

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](#).

October 16, 2017 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Board approved the minutes from the September 18 meeting. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Syosset High School Student Government representative Peri Lund discussed recent activities at the high school, including: the creation of a Unity Coalition and events being planned for Oct. 25, National Bully Prevention Day; the school walkathon which raised approximately \$2,000 for the Holocaust Museum and Tolerance Center (HMTC) of Nassau County; multiple fundraisers for hurricane relief, including efforts organized by Interact, the Awareness Club and the GSA; a student-run blood drive that collected enough pints to potentially save 186 lives; and the Student Government carnival that raised approximately \$21,000 for student activities with a portion of the proceeds also going to hurricane relief. Peri also shared information about DECA (the student business club), Model Congress and peer leadership lessons conducted by the HMTC.
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers provided an update on his review of the high school grading and transcript practices, including the calculation of the high school grade point averages (GPA). At the September meeting, a resident suggested starting every student's GPA as though they scored at the top of a letter grade ("A", "B+", etc.) range rather than the average, essentially adding 2.5 points to every grade point average. After his review, Dr. Rogers recommended no changes to the current GPA calculation, as any non-inflationary change would create both winners and losers and because most colleges calculate their own version of GPAs anyway. He noted that the current system encourages students to challenge themselves by protecting them from the potential negative impact of taking more difficult Honors and AP courses (students are awarded an additional point (on a scale of 8) toward their GPA for each of these courses). The completion of such courses is viewed favorably by college admissions officers, and so the incentives in the current system benefit the student/college applicant. Dr. Rogers did recommend a narrow change to differentiate high school transcripts from a student's academic record. In the future, the transcript would replace failing Regents exam grades with passing scores from a retaken Regents, with course grades recalculated should that passing score be achieved during the next two administrations (August or January).
- Dr. Rogers described the District's Multi-Tiered System of Support (formerly known as RTI) which replaced the previous "Academic Intervention Services" model. He indicated the need to improve the District's universal screening tool as an early warning system for students who begin to struggle. These warnings result in additional general education supports prior to resorting to remedial services. An internal district

subcommittee reviewed various options and selected Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), to be piloted in several schools and grade levels before a determination is made on a long-term, district-wide replacement for AIMSweb and CogATs.

- At the Board's request, Dr. Rogers reviewed some of the challenges experienced during past high school parent-teacher conferences including the lack of an ample number of time slots for teachers to hold discussions with parents regarding their children, lengthier than anticipated parent conversations, and pressure on the first of the two nights, among other issues. Immediate solutions proposed include holding individual parent-teacher conversation to five minutes, improving parking and outside lighting conditions and continuing the practice of teachers returning parent calls. The District is exploring other potential long-term solutions.
- Dr. Rogers also shared feedback from the October 11 community information forum regarding Phase II of the District's facilities improvement initiative. Residents expressed support for renovations including air conditioning solutions, new science labs, better parking and traffic flow at the high school campus and more energy efficient building systems, all of which would be addressed through Phase II. Questions asked by the community addressed specifics about the projects being proposed, timelines for approval and construction and costs. Other community feedback and suggestions were shared with the District's architects for review. Future community information and feedback sessions are scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 26 and Wednesday, Nov. 1, both to take place in the South Woods Middle School North Cafeteria at 7:30 p.m.
- Dr. Rogers reviewed the process by which the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency's awards Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) as a tax incentive to new businesses. Although the District has no formal standing to support or oppose these activities, it can negotiate supplemental payments above the PILOT in some cases (the Jericho school district recently did so with the developer of the Milleridge Inn property). The Board authorized Dr. Rogers and the school's attorneys to pursue any similar opportunities with developers within the Syosset School District. Such payments would help mitigate concerns over reduced tax revenues on PILOT eligible parcels both now and in the future.
- Dr. Rogers once again addressed the investigation into the anti-Semitic graffiti found on the Syosset High School campus in August, reiterating that the district remains in frequent contact with police at both the investigation and command levels. The police gave assurances that neither their operational tempo nor level of interest in the investigation have waned. Moving forward, the district will convene a meeting of community stakeholders, including The Interfaith Coalition of Syosset-Woodbury, local veterans' organizations, Erase Racism, and the Holocaust Museum and Tolerance Center (HMTC) among others. In addition, the HMTC has also visited the high school to speak with students and is conducting peer leadership tolerance training for students and teachers. Several other student activities promoting unity and tolerance are underway, including the Association of Creative Thespians production of "I'll Never See Another Butterfly," based on a collection of poems written by children of the Holocaust.
- In response to the Syosset Park multiuse proposal of the former Cerro Wire property, the District conducted a study to independently project the enrollment impact of the development based on its residential construction plans. The developer's initial estimate

was for school district enrollment to increase by 139 students as result of the residences created; the district study indicated a potential increase of 388 students from the project. The Syosset Park plan includes the construction of 625 units of residential property ranging from 1 Bedroom condominiums over retail through 3 bedroom detached “cottages.”

- Following a previous Board discussion, Dr. Rogers answered the Board’s inquiry for additional information on the Rowing Club’s request for District transportation to and from practices at Center Island:
 - Transportation costs would amount to \$2,000 per week for the 7-week fall season and 10-week spring season.
 - Two of the club’s members reside outside of the District.
 - Additional supervision would be required as the club’s coaches are not District employees.
- In conjunction with New York State School Board Recognition month, the Board received three shows of appreciation:
 - Parent Niketa Bhatia along with several other parents and young children representing the district’s Indian community presented each Board member with a traditional Diwali gift recognizing the Board’s approval of Diwali as an official school holiday.
 - Additionally, Syosset Council of PTAs co-presidents Meryl Bolnick and Diane Hornick presented each Board member with a gift on behalf of the Council, in appreciation for the Board’s service to the community.
 - Dr. Rogers presented the Board with a Senate proclamation initiated by State Senator Carl Marcellino.

Audience to the Public

- A parent expressed his concerns regarding the pace of the police investigation into the August anti-Semitic vandalism as well as rumors that the perpetrators may be current Syosset High School students. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen reiterated that the police have instructed the District not to take any action until the police investigation concludes.
- Another parent petitioned the Board for the creation of a girl’s gymnastics team and suggested he had recruited participants and arranged logistics. Multiple Board members expressed regret in only recently learning of the interest and directed Administration to follow up. Ms. Parker cautioned that tryouts would still be necessary. Ms. Frankel raised concerns about liability. Dr. Cohen indicated that the District must do its own logistics to ensure compliance with law and suggested in the event that a high school team cannot be formed immediately, a middle school team may be a possibility.
- A representative of the District’s senior citizen community praised the Board for its recent communications regarding Phases I and II of the facilities improvement initiative. He said information was sent to all of the District’s major senior citizen communities and residents felt they were well informed and supportive of the proposals being considered. Dr. Cohen thanked the man for his acknowledgement of the District’s efforts.
- Another parent advocated for an expansion of the district current elementary science curriculum and instruction practices. Dr. Rogers noted that the District has made three

recent changes: it hired an elementary science specialist to work with its elementary schools, it hired a K-12 science director to develop greater continuity between the elementary, middle and high school science programs, and it increased the amount of time dedicated to science in the elementary schedule. He expressed enthusiasm for the District's progress implementing new science standards (based on the National Next Generation Science Standards), which call for more inquiry and investigation as well as practices that connect different areas of science through common applications. The same parent also expressed a concern over high school freshmen dropping Honors 9 Math. Dr. Rogers said the District has been monitoring the issue and has prioritized K-12 alignment in math as well as in science and other disciplines.

Discussion Items

- High School Start Times – The District held a forum last fall exploring the notion of moving high school start times later, and followed up the forum by exploring other phenomena impacting student sleep, including a survey of every high school student and teacher on the subject of homework. Dr. Rogers indicated that one of the obstacles to changing high school start time is the inability to change transportation services without disrupting the middle and elementary schools' schedules. Dr. Rogers indicated that he would continue to dialogue with districts that have implemented later start times.

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to appointments of advisers, coaches, staff service providers and volunteers and the approval of service contracts, committee minutes, cooperative bidding and purchasing agreements, and other financial operations of the district.
- The Board re-appointed its part-time treasurer and district architect.
- The Board approved a stipulation of agreement for the renewal of the Syosset Principal's Association contract.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, November 13, 2017 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.