

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](#).

July 5, 2017 Board of Education Reorganization and Regular Meeting

After an executive session, the annual reorganization meeting was called to order. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Rogers and Board trustees Dr. Michael Cohen, Carol Cheng and Anna Levitan were sworn in. Dr. Cohen and Board member Tracy Frankel were elected to serve as president and vice president, respectively. The Board also appointed Francine Benjamin as district clerk, Christina Costa as district treasurer, and made several other annual appointments of staff and designations for services. In addition, they approved dates for monthly Board meetings and budget information meetings for 2017-18.

A Trustee asked what the specific criteria were for designating banks to serve as depositories for school funds, as multiple banks were appointed to serve in this capacity for the district during the reorganization meeting. Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Patricia Rufo said the appointed banks all have a prominent practice in the municipal banking and that other interested banks may inquire to Treasurer Costa for consideration.

A Trustee asked whether the fee structure for the District's appointed law firm is aligned with current district needs. Dr. Rogers said the firm is paid based on a retainer for annual Board and labor work, but bills the district on an hourly basis for certain episodic services, (i.e. student misconduct hearings, individual staff issues outside of the labor agreement, and special education cases requiring attorney assistance). Since the time spent on each of these non-retainer services varies from year to year, there is no stable baseline that might lend itself to a conversion of one or more of these services to an additional retainer agreement. Nevertheless, he said he would speak with the attorney to see if any of these services could be incorporated into the retainer agreement.

Following the reorganization meeting, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. The Board approved the minutes from the June 12 meeting.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items

- Dr. Rogers reported on his recent attendance at the International Society for Technology in Education Conference held in San Antonio, Texas, noting that he did not see any category of instructional technology usage that the District was not currently exploring. He also shared that many districts of similar and larger size are implementing the same types of technology infrastructure changes currently underway at Syosset to accommodate the expansion of devices for education purposes. Dr. Rogers said he looks forward to sharing his notes and ideas with the district's technology workgroup.

- In response to a request by a Board member, Dr. Rogers gave a presentation on student registration and residency verification procedures. The presentation covered kindergarten in-person registration and new online requirements, documents required to prove age and residency, timelines for registering students, and challenges in determining eligibility and residency (including custody issues, foreign exchange students here on Visas and multiple families residing at a single address). He also described ongoing enforcement procedures for residency policies. He also identified opportunities for additional enforcement efforts, from adding “Address Service Requested” to bus pass mailings to periodic mandatory re-registration or requiring current leases on file. He also covered some of the potentially negative impacts of the latter two (additional cost, inconvenience to parents, potential legal challenges, and the inability to act solely on the findings).

Audience to the Public

- Continuing the registration and residency verification discussion, a district resident suggested requiring students to re-register both when transitioning from elementary to middle school and again when leaving the middle school to enter high school.
- Another resident inquired about the possibility of holding the Audience to the Public session at the end of regular meetings to provide residents with an opportunity to comment on agenda items voted on during the New Business portion of the meeting. Dr. Cohen said that Audience to the Public has been placed on the agenda to allow the public to comment on agenda items prior to the Board’s action, but that the Board would consider making time at the end of the meeting to respond to questions specifically related to any board discussions on new business items voted on during the meeting. However, he indicated he would seek concurrence from the Board before making changes to the structure of the agenda. A Board member noted that if Audience to the Public was moved to the end, the Board may not have an opportunity to hear all of the community input on a particular issue before voting on it. Another Board member reminded the public that any resident may submit an Audience to the Public request and question online in advance of the meeting.

Discussion Items

- The Board discussed the registration and residency verification process, with a Trustee supporting the idea of re-registration of students upon entering middle school and high school. He offered additional suggestions including: asking parents/guardians to sign an attestation to their residency and an acknowledgement that they are required to bear tuition costs should their residency prove to be invalid, and requiring landlords to sign a notarized affidavit with any lease agreements. Dr. Rogers said that the enrollment process is highly regulated by state and federal law, and that several Nassau school districts’ policies had recently resulted in enforcement actions by the State Attorney General. Therefore, he would look into the legality of requiring such affidavits and attestations in order to advise the Board. A Trustee asked if there were any data to substantiate a pattern or trend of residency fraud in Syosset. Dr. Rogers responded that each year there are a handful of ineligible students denied initial enrollment and an equally small number

of residency investigations that result in exclusion. He suggested that there is no discernable pattern among the cases and each represents an individual family circumstance. A Trustee commented on the burden reregistering might create for parents. Summarizing the discussion, Dr. Cohen asked Dr. Rogers to prepare recommendations for consideration by the Board's Policy Committee that balance the District's obligation to protect taxpayers, while maintaining the character of a "compassionate community."

New Business

- Various resolutions were approved relating to: appointments and abolition of positions; revisions to agreements pertaining to the certain administrative positions; fall coaching appointments and pay; committee and sub-committee members, committee minutes and recommendations; acceptance of service contracts; participation in a school facilities purchasing consortium and awarding of bids under the consortium; an amendment to a licensing and purchasing/product replacement agreement; attendance at conferences; and a declaration that building improvements to be performed at Walt Whitman Elementary School require no further action to comply with the State Environment Quality Review Act.
- Following a discussion between the Board and Dr. Rogers, the Board rejected all bids for a new food service provider, and extended the existing food service management contract for the 2017-18 school year. Dr. Rogers indicated that none of the bid responses complied with the District criteria, necessitating rejection. This left the District with two choices: conduct a second abbreviated bid process this summer, or use the State-approved process of extending the current provider for a single year at a State-determined cost-of-living increase (1.8%). The first option ran the risk of a second round of failed bids in late July, which would then jeopardize having a food service provider in place by the start of the new school year. Enacting the extension would ensure that food services were in place in September and allow the District ample time to rebid the contract without time pressures. In response to Trustee inquiries, he indicated that none of the flaws in any of the bids were insurmountable and none involved health or safety issues. A Board member inquired about the legality of more aggressively advertising the bid process to expand the net of potential bidders. Dr. Rogers said there are three companies that tend to provide food services to the Long Island education market, but that he would further research the matter. Within its bid specifications for food service providers, the Board included a provision requiring an online menu and ingredient list to help families proactively manage potential food allergens.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, August 14, 2017 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.