

OCTOBER 26, 2020
WILMETTE, IL
REGULAR MEETING

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held on Monday, October 26, 2020 at the Mikaelian Education Center, 615 Locust Road, Wilmette, Illinois. President Lisa Schneider-Fabes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Lisa Schneider-Fabes, Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica, Amy Poehling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone

Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Kari Cremascoli, Corey Bultemeier, Heather Glowacki, Katie Lee, Kristin Swanson

President Fabes acknowledged the Metrics Advisory Team's difficult work and commitment to maintaining the health of the greater community. She noted the team is closely monitoring the upward trajectory of the COVID-19 Positivity Rates and New Cases per 100,000 within the Wilmette and neighboring communities, as well as students and staff absences. Through the administration's swift, diligent efforts to identify, contact trace, and isolate cases among students and staff, there have not been any identified cases of within school transmission, which shows the school's safety measures are effective. She stated that it also points to collective action needed outside of school. She asked families to take safety precautions seriously, both in and out of school; wear a mask, wash your hands, social distance, avoid large gatherings, and quarantine as needed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Principal Cindy Anderson videotaped Romona students who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVE THE MINUTES

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to accept the minutes of the September 21, 2020 Board of Education Regular and Executive Session Meetings and the October 9, 2020 Special Meeting minutes. The minutes were approved as submitted by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote**.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. DeMonte and Dr. Glowacki read the public comments submitted via email:

Rucha Patel submitted several written communications supporting in-person learning. Rachel Heiligman, Lionel Girardin, Brian Novelline, Lindsay Rattay all wrote to support continued in-person learning. Nilesh Kumar sent a marketing email for enhanced web traffic. Cathy Peach, Support Staff Union President, wrote on behalf of the Support Staff Union for consideration to move to remote learning to continue teaching and learning from November 30 – December 18 to allow quarantine time for families, students and staff following the Thanksgiving holiday.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facility Development – Mrs. Sternweiler reported the committee met as part of Committee of the Whole on October 19th. Mr. Bultemeier updated the Board on the two village construction projects. The majority of work around Central School relating to the Central Avenue construction project has been completed. Construction continues in the downtown area. The village plans to pause work through the winter months opening Central Avenue to two-way traffic.

Mr. Bultemeier reported administration continues to be in contact with the Village and Park District regarding installation of an irrigation system under the playfields between Highcrest and the junior high. Installation will continue during the winter. The District will have access to portions of the playfields as the installation work progresses from field to field.

Mr. DeMonte updated members regarding permits that were required by the Village for the tents installed outside of each of the schools in August. Letters were required to be mailed to residents living within 250' of school property lines to notify them of the tents installed for outdoor education.

School Finance – Mr. Cesaretti said Mr. Bultemeier reported the annual tax levy process requires the District to publicly provide an estimate of the 2020 tax levy at least 20 days prior to the approval of the tax levy. The official estimation of the 2020 tax levy will be presented during tonight's Board Meeting, with Board approval on November 16th. Mr. Bultemeier reported the Consumer Price Index (CPI) percentage is 2.3%, the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) is estimated at \$1.9B, and new property growth is estimated at \$14.2M. He noted new property growth has no impact to existing property owners. Mr. Bultemeier stated the Debt Service request is \$1.56M to cover amounts of bond payments due. The total levy request is \$59.24M including debt service. He noted the tax levy request is 4.49% higher than the 2019 actual extension; 2.3% related to CPI and 2.19% to capture new growth.

Mr. Bultemeier explained that the District is not obligated to hold a public hearing to comply with the Truth in Taxation laws as the levy request is under 5%. However, the District traditionally chooses to remain transparent by publishing notice of a public hearing to be held prior to the regular Board meeting in November.

Mr. Bultemeier also reported on the SSCIP Liability Insurance Renewal. He stated the annual liability policy runs from January 1st to December 31st. He had received an email regarding policy increase expected at 19-23%, partly due to COVID-19. He noted the information detailed insurance disasters such as floods, tornados, hail storms, hurricanes and now COVID as reason for the dramatic increase. He noted the District budgeted for 10-15% increases and the total premium last December was \$218K. He said this would be \$40K increase in premium payments.

Strategy – Mr. Steen reported the Strategy committee and the CRC are excited to engage and guide the District in their plans to develop a multi-year Strategic plan in coordination with the Consortium for Education (CEC). CEC is a consulting firm that was hired last spring to help develop the strategic plan, however, with the pandemic and focus on reopening schools, these plans were put on hold until second semester of the 2020-2021 school year. Dr. Cremascoli has been in contact with CEC and together they are engaging in options on how to proceed under current pandemic conditions. Discussion on ways to effectively navigate work beginning in 2021 took place and the CEC will continue to evaluate strategic planning efforts.

CRC Report – Mr. Steen reported on CRC in conjunction with the Strategy Committee report. The next meeting is November 10th.

Liaison Reports

Educational Foundation – Ms. Stone reported Ed Foundation held a virtual meeting on October 20th. The Foundation worked with and granted \$3K toward Mr. DeMonte's development of an Eva platform called "*Sora*", to allow students to access eBooks. She noted the Foundation's Annual Appeal is beginning and stressed that the normal fundraisers will not occur this year so the annual appeal will be the sole source of revenue for the Foundation. The Gripp Grant deadline is October 30th at 5:00 p.m. The Foundation is working to partner with fifth-eighth grade students in a campaign called "*We All Live Here*" in the spring of 2021 to celebrate and promote inclusion in schools. The next meeting is November 18th.

Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) – Mrs. Sternweiler reported members may register for the October 28th Virtual North Cook Fall Division meeting as well as the Virtual Summit held on November 20th. She received feedback from informed community members regarding 2020 IASB Resolutions Report and attended the first of two discussions for delegates on resolutions. She reviewed the eight new proposed resolutions and stated she would provide materials at the next Committee of the Whole meeting for members to review and reconsider.

Legislative Update

Ms. Stone stated there was nothing new to report.

INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Written Communication

- Dr. Cremascoli reported the Board received written communications Dan Johnson regarding the petition signed by parents supporting in-person education
- Katie Papadakis supporting the petition for in-person learning
- Robin and Tom McShane supporting in-person learning
- Thomas Creagan of Lake Michigan Technology Consulting regarding his E-Rate consultant work with schools
- Remote Family Committee regarding gaps in remote learning
- Mary Rita Kropp regarding school aged children having in-person birthday parties and sleepovers
- Rebecaa Kamen and Jeff Yasumoto acknowledging their child’s remote learning team’s outstanding work
- Louella Levey of the League of Women Voters of Wilmette requesting the Board vote ‘Yes’ on IASB’s Resolution 2 supporting legislation to strengthen safe gun storage laws
- Kelly Gruner expressed concern about shifting to a remote learning environment
- Maja Kos requested the District implement a weekly COVID-19 saliva screening for in-person students and District 39 staff
- Rucha Patel sent several communications supporting in-person education.
- Rachel Heiligman, Michele Coffey, Lionel Girardin, Brian Novelline, Lindsay Rattay wrote to support continued in-person education
- Nilesh Kumar emailed to market a web traffic enhancement plan
- Laura Hemmer suggested implementing a testing strategy for in-person students and staff and consider re-evaluating metrics used for determining a pivot to remote learning
- Cathy Peach, D39 Support Staff Union President, requested the Board of Education consider pivoting to remote learning beginning the end of Thanksgiving Break to the beginning of Winter Break, November 30 - December 18th to allow community, staff, students the ability to quarantine while still teaching and learning.

B. Administrative Announcements

Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Walk Against Hate at HMS and WJHS

Dr. Cremascoli stated last weekend, students, teachers, staff, administrators and families at HMS and WJHS participated in the ADL Walk Against Hate. There was broad participation and support for this important cause.

Time Capsule Opening October 30th

Dr. Cremascoli stated Board members and the community are invited to Highcrest Middle School on October 30th at 3:00 for a time capsule opening. The 25-year-old time capsule opening will take place near the beautiful new sign at the front of the school. Several former staff members who were part of the HMS family at that time will be in attendance to support the event. The event will be live-streamed.

Metrics Reopening Advisory Team Update

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Metrics Reopening Advisory Team met last Friday. In short, the team is on alert based on the community spread metrics. Of note, the COVID-19 Positivity Rates as well as the New Cases per 100,000 within the community and neighboring communities have been high and the team continues to monitor these metrics closely. In addition, cases within schools and staff absences are also metrics that are closely monitored. Dynamic graphs of these data have been published to the Metrics Reopening Advisory Team website. Dr. Cremascoli reviewed and explained the data presented on various graphs on the website.

Mr. Steen noted on the Active COVID-19 Cases graph the District had not had 95 students who recovered from COVID. Dr. Cremascoli clarified that the bar on the left noted student positive cases and the students who were quarantined due to an active case represents the 95 number.

Mr. Cesaretti noted the high number of staff absences. Dr. Cremascoli noted the COVID illness mirrors other illnesses and staff are being respectfully compliant to stay home and quarantine. She noted if staff absences continue to climb it will be difficult to enforce health and safety protocols to keep staff and students safe. The District continues to interview substitutes and have obtained a large substitute pool as well as having designated staff to serve as internal substitutes.

Mr. Steen echoed President Fabes remarks stating the District has been successful in ensuring health protocols are followed at school and families need to continue these practices at home as well. He thanked the community for their compliance in contact tracing and thanked Dr. Cremascoli and the administration for working nights and weekends in following up with the county health department in early identification of positive cases and contact tracing.

Mr. Panzica was grateful for the metrics team and impressed by the weekly meetings. Dr. Cremascoli stated the District is exceptionally privileged to have an incredible metrics team with an immense amount of expertise. She noted how fortunate the District is to have families' cooperation to work together to isolate cases and prevent spread among schools. The health and safety of the entire community is a priority. She thanked the hard work of school nurses, principals, and the Department of Public Health.

COVID-19 Testing Update

Dr. Cremascoli stated the District has successfully launched a new testing access partnership for faculty and staff. District 39 partnered with Ambry Genetics to provide all employees access to Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, with results provided quickly. Employees can access testing through this partnership or through other testing sites at any time if they are experiencing symptoms or have been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Dr. Cremascoli stated New Trier is utilizing a new saliva screening test that may prove useful in the future. She attended the session with the New Trier team in which the testing agency reviewed the protocol, sensitivity, and application. She contacted a school nurse that uses the same testing at a district in the western suburbs who noted there are barriers and concerns to this approach. She noted the District would closely monitor the New Trier testing pilot and additional testing options would continue to be explored including benefits and costs.

Mrs. Sternweiler asked if testing would help to lower staff absence rates and if New Trier's testing was mandatory for in-person staff and students. Dr. Cremascoli stated testing in District 39 would allow staff to return to work sooner and safely and that testing at New Trier was optional except for in-person athletics participation where testing is mandatory.

eBook Platform and Public Library Partnership

Mr. DeMonte reported a new partnership with the Wilmette Public Library was developed for students to access eBooks. As access to learning commons is limited and public library visits may not happen as often as before the pandemic, it was important to ensure students have an easy way to access books. A single, district-wide ebook platform named *Sora* of OverDrive was developed. Anthony Auston, Director of the Wilmette Public Library, issued a statement expressing his excitement in partnering with District 39 to allow students and the community to access the wide digital resources through one easy to use digital platform.

Members were very impressed with this resource and felt it would be widely utilized. Discussion regarding various licensing fees ensued.

Community Review Committee (CRC) Members-At-Large

Dr. Cremascoli stated in accordance with the CRC Bylaws, Darshana Lele, Emily Paris and Virginia Reising are presented for approval as Members-at-Large to serve on the 2020-2021 CRC.

Diversity and Inclusion Executive Board Member of PTA/PTO

Dr. Cremascoli said she meets monthly with the Presidents' Council of District 39. This group comprises the PTA presidents from each of our six schools. The committee discussed the District's community-wide effort to support diversity and inclusion and consider the opportunity to coordinate efforts district-wide. Ideally, each PTA would identify an Executive Board level position to lead diversity and inclusion.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Board received the following FOIA requests:

- Jeff Axelrod FOIA dated October 16, 2020 requesting a list of staff who resigned for any reason along with resignation dates, resignation letters or other documents explaining the resignation created from October 2nd to present. He also requested documentation of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure, suspected or confirmed cases for D39 staff from October 2nd to present.
- Commercial FOIA from Ken Deloian of SmartProcure dated October 5, 2020 requesting any/all purchasing records from June 30, 2020 to present.
- Jeff Axelrod FOIA request dated October 2, 2020 asking for staff who resigned for any reason including dates of resignation, resignation letters, documents explaining the resignation from September 25th through present.
- Robert Degre FOIA request dated October 2, 2020 asking for the number of students with IEPs, charter school students with IEPs, homeschooled students with IEPs/ISPs, how many privately placed students referred for testing under IDEA requirements, privately placed students identified through child find for special education or related services, how many private placed students with IEP/ISP, if the district child-find referral process is in writing and how to access the district's child-find referral information, what is the total IDEA Part B allocation, what is the total IDEA Section 619 allocation, how many private placement students receive IDEA funded services, which IDEA funded services were provided to privately placed students, the location of services provided to privately placed students.
- Nina Terebessy of Equal Justice Works Fellow, Children and Families Practice Group sponsored by Abb Vie Inc, & Kirkland & Ellis, FOIA request dated September 21, 2020 requesting a response to FOIA sent from Kirkland & Ellis on February 7, 2020. That FOIA requested public records pertaining to District 39's grievance procedures in response to sexual harassment (including but not limited to sexual assault) and gender based discrimination as well as the District's anti-discrimination policy to assist in accessing and disseminating information about the legal rights of general public in compliance with Title IX.

- Jeff Axelrod FOIA dated September 25, 2020 requesting a list of staff who resigned, any/all resignation letters/documents from September 11, 2020 to present. Also requested any documentation about suspected/confirmed COVID-19 exposure, suspected and confirmed cases for D39 staff from September 11, 2020 to present.
- Jeff Axelrod FOIA dated September 22, 2020 requesting any district documents including emails which contain any/all contents of emails sent by Jeff Axelrod between September 11, 2020 to present.
- Jeff Axelrod FOIA dated September 18, 2020 requesting a list of staff who resigned for any reason along with resignation dates, resignation letters or other documents explaining the resignation created from September 18 to present. Also requested documentation of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure, suspected or confirmed cases for D39 staff from August 18, 2020 to present.
- Jeff Axelrod FOIA request dated September 3, 2020 requesting electronic copies of district documents containing test results for building ventilation for the past five years.

C. Strategic Plan Updates

1. Future Strategic Planning Update

Dr. Cremascoli stated the ongoing planning and considerations underway related to future strategic planning. The Consortium for Educational Change (CEC), hired by the Board last school year to help lead Strategic Planning efforts, has started to implement its Strategic Planning processes through a hybrid approach to team meetings, with some in-person and some remote engagement opportunities. Dr. Cremascoli was briefed on these opportunities and some of the successes the CEC is having in other districts and was able to provide the D39 CRC with an update on Strategic Planning. The CRC team will hear more from the CEC at the next meeting and consider approaches as well as timing for future planning efforts.

2. Enhanced Remote Learning Program Review Update

Dr. Cremascoli stated October marks two months of school and signaled a time to conduct a program review of enhanced remote learning model: strengths, areas for improvement, and student/family and teacher needs.

Ms. Katie Lee stated the program review began with collection of initial data through surveys administered to teachers, parents, and students. Elementary teachers cited classroom routines, parent communication, and student ease navigating technology were all going well. They also shared that collegial collaboration and establishing classroom community was progressing positively. Grades 5-8 teachers cited student ease with accessing technology and student engagement/attention were going well.

Ms. Lee reported at the elementary level, top challenges identified included student engagement and attention, technology issues, and student access to supplies and materials. Additional challenges identified were elementary class size, adjusting to the class schedule, and finding opportunities within the school day for students to connect with peers. At the 5-8 level, challenges included balancing asynchronous and synchronous learning, student participation, completion of asynchronous work, and for some, access and use of Schoology. Grade 5-8 teachers cited too much time on screen, attendance and schedule confusion, and accessing feedback in Schoology as additional challenges to problem solve. She noted teachers across all grades cited needs for additional technology tools such as monitors/screens, iPad stands, cameras and help with managing break out rooms.

Principal Kelly Jackson shared highlights of survey data collected. Survey responses were received from 368 parents (parents were asked to fill out a survey for each child enrolled), 177 elementary students (grade 3 and 4 were surveyed), and 277 students in grades 5-8. All 44 remote teachers participated and provided responses on their needs. Parents and students were asked questions regarding total engagement, time spent in synchronous learning (screen time), connections to school, ease of access for technology and adult support, and engagement with peers.

Ms. Lee stated a targeted review of the Enhanced Full Remote Program is in process. A team of teachers and administrators will review all survey data. The next steps include a continued review of paraprofessionals who support remote learners. After gathering all feedback, the team will evaluate the program and identify 2-3 focus areas to be improved and formulate recommendations, and develop and implement an action plan. Ms. Lee stated the administration would then begin an in-person program review with same stakeholders.

Ms. Lee noted they took the opportunity to ask families at this moment in time, how they would be to keep their child enrolled in remote learning for the second semester. She reported of 368 responses nearly 55% would most likely keep their child in the remote learning program.

Board member discussion included students feeling disconnected, sad about not seeing friends/lack of social interactions, connecting academics with social emotional learning, class sizes for remote learning, and timeline for second semester learning options.

3. 2020-2021 Superintendent/District Goals

The 2020 - 2021 Superintendent/District Goals action item outlined goals to support District initiatives and was submitted for Board of Education approval.

D. Annual Business

1. Review the Tax Year 2020 Estimate of Levy

Mr. Bultemeier reported the tax levy process requires the District to estimate the tax extension and levy request by fund at a public board meeting. The official estimate for the 2020 tax levy was presented along with other key information related to the tax levy. A review of the tax levy calendar was shared along with general background information such as the importance of property taxes to the D39 budget. Historical information going back ten years for CPI, new growth, and EAV was also reviewed. The limiting tax rate calculation highlights that existing property owners should expect a 2.3% increase on their District 39 portion of the property tax bill. The last portion of the presentation detailed the importance of CPI and new property growth, and estimate of the 2020 tax levy by fund.

2. Approve Public Hearing Date

Mr. Bultemeier stated the District has traditionally held a public hearing before the Board approves the tax levy each year in the spirit of transparency. The District is not required to hold a public hearing since the tax levy request is below 5%.

3. Establishment of Sick Banks for Employees in Non-Union Positions

Dr. Cremascoli stated the approval and creation of a “regular” sick bank and COVID sick bank for employees in “non-union” positions allows for all D39 employees to have the same benefits. The provisions outlined for employees in non-union positions very closely mirrors the provisions for Wilmette Education Association (WEA). There are approximately 30 employees who could benefit from this provision. As with the WEA and SSU, COVID sick bank participation is optional.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

ACTION ITEMS**A. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the personnel report dated October 26, 2020 which included licensed full-time employment of **Michael Golabek**, effective October 19, 2020; **Harriet Rawls**, effective October 19, 2020; educational support personnel full-time employment of **Margaret Baker**, effective October 16, 2020; **Kenneth Deans**, effective October 13, 2020; **Jason Gotangco**, effective October 13, 2020; **Ewa Luberda**, effective November 2, 2020; **Gloria Murray**, effective October 5, 2020; **Lisa Pines**, effective October 19, 2020; **Catherine Rubino**, effective September 30, 2020; licensed resignation of **Kathleen Bowers**, effective October 23, 2020; educational support personnel resignation **Katelynn Fields**, effective October 6, 2020; **Joanne Perri-Nadler**, effective October 30, 2020: approve the 2020-2021 Superintendent/District Goals: review the Tax Year 2020 Estimate of Levy as per “Exhibit A” dated October 26, 2020: approve a *Public Hearing on the Proposed Levy* scheduled to immediately precede the regular November 16, 2020 meeting of the Board of Education: approve the establishment of sick banks for employees in non-union positions: approve Darshana Lele, Emily Paris and Virginia Reising to serve as a members-at-large on the Community Review Committee (CRC): approve to release to the public the executive session minutes of August 12, 2020: approve to maintain as confidential the executive session minutes for the following dates: June 10, 2019 Session 2; June 17, 2019, August 26, 2019 Sessions 1 & 2; September 16, 2019; September 23, 2019; October 28, 2019; November 18, 2019; December 16, 2019; January 13, 2020; January 27, 2020; February 10, 2020; February 24, 2020; March 16, 2020; April 20, 2020; April 27, 2020; May 11, 2020; May 18, 2020; June 8, 2020; June 15, 2020; July 20, 2020; August 17, 2020; August 24, 2020; September 14, 2020, September 21, 2020: Approve the disposal of executive session audio recordings pursuant to District policy for the following dates: May 14, 2018; May 21, 2018; June 18, 2018; August 27, 2018; September 24, 2018; October 15, 2018; October 22, 2018, 5:00 p.m.; October 22, 2018, 9:00 p.m.: approve the accounts payable for bills listed between September 22, 2020 – October 26, 2020 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$796,818.15; O&M Fund \$301,187.46; Transportation Fund \$134,619.26; Capital Projects \$1,141,472.00; total all funds: \$2,374,096.87: approve the manual checks issued between September 22, 2020 and October 26, 2020 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$656,065.93; O&M Fund \$63,341.77; Transportation \$(566.25); total all funds: \$718,841.45.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” – Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica, Amy Poehling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone, Lisa Schneider-Fabes; voting “nay” – none; absent – none:
Motions Carried.

CONFERENCE ITEMS**Old Business****1. Board Work Regarding Equity**

Mrs. Poehling suggested the Board begin reading the book, *What Does It Mean To Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy* by Robin DiAngelo and having a facilitator to engage the group discussion. She acknowledged the administration is focused on supporting students at this time. Dr. Cremascoli stated the administration could pursue reading the book over winter break. In the meantime, the Board would read the book and look to a meeting with facilitator.

Mr. Steen noted he would like to discuss Juneteenth in the future.

New Business

President Fabes noted the superintendent's goals evaluation process was reviewed last year. Members felt the process was cumbersome and proposed streamlining it. She asked for volunteers to pare down the evaluation process in the next month. Ms. Stone and Mr. Cesaretti volunteered to collaborate on the project.

Good and Welfare

Ms. Stone shared her encounter watching an excited little girl walking with her father, at times leaping her way to Romona one morning. She noticed the same little girl at dismissal time the next day exuding a different type of energy, which Ms. Stone identified as confident and self-assured. She noted in normal days this would be heartwarming but during the pandemic this was a noble event; young children excited to go to school, leaving fulfilled, and staff working to do their best in difficult times.

Mr. Steen noted this was the Monday before election day and reminded everyone to vote. He said his son watched his mother cast her first vote in the General Election as an American citizen.

President Fabes noted several Board members visited Harper School. She reported for those not fortunate enough to participate in the site visit, the addition is beautiful. While most parents or community members have been unable to see classrooms, she noted they are warm, colorful, welcoming and lovely spaces.

President Fabes noted due to audio issues, her opening remarks could not be heard. She reiterated that the District has not identified any positive COVID-19 cases transmitted within the schools, which is remarkable and deserves to be celebrated. She stated observing all of the precautions, social distancing, washing hands, and wearing masks works. She asked the community to work together to follow the same protocols outside of school to allow students to remain in their school programs whether in-person, hybrid, or remote learning.

Being no further business, Mr. Cesaretti moved, seconded by Mrs. Sternweiler, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education. It adjourned at 9:38 p.m. by **General Consent**.

 President

 Secretary