Rye Neck Schools

RYE NECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
300 HORNIDGE ROAD
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2026

DRAFT

Present: President Halli Gatenio
Trustee Gabriella Danza
Trustee Ruth Homberg
Trustee Alex Rainert
Trustee Laurel Ryan
Trustee Erica Wagner
Mr. Michael Burke, Superintendent of Schools
Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Student Senate Representative Dalia Mansell
Mary Ellen Chiera, District Clerk

I. Opening of Meeting

President Gatenio called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. President's Report

President Gatenio began her report by recognizing some of the events that have taken place throughout the Rye Neck community this month. The Rye Neck International Committee held a very successful potluck dinner earlier this month where families came together to celebrate the many cultures and traditions that make this district so special. The Rye Neck School Foundation sponsored a successful Not-So-Polar Plunge this past weekend. The Foundation had to get a little creative and pivot from the traditional plunge into the Sound to an ice bucket challenge instead. A great time was had by all. She congratulated the entire cast and crew of *Clue*, which was performed this past weekend. It was an incredible show! She thanked and congratulated Cindy Feinman and her amazing staff, whose talent, creativity and dedication are truly extraordinary.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Education, President Gatenio wished everyone a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving and stated how grateful she is to be part of such a wonderful school community. From the dedicated staff and talented students to the supportive families and volunteers, there is so much to be thankful for here at Rye Neck.

III. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Burke began by reporting that the District held its first-ever Global Citizens Week from November 2nd through 6th. Students and staff across all three schools took part in engaging activities throughout the week, culminating in an International Potluck Dinner on Friday night in the MS/HS cafeteria. He thanked the Rye Neck International Committee for organizing the celebration. Their hard work directly supports the District's goal to strengthen community belonging by turning cultural awareness into active, shared celebrations of our diverse nationalities and heritages.

Next, he announced that Rye Neck will offer a district-wide Pre-Kindergarten program starting next September and thanked the administrative team for their hard work in building three partnerships with local programs to make this possible. To learn more or ask questions, community members can visit the Rye Neck website, select the Daniel Warren tab, and complete the Pre-K Interest Survey. The Pre-K Coordinator, Daniel Warren Principal Ms. Tara Goldberg, will lead the application review process in January.

Mr. Burke then congratulated Director Ms. Cyndi Feinman and the entire cast and crew of the Fall MS/HS Drama, *Clue*. It is amazing to see how quickly the theater department brings such a high-caliber production to life. From the acting and set design to the stage and lighting crews, the students and staff delivered a fantastic show. Rye Neck sets a high bar for its performances, and *Clue* was a wonderful example of what happens when talent and hard work come together on stage.

He noted that the District enjoyed a wonderful fall athletic season. Diver Lucie Megret is heading to Rochester on November 19th to compete in the NYS Diving Championships. In addition, fall athletes were recently honored by Section 1 at the County Center with the Fall Season Community Service Award. This recognition celebrates their Pink Panthers Initiative, which successfully raised both awareness and funds for breast cancer awareness and research.

Mr. Burke thanked the RNSF for sponsoring the third annual Polar Plunge last Saturday at the Mamaroneck Beach & Yacht Club. He thanked MS Principal Jason Doerr for taking the plunge with him, as well as Mr. Siegel for offering his emotional support from much drier ground.

Additionally, he reminded the community that the first Technology Town Hall meeting takes place tonight at 6:00 PM in the MS/HS cafeteria. This session offers an open forum to discuss emerging technology like AI and the district's plans moving forward. The vision is to strike the right balance between preparing students for a tech-driven world and maintaining essential non-technology skills. Three Rye Neck staff members will also join to share how they have adapted their classroom practices with technology this year. Tonight is the first in a three-part series, with upcoming sessions planned for Daniel Warren and F.E. Bellows later this year.

IV. Student Recognition

Mr. Burke recognized the following students for their participation in the F.E. Bellows Girls on the Run Club:

3rd Graders: Adora Huang, Ama Plouseau, Charlotte Glass, Charlotte Cohan, Claire Graham, Emmy Ivanov, Leah Durand, Mia Khemlani, Nana Tsuchiya, and Skylar Sanderson

4th Graders: Angelina Gourgareas, Colette Salubro, Eleanor Streeter, Ella Malatras, Everly Baker, Hadley Apfel, Julia Mileo, Lucy Casey, and Maya Ortega

5th Graders: Claire Durand and Annaabel Glass

V. Curriculum Presentation - Capital Reserve Fund

Mrs. Mahar advised the Board that she would like to include a proposition to the community at the May 18, 2027 budget vote to authorize the creation of a new 10 year, $10 million Capital Reserve Fund. In 2027 the District is mandated by the New York State Education Department to perform a Building Condition Survey (BCS) where a licensed architect will inspect all school buildings. The findings from this survey will facilitate developing the District's updated 5-year capital plan. The new capital reserve fund will go towards funding work required under the BCS. In addition to obtaining voter approval to create the fund, voter approval would be required to spend down the funds. She stated that the current 2022 Capital Reserve Fund will expire in 2031and voter approval is needed to spend down any remaining funds on project work. They could also ask for voter approval to transfer the remaining funds to the new Capital Reserve Fund.

She reviewed the reserve funds Rye Neck currently has and the balances in these funds. In addition, she reviewed the 2022 Capital Reserve Fund activity and how a portion of the money was spent.

VI. Approval of Consent Agenda

Upon Motion duly made by Trustee Wagner 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:

1. Approval of the Minutes of the November 4, 2026 Board of Education Planning Session

2. Approval of Personnel Appointments, Leaves and Termination

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

Name	Effective Date	Type	Assignment/Location
Daniela Spellman	10/26/2026	Leave Replacement	Teacher/MS
Michael Huber	02/01/2027	Leave Replacement	Teacher/HS
Samantha Maresca	11/16/2026	1.0 FTE	Monitor/MS/HS

WHEREAS, **Julia Degen** is currently employed by the Rye Neck School District as a Long Term Substitute; and

WHEREAS, **Julia Degen** holds the appropriate New York State teaching certification and has satisfied the applicable requirements for appointment to the position of Elementary Teacher.

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board hereby appoints **Julia Degen**, in accordance with §3012 of the Education Law, to a four-year probationary term as an Elementary Teacher, in the tenure area of Elementary Education, commencing on November 1, 2026 and ending on October 31, 2030; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, that effective November 1, 2026, **Julia Degen** appointment as a Long Term Substitute shall cease concurrent with the commencement of the appointment to the teaching position.

WHEREAS, at its meeting held on June 20, 2024, the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, approved the appointment of **Elizabeth Merkel** to a four-year probationary period in the tenure area of Elementary Education, commencing August 27, 2024, and ending August 26, 2028; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that **Elizabeth Merkel**, having previously attained tenure in another New York State public school district, has satisfied all applicable requirements pursuant to **New York State Education Law § 3012(1)(a)**, thereby qualifying for a reduced three-year probationary period.

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education hereby amends its June 20, 2024 resolution to reduce the probationary appointment of **Elizabeth Merkel** in the tenure area of Elementary Education from four years to three years, establishing a revised probationary period commencing **August 27, 2024**, and ending **August 26, 2027;** and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board appoint **Julia Blondel** to a four-year probationary position as a Teaching Assistant, effective November 23, 2026, and ending November 22, 2030; 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 2026-2027 school year:

<u>Middle School Yearbook Proofreaders</u>
Jennifer Dallow
Janine Rocchio
Coleen Slattery

<u>High School Yearbook Proofreaders</u>
Trisha Appel
David Golden

Model UN Advisor
Nicholas Smith

HS Fall Play
Playbill - Jennifer Dallow
Ticket Sales - Mary Ellen Chiera
Videographer - David Golden
Set Designer - Vincent Gunn
Lighting Designer - Vittoria Orlando
Technical Director - Hannah Hancock Rubinsky
Tier 1 Art Crew - Alexandra Campana

UPK Coordinator
Tara Goldberg

and it was

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

SEASON	SPORT	LEVEL	ROLE	LAST	FIRST
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Calderon	Marlon
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Calvini	Jessica
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	DiFalco	Laura
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Iacovelli	Bryan
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Kleopoulos	Sophia
Winter	Track		Asst to Program	Kleopoulos	Sophia
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Levine	Brad
Winter	Basketball	JV	Head Coach/Girls	Pecchia	Carissa
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Reynolds	Allison
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Sinaheris	Sofia
2026-2027			Support Staff/Athletics	Wade	Ava

and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board rescind the appointment of **Robin Trigoboff** as the Head Coach for JV Girls Basketball; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Marissa Fanelli** up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave beginning September 24, 2026 to be used intermittently in accordance with applicable FMLA regulations. As per her CBA, Ms. Fanelli may utilize her sick days toward the first twenty (20) days of intermittent leave. Thereafter, the remainder of FMLA leave will be unpaid; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board grant **Employee #1965** up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave beginning October 20, 2026 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 **Carolann Baal** a paid FMLA beginning on January 20, 2027 through April 27, 2027; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, hereby that the Board authorize the suspension without pay of Employee #1811 for up to 30 calendar days, effective November 17, 2026.

3. Adoption of Portion of Section 5000 of the Policy Manual
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approves the adoption of a portion of Section 5000 which was reviewed and has no changes.

4. Adoption of Policy 4756 - Virtual, Blended, and Remote Learning
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approves the adoption of Policy 4765 which required a title change.

5. Adoption of Policy 5300.50 - Discipline of Students with Disabilities
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approves the adoption of amended Policy 5300.50 to correct a grammatical error.

6. Adoption of Policy 5695 - Students and Personal Electronic Devices
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approves the adoption of amended Policy 5695 to correct a grammatical error.

7. Adoption of Policy 8130.2 - Workplace Violence Prevention
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approves the adoption of amended Policy 8130.2 to correct a grammatical error.

8. Adoption of Policy 6690-E - Audit Committee Charter

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approves the adoption of Policy 6690-E - Audit Committee Charter - which was reviewed and has no changes.

9. Approval of 2027-2028 Budget Development Calendar

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approve the attached Budget Development Calendar for the 2027-2028 School Year Budget Vote.

10. Approval of Tax Certiorari Settlement

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District, hereby authorizes the District to execute settlement in accordance with the consent judgment pursuant to §726 of the Real Property Tax Law of the State of New York in the following tax certiorari proceeding:

Petitioner	**Municipality**	**Parcel ID#**	**Consent Judgment Amount**
745 E Boston Post Rd	Town of Rye	154.51-1-54	$6,245.30
TOTAL			**$6,245.30**

and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, pursuant to the settlement, the Board of Education authorizes the appropriation of the tax certiorari reserve to increase the 2026-2027 budget in the amount of $6,245.30 in order to refund taxes.

11. Approval of Disposal of Furniture and Equipment

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

12. Approval of Side Letter

RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby approve the attached Side Letter Agreement between the Rye Neck Union Free School District and the Rye Neck Administrators' Association, dated November 18, 2026.

13. Appointment of Hearing Officer

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District hereby appoints Steven Kasarda as the Hearing Officer in the Matter of Disciplinary Proceedings against Employee #1811. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with Civil Service Law Section 75. Hearing Officer Kasarda is hereby directed to cause a transcript to be made of the hearing, which will be referred to the Board, along with his findings of fact and recommendations as to penalty, if any, for review and final decision by the Board.

14. Approval of Homebound Instruction
RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District agree to arrange for homebound instruction as recommended by the Committee on Special Education, as per the **attached** memorandum.

15. 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.

16. 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**

VII. Financial Reports for Information

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

VIII. Communications to the Board

President Gatenio reported that the Board has received 3 communications since the last meeting, 2 regarding Safe Routes to School and 1 regarding artificial turf fields.

IX. Citizens' Privilege of the Floor

There were no comments made by the public.

X. Reports - Community and School Groups

Student Senate - Dalia Mansell

Student Senate Vice President Dalia Mansell began by sharing some highlights from the late-October spirit events. The sponsored Pink Out Day, where students and staff wore pink to show their support for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. That same week, the Senate filmed a promotional Halloween video and hosted the annual homeroom costume contest, which brought a lot of energy and participation across all four grades. Last week, they held a raffle fundraiser at the High School's fall production of *Clue*.

Next, she reported that the Senate is now focused on the November canned food drive at the High School. Along with collecting non-perishable items for local families ahead of the holidays, the drive is tied into the Battle of the Grades competition so students earn points for their class with every donation they bring in. Soon, they will assign each grade a color and will have students vote on their official class T-shirt designs for the year.

Finally, the Student Senate is organizing a Winter Pep Rally for next Wednesday, the half-day before Thanksgiving break, as a way to recognize the winter teams, build excitement for the winter season, and head into the holiday on a high note.

PTSA - Elizabeth Gillespie

PTSA President Elizabeth Gillespie reported on their October events. They held their annual Family Kickball Night at F.E. Bellows. The week of October 19th was Walk To School Week. Both Daniel Warren and Bellows had different themes each day to encourage participation. At Daniel Warren, children created living murals with pieces of nature that they found on their way to school. At Bellows, students created a school-wide Better Together Puzzle. Middle school and high school students were entered into raffles if they walked or biked to school and the health & wellness team handed out healthy snacks upon arrival. The Middle School Fright Night took place at the end of October where the kids enjoyed snacks, dancing, games, and a costume contest.

Next, she stated that they kicked off November with the RNIC Potluck Night, where over 200 attendees shared food, culture, and community. Thanks to the community's generosity, the RNIC raised over $3,000.

In addition, there are two give back drives happening now. The Middle School is sponsoring the Feeding Westchester Food Drive. Donation bins are at all schools and on November 23rd there will be a community day drop at the Middle/High School. The PTSA Coat Drive is running now. Donation boxes are at Daniel Warren and Bellows between now and December 4th where you can donate any new or gently used coats for all ages.

Lastly, Mrs. Gillespie advised that the next General Membership meeting will be December 3rd. We are doing an evening virtual meeting to hopefully give more people the opportunity to listen in.

RNSF - Jennifer Soussa

RNSF President, Jennifer Soussa reported that the RNSF held its Third Annual Polar Plunge this past Saturday and it was a big success. About 100 people participated and they raised about $12,000 and showcased three new grants at the plunge. These grants include: a reading nook in the 5th grade corridor in memory of Mrs. Burstein; a variety of colorful math mats in all DW classrooms to help students learn math facts in a fun way; and reading and phonics games and manipulatives throughout all DW grades to enhance the literacy curriculum. The grants will be open for the next few weeks if anyone would like to make a donation. She thanked Mr. Burke and Mr. Doerr for being great sports and participating in the event.

Booster Club - Heather Harvey

Booster Club member Sophie Lecue reported that provided framed photos of the senior cast and crew members of *Clue* which are on display in the hallway outside the PAC, and they ran concessions at both performances.

She stated that Winter Athletics Media Day is scheduled for November 23rd. Photos will be taken for use with social media and for athlete's families to purchase; the Booster Club Invitational Basketball Tournament is scheduled for December 3rd through 5th; and the Harlem Wizards are coming to Rye Neck on January 29th, and planning is well underway. There will be assemblies on December 11th at Daniel Warren and FE Bellows to get the kids excited for the big game, and tickets go on sale November 23rd.

XI. Reports - Board of Education

Athletic Director's Advisory Committee

Trustee Rainert reported that the ADAC held their second meeting on November 2nd where Mr. Ceglia provided an update on the fall season. He updated them on the successes of individual athletes as well as teams and advised that the fall athletes were chosen as recipients of the Section 1 Fall Season Community Service award for their Pink Panther Initiative which raised funds and awareness for Breast Cancer research. An Athletic Fall Season newsletter will be emailed right before Thanksgiving.

Trustee Rainert advised that Mr. Ceglia also presented the possibility of change in format for the football program since small schools like ours in Section 1 are looking at an 8-man model for the 2027 season. The focus of the discussion for the meeting was around attendance, absences and the commitment involved with and surrounding participation in athletics of all seasons. The conversation had a lot of energy and will be continued into the next meeting.

Policy Committee

Trustee Homberg reported that the Policy Committee held its second meeting of the school year on Monday, November 9th. This was an additional meeting we scheduled to help catch up on reviewing the quarterly policy updates provided by NYSSBA. As a result, there are several policies before the Board for a first read this evening.

They reviewed updates to the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity policy, which is a required policy and includes changes related to federal website accessibility requirements. They reviewed updates to the Voting Procedures policy, which clarify and streamline procedures for absentee, early mail, and military ballots. Several other updates bring existing policies in line with current state requirements. These include policies on Timeout and Physical Restraint, Interscholastic Athletics, and Student Health Services. There are also a group of policies addressing students in temporary housing. These updates reflect changes in terminology, moving away from the term "homeless students," and clarify protections and opportunities for these students, including participation in extracurricular activities.

Other policies reviewed are as follows: Policy 5422, Diapering and Toileting Protocols, is a new recommended policy. This will be particularly relevant as we move forward with our Universal Pre-K program. Updates to the Child Abuse, Maltreatment or Neglect in a Domestic Setting policies, addresses a change in state law prohibiting anonymous reporting. Policy 8635, Information and Data Privacy, Security Breach and Notification, is another important update. These changes strengthen requirements around data privacy and cybersecurity, including reporting procedures when a cybersecurity incident occurs. The Extreme Risk Protection Orders policy, updates terminology to reflect current state requirements.

In addition to the policy updates, they reviewed several committee charters.
For the Facilities and Technology Committees, they recommend readoption with an update allowing for up to six community members to serve on each committee. This gives the District some additional flexibility as it looks to involve community members in

these areas. They also reviewed the Audit Committee Charter and recommended it for Readoption. They discussed the possibility of developing a charter for an Athletic Director Advisory Council in the coming months.

Lastly, she stated that they are holding off on reviewing Policy 8636, Artificial Intelligence for now. The Technology Committee will review the topic and gather additional community input through the upcoming town halls before bringing it back to the Policy Committee. Given how quickly AI is evolving, they feel this deserves a thoughtful approach.

The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 11th, at 9:00 a.m. in the Administration Building.

XII. New Business

The following policies were addressed in the Policy Committee report by Trustee Homberg:

First Reading - Policy 0100- Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity
First Reading - Policy 2120. 2 - Voting Procedures
First Reading - Policy 2261-E.1 - Facilities Committee Charter
First Reading - Policy 2261-E.2 - Technology Committee Charter
First Reading - Policy 4321.12 & 4321.12-R - Timeout and Physical Restraint (All Students) & Regulation
First Reading - Policy 5100 - Student Attendance
First Reading - Policy 5151 & 5151-R - Students in Temporary Housing & Regulation
First Reading - Policy 5205 - Eligibility for Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Activities
First Reading - Policy 5280 - Interscholastic Athletics
First Reading - Policy 5404 - Student Wellness
First Reading - Policy 5420& 5420-R - Student Health Services and Regulation
First Reading - Policy 5422 - Diapering and Toileting Protocols
First Reading - Policy 5460 & 5460-R - Child Abuse, Maltreatment or Neglect in a Domestic Setting & Regulation
First Reading - Policy 8130.1 - Extreme Risk Protection Orders (The "Red Flag Law")
First Reading - Policy 8635 & 8635-R - Information and Data Privacy, Security, Breach and Notification & Regulation

XIII. Public Comments Concerning Above

There were no comments made by the public.

XIV. Adjournment of Meeting

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Wagner seconded by Trustee Ryan, it was

RESOLVED, that there being no further business before the Board, that the Board of Education Meeting of November 18, 2026 be adjourned.

AYES: All Present
NAYES: None

President Gatenio adjourned the meeting at 9:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mary Ellen Chiera
District Clerk