Rye Neck Schools

RYE NECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
300 HORNIDGE ROAD
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 17, 2025

Present: President Erica Wagner
Trustee Nikki Barker
Trustee Halli Gatenio
Trustee Ruth Homberg
Trustee Alex Rainert
Student Representative Spencer Elliot
Mr. Michael Burke, Superintendent of Schools
Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Mary Ellen Chiera, District Clerk

Absent: Trustee Jason Carmel

I. Opening of Meeting

President Wagner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. President's Report

President Wagner began by explaining that the New York State Education Department now requires all districts with high schools to have one ex-officio, or student, member of the Board of Education. The law aims to recognize the value of including students' voices on school boards and provides an opportunity for young people to build skills and habits of civic engagement. She noted that the ex-officio student member is not allowed to vote and is not permitted to attend executive sessions or any other meeting or hearings not open to the public. She then introduced and welcomed Rye Neck's Student Senate President, Spencer Elliot, as this year's ex-officio member of the Board.

III. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Burke began by stating that Rye Neck has had a strong start to the academic calendar. He has enjoyed the High School and Middle School Open Houses and looks forward to the F.E. Bellows Open house tomorrow night and Daniel Warren Open House next Thursday.

Next, Mr. Burke advised that Assistant Superintendent for Business, Carolyn Mahar, provided a comprehensive presentation of the summer capital projects at the last planning session on Wednesday, September 3rd, a copy of which is posted on the district website. He thanked Mrs. Mahar for her leadership in those projects, which are projected to finish under budget by over $100,000.

He then thanked Director of Technology and Communications, Mary Lanza, for offering free ParentSquare training sessions during the Open Houses, and encouraged those who

have not yet joined ParentSquare to download the free mobile app, available for iOS and Android. It is the one-stop option for all District communications. He also recognized Ms. Lanza for her persistence in educating the students and community about being vigilant on phishing campaigns. There were multiple student reports of suspicious emails to Ms. Lanza, which is critical to maintaining online security.

Mr. Burke reported that the implementation of the State Cell Phone policy has been very successful so far. He thanked Ms. Folchetti, Mr. Priskie, Mr. Doerr, and the students and staff for a very smooth transition. He then welcomed student representative, Spencer Elliot, to the Board and thanked him for attending the Westchester BOCES workshop with fellow ex-officios from the area. Mr. Burke reported that he attended the second meeting and enjoyed interacting with other superintendents, board members and other student representatives.

Additionally, Mr. Burke stated that he will be meeting tomorrow with State Senator Shelley Mayer. He reached out to Senator Mayer after the United States Department of Education notified all state education agencies that it has discontinued the national Blue Ribbon Schools program effective immediately. The decision came without consultation with the New York State Education Department, and the timing of this announcement coincided with the news that Rye Neck High School would have, in fact, received the Blue Ribbon acknowledgement for the first time since 1996. To cancel this program, at the end of the review cycle, without any recognition for the schools that competed in the process throughout the school year is an academic injustice. He believes that Rye Neck should still celebrate this prestigious achievement, since Ms. Folchetti was able to receive direct confirmation from the Blue Ribbon committee that Rye Neck would have indeed been honored. Mr. Burke is collaborating with Senator Mayer on a way to get a formal recognition from NYSED for the district regarding this honor, and he congratulated Ms. Fochetti, the high school staff, students and entire Rye Neck community on this incredible accomplishment.

Mr. Burke announced that he will be holding three Coffee & Conversation opportunities with the Rye Neck community at which he will provide a 15-minute presentation on educational topics, before opening up the floor to general discussions. There will also be time at the end for 1-on-1 conversations. His goal is to hear feedback on what we do well, and what growth areas or new ideas you have for our district. They are all Monday nights at 6:00 pm, with Daniel Warren scheduled for September 29th, F.E. Bellows on October 27th and MS/HS on December 1st. I

Finally, he wished all Rye Neck students and families well, especially those who celebrate the upcoming holidays.

IV. Approval of Consent Agenda

Upon Motion duly made by Trustee Gatenio and seconded by Trustee Homberg, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approves the following consent agenda:

Approval of the Minutes of the September 3, 2025 Board of Education Planning Session

Approval of Personnel Appointments and Leaves

RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board appoint **Kara Naughton** to a four year probationary position as a Teaching Assistant, effective 08/26/2025 and ending 08/25/29; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board appoint the following certified personnel:

Name	Effective Date	Type	Assignment/Location	Salary/Step
Andrew Bartlik	**08/26/2025 - 11/18/2025 (approx.)**	**Leave Replacement**	**Teacher/HS**	**MA/Step 1**
Lisa Rubenstein	**09/02/2025 - 10/01/2025**	**Leave Replacement**	**Teacher/MS/HS**	**MA/Step 12**
Jennifer Stallone	**09/02/2025 - 06/30/2026**	**Leave Replacement**	**Psychologist/ RNHS**	**MA/Step 3**

and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board appoint staff members to the following positions for the 2025-2026 school year:

Technical Director, HS Fall Play - **Hannah Hancock Rubinsky**

CSE Subcommittee Chairperson - **Jennifer Stallone** (Grade 9-12)

Library Special Assignment - **Susan Balsamo**

and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board appoint the following staff member for sports:

SEASON	SPORT	LEVEL	ROLE	FIRST	LAST
2025-2026			Support Staff	Julianna	Peduzzi

and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools,

hereby that the Board grant **Amy Rossignuolo** an unpaid leave of absence beginning on September 2, 2025 to on or about September 24, 2025; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Lisa Rubenstein** an unpaid leave of absence from her Teaching Assistant position beginning on September 2, 2025 to October 1, 2025; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Shailaja Vangala** up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave beginning September 11, 2025 to be used intermittently in accordance with applicable FMLA regulations; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Angelo Labrusciano** an intermittent paid FMLA/sick leave of absence beginning on or about September 16, 2025 to November 12, 2025; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Nicole Crispinelli** an unpaid parental leave of absence beginning on October 8, 2025 to June 26, 2026; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Davide Bianco** an intermittent paid FMLA/sick leave of absence beginning on or about November 20, 2025 to December 1, 2025.

Adoption and Approval of Stipulation of Settlement and General Release

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District adopt and approve the attached Amendment to Stipulation of Settlement, effective August 25, 2025, between the District and the parent of a student with a disability.

Adoption of SEQRA Type II Resolution

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District (the "District") is the sponsor of proposed unrelated capital improvement activities within the District which would include electrical work and upgrades at the Rye Neck Middle School/High School (the "Project"); and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of Rye Neck Union Free School District herby declares itself lead agency in connection with the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act; and

WHEREAS, the work to be performed at each building includes, but is not limited to, electrical work and upgrades including removing and replacing step down transformers, removing outdated equipment, reconstruction of electrical equipment, installation of new power lines, and installation of new equipment as required; and

WHEREAS, the District desires to comply with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act ("SEQRA"), as set forth in Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law, and the requirements of the implementing regulations set forth at 6 NYCRR Part 617 (the "Regulations"), with respect to the Projects; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Regulations, the District has considered the Projects in light of the actions included on the Type I list specified in Section 617.4 of the Regulations and in light of the actions included on the Type II list specified in Section 617.5 of the Regulations.

RESOLVED THAT:
1. The Projects constitute a "Type II action" (as the quoted term is defined in the Regulations) because they fall within the ambit of one or more of the following actions included on the Type II list specified in 6 NYCRR § 617.5(c)(1), (2), (10) and/or (31) because they involve:

> (1) maintenance or repair involving no substantial changes in an existing structure or facility;
>
> (2) replacement, rehabilitation or reconstruction of a structure or facility, in kind, on the same site, including upgrading buildings to meet building, energy, or fire codes;
>
> (10) routine activities of educational institutions, including expansion of existing facilities by less than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area; and/or
>
> (31) purchase or sale of furnishings, equipment or supplies, including surplus government property, other than the following: land, radioactive material, pesticides, herbicides, or other hazardous materials.

2. The Projects are not subject to further review under SEQRA.

3. Notwithstanding that the Projects are not subject to further review under SEQRA, the District will continue to comply with guidance issued by the New York State Education Department.

4. A copy of this resolution shall be provided to the New York State Education Department.

Approval of Disposal of Equipment and Uniforms
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approve the disposal of equipment and uniforms no longer in good working condition as per Schedule A.

Awarding of Emergency Transportation Contract
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approve the attached Shared Transportation Administration and Management agreement with the Mamaroneck Union Free School District commencing on June 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

Approval of Change Orders
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approve the following change orders:

2025 High School Security Vestibule Project:

- **Pierotti Corporation**, change order for a decrease of ($3,851.95), refund of the unused contract allowance.

2025 Masonry and Site Work at F.E. Bellows Elementary School:

- **Capitol Renovation Corp**., change order for a decrease of ($5,900.00), refund of the unused contract allowance.

Approval of Contracts for School Year 2025-26 Transportation Routes
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District Approve the transportation routes and extensions and related estimated costs for the 2025-2026 school year as per the attached Schedule A.

Approval of CSE Recommendations
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District agree to arrange for special education placement as recommended by the Committee on Special Education, Committee on Pre-School Education and Committee Recognition of Disabilities under American Disabilities Act (504), as per the **attached** memorandum.

Approval of Financial Reports
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approves the Treasurer's Report, Appropriation Status Report, Bank Reconciliation Report, Claims Auditor Report, Extra-Classroom Activity Fund and Revenue Status Report.

AYES: **All Present**
NAYES: **None**

V. Financial Reports for Information

The Board was presented with the Budget Transfers and Warrant Schedule - All Funds for information purposes.

VI. Communications to the Board

President Wagner reported that the Board has received no communication since the last meeting.

VII. Citizens' Privilege of the Floor

There were no comments made by the public.

VIII. Reports - Community School Groups

Student Senate - Spencer Elliot
Student Senate President Spencer Elliot began by thanking Mr. Burke and the Board for having me this year. He reported that going into this school year has been a harder transition with the phone ban. While most student opinions surrounding the phone ban are more negative than positive, there have been some mixed views.

He stated that there are some positives that have come from the phone ban. Many students are more focused and engaged as they are less inclined to look at their phones, and there has been more social interactions, especially in the cafeteria and in the senior lounge.

Spencer advised that the phone ban is a big transition for some students, especially for those students who typically spend a lot more time on their phones. For those dissatisfied with the policy, it is mostly during free periods, study halls, and lunches. Many students believe they should be able to use their phones during the times of the day when they are not in class. Seniors, however, who have the privilege of leaving campus during free periods, do often use their phones when off campus.

Another concern that was brought up by some students was managing the cell phone ban with either family or work responsibilities. For example, in the spring when juniors and seniors are finding summer jobs or even starting them, it's important to communicate with their employers. It would be great if there was a place on campus where phones could be used in certain cases. They feel it would be great to create a small committee of students, possibly within the student senate, to address student concerns about the phone ban.

Spencer then reported that seniors are very happy with the new parking situation. They like having assigned spots. In addition, he thanked the counseling department for their help with college applications.

Finally, Spencer stated that the Student Senate is preparing to have another successful year. They are hoping to bring back the volleyball tournament, which was a great way to bring the school together for an event filled with fun competition. Additionally, they are planning on sending out a google form within the next few weeks to collect students' concerns concerning aspects of the high school which will then be addressed in Senate meetings. Student senate elections will be at the end of September and our weekly meetings will start at the beginning of October.

RNTA Report - Kathie Offner

RNTA President Kathie Offner began by reporting that teachers worked hard over the summer to help prepare for the new school year. Many teachers conducted summer classes, trained on the new Parent Square communication forum, collaborated to plan new curriculum and strategies, enrolled in classes and workshops and came in early to set up classrooms. In addition, the RNTA hosted its annual new teacher/TA luncheon in August. Open House provides an opportunity to meet with parents and showcase the curriculum and expectations. Open Houses have already been held at the high school and middle school levels, and F.E. Bellows and Daniel Warren Open Houses will be held shortly.

Next, Mrs. Offner welcomed Superintendent Burke and Mrs. Erica Wagner as Board President and stated that the RNTA hopes to share a year of continued growth and cooperation as they move forward with the Strategic Planning goals for the district.

Finally, Mrs. Offner welcomed Mrs. Elizabeth Gillespie as PTSA President, thanked the PTSA for the breakfast truck that was provided for all staff during one of the Professional

Development days, and wished a Happy and Healthy New Year to families celebrating Rosh Hashanah.

Booster Club - Jennifer Abbey

Booster Club President Jennifer Abbey reported that the Booster Club has been planning and organizing for the 2025-2026 school year. They launched the "proud supporter" campaign to join the Booster Club with differing tier levels, as well as alumni and RN staff options. They set a goal of raising $5,000 and already have over 100 supporters and are almost 90% to meeting that goal.

Next, she stated that they have successfully ordered bulk merchandise which has already been sold at the Florence Park Community Event, a Daniel Warren Pop Up and the Middle School Open house last week. They will also be selling at the F.E. Bellows Open House and Homecoming. In addition, they will be opening an online store and will offer a wider array of selections.

Mrs. Abbey announced that this year the Booster Club is moving to 24 x 36 inch vinyl senior signs for all athletes and thespians. She thanked Mary Lanza who helped get photos of all senior athletes. The signs will be printed in the coming week.

In addition, with some of the excess funds from last year, they ordered a large Rye Neck branded 11' wide arch which they will be able to use to spread more panther cheer at all of the amazing Rye Neck events.

Next, Mrs. Abbey stated that the next big Booster Club event is homecoming where they are working with sports teams liaisons to set up the Athlete's village again. Each team will have their own table set up as they would like. They will also be selling merchandise, concessions on both Friday night and Saturday, providing Rye Neck themed decorations around the Middle/High School campus, and organizing a Panther visit. The elementary school liaisons are working to schedule a spirit week leading up to homecoming which will include a panther visit to both schools. Additionally, they are repeating the "Bring Me to Homecoming" raffle ticket program where they send home tickets for the kids to bring back to homecoming for a chance at winning a prize, and are working on the design for homecoming t-shirts which will be given to the entire HS student body.

Lastly, Mrs. Abbey advised that tickets will soon be on sale for the new fall event for Parents which will be held on October 30th at Barley Beach House in Rye. The larger parent event with the auction is being moved to January at Modern on the Rails in Mamaroneck.

Rye Neck School Foundation - Jennifer Soussa

Mrs. Soussa began by reporting that last year was the first year in the District and they funded 23 grants valued at close to $90,000. These grants introduced new programs, clubs, classroom materials, tech and facility updates across all our schools. The RNSF awarded 5 grants this summer, including College Tours for HS juniors, the Written Out Loud Storytelling Program for the MS, and the second year of the 5th grade school store at F.E. Bellows. Tonight, there are 7 new grants on the Board's agenda for acceptance, which include flexible furniture for the entire 3rd grade at F.E. Bellows, phonics manipulatives and supplemental materials for 1st grade, and a 10th grade-wide field trip to

the Anne Frank Exhibition in NYC. This school year, they will be hosting 2 fundraisers- the second annual Polar Plunge on November 15th and the spring fundraising event on April 17th. In addition, they will be continuing the Panther Paver brick campaign in the late spring. Last year's bricks will be installed at the entrance to the High School in the next couple of weeks. Information about the RNSF, its events, grants, and how you can get involved, can be found on the website at ryeneckschoolfoundation.org and in their newsletters.

PTSA - Elizabeth Gillespie

PTSA President Elizabeth Gillespie began by advising the community that the PTSA is made up of 12 Executive Committee members and 52 committee heads. The Rye Neck International Club and the Special Education Action Committee are also a part of the PTSA, and you'll see the many meetings and activities they have coming up this year. The goal this year is to raise over $100,000 to fund the various programs, evenly, across the entire district K- 12.

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They kicked off the year by welcoming back teachers and staff during the superintendent conference days with the Ramblin' Coffee Truck. Everyone enjoyed custom drinks and breakfast treats to fuel their days. In the elementary schools, they hosted the Kindergarten Playdate at Daniel Warren in August. They also hosted Chalk the Walk on Labor Day Monday and encouraged families to gather at DW and FEB to write inspirational chalk messages for students to see on their way to school on the first day. In addition, they held the 1st and 2nd grade playdate last week at afterschool.

At the middle school, they hosted the annual Bagels and Locks event at the end of August. They distributed school supplies and partnered with the district to invite 6th graders into the school for bagels, tours, and to organize their lockers ahead of the school year. On September 5th, the class parents organized a Middle School Welcome Back snack for the students, aiming to foster connection and school spirit.

On September 6th, they hosted a Welcome Back to School Meet Up in the Park with the RNIC. The Booster Club came to sell merchandise and the RNIC had craft tables.

In addition, school programs have begun. Instructors from the Rye YMCA come to recess at Daniel Warren and F.E. Bellows to organize games for any student who would like to join during recess. After School Clubs kicked off last week. The PTSA is offering 16 clubs at Daniel Warren and 9 Clubs at F.E. Bellows. They include Drama, Sports, Woodshop, Robotics and 3D printing, just to name a few. The clubs will run through December. The winter session will start after that. Steps to Success began last Monday. The PTSA pays teachers to stay after school to help 6th graders adjust to their homework load and answer any questions the students may have. This year, the program will run through Feburary instead of ending in December.

The PTSA sponsored an "Organize Your 6th Grader" talk given by Allison Reynolds. Kids were encouraged to attend with their parents. There were over 70 attendees.

With regard to events and fundraising, the first parent social event of the year will be held September 25th at 7:30 p.m. after the Daniel Warren Open House. This event will be at Kyria in Harrison. The Ribbons for Rye Neck Fundraiser is underway. The goal is to

raise $30,000 by October 9th. Currently, they have raised around $16,000. They will be hand-delivering the window clings October 10th, just in time to show your panther pride for homecoming.

The first General Membership meeting takes place on the morning of September 26th in the DW Auditorium. There will be a meet and greet followed by our budget presentation and vote.

Lastly, their membership drive is in full swing. So far they have just over 330 members, and the goal for the year is 600.

IX. Reports - Board of Education

Office Hours

Trustees Carmel and Homberg will represent the Board at the next Office Hours, September 30, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Administration Building. Please email or call the District Clerk by Thursday, September 25th to make an appointment and state your topic of interest.

West/Put

Trustee Rainert reported that he joined the annual WestPut Advocacy meeting on September 11th where board members from Westchester and Putnam counties met to review, discuss and align on a regional consensus to the 37 proposed resolutions and bylaw amendments. These resolutions have been submitted by member boards of the NYSSBA Board of Directors for consideration during the 2025 Annual Business Meeting in October. The next step will be for Rye Neck's Board to review the resolutions, along with the WestPut perspective and then determine, as a board, how they would like our representative to vote at the mid October Meeting.

Policy Committee

Trustee Barker reported that the first Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for September 22nd at 9 a.m. in the Administration Building. The meeting is open to the public, and the agenda is posted on Board Docs.

X. New Business

Acceptance of Donation

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Barker and seconded by Trustee Gatenio, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby accepts the donation of *The Guy Joseph Pipolo Memorial Scholarship* which will be awarded annually to a graduating Rye Neck senior beginning with the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with the criteria established.

AYES: **All Present**
NAYES: **None**

Acceptance of Rye Neck School Foundation Grants

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Homberg and seconded by Trustee Rainer, it was

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District

hereby accept the Rye Neck School Foundation Grants to the Rye Neck Schools, as per the attached letter and chart.

AYES: **All Present**
NAYES: **None**

XI. **Public Comments Concerning Above**
No comments were made by the public.

XII. **Adjournment of Meeting**
Upon motion duly made by Trustee Homberg seconded by Trustee Barker, it was

RESOLVED, that there being no further business that the Board of Education Meeting of September 17, 2025 be adjourned.

AYES: **All Present**
NAYES: **None**

President Wagner adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mary Ellen Chiera
District Clerk