

MARCH 22, 2021
WILMETTE, IL
REGULAR MEETING

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held on Monday, March 22, 2021 at the Mikaelian Education Center, 615 Locust Road, Wilmette, Illinois. President Lisa Schneider-Fabes called the meeting to order at 7:04 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 (remotely), Katie Lee,
 Kristin Swanson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Principal Aaron Dubnow videotaped Harper students who received the Wilmette Warriors award. The Harper Warriors honored custodians and the D39 maintenance team who were also recognized as Wilmette Warriors. The students then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVE THE MINUTES

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2021 Board of Education Meeting and February 27, 2021 Special Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote.**

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comments were accepted in-person and virtually.

Evita Vulgaris, Wilmette, cited Dr. Schanzenbach comments regarding MAP growth analysis and requested further analysis for 7-8th graders by gender.

Lauri Fisher, Wilmette, brought attention to letter dated 3/19 signed by 100 parents to maintain saliva screenings throughout the school year and make participation mandatory for 5-8 graders.

Abigail Karasick, Wilmette, stated the SafeGuard screening program should be continued and be made mandatory for 5-8 graders as in-person student populations increase and social distancing is decreased.

Board Committee Reports

Facility Development – Mrs. Sternweiler reported the Romona & McKenzie summer construction projects would begin during spring break week. There was good attendance for the WJHS project mandatory pre-bid meeting held on March 16th.

The Central Avenue road construction has resumed. The focus of the work is expected to be east of Central School. The Village communicated that substantial completion of the project should be done by the time school starts in August. One-way traffic will continue through spring and summer.

School Finance – Mr. Cesaretti reported that due to continued constraints and uncertainty caused by COVID-19, the summer programs have been modified to focus on academics. The Extended School Year (ESY) Program will be offered to eligible students with IEPs, as well as two academic offerings. The previous BASIC classes have been renamed to ‘Review and Reinforcement’. These classes will be offered to students who demonstrate need. Academic Camp classes will be available in either reading and writing or math. To limit transitions and the combining of students, two class periods will be scheduled with each class being 90 minutes. This allows for more in-depth instruction, as well as the opportunity for community building and social emotional connections. The fees are consistent with previous year fees, with some adjustments made to accommodate the longer class periods. Transportation remains the same.

In mid-February, the Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) announced a new supplemental plan for employees. The initial announcement was a surprise as all school districts had to get board approved participation by March 31st, 2021. The announcement was met with a lot of push back and questions from member districts. TRS has since revised their rollout plan. Administration will continue to monitor the plan.

Strategy – Mr. Steen said the Board had asked administration to design and evaluate programming options that would allow the merging of A/B in-person learning pods at Highcrest and the junior high school. Understanding that this merger required reduced distancing within classrooms to 3-4 feet, the Board requested a review of the layered mitigation plan as well as the CDC and IDPH guidance to evaluate the ability to maintain safe and healthy classroom environments. IDPH and CDC guidance has since changed requiring less spacing for social distancing.

The District has prepared to launch the merged A/B in-person learning pods on Monday, April 12th. The Fully Remote Program will remain intact for the fourth quarter, with some increased optional opportunities for in-person connections. There will be no significant changes to elementary programming, however, opportunities for increased in-person optional activities for fully remote elementary students will be explored. Transition requests will be handled individually on a case-by-case basis. Administration continues to plan for a return to full in-person programming for all students in the fall.

Liaison Reports

CRC Report – Mrs. Poehling reported the Community Review Committee met on March 2nd. They began with discussion regarding the team that would be attending each of the strategic planning meetings. Two members of CRC will join that team. They spent a majority of their time discussing the next planning phase; the Environmental Scan Phase. This phase begins by collecting information from all of the stakeholders. They discussed a survey, focus groups, and interview questions. The members met in three subcommittees to discuss and recommend survey questions for stakeholders from community-within and community-at-large. One of the subcommittees focused on researching educational trends at the local, state, national and international levels. Work will continue and a list of recommended survey questions will be submitted for administration’s consideration.

Educational Foundation – Dr. Cremascoli reported the Educational Foundation held its last regular board meeting on February 10th and will meet again on March 23rd.

Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC)– Mrs. Poehling stated the IAC met on March 8th. Representatives from both the WEA and SSU joined administration in reviewing current health and dental insurance provisions. District 39 continues to participate in the Cooperative 90’s health and dental insurance cooperative. The insurance/benefit plan year in District 39 runs from September 1 through August 31.

It is expected that there will be an increase between 3-4% on health insurance premiums but there will be no plan changes. Additionally, there are no increases expected for dental premiums. Open enrollment for the new plan year will occur prior to summer vacation.

Wilmette Community Special Education Agreement (WCSEA) – Mrs. Poehling stated the WCSEA Advisory Board discussed the budget calendar, projected expenditures for this year and projected costs for next year, as well as the upcoming summer programming. The next Advisory Board Meeting will be held May 24, 2021.

Legislative Update & Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) – Ms. Stone reported at the federal Level, on March 10, the U.S. Congress approved a nearly 1.9 trillion pandemic recovery bill, which includes approximately \$122 billion for K-12 schools. On March 1, the U.S. Senate confirmed Miguel Cardona as the next U.S. Secretary of Education. On the state level, on March 8, Governor Pritzker signed into law HB 2170 Education Reform Bill that is the education pillar of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' social justice reform package. Among other things, it creates an Inclusive American History Commission and a Whole Child Task Force. It also requires ISBE to assess all students entering kindergarten with a common assessment tool. House Bill 7 would force school consolidations across Illinois of 25% of districts. IASB opposes this bill on grounds that consolidation should be a local issue and has encouraged districts to oppose this measure. The bill was debated but was not called for a vote, largely due to the advocacy of school district leaders. In a related bill, SB 635 contains nearly identical language as HB 7 and would give ISBE the authority to consolidate elementary school districts with elementary school districts and high school districts with high school districts without voter approval.

INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Written Communication

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Board received written communication from Nora Joyce regarding full in-person education for 2021-2022 school year; Evita Vulgaris sent several communications regarding delivering more core instruction for 5-8th graders, returning to full day in-person instruction, regarding the review of Winter Assessment results, MAP growth analysis, and why more ELA is offered rather than science and math, and incorporate handwriting as part of writing classes; Laura Hemmer, Shannon Geier, Krista Gallagher, regarding returning to full in-person education every day; Maja Kos regarding increasing participation in SafeGuard screenings and extending the program through the end of the school year; Jennifer and Scott Giller regarding all students being offered increased access to in-person education; Emily Abraham, Cindy and Jeff Larson, regarding remote learners returning to in-person instruction for fourth quarter; Julie Nelson regarding increased number of days for in-person education for remainder of school year; Laura Fisher regarding keeping the A/B schedule as is for the remainder of the school year; Brian Novelline regarding the return to full in-person instruction; Rachel Heiligman requested April 5th be a student attendance day; Maja Kos, Denise Kenny and many other parents requested SafeGuard screenings continue through the end of the school year and making participation mandatory for 5-8 graders.

B. Administrative Announcements

Metrics Team Update

Dr. Cremascoli stated the team did not meet this week, and is scheduled to meet again on March 26th. Dr. Cremascoli provided an overview of the dashboard analysis on the website. More than 92% of staff received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr. Steen noted the certificated staff absences were due to various reasons not just COVID/vaccine related illness.

SafeGuard Screening

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Testing Subcommittee of the Metrics Reopening Advisory Team met on Friday, March 19th to review the District's SafeGuard Screening data as well as the current recommendation to extend screenings through the second week of April. The subcommittee recommended a focus on ensuring consistent access to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for those who need it as well as use of resources to continue to strengthen the District's mitigation efforts. With lower community spread, few cases being identified through SafeGuard Screening, and ongoing needs throughout the District, the subcommittee recommended continuation of SafeGuard screenings through the second week of April.

Much discussion ensued among members regarding percentages of confirmed cases, participation costs, increased number of supervisors for lunch periods, and staff resources. It was noted the metrics committee members consist of nurses, doctors, scientists, and an epidemiologist and the amount of volunteered time they have committed to compiling data analysis and community behavior outside of schools was commendable. (Discussion continued later in the agenda under Old Business.)

Student Recognitions

Dr. Cremascoli reported the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) held its First Amendment Essay Contest. The District recognized and celebrated Avni Arora, Highcrest Middle School 6th grader, who was awarded first place in the Junior High Essay Writing Contest. Students from more than 230 schools shared what the First Amendment personally means to them (as well as the educators and caregivers who helped them think about their freedoms).

Dr. Cremascoli reported the District recognized and celebrated Elaine Xu, Highcrest Middle School 6th grader, who won first place at the 11th Annual North Cook ISC Scripps Spelling Bee. The spelling bee went 9 rounds and Elaine's winning word was "Attributive." Elaine represented the North Cook region at the Suburban Cook County Spelling Bee held at McClure Junior High School in Western Springs on March 16 and finished in 4th place overall.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The District received a FOIA request from Joe Sutton requesting pdfs of the District's current contract for website and/or content management system provider; current contract for emergency alerts/notifications system; current contract for mobile applications provider; current contract for learning management system.

C. Strategic Plan Updates

1. 5th-8th Grade Fourth Quarter In-Person Plan
2. In-Person Opportunities for Fully Remote Students
3. April 5, 2021 ISBE Planning Day

Principal Kelly Jackson provided the report on fourth quarter 5-8 campus modified in-person plan for students in hybrid and remote programs. Mrs. Jackson thoroughly reviewed the programming plans for the A/B merger as well as increased in-person opportunities.

A summary of the survey feedback gathered recently from parents and students was shared, along with a review of the options, opportunities, and process that finalized plans for April and beyond. Details of the presentation included classroom arrangements, homeroom, lunch period, and the creative arts, physical education, and world language rotations.

The fully remote program remains intact for the fourth quarter with increased opportunities for in-person connections. Program transfer requests will be handled individually on a case-by-case basis. Elementary programming will not have any significant changes; however, opportunities are being evaluated for additional in-person optional activities for fully remote elementary students.

In support of planning for instructional programming for fourth quarter and beyond, the District will utilize one of the five planning days allotted by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Monday, April 5 will be a non-attendance day for students and a work day for teachers, staff and administrators.

Discussion ensued regarding survey results and suggestions with outdoor activities such as field day and end of year activities/celebrations being most popular activities, student transitions from in-person to remote learning due to unease with lessened social distancing, and remote learners transitioning to in-person, appreciation for flexibility and attention given for both in-person and remote learners.

D. Annual Business

1. Letter of Agreement with Support Staff Union (SSU)

Dr. Cremascoli explained the SSU Letter of Agreement codifies Juneteenth as a paid holiday for 12-month employees and building secretaries when the work year extends through June 19th. The holiday will be recognized on June 19th or, if June 19th falls on a weekend, it will be recognized on the closest work day preceding or following June 19th.

2. Special Education Child Count

Dr. Swanson stated annually ISBE compiles special education enrollment information. Currently 524 students receive special education services pursuant to Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Of the 524 students 492 are attending and receiving services through the District. The remaining 32 students are served through a variety of placements including private/parochial schools within D39 boundaries, or through private therapeutic or residential placements, or through itinerant speech services. The actual number of students receiving services is slightly lower than last year and consistent with the state of Illinois percentage. Graphs were provided that identified enrollments by disability categories and by gender.

Members discussed disability categories and resources and students aging out of disability categories.

3. 2021-2022 School Calendar

Dr. Cremascoli noted the proposed 2021-2022 school year calendar was presented to the Board for review at last month's Board meeting and would be approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

4. WJHS Summer Construction Bids

Mr. Bultemeier stated District 39 had a successful bid opening for the WJHS summer construction projects. The most recent cost estimate had all in project costs at about \$3.1 million. After the bid opening, the total cost dropped about \$500,000 to \$2.6 million. The District received several bids in each of the three bid packages. The project is scheduled to start at the end of the school year and finish by mid-August. The total costs of the project fall within the fiscal years 2021 and 2022 budgets.

5. 2021-2022 Staffing Plan

Dr. Glowacki stated each March, District 39 begins to plan in earnest for the next school year. The District hired several more staff members this fall in order to staff additional homerooms due to smaller class sizes. Plans for fall are based on a more typical school year and will require less teachers. As a result, the Board will be asked to approve the honorable dismissal of some teachers. Additionally, this is also the time of year when decisions about renewing pre-tenure contracts are considered. There will also be an action item to approve the non-renewal of pre-tenure teachers for whom there are performance concerns. Many changes may occur between now and August and administration will continue to monitor local and state health guidelines. Plans will adapt and change as guidance warrants.

E. Board Policy Review

1. Second and Final Reading of Board of Education Policy 7:345

Dr. Cremascoli stated this new policy was recommended for adoption as part of continued efforts to address the requirements of the Student Online Personal Protection Act (SOPPA).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Abigail Karasick, stated several key questions needed to be addressed and a rigorous evaluation be conducted before discontinuing Safeguard program. She requested the Board delay voting on this action.

Rebecca Guryan, stated the voices of over 100 people who wished to continue Safeguard screenings was not acknowledged. She requested Safeguard continue for grades 5-8 as in-person populations increase.

Denise Kenny expressed concerns about the community at large and said Safeguard testing is a small inconvenience to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Lauri Fisher was disappointed in decision to discontinue Safeguard screening with only eight weeks of school remaining. She noted students and parents are not yet vaccinated and mitigation protocols should in place to protect families.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Consent Agenda

Mr. Steen and President Fabes requested the approval of the Letter of Agreement with SSU be pulled from Consent Agenda.

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the personnel report dated March 22, 2021 which included educational support personnel full-time employment of **Kimberly Vander Yacht**, effective March 15, 2021; temporary employment of **Lizzy Marks**, effective August 23, 2021; licensed resignation of **Jennifer Archer**, (leave of absence), effective February 28, 2021; **Chad Belfor**, effective June 10, 2021; **Linda Diekman**, effective June 10, 2021; **Elizabeth Filley**, effective June 10, 2021; **Michael Hart**, effective June 10, 2021; **Monica LaRocco-McVay**, effective March 12, 2021; **Katherine Porter**, (leave of absence), effective February 26, 2021; **Sarah Quinn**, (leave of absence), effective February 28, 2021; **Zachary Truran**, effective June 10, 2021; **Janet Vitale**, effective June 10, 2021; **Abigail Winter**, effective June 10, 2021; educational support personnel resignation of **Denise Arnold**, effective March 12, 2021; **Maria Rodriguez**, effective March 1, 2021: approve the 5th-8th grade fourth quarter in-person education plan: approve April 5, 2021 as Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Planning Day: approve as second and final reading of Board of Education

Policy 7:345 Use of Educational Technologies: Student Data Privacy and Security: approve the 2021-2022 School Calendar: approve the accounts payable for bills listed between February 23, 2021 – March 22, 2021 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$415,558.21; O&M Fund \$326,778.43; Transportation Fund \$128,501.67; total all funds: \$870,838.31: approve the manual checks issued between February 23, 2021 – March 22, 2021 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$630,437.67; O&M Fund \$92,620.72; Debt Service Fund: \$1,500.00; Transportation \$33.38; total all funds: \$724,591.77.

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.

Approve the Letter of Agreement with the Support Staff Union (SSU)

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the Support Staff Union (SSU) Letter of Agreement dated March 22, 2021.

Mr. Steen summarized the significance of this important holiday. He stated Juneteenth commemorates the abolition of slavery in the United States. The date is recognized in 47 states including Illinois and is a paid holiday in three states and starting this year in District 39. An act such as consequential as ending legal slavery deserves annual recognition as a holiday. Juneteenth should be a day of remembrance, reflection, and hope.

Members agreed and stated reflecting on history of the millions of Americans and slaves who died is important; with hate and institutional racism on the rise, the need to reinforce the District’s commitment to equity and inclusion is also very important.

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:
Motion Carried.

B. Approve Bids for Air Conditioning and Electrical Renovations at Wilmette Junior High School

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to award base bid package 1 and 2 in the amount of \$2,030,300 per bid specifications for the classroom air conditioning and electrical renovations at Wilmette Junior High School; Monarch Construction Co. for an amount not to exceed \$170,300; F.E. Moran, Inc. for an amount not to exceed \$1,049,000; RB Construction, Inc. for an amount not to exceed \$206,000; Prospect Electric Co. for an amount not to exceed \$605,000; total Wilmette Junior High School Project Cost: \$2,030,300.

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:
Motion Carried.

C. Approve the Resolution Authorizing the Honorable Dismissal of Teachers

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the resolution dated March 22, 2021 authorizing the honorable dismissal of teachers.

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:
Motion Carried.

D. Approve the Resolution Authorizing Notice of Non-Renewal to Probationary Teacher Other Than Final-Year Probationary Teacher

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to approve the resolution dated March 22, 2021, authorizing notice of non-renewal to probationary teacher other than final-year probationary teacher.

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:

Motion Carried.

CONFERENCE ITEMS

Old Business

Mrs. Sternweiler requested Board members consider continuing SafeGuard screenings through the end of the school year for safety of families due to increased populations for in-person instruction.

Following extensive discussion, members agreed to continue Safeguard screenings for an additional two weeks, through the end of April. Members agreed to continue discussion at the Committee of the Whole meeting in mid-April to analyze the participation and results.

New Business

Ms. Stone asked in reference to the Legislative Update and IASB report if the Board wished to advocate against proposed legislation that could result in forced consolidation of school districts, she would research the process and report back to the Board.

Members agreed to learn more about the process and who makes the decisions regarding consolidation.

Good and Welfare

Mr. Panzica noted the Wilmette League of Women Voters held two candidate forums and suggested community members watch the videos of candidates prior to voting on April 6th.

Ms. Stone expressed her gratitude for the custodians, educators, and District 39 staff who have worked above and beyond even before the pandemic.

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to adjourn to executive session to discuss specific personnel and review executive session minutes.

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:

Motion Carried.

The meeting adjourned to executive session at 10:23 p.m. and returned to the regular meeting of the Board of Education at 10:30 p.m.

Being no further business, Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Cesaretti, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education. It adjourned at 10:31 p.m. by **General Consent**.

President

Secretary