

PRESS RELEASE

FLORAL PARK-BELLEROSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING – December 11, 2023

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of the Floral Park-Bellerose Elementary School District was conducted at the John Lewis Childs School and via teleconference on Monday, December 11, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Minutes of the November 13, 2023 Regular Meeting, Minutes of the November 30, 2023 Workshop Meeting, Treasurer's Report, Health Report, Cafeteria Report and Schedule of Disbursements were approved or accepted as submitted.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the following FPBS sixth grade students from the Don't Press Send club: Hanna Besozzi, Mayra Islam, Grace McDonald, Charissa Tam, Leila Torres, Lily Trentacoste and Kiera Zielinski.

President Kierez read the Public Participation Statement.

The Board conducted two Public Hearings: Public Hearing on Tax Exemptions for Senior Citizens and a Public Hearing on Tax Exemptions for Persons with Disabilities and Limited Income.

FPBS sixth grade students from the Don't Press Send club conducted a presentation led by teacher, Caitlyn Periera.

Interim Superintendent Ruiz, FPBS Principal John DeKams, and JLCS Interim Principal Kristina Lynch conducted a DASA/Anti-Bullying presentation. The presentation can be viewed on the school website, under the Board of Education tab.

Interim Superintendent:

Interim Superintendent Ruiz began her report by stating that she hoped everyone enjoyed a festive and fun Thanksgiving break spending time with family. She remarked that we are now fully immersed in the holiday season and wished a Happy Hanukkah to all those who observe and are celebrating this week. The students are learning about various traditions as we observe all the December holidays. There are upcoming Winter concerts at both schools - JLCS's concert will be held on Thursday, December 14th and FPBS will hold their concert on Wednesday, December 20th.

Last month the district spoke about upgrades to the heating systems, to convert from a steam heating system to a traditional hot water heating system, and the possibility of going out for a bond to fund the cost. The Board of Education has decided to adjust the timeline of the potential bond vote to the Fall of 2024. This decision was made for several reasons. First and foremost, the Board of Education wants to ensure the community has every bit of information they need to make an informed decision. Considering the timeline, a vote in the late winter is simply too soon. Additionally, adjusting the timeline to the Fall allows the district to better forecast revenue projections and interest rates, as both have a material impact on the amount of the potential bond. It will possibly move forward in the Fall of 2024.

Goal #1 Fostering Culture and Communication:

The second Strategic Planning meeting of the year was held on Tuesday, November 28th. Participants selected their goal area subgroup of interest and began combing through the various survey results and data which was

collected and shared with the committee. The goal is to pinpoint trends through this data dive to begin identifying district priorities for the next five years. Rich conversations were held among the participants, and the plan will start to take shape as the committee moves forward. The next meeting will be held on January 18, 2024. The presentation for this last meeting can be found on the school website.

Meet and Greet

The Board of Education held its first *Meet and Greet* of the year for PreK and Kindergarten families. Interim Superintendent Ruiz said that this is an excellent opportunity to speak with the board and administration about anything that is on your mind. The next *Meet and Greet* will be held on January 11th for first and second-grade families.

SCOPE Morning Program

The SCOPE morning program started this morning with three students in attendance. Attendance varies due to both full and part-time students who attend on various days of the week. The district is thankful to SCOPE for their partnership with this program and the benefits it provides to parents as well as its coordination with other district programs. The district is looking forward to the Saturday Academy starting on January 6th. Flyers have been distributed to inform parents about the courses available, and the hope is that everyone is or will be registering for the courses their children want to attend.

Goal #2 Opportunities and Success for All:

The PEARL Dyslexia Screener was recently administered to all kindergarten students. This is a valuable tool that helps identify students who may face future reading challenges by assessing critical decoding skills. Out of 203 kindergarten students screened, thirty-eight or approximately 18% districtwide were identified as needing intervention. Some of these students have already been identified as students with disabilities. In response to these findings, Reading Horizons, structured literacy intervention, will be implemented five days a week by the special education, reading, or AIS teachers. Students will receive the necessary support to bridge grade-level gaps and become proficient readers by addressing decoding challenges. Mrs. Sharon Meyer, Director of Special Education, provided a presentation on dyslexia to the Board of Education during the Workshop Meeting, where they explored the intricacies of dyslexia. The presentation aimed to provide an understanding of dyslexia, covering its prevalence, and early indicators, and highlighting the strengths inherent in dyslexic learners. In addition, Mrs. Meyer presented the various structured literacy interventions that are specifically designed to support students with dyslexia. The District is committed to supporting dyslexic learners with the most current research-based practices. The entire presentation can be found on the school website, under the Board of Education tab.

Goal #3 Exploration and Innovation:

The district is in the process of building a new website that will be easier to navigate and more up to date. The website will be launched after the new year.

Goal #4 Maximizing Resources:

The district has coordinated a contract with Kiddie Academy, a local community-based organization (CBO) to operate a district-run UPK program at their location. Currently, Kiddie Academy has some eligible Floral Park-Bellerose District resident students, ready to commence the UPK program as of January 2024. The district worked closely with Kiddie Academy, which meets the criteria as a community-based organization. Kiddie Academy is eligible to partner with the district so resident students who attend will benefit from a tuition-free opportunity that is funded through the UPK grants during their full-day program.

The budget development process for the 2024-25 school year is well underway. The district met with all budget leaders and has begun to develop the first draft, to be presented at the January Board of Education meeting. As a reminder, at the January meeting, the first draft of the budget will be presented, with a focus on Transportation and the overall staffing budget districtwide.

Interim Superintendent Ruiz wished everyone a joyous holiday season with family and friends and a restful vacation.

High School:

Sewanhaka Central High School District Board of Education Trustee Peltonen congratulated Mrs. Alicia Calabrese on being named the new Principal of Floral Park Memorial High School. Mrs. Calabrese has over 25 years of experience in the Sewanhaka Central High School District and has served as the Assistant Principal at Floral Park Memorial since 2018. Trustee Peltonen stated that Mrs. Calabrese brings a wealth of knowledge and familiarity with the school and community. Trustee Peltonen was pleased to report that the Superintendent search is well underway, with adherence to all procedures and timelines. Information will be shared as the process unfolds. The Floral Park Memorial High School Drama Club production of “Clue” was held November 29-December 1st. Trustee Peltonen stated that the performances are a testament to the talent and dedication of the cast and all those involved in making the production a success. The Winter Concerts and Art Exhibition will be held on December 12-14th. Chorus will perform on December 12th, Orchestra will perform on December 13th, and Band will perform on December 14th. These events showcase the talents of the school’s musicians and gifted artists. The last day of school before Winter recess is Friday, December 22nd. The students will return to school on Tuesday, January 2nd. Trustee Peltonen wished all students, faculty, and staff a happy and healthy holiday break. The next Board of Education meeting for the Sewanhaka Central High School District will be held on Tuesday, December 19th at 8 pm. The meeting will be live-streamed and can be viewed on the Sewanhaka Central High School District’s YouTube channel.

Budget Advisory Committee:

Trustee Trentacoste gave a report on behalf of Trustee Culotta. She stated that the Budget Advisory Committee met on November 27th to discuss the development of the budget for the 2024-2025 school year. The meeting provided a comprehensive overview of various aspects of the budget as well as the communication strategies to present transparent information to the community. Over the last five years, the district has experienced budget increases due to contractual obligations and rising health care costs. Mrs. Linda Macias, Assistant Superintendent for Business, noted that only 5% of the budget is discretionary, and 95% is tied to contractual obligations, such as salaries and benefits. In addition, the committee discussed the revenue streams that support the budget – the largest portion being tax revenue. There is a 2% tax cap, and the formula behind that cap makes long range planning problematic due to the unpredictable nature of what the tax cap may be. Foundation aid is the base aid from the State. The district capital reserves were also discussed in using them for the financing of a heating conversion project for both schools. The purpose of those reserves is to fund special projects in the capital plan. The community has approved propositions totaling \$5.3 million in capital reserves which can be spent on the heating conversion project. The committee will also be working on the development of a long-range fiscal/strategic plan, which will align with the annual budget. There were questions surrounding the heating conversion project, including financing, alternative energy sources, and the project timeline which Mrs. Macias was able to answer. The next meeting for this committee will be held on January 25, 2024.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee:

President Kierez provided an update on the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee’s second meeting, held on December 6, 2023. During the session, the committee delved into the significance of its work by viewing a segment of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “The Danger of a Single Story.” The meeting’s central theme was to

explore avenues for building stronger connections between families and schools. The committee had a discussion on explicit biases versus implicit biases, with a focus on how the latter can unconsciously impact behavior, practices, policies, and procedures. Uncovering these implicit biases is seen as a crucial task to mitigate their impact on others. The New York State Education Department Culturally Responsive Education Roadmap (NYSED CRSE) was introduced as the committee's next guide. The roadmap outlines key action steps and provides notes for local implementation and customization. The committee plans to identify steps already taken within the District and has outlined potential future actions. Planned activities include using social media to inform stakeholders, conducting Parent University sessions on the culturally responsive education framework, making presentations at PTA meetings, coordinating inclusive events like the Inclusive Fair for students and families, and continuing curriculum development for diverse literature accompanied by family newsletters and staff professional learning. The presentation for this meeting can be found on the school website under the District tab. The next meeting for this committee will be held on March 27, 2024.

Policy Committee:

Trustee Peltonen reported that the Board of Education will be asked to adopt Policy 8130.2-Violence in the Workplace. The policy outlines procedures that the district must take to ensure that a written violence prevention program is in place. This includes performing a risk evaluation and determination, ensuring that information and training is given to all employees as it relates to this policy, and that incident reporting and recordkeeping is understood and documented. The Board of Education will be adopting this policy tonight to be in compliance with a new law that goes into effect on January 4, 2024.

Safety Committee Meeting:

Vice President O'Donohue reported that the District Safety Committee met on November 29th and discussed several important updates and initiatives:

1. Legislation on Workplace Violence Prevention: Mr. Peter LaDuca, the Nassau BOCES representative, highlighted new legislation effective from January 4th, specifically addressing workplace violence prevention through the NYS Labor Department. This legislation is exclusive to employees, and staff will be informed about the completed risk evaluation and the measures planned to mitigate any identified risks.
2. Transportation Updates: Mr. Tyrone Kelsie, Supervisor of Transportation, reported on transportation safety. Bus Patrol will be providing tablets to expedite and compile footage faster. Mr. Kelsie also reported that the bus drivers completed their Vector training.
3. Reunification Training: Mr. Joseph Napolitano, the Altaris representative, shared insights into reunification training conducted via a PowerPoint presentation. Floral Park Police Lieutenant Doherty attended the training to provide valuable input. Next month's agenda includes tabletop exercises, mock drills, and opening the emergency kits in preparation for potential emergencies. Emergency protocol flip charts will be provided and displayed in every classroom's safe zone, with plans to extend them to common spaces such as the cafeteria and library.
4. Building and Grounds Report: Mr. Fred Mandracchia, Director of Facilities, provided updates on buildings and grounds. Knox boxes were ordered for both buildings to grant access to police and fire departments in emergencies. Megaphones were purchased for each building, aiding communication during large-scale evacuations. Room numbers were ordered for classrooms, with dual sets for the safe area and front of each classroom. Fire inspections were successfully completed.
5. Technology Report: Mr. Dan Cunneely, Network Administrator, reported a successful transition from IntraLogic Solutions to NCD Communications for lockdown support systems monitoring. The conversion to a new video management system is complete, and access has been granted to the Floral Park Police Department and main offices at both schools.

6. School Reports: Mrs. Kristina Lynch, Interim JLCS Principal and Mr. John DeKams, FPBS Principal reported positive outcomes from successful fire drills and inspections on November 17th. Teachers were given prior notice during the drill about blocked exits, allowing them to model emergency procedures for students. The new security measures continue to receive positive feedback from both staff and families.

The next meeting for this committee will be held on February 14, 2024.

Strategic Planning Committee:

Interim Superintendent Ruiz reported that the second Strategic Planning meeting of the year was held on Tuesday, November 28th. Participants selected their goal area subgroup of interest and began combing through the various survey results and data which was collected and shared with the committee. The goal is to pinpoint trends through this data dive to begin identifying district priorities for the next five years. Rich conversations were held among the participants, and the plan will start to take shape as the committee moves forward. The next meeting will be held on January 18, 2024. The presentation for this last meeting can be found on the school website.

Technology Committee:

The next meeting for this committee will be held on January 11, 2024.

Wellness Committee:

The next meeting for this committee will be held on March 7, 2024.

Board:

Trustee Trentacoste attended a Nassau BOCES basics meeting at their Westbury campus in November. BOCES, which stands for Board of Cooperative Educational Services, functions as a vast resource hub for schools. School districts, including Floral Park-Bellerose UFSD, are shareholders in BOCES. Each district contributes funds to BOCES, and in return, BOCES provides an array of school-related goods and services at a significantly discounted rate compared to for-profit vendors. BOCES offers an extensive range of over 150 services, covering various aspects of education. Trustee Trentacoste highlighted some of these services.

1. Technology: This encompasses placing technology professionals in schools (FPBSD currently benefits from two technology workers from BOCES), website design, and cybersecurity.
2. Special Education: BOCES offers eleven school programs catering to students ranging from infancy to 21 years old, providing comprehensive support in the realm of special education.
3. Curriculum: BOCES contributes to curriculum development, offering programs and professional development opportunities for staff. Additionally, BOCES participates in outdoor and environmental education initiatives.
4. Health Services: BOCES extends medical and social health services to schools, ensuring the well-being of students and staff.
5. Career & Technical Education: BOCES plays a vital role in providing career and technical education resources, preparing students for future career paths.

Trustee Trentacoste remarked that, much like Floral Park-Bellerose School District, BOCES is actively engaged in the budgeting process for the upcoming school year, ensuring the continuity of these crucial programs for districts across the county. The collaborative nature of BOCES reflects a shared commitment to enhancing educational opportunities and resources for the benefit of all participating school districts.

Board acceptance or approval was granted for the following:

Educational Programs: Committee on Preschool Special Education reports; Committee on Special Education reports; Subcommittee on Special Education reports; Section 504 Committee reports; 2023-24 Committee Members for Preschool Special Education, Special Education and Subcommittee on Special Education; Consultation Agreements with Caryl Oris, MD, and Dr. Barry McNamara and School Life Plus report.

Personnel: Certified Probationary Appointments for Teaching Assistants; Non-Certified Confidential Motion; and Certified and Non-Certified Personnel reports.

Business: Adoption BOE Policy #8130.2 Workplace Violence Prevention and #8130.2R Workplace Violence Incident Report; Senior Citizen Tax Exemptions; Persons with Disabilities and Limited Income Tax Exemptions; Destruction of May 16, 2023 Election Ballots; Corrective Action Plan Annual Risk Assessment; SCOPE Agreement for Saturday Academy; Kiddie Academy Contract; Memorandum of Agreements with Transportation Unit, Teachers' Association, Assistants and Aides Unit, Cafeteria Unit and CSEA Custodial Unit; FPBS & JLCS 2022-23 Capital Project payments for Auditorium Seating, Auditorium Carpet and Early Childhood Playground; FPBS 2021-22 Capital Project Restroom Alterations Change Order; FPBS 2021-22 Capital Project payment for Sensory Gym General Contractor; FPBSD 2021-22 Capital Project Contract Award for FPBS Sensory Gym Alterations; Nassau County Directors of School Facilities Purchasing Consortium Cooperative Bids; Nassau BOCES Bid for Heating & Air Conditioning Services; Nassau BOCES Letter of Agreements with BOLD Election Management Software Upgrade and Timepiece Clocks; Transportation Contract with Sewanhaka CHSD; Disposal of Equipment and Budget Transfers for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Dates:

Regular Meeting - Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 8:00 p.m.
John Lewis Childs School Auditorium

Workshop Meeting - Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.
Floral Park-Bellerose School Library

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