

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](#).

November 14, 2016 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session, the meeting was called to order and the minutes from October 17, 2016 meeting were approved. The Board also approved the Treasurer's Report.

The Superintendent's Monthly Report and Other Items

- South Woods Middle School Student Government representatives Christina Johnson and Max Rosenthal provided an update on recent activities at the school, including charitable activities such as the Halloween walkathon, a current food drive to benefit Mercy First, and an upcoming pajama drive for Jake's Jammies, benefitting children in pediatric hospital wings. They also spoke about different clubs at the school, including the Book Club and the Makerspace Club, as well as the theme days, the school's upcoming production of "Little Shop of Horrors" and the third annual Brave Bolt Challenge scheduled for this spring.
- Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts, K-12 Michael Salzman introduced Syosset High School's 27 All-State musicians and four All-National Honors Ensemble selections. Overall, the school had a record 30 selections for the New York State School Music Association's All-State conference (three students were chosen for two instruments) – the most school history. The four students chosen to perform at the National Association for Music Education's All-National Conference are Dylan Eliassof, Vivian Lin, Ben Rhee and Cameron Zandieh.
- Science Research Facilitator Veronica Ade introduced Syosset High School's nine semifinalists in the Siemens Foundation Competition for Math, Science and Technology – also a school record. Eric Pun and Nikhil Saggi, who were also named finalists in the competition, presented their research on concrete durability to the audience. All nine students had the opportunity to present their research on laptops in the lobby prior to the meeting.
- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers announced that 45 members of the high school's Association for Creative Thespians have been inducted into the International Thespian Society's honor society.
- Dr. Rogers spoke about the district's recent "Edcamp" professional development collaboration with the Jericho School District, stating that there was a tremendous amount of positive feedback from the participants regarding the format and workshops offered. He thanked the conference committee and the dozens of faculty members who volunteered to lead sessions.
- Dr. Rogers provided an update on the pending sale of a 2.4-acre district-owned parcel that abuts the Walt Whitman School campus in Woodbury,

indicating that the developer has offered to make modifications to the proposal that would benefit the school district. A public meeting to inform the community of these modifications will be scheduled. While the Board has agreed to a contract with the developer, the sale has not yet been finalized.

Citizens Advisory Committee for Finance Update: a member of the committee reported on discussions at the October 19 meeting, which included the updated facilities presentation being considered by the Board and key components such as options for installing air conditioning, a new bus loop and subsequent traffic flow improvements at the high school, science lab renovations, an Energy Performance Contract and athletic facility upgrades. Additionally, the committee discussed the district's use of the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition Model to determine how computer technology impacts teaching and learning. The committee also reviewed copies of the district's audited financial statements, including extra classroom activity fund reports.

Board Member's Report

NYSSBA Update: Board of Education member and district delegate for the New York State School Boards Association Susan Parker reported on activities at the NYSSBA annual conference including:

- Productive workshops she attended on perception and branding school districts and using social media for positive messaging; sports and school boards; creative ways for schools to fundraise, including foundations; and later school start times. Additional topics of interest covered the effectiveness of project-based learning and the use of relevant music to keep students engaged in the learning environment. She indicated that all workshop presentations are available on the NYSSBA website.
- The annual NYSSBA business meeting, where 16 resolutions were approved as position statements to lobby lawmakers for various legislation. Approved resolutions of interest included updating aid funding formulas for school districts; further restoration of funds lost under the Gap Elimination Act; and legislation to unlink funding formulas from the number of students taking standardized exams.

Audience to the Public

- An elementary school parent inquired about the possibility of establishing a uniform homework policy for weekends to address inconsistencies between the amounts of homework assigned by different teachers at different schools. Board President Dr. Michael Cohen indicated that the Board has been looking at the volume of homework assigned following its review of school start times and their impact on students. Dr. Rogers indicated he has already engaged principals in the conversation. The same resident also raised concerns voiced by other parents regarding the Board's recent approval of Diwali, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha as holidays to be scheduled on the school calendar, inquiring about the rationale for the decision. Dr. Cohen said that the rationale was evident based on the testimony given by those who

celebrate the holidays but that he would be open to scheduling a public forum to further explain the rationale to anyone not in attendance when the resolution was passed.

- A resident inquired whether the Board is planning to adopt a resolution opting in on a new state law that gives school districts and other public entities the option to offer property tax exemptions to veterans of the Cold war. By law, the Board must first hold a public hearing before adopting the exemption. They addressed the matter later in the meeting during the Board Discussion period and set December 19 as the date of the hearing at which time they will vote on whether to adopt the exemption. If approved, this would leave enough time for eligible veterans to take advantage of the exemption for the upcoming year.

Discussion Items

- The Board discussed options for adding the three new approved holidays into the school calendar for 2017-18. Dr. Rogers described the upcoming year as a “tight year” for scheduling based on where the holidays fall and thus recommended that whatever means were used to manage the “tight” year not be regarded as precedent setting. He presented the Board with two lists of potential school days to add - some less impactful on students and families than others. The Board agreed to proceed with scheduling new days of instruction that were the least impactful to students and their families. Calendar development is expected to be finalized over the next 1-2 months.
- With the summer of 2018 in mind as a target to commence work on projects included the district’s facilities proposal, Dr. Rogers asked the Board if it would like his office to draft a resolution for a public vote on the projects identified in the plan. In response to a question about prioritization, Dr. Rogers indicated that the current list of projects was recommended by the district architect as part of the districtwide Building Condition Survey. After discussion, the Board ultimately directed Dr. Rogers to prepare a resolution for the Board to vote on at the December meeting. If approved, a community vote would likely be held in February to authorize the Board to proceed with the facilities projects.
- Following up on the Board’s request to explore a new food service bid proposal that would require vendors to make ingredients of school lunch menu items easily accessible (via the internet specifically) Dr. Rogers reported that while no available food service vendors can provide an exhaustive list of ingredients for all of their menu items, there are at least two providers who can provide more extensive menu information than the district’s current vendor.

New Business

- Simon Properties, developers of the proposed Syosset Park mixed-use plan for the former Cerro Wire property and Town of Oyster Bay landfill, gave a presentation on the proposal. Board members asked questions about the traffic impact of the project, and restrictions on commercial use of the

property given its proximity to two district elementary schools. The developer indicated that traffic studies show peak travel to and from the different types of locations/uses at the site do not overlap, and was receptive to district input on commercial usage. A resident expressed multiple concerns about the proposal, including its impact on property values and environmental concerns of development and use of the land given its prior use and past designation as a Federal Superfund site. The developer indicated that the property had been removed from the Brownfields list since 2005 and that the State would ultimately determine if any additional remediation is required.

- Various resolutions were approved including coaching, special assignment, and staff service appointments, acceptance of contracts, policy readings, student club charters and volunteers.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is Monday, December 19, 2016 at 8 p.m. at South Woods Middle School.