

**JANUARY 25, 2021**  
**WILMETTE, IL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held on Monday, January 25, 2021 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, Erin Stone

Members Absent: Ellen Sternweiler

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Principal Kelly Jackson videotaped Highcrest Middle School students who shared their contributions to the HMS Time Capsule to be opened in 2045. Mrs. Eakley's class then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to accept the minutes of the December 14, 2020 Board of Education Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote**.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None present.

Via Zoom:

Evita Vulgaris, Wilmette, had three questions regarding District 39 requiring teachers to get a COVID vaccine; if teachers are vaccinated, would the administration modify their instruction models; would the administration consider extending the school year to make up for lost instruction time.

**Board Committee Reports**

Facility Development – Mrs. Poehling reported on behalf of Ms. Sternweiler. Mr. Bultemeier presented and reviewed the construction project timeline for summer 2021. Projects include Romona and McKenzie KEEP39 construction, WJHS second floor air conditioning, along with Life Safety work at the junior high school. All projects are expected to be completed by fall start of school.

Mr. Papanicholas of Nicholas and Associates provided a budget update for projects at Romona and McKenzie. The total budget cost for both schools is currently at \$8.2M which included unforeseen roof replacement at McKenzie. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) reported the underground storm water systems at both schools needed attention. \$234K of the budget estimate was due to McKenzie roof replacement and storm water replacement at both schools.

Mr. Papanicholas noted the junior high air conditioning/Life Safety project is at 60% design issuance and he would compile a budget assessment to present at the February Committee of the Whole meeting. He received commitment letters from manufacturers for the unit vents and chiller, should the Board not approve the air conditioning project, the letters eliminate all risk of penalty for the District.

School Finance – Mr. Cesaretti reported at the Committee of the Whole meeting, Mr. Bultemeier reviewed the budget calendar and resolution to be approved during the Consent Agenda. Mr. Bultemeier stated the capital projects timeline had slated McKenzie roof replacement for summer of 2024. Following discussion with Nicholas and Associates and STR Architects it made sense and was cost efficient to replace the roof during KEEP39 construction rather than conduct patchwork repairs and then re-roof at a later date. The cost component for roofing was \$180K.

Mr. Bultemeier stated the federal government passed another round of stimulus over winter break. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) rough estimates provided toward education are quoted at \$56B which equates to \$210K or \$50 per student for District 39. Districts would have the ability to spend the allocated funds through September 2022. Mr. Bultemeier stated he would keep the Board apprised of updates on the exact amount to be issued and the allowable expenditures for those funds. Dr. Cremascoli noted the allocation of federal stimulus money is not based on enrollment or low-income data and that District 39 would receive the same amount as Kenilworth or Avoca.

Strategy – Mr. Steen reported the Strategy committee received a report from Mrs. Jackson and Ms. Dominique led a team of teachers and administrators to explore options for the 5-8. grade hybrid model that included a variety of options for 3rd quarter Mondays. Options considered included utilizing half-day schedules and continuing with alternative full days of instruction within the hybrid model. The benefits and drawbacks to using Mondays for alternating in-person instruction was also explored.

Mrs. Jackson stated feedback from the targeted review of in-person programming, including parent and teacher surveys, requested a review of half-day in-person learning. She reported the many options considered for half-day in-person learning and all ideas had logistic considerations, such as instructional time, content areas of focus, in-person prioritization, timing of bus routes, pick up and drop off issues, and time required to clean classrooms. Ultimately, after much consideration, the team found the current hybrid model to provide the best instructional services to students while maximizing in-person learning across content areas and minimizing disruption.

The team began evaluating a review of alternating Mondays between groups A/B. Two significant disadvantages to this approach included the loss of the fully remote and synchronous whole group instructional days as well as an equivalent increase in asynchronous days to accommodate the in-person alternating days. Teachers value having Monday remote, synchronous instruction as it allows the whole class to participate and foster discussion together, becoming one united class. A survey was recently sent to students to obtain their feedback regarding the Monday schedule. Having evaluated all options, the team ultimately recommended maintaining Mondays as currently scheduled. Having the Board's support, the final hybrid calendar for third quarter was published.

#### Liaison Reports

CRC Report – Mrs. Poehling stated the CRC met on January 5<sup>th</sup>. The CRC is assisting the District with all phases of the strategic planning process. The team focused on Phase 1, Stakeholder Awareness. The three subcommittees are researching the best modes of communication, developing a draft communication plan for all stakeholders. Each subcommittee is identifying stakeholder groups and drafting how to best connect with families and community to provide awareness about District 39 embarking on a new strategic planning process. The next meeting is February 6<sup>th</sup>.

Educational Foundation – Dr. Cremascoli stated the Foundation discussed The Silver Lining Project: Celebrating Unexpected and Rewarding Moments During COVID-19. Details are on website along with a video to generate support of the project. Gripp Grant applications are currently open to D39 teachers. The upcoming Bingo Fundraising event will be held virtually on February 6<sup>th</sup>.

Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) – Ms. Stone reported most news coming from IASB relates to State Legislation. IASB is sponsoring a number of webinars that include school board seats. A webinar on January 28 welcomes new school board members and February 11<sup>th</sup> relates to school board candidates.

### **Legislative Update**

Ms. Stone reported the Education Reform Bill, HB 2170 which was approved on January 11<sup>th</sup> and is the educational pillar of Illinois Legislative black caucus' social justice reform package. Portions affecting Preschool – 8<sup>th</sup> education include required instruction in computer literacy skills starting in elementary school and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) assessing all students entering kindergarten with a common assessment tool. The bill creates a whole child task force and a P20 Council to research and make recommendations for short and long-term recovery reactions for public school students in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Written Communication**

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Board received written communication from Evita Vulgaris regarding student surveys on Monday instruction, low staff participation rate in saliva screening, requiring teachers to be vaccinated, modifying instruction models, extending the school year; from Rebecca and Jonathan Guryan, Maja Kos, Jane Tomlinson and Amy & Mike Oseland requesting SafeGuard screening continue beyond January and to encourage increased participation.

### **B. Administrative Announcements**

#### *Metrics Team Update*

Dr. Cremascoli stated the team now meets bi-monthly. The Metrics Dashboard and Full Report has been updated and published on the website. Subcommittees of the team held meetings to discuss the SafeGuard Screening schedule and recommendations for February.

#### *COVID-19 Testing Update and Discussion of February Screening Schedule*

Dr. Cremascoli stated the testing subcommittee reviewed SafeGuard screening experiences thus far. The testing subcommittee recommended continuing testing throughout February. They acknowledged there is not sufficient data upon which to evaluate the program. Screening is available for in person learners and staff. This a time of potential increased community spread risk due to reduced community mitigation efforts and as new, more potential contagious variants of the virus appear. Additionally, it remains very likely that teachers and school staff will begin to gain access to the vaccine in February. Maintaining this additional layer of protection seems prudent.

Participation in the screening program increased each week with the highest participation in upper grades. More than half of the costs for the screening program have been covered by voluntary contributions of families. Once staff are vaccinated there should be no reason to continue the screening program. Dr. Cremascoli recommended continuing the same weekly testing schedule through February. At the February Board meeting additional data will be provided to evaluate the screening program and whether to continue screenings in March.

Members agreed the screening program provides more knowledge and ensures peace of mind, also with lowering of mitigation strategies and variants on the rise continuing with the screenings was advisable.

### *Educator and Staff Vaccine Update*

Dr. Cremascoli stated District 39 is working closely with neighboring New Trier Township School Districts, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), the Village of Wilmette, and North Cook ISC to coordinate vaccine distributions for all D39 educators and educational support staff. The CCDPH has a huge task, considering the size and spread of the department's jurisdiction, and approval for site and distribution plans is near. Approximately 95% of staff have indicated interest in receiving the vaccine, and efforts continue to make this happen as soon as possible.

Board discussion ensued regarding availability of the vaccine based on county of employment or residence, appointments and vaccines being limited, the possibility of staff having simultaneous side-effects if vaccinated in a large group causing high staff absences in subsequent days, not having to mandate staff vaccinations as interest is at 95%, continuing to follow social distancing, masking, and handwashing following staff vaccinations to keep students and families safe as students will not have access to vaccines until fall, and requirements for social distancing would need to be reduced to 4' in order to accommodate full return to in-person 5-8 grade education.

### *Third Quarter Planning Update*

Dr. Cremascoli reported the administration had successfully enrolled all students within their chosen enrollment program, both in-person and fully remote, without too much disruption to class assignments overall. More students moved to in-person than to remote; thus, remote class sizes have been reduced.

A team of teachers and administrators spent a substantial amount of time examining options for third quarter adjustments to schedules for 5th - 8th grade campus. This examination focused on the potential options, barriers, impacts, advantages and disadvantages of attempting to transition to half-day daily in-person programming for all students. Despite a myriad of potential reconfigurations, the team concluded the disadvantages and barriers to implementation outweigh the potential gain.

### *Future Strategic Planning Coordination*

Dr. Cremascoli stated the CRC continues to make good progress in guiding communication and community engagement efforts related to the spring strategic planning efforts. They have selected retreat dates to be held virtually to begin the planning process with Strategic Planning expected to begin in March.

### *Summer Planning*

Dr. Cremascoli reported District 39 will host summer school in July under strict mitigation measures. The focus is on in-person summer school opportunities for academic learning, intervention, and boosting. Special education extended school year programming will be offered along with the BASIC program for remediation, as well as some opportunities for academic practice. The full enrichment program previously operated will not occur, largely due to COVID restrictions and a recognized need to focus on academics.

### *Revised Letters of Agreement Regarding COVID-19 Sick Bank*

Dr. Cremascoli stated The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all related provisions expired on December 31, 2020. As a result, further delineation of the use of the COVID sick bank days was recommended. The original Letters of Agreement indicated the use of up to 40 days for an employee's own COVID illness and up to 30 days for an employee caring for an immediate family member with COVID illness. These two provisions remain. The revised LOAs permit the use of up to 8 days for quarantine related to pre-approved travel as well as up to 10 days for childcare needs related to COVID.

### *Property Tax Appeals*

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Board of Education approved a resolution authorizing intervention in property tax assessment appeals filed with the PTAB and with the Circuit Court of Cook County in accordance with policies and limitations established by the Board of Education. The District has received notice of property tax appeals. The Property Index Number and the estimated refunds are listed including information regarding the potential refund liability. Legal counsel will intervene on behalf of the District.

### *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)*

The District received the following FOIA requests:

- Jeff Axelrod, November 20, 2020 requesting a list of staff who resigned for any reason along with resignation dates, documents and letters from October 29 through present. Also, include documents about requested or granted any leaves of absence. Also send from October 29 to present documentation about suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure, suspected or confirmed cases for D39 staff. Provide documents from January 1, 2020 about students partially or fully withdrawing from D39 schools for any reason.
- Jeff Axelrod, December 8, 2020 requesting a list of staff who resigned for any reason along with dates of resignation, copies of resignation letters and documents explaining the resignation. Send documents about requested or taken leaves of absence, temporary or permanent. Send documents about suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure, suspected or confirmed cases for D39 staff and students. Provide documents about students partially or fully withdrawing from D39 schools for any reason.
- Jacob Shorr, December 4, 2020 requesting all written communications with Cook County Department of Public Health including notes/communication with CCDPH assuring the individuals were not infectious/contagious when last at school for students or staff ill on November 9, 2020 at Romona Elementary; November 11, 2020 at McKenzie Elementary; November 13, 2020 at WJHS; November 15, 2020 at Romona; November 15, 2020 at HMS; November 16, 2020 at WJHS; November 24, 2020 at McKenzie Elementary; November 28, 2020 at HMS; December 1, 2020 at McKenzie Elementary; December 1, 2020 at Central Elementary; December 2, 2020 at WJHS.
- Walter Keats, January 4, 2021, requested copies of IGAs and/or leases between Wilmette District 39 and the Wilmette Park District for use of either's property including documents relating to use of Highcrest Middle School by the Park District as well as use of the Community Center (now the WJHS Resource Center), include documents relating to use of D39 property by WPD programs for Bell, Central, Harper, HMS, Howard, McKenzie, Romona, WJHS and Mikaelian Center.
- Jodi Cohen of ProPublica and Jennifer Smith Richards of Chicago Tribune, January 7, 2021, requesting all contracts, amendments, memorandums of understanding, intergovernmental service agreements, agreements of any sort entered into between the school district/schools and any law enforcement agencies. Include all invoices, billing summaries, purchase orders, daily logs and other payment records between the school district/schools and any law enforcement agencies from 2015 to the present. All records documenting the service the law enforcement agencies conducted at district schools from 2015 to present.
- Zoe Yalcin of SmartProcure, January 7, 2021, commercial FOIA requesting any/all purchasing records including vendor information from October 5, 2020 to present.

## **C. Strategic Plan Updates**

### **1. 2020-2021 Strategic Plan Updates: Annual Business**

Dr. Cremascoli noted on September 21, 2020, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2020-2021 District 39 Strategic Plan. This executive summary report focused on mid-year updates under Annual Business section:

- **Building School Culture and Community**  
District 39 values diversity, equity and inclusivity and understands the impact school culture has on the development of a deep sense of belonging community-wide for students, staff, and families. District 39’s statement of inclusion captures the entirety of this ongoing initiative including social emotional learning, diversity, equity, and inclusivity efforts, and family and community engagement.
- **School Safety**  
The State of Illinois requires school districts to review school safety plans annually. To continuously improve security and safety in District 39, a security review process was established categorizing priorities in phases for implementation during 2017-2018 school year. As a result, security measures are revisited and projects are identified, as needed, every school year. In addition, District 39 regularly collaborates with the Wilmette Police Department (WPD) and Wilmette Fire Department (WFD).
- **Science Curriculum Review**  
Grades K-8 Science Curriculum Review was initiated in 2018-2019 school year with a two-year developing phase. The review process involves a reflection on current units of study, an evaluation of standards alignment, and identification of curricular resources required to support teaching and learning. At that time, the newly released Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) suggested a shift in science education from “learning about” science to “figuring out” science with close attention to the engagement of students in phenomenon investigations while incorporating a variety of learning modalities, inquiry, and argumentation.
- **Sustainability Planning, Practices, and Education**  
District 39 continually seeks to ensure positive environmental practices during construction projects through the use of sustainable materials, grant funding applications, and cost analysis. Past addition/renovation projects undertaken by District 39 were designed to meet and/or exceed rigorous energy codes and standards and all future design processes will follow suit as well.

Board members appreciated all of the rigorous work being done during this unusual pandemic year. Members noted reviewing challenges regarding inclusivity was important as well as observing and rewarding student behavior as ‘upstanders’ and improving school culture and feelings of inclusivity. Ways to measure successful preparedness for New Trier High School in areas of science was noted.

#### **D. Annual Business**

##### **1. Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Calendar and Resolution**

Dr. Cremascoli stated the fiscal year 2022 budget calendar and resolution has been presented to the Board for approval on the Consent Agenda.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the personnel report dated January 25, 2021 which included educational support personnel full-time employment of **Marcanthony Aguilar**, effective February 1, 2021; **Ava Bjornson**, effective January 11, 2021; **Chris Dziedzic**, effective January 20, 2021; **Michelle Mathew**, effective January 6, 2021; **Sara Schroeder**, effective January 14, 2021; licensed resignation of **Elizabeth Simpson**, effective January 22, 2021; **Carrie Stefano**, (leave of absence), effective January 4, 2021; educational support personnel resignation of **Melanie Eckert**, effective January 8, 2021; **Kathleen Kelley**, effective December 18, 2020; **Pamela Stafford**, effective January 22, 2021; educational support personnel dismissal of **Jeffrey Alters**, effective January 4, 2021; **Glenn Bullocks**, effective January 4, 2021; tenured leave of absence of **Michelle Youkhana**, from January 25, 2021 to the end of the 2020-21 school year: approve the Revised Wilmette Education Association (WEA) Letter of Agreement dated January 25, 2021: approve the Revised Letter of Agreement with the Support Staff Union dated January 25, 2021: approve the revision of the COVID sick bank for employees in non-union positions: adopt the resolution dated January 25, 2021 establishing the school district 2022 fiscal year and direct the Superintendent to prepare a tentative budget; and, approve the January 25, 2021 budget-planning calendar as written: approve the accounts payable for bills listed between December 15, 2020 – January 25, 2021 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$335,005.18; O&M Fund \$179,267.05; Transportation Fund \$62,288.19; Tort Fund \$137.00; total all funds: \$576,697.42: approve the manual checks issued between December 15, 2020 – January 25, 2021 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$1,054,684.03; O&M Fund \$244,853.68; Transportation \$216.18; Tort Fund: \$585.00; total all funds: \$1,300,338.89.

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

**Motions Carried.**

## **CONFERENCE ITEMS**

### **Old Business**

1. Board Work Regarding Equity – Mrs. Poehling reminded Board members and administrators to begin reading the book if they haven’t done so. She participated in HEROS MLK workshop on January 17<sup>th</sup> and noted the Healing Everyday Racism in Schools Program was exceptional and seem to be very well attended. She also said the local history break out group was fascinating and possibly recorded.

### **New Business**

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Wilmette Park District would like to enter into an agreement to allow them access to a bathroom at the rear of Wilmette Junior High School to be utilized during park district events on the Community Playfields. The bathroom hasn’t been used in some time and is essentially out of use and requires upgrading.

Board members agreed to allow the District to pursue an agreement with the Park District but to review any liability issues.

### **Good and Welfare**

Mr. Steen also noted the MLK HEROS event was exceptional and learned that a member of the community took part in the civil rights lunch counter sit in during the 1960s. He noted many people continue to carry on this important work.

Ms. Stone said she was in her home office area when she heard a high-pitched sound outside. Two third graders were in the front yard, standing 6' apart playing their recorders. Normally these students would practice together in a classroom but during a pandemic they practiced outside following social distancing guidelines.

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to adjourn to executive session to discuss negotiations, personnel and litigation.

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

**Motion Carried.**

The meeting adjourned to executive session at 9:04 p.m. and returned to the regular meeting of the Board of Education at 9:45 p.m.

Being no further business, Mr. Cesaretti moved, seconded by Mr. Panzica, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education. It adjourned at 9:45 p.m. by **General Consent**.

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President

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Secretary