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and problem solving while programming robots. Mr. Loverso also discussed a new SySTEM Robotics II course that will launch this fall in the high school, which is a collaboration between the Technology and Math departments that will include a component for students to learn to navigate drones with an opportunity to receive FAA pilot certification.
- Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation Drew Cronin highlighted the successes of winter athletes and athletic teams. Team honors include: Varsity Boys Swim team (Conference I champions, undefeated in 31 meets); Varsity Girls Bowling (Section III Conference Champions, back-to-back Nassau County champions, state qualifier); and Varsity Girls Basketball (Conference champions). Individual honorees were Varsity Boys Winter Track members Andrew Lafferty and Ross Reddock (state qualifiers); Girls Winter Track member Reilly Siebert (All-American, All-State, County champion); Varsity Girls Bowling member Rebecca Lee (Todd Heimer Scholar-Athlete award); Varsity Girls Basketball player Kendall Halpern (Conference Player of the Year); Varsity Girls Basketball player Rachel Mahler (Conference Defensive Player of the Year); and Varsity Girls Basketball coach Michael Ferreira (Conference Coach of the Year). Mr. Cronin also read aloud an email sent by the East Meadow Bowling Coach commending the Varsity Girls Bowling team for their sportsmanship and the kindness displayed by the both the team and head coach.

- Harry B. Thompson Middle School student government representatives Leah Corcoran and Brandon Mazen gave a report on various happenings at the school during the second half of the year, including: HBT's Multicultural Week and Expo; PAL and Buddy Club Anti-Defamation League Training; designation as a "No Place for Hate" school by the Anti-Defamation League; a school-wide math competition; an Olympic-themed Cupcake Wars; a peaceful walkout in support of Parkland students; 2nd Annual Wellness Week, with a focus on social and emotional learning; an anti-bullying presentation of "Ryan's Story", sponsored by the PTA; a presentation of "From the Fires", also sponsored by the PTA; HBT Technology and Robotics club success in a LEGO regional competition; the HBT Drama Club's performance of "The Lion King"; participation in a state-level competition run by National History Day, where 4 students qualified for the national competition occurring in June; 39 students represented HBT in the 2018 All-County Music Festival, and 235 participated in NYSSMA, and more. They also acknowledged student Max Greene for receiving national recognition in the PTA Reflections contest and previewed the school's upcoming talent show and a "Syosset Salutes the Troops" T-shirt sale to raise money for the Boots on the Ground organization, which benefits local veterans.
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers congratulated H.B. Thompson and South Woods middle schools for receiving the Anti-Defamation League's "No Place for Hate" school designation this year for their work in the area of tolerance education.
- Dr. Rogers also congratulated H.B. Thompson Principal James Kassebaum for being named by the Empire State Society of School Administrators as a Region 1 Administrator of the Year.

Following student recognitions and presentations, the Budget Information Hearing was held. Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Patricia Rufo reviewed this year's allowable tax levy cap of 3.57 percent for Syosset, and the Board-approved proposed budget of \$230,346,020 for the 2018-19 school year, which represents a 2.97 percent budget-to-budget increase with a 2.26 percent increase in the tax levy. During the presentation, Dr. Rufo reviewed the proposed expenditures and revenues, including the use of reserves and fund balance in support of the budget. She also reviewed Proposition No. 2 on this year's ballot, which seeks voter approval for the creation of a Security Capital Improvement Reserve Fund.

Board Trustee Christopher Di Filippo asked for an explanation on why this year's tax cap is higher than in the past. Dr. Rufo pointed to the Tax Base Growth Factor, which takes into account the number of new properties and other factors that may contribute to the tax cap formula. At the conclusion of the Budget Information Meeting, the regular monthly public meeting reconvened.

- Dr. Rogers provided an update on the District's review of the Syosset Park Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Joined by Carrie-Ann Tondo, Esq. attorney with the District's law firm, Ingerman Smith, Dr. Rogers reported on the District's findings regarding the mixed-use plan application for the former Cerro Wire property

and Town of Oyster Bay landfill – a plan that includes significant residential housing. Areas of the District’s focus included: projected enrollment; potential school facility needs; the potential financial impact; and the impact of construction to the surrounding community, including health concerns given the property’s history as a Federal Superfund site. The District’s latest independent enrollment study projects an additional 381 students (an increase from the District’s preliminary projection of 355 students) in comparison to the developer’s projection of 243. Dr. Rogers provided a background on the different methods used for enrollment projections, and stated that while there may be adequate space at the secondary buildings, an additional 14 elementary classrooms would be required, along with expansion of core elementary spaces to accommodate the additional 267 elementary students within the overall projection of 381. The total construction costs are estimated at \$17 million based on current market square footage costs. This would result in an additional \$1.25 million in annual debt service. The District’s financial analysis of the DEIS included conversations with the Nassau County Assessors Office regarding the developer’s estimation of an additional \$12 million in tax revenue for the District. Dr. Rogers said the Assessor’s Office could not confirm the revenue estimate as the County is undergoing a systematic review of its own assessment system. Furthermore, the District estimates an additional \$9.5 million in operating costs for the influx of students based on its projected enrollment increase for a total of \$10.75 million when combined with the projected debt service from the required facilities expansion. (Subsequent to this presentation, the District amended its estimate to include an additional \$1.25 million in non-instructional costs per year for a total of \$12 million a year.) It is also unknown if and to what extent the developer would be awarded tax abatements that would offset the tax revenues estimated by the developer. The District concludes it is unlikely to realize the full \$12 million in projected tax revenue projected by the developer, due to tax abatements and the tax levy caps. The District’s review of the impact of construction on the immediate area (which impacts two elementary schools) includes air quality, noise levels, water usage, overall public health and traffic analyses, the latter of which could cause further financial burden if buses needed to be rerouted as a result of ongoing construction. Dr. Rogers said the District will prepare comments that will be submitted to the Town of Oyster Bay based on its in-depth analysis.

Board Trustee Christopher Di Filippo asked about the timing of the tax revenue being recognized by the District as a result of the construction. Ms. Tondo explained that this issue is a product of the county’s assessment system and when property is placed on the tax roll by the county, and is outside of the District’s control.

Board Trustee Susan Parker asked about the timeline of the town’s process after the June 4th deadline for comments on the DEIS. Ms. Tondo explained timelines are governed by statute, and generally after the DEIS is completed and comments are received, the developer and the lead agency meet to review and address the comments in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Board President Dr. Michael Cohen noted that although there were serious financial and tax implications to consider, “given the history of the property and the scale of what is

proposed” he was most attentive to parents’ concerns about the safety and health aspects of the project over a lengthy construction period.

Board Vice President Tracy Frankel expressed concern that the scale was too large, the proximity to students too close and the unanswered questions too many about how to possibly mitigate the impacts of a construction project of this scale, and what potential hazards it might uncover.

Board members individually and unanimously voiced their opposition to the plan, citing health concerns, environmental impact, the impact of construction on the area (particularly the schools and the distraction noise would cause to instruction), and the estimated financial impact on the District’s schools and facilities. The scale of the project, impact to fire and emergency services, impact to property values and taxes and the unknown long-term health and environmental effects of the construction were also cited. Dr. Rogers said he would include the Board’s opposition in his written comments to the Town.

Board Member Report

Board of Education Trustee Susan Parker reported on the Board’s participation in this year’s National School Board’s Convention in San Antonio, Texas. Ms. Parker, Vice President Tracy Frankel and Trustee Rob Gershon attended various informative workshops on topics such as safety and security, cyber and data security, Board policymaking, empowering students to have a greater voice with administration and infrastructure planning.

Report from the Spokesperson of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance

A representative from the Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance reported on the committee’s April 23 meeting. The committee discussed Dr. Rufo’s presentation of the proposed budget, which covered the property tax cap, PILOTs, state aid, BOCES spending and use of reserves and fund balance. She also discussed the District’s practice of piggybacking to reduce costs and new modules in the District’s accounting software.

Audience to the Public

- A resident inquired about cost drivers impacting the proposed budget-to-budget increase and how it measures against other surrounding school districts. Dr. Rogers attributed the increase largely to salary agreements, mandated District contributions to the teacher and employee retirements systems (which are impacted by the stock market) and increases to health insurance premiums which are determined midway through the school year, requiring the District to estimate the last six months’ costs. He added that neighboring Districts all share the same pension and health care systems and thus have similar costs.
- Another resident inquired about capping the number of students participating in the District’s recreational program, citing overcrowding and inadequate supervision. Dr. Rogers said the program had been previously capped, however was opened to avoid depriving children of opportunities. He said that the residents’ concerns would be investigated by Deputy Superintendent Adele Bovard.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to compensation, staff appointments, tenure appointments and leaves of absence.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to the management of the District, including committee meeting minutes, policies, student club charters, legal matters, the appointment of election inspectors and a SEQRA declaration for capital improvements at H.B. Thompson Middle School.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to financial operations of the District, including agreements, bids and service contracts (including security and field trip transportation), cooperative bidding and the disposal of obsolete equipment and books.

Next Meeting

- The annual Budget Vote and Board of Education Election will be held on Tuesday, May 15, 2018. The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, June 11, 2018 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.