

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](#).

### **April 17, 2018 Board of Education Meeting**

After an executive session and the Pledge of Allegiance, the third of four Budget Information meetings was held. The meeting focused on sources of revenue that support the budget. Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Patricia Rufo explained PILOTs (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) and showed how the District's tax levy cap is calculated. This year's allowable tax levy increase is capped at 3.57 percent for Syosset, yet the Board-approved proposed budget carries a lower 2.26 percent increase in the tax levy. During the presentation, Dr. Rufo clarified the difference between two revenue streams that support capital projects: capital fund transfers in the annual budget and use of the District's Capital Reserve Fund. She also provided information on Proposition No. 2 on this year's ballot, which seeks voter approval for the creation of a Security Capital Improvement Reserve Fund.

At the conclusion of the Budget Information Meeting, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. The minutes from the March 19 and the April 12 meetings were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

### *The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items*

- Syosset High School Student Senate President Andrew Goldman gave a report on various happenings at the school, including the upcoming blood drive on April 25, 2018, Bravefest auditions for the event happening on June 2, 2108, prom food tastings, the Breaking Borders program, menu improvements achieved by the school's Food Service Committee, Chess and Investment Clubs, Student Government elections, and the Young Women's Forum. Mr. Goldman also reported on the success of Syosset DECA, which had a record 44 students qualify for the International Career Development Conference, scheduled in Atlanta this month, as well as the Forensics Speech and Debate Club, which has 80 students competing in the state competition. Mr. Goldman gave an account of the student-led peaceful walkout and memorial held on March 14 in honor of the victims of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Syosset High School Student Advisory Committee Chair Jordan Rosenberg also provided information on the refurbishment of the school courtyard and a single stream recycling program. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers commended both students for their work and also praised the student body for its actions to secure Anti-Defamation League "No Place for Hate" status for the school and for its organization of the heartfelt March 14 memorial.
- Dr. Rogers announced that Jarrad Li has been named Class of 2018 Valedictorian and Daniel Israel has been named Salutatorian.
- Dr. Rogers also announced that Syosset has been named one of the Best Communities for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation for the 17<sup>th</sup> year.

- Dr. Rogers reminded the community that school will be in session on May 24<sup>th</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup>, as well as June 15<sup>th</sup> for elementary and middle school students, as a result of the snow days required this year.
- Deputy Superintendent Adele Bovard outlined a new format for elementary report cards that is in development. In conjunction with the Syosset Teachers Association, the District is working toward redesigning report cards that better communicate with parents and are easier to understand, are more aligned with the curriculum and the daily work in the classroom and more effectively measure student learning against a standard. Each grade will have its own report card, and will be based on trimester reporting rather than quarterly. Parents will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed change in the near future.
- Ms. Bovard also discussed efforts to address a gender imbalance in certain courses, such as robotics and coding. Student feedback has been gathered on ways to make certain activities more appealing to both female and male students. A series of forums, which will offer students and their parents the opportunity to hear from and speak with accomplished professionals about their leadership positions within business and STEM careers, will take place in May, with the first talk scheduled for May 9<sup>th</sup> followed by a second on May 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Rogers provided a brief update on Phase I facilities improvement projects and security enhancements: corridor wall replacement is underway; exterior demolition in preparation for security vestibule construction is underway; a recent bid for the replacement of doors was rejected as bid specifications have been updated to require enhanced locking mechanisms and is in the process of re-bidding; and automated control systems will be installed at every school in the future to more effectively monitor who is visiting the schools. A new Alert Domain Awareness System (which was approved by the Board later in the meeting) will be utilized to provide Nassau County Police with surveillance footage of school buildings only in the event of a life threatening situation such as an active shooter. Dr. Rogers reported the District has implemented a more robust visitor management protocol and is investigating automated systems that scan IDs, provides a census of who is in the building and can be integrated with student IDs in the future.
- In response to a request by the Board of Education to outline the logistics involved in implementing a later start time at the high school, a timeline and outline of the key milestones was presented. Based on the need for sufficient planning, which would include a traffic study and redesign of the District's transportation plan, public engagement and other logistical factors, the Board would need to make a decision by January 2019 in order to implement new start times for September 2019.
- Carrie-Ann Tondo, Esq. attorney with the District's law firm, Ingerman Smith, provided an update on the District's preliminary review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Syosset Park mixed-use plan for the former Cerro Wire property and Town of Oyster Bay landfill – a plan that includes significant residential housing. Areas of focus included: projected enrollment; potential school facility needs; and the potential financial impact additional students would have on the District, including how the tax cap and potential granting of PILOT status would affect or limit the associated growth in the tax base. The District projects enrollment to increase by

355 students while Syosset Park's updated projections are 243. The District indicated that additional elementary instructional space will likely be needed if the project was approved. The District is also studying the impact of construction to the surrounding community. Ms. Tondo outlined the next steps for the District, which include: an independent evaluation of the entire DEIS; a review of the traffic and construction impacts by the District architects; an updated enrollment study and subsequent identification of physical plant needs; and conferencing with the New York State Division of Taxation and Finance, New York State Office of Real Property Tax Services and the Nassau County Department of Assessment. The District has no formal approval capability in regards to the project, but rather acts as an interested and impacted party and will confirm and evaluate the data included in the DEIS and provide comments to the Town of Oyster Bay. An update will be provided at the May 7 Board meeting. The Town of Oyster Bay is holding a public hearing on the proposal in the Syosset High School auditorium on May 1, beginning at 6 p.m. This is not a District-sponsored event. The Town is the lead agency that ultimately can approve the project. The Syosset School District has the ability to evaluate, monitor, and provide significant commentary to be taken into consideration.

#### *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 March 20 meeting. The committee discussed Dr. Rufo's presentation of Administrative and Program components of the proposed budget, as well as union contract agreements and new regulations regarding cost per pupil calculations. Three new members to the committee were also announced. The next meeting is scheduled for April 23.

#### *Audience to the Public*

- A resident provided written feedback to the Board on security initiatives and requested more two way communication between the Board and residents, with the suggestion to allow for questions to be asked of the Board as discussions and presentations are taking place during public meetings rather than limiting community questions and comments to the dedicated Audience to the Public session.
- Another resident inquired whether the recent expiration of a PILOT would result in additional tax revenues to the District as a result of the property returning to the tax rolls. Dr. Rogers said that while the property owner will likely pay additional taxes, neither the District nor the Class I residential taxpayer would be the beneficiary. Other Class IV commercial properties would benefit as a result of Nassau County's tax system, which apportions property tax obligations for the total tax levy into four classes of properties.
- Several residents voiced their concerns regarding the Syosset Park proposal, most urging the District to advocate against the project. Major topics included the proposed use; projected enrollment increase and financial impact toward the district; the impact construction will have on nearby residents and students at both Robbins Lane and South Grove schools; and the potential health risks associated with developing the property based on its past use for the disposal of hazardous waste (now capped). Multiple residents offered to lend their expertise in analyzing the impact of the project,

particularly in the area of engineering and financial review. One resident suggested the District research the high incidence of cancer in the area of the proposed site.

- Also on the topic of Syosset Park, a resident questioned what outside consultants would be required in reviewing the DEIS, to which Dr. Rogers reverted back to Ms. Tondo's presentation that cited use of an architect (which was later approved in the New Business portion of the meeting) and an enrollment study to complement the District's in-house financial assessment of the project. Another resident suggested enlisting high school research students to conduct their own environmental impact studies and compile data for the District.

#### *Discussion Items*

- Trustee Chris Di Filippo inquired whether the recent Facebook breach affected the District's Facebook page. Dr. Rogers indicated that there has been no indication of a breach and that the District page is set up as a business page operated under the District's communications consultant account. He added that since there are no apps or surveys connected to the District Facebook page –as was the case with the Facebook breach– and no personal account passwords were linked to the page, it is highly unlikely that any breach of information occurred. Dr. Rogers said he would contact Facebook directly, seeking confirmation.

#### *New Business*

- Various resolutions were approved relating to compensation, staff appointments, leaves of absence, resignations and retirements. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen thanked Harry B. Thompson Middle School Principal James Kassebaum, one of the retirees, for his many years of service.
- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to the management of the District, including committee meeting minutes, policies, student club charters, the designation of official newspapers and the appointment of an assistant purchasing agent. Trustee Susan Parker inquired if the assistant purchasing agent was a new position. Dr. Rufo indicated that the position was the result of a restructuring of the business office but that the position was supported within the financial parameters of the existing budget.
- The Board voted to approve the Nassau BOCES administrative budget for the 2018-19 school year and voted in support of three unopposed candidates for the Nassau BOCES Board of Education.
- The Board adopted a proposed district budget of \$230,346,020 for the 2018-19 school year to be presented at a public hearing on May 7 and for voting on May 15. The Board also approved the School Property Tax Report Card for 2018-19 as well as inspectors for the May 15 Board of Education election and budget vote.
- The Board approved the issuance of \$34,345,500 in bonds to finance Phase II facilities improvement projects approved by the community in the February 13 district-wide referendum. The Board also voted to expend \$11,464,500 from its Capital Reserve Fund to support the balance of an estimated \$45,810,000 in funding required for the projects.
- The Board awarded an Energy Performance Contract to Johnson Controls for the purpose of improving the efficiency of the District's energy systems.

- The Board approved a number of resolutions related to financial operations of the District, including agreements, bids and service contracts, the acceptance of a donation as a result of student participation in the Regeneron Science Talent Search and participation in an inter-municipal cooperative agreement for student transportation to out-of-district schools. Trustee Andrew Feldman inquired whether a transportation consortium would leave the District more vulnerable in the event of a bus company strike. Dr. Rogers said this is highly unlikely since the consortium is for out-of-district transportation, affecting a limited number of students on various bus routes shared with students from other districts.

*Next Meeting*

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Tuesday, May 7, 2018 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m. The annual Budget Information Hearing will be held prior to the regular meeting, beginning at 7:45 p.m. (same location).