

**NOVEMBER 16, 2020**  
**WILMETTE, IL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held on Monday, November 16, 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 (remotely), Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica,  
 Amy Poehling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone

Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Kari Cremascoli, Ellen Crispino, Tony DeMonte, Heather Glowacki,  
 Katie Lee, Kristin Swanson

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Principal Aaron Dubnow introduced Harper KEEP39 students who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to accept the October 26, 2020 Board of Education Minutes. The minutes were approved as submitted by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote**.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**ADJOURN TO PUBLIC HEARING ON 2020 LEVY**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to adjourn to the public hearing on the 2020 Levy. The meeting adjourned to the Public Hearing by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote**.

**FINANCIAL PRESENTATIONS**

**A. Fiscal Year Financial Audit**

Mr. Bultemeier stated Nick Cavaliere, CPA, CFE of Baker Tilly LLC presented the audit for District 39 and Wilmette Community Special Education Agreement (WCSEA). Mr. Bultemeier stated District 39 earned the highest “Financial Recognition” for exhibiting financial stability with a weighted score of 4.0 out of 4.0 with no audit findings or issues to report.

**B. 2020 Levy**

Mr. Bultemeier reported the 2020 levy is based upon several variables including the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the value of new construction, the county multiplier, and the Limiting Rate calculation. The District’s Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) is unknown at this time, but is projected at \$1,933,044,201 (2019). However, when the County Clerk extends the taxes, the taxes will be against the actual 2020 EAV plus new property growth, which is estimated at \$14.2M. The total requested levy is \$57,671,648. Which is 4.49% higher than 2019. He noted the Cook County Clerk determines the final levy extension amount. He reported the Debt Service Levy was also reviewed at Committee of the Whole meeting. The Debt Service Levy is a standard practice allowing the District to cover actual bond payment obligations.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION ON THE 2020 LEVY**

Mr. Steen clarified the average rate for existing rate for tax payers is 2.3% some may be more and some may be less.

## **AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO THE 2020 LEVY PRESENTATION**

None

## **ADJOURN TO REGULAR MEETING**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen, to adjourn back to the regular Board of Education meeting. The meeting adjourned to the Regular Meeting by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote**.

## **BOARD REPORTS**

### **A. Committees**

Facility Development Committee – Mrs. Sternweiler stated Colby Lewis of STR Architects provided construction plan details for McKenzie and Romona KEEP39 classrooms. McKenzie construction includes interior renovation to expand the cafeteria, an addition of three classrooms, a suite of offices, two restrooms and converting a typical classroom to a kindergarten classroom that has an entry addition with cubbies and a restroom. Romona has two areas of construction; an addition to the north adding two classrooms and adding an office and three small group/conference room spaces near the existing entrance.

Mr. Papanicholas of Nicholas and Associates provided second round estimates for McKenzie base bid which at this time is estimated at s\$4.6M and Romona base bid is just over \$3M. He stated there would be two more rounds of budget refinements in which he hopes the unforeseen soil sample issues may be removed. He noted the soil samples were not as strong as they should be, which means soil might have to be removed or reinforced to ensure a stable foundation. He said the soil samples are pinpoint areas and may not be representative of the entire footprint. The estimate included \$75K for soil contingency.

The committee discussed the installation of air conditioning on the second floor at Wilmette Junior High which was scheduled to be completed last summer but was postponed due to Village stormwater construction in the playfields near Highcrest Middle School. Mr. Bultemeier stated the air conditioning project is imbedded in FY21-22 capital project timeline and would piggyback with Life Safety work. He suggested the Board direct STR to begin preparing architectural drawings to go out to bid and at that time the Board could decide whether to pursue the project. Mr. Lewis noted procuring air conditioning equipment such as chillers would take about 16 weeks and perhaps even longer during the pandemic. He said if the District plans to pursue the project next year the decision would need to be made now in order to have the equipment on hand for installation.

Members had lengthy discussion regarding all three construction projects and costs in the midst of the pandemic. Members agreed that an update on the overall budget was needed along with cost estimates for design, construction, and COVID-19 in order to explore the impact on the budget and whether to proceed with the three projects. Members agreed to proceed with the design process for the air conditioning project.

School Finance Committee – Mr. Cesaretti stated Mr. Bultemeier introduced Nick Cavaliere, CPA, CFE of Baker Tilly, LLC to present the audit for District 39 and Wilmette Community Special Education Agreement (WCSEA). Mr. Cavaliere attended the meeting (virtually) to present the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) along with subsequent reports and Audit Communication Letters. The District is proud to report that it received an unmodified “clean” opinion for 2020.

Mr. Bultemeier shared a document highlighting the differences in budgets to actuals for the Operating Funds, which included variances due to COVID-19. The Fiscal Year 2020 budgeted deficit was projected to be \$1.7M with the budget actual at \$1.9M. He noted salaries and benefits came in under budget and the bond issuance allowed for additional proceeds. The FY20 Operating Fund balance ended at 70%. The Fiscal Year 2021 budget is projected to have just over 47% in Operating Fund balance at year end.

Strategy – Mr. Steen stated the Strategy Committee met as Committee of the Whole on November 9<sup>th</sup>. During the Committee of the Whole meeting, Katie Lee and Kelly Jackson shared an update to the Enhance Remote Learning Program Review. They reported on trends in the survey data and shared a few action items under each recommendation that administration felt could be implemented were: prioritizing synchronous learning time for more small group instruction, balance online/offline time, increase opportunities for social interaction across all grades, and providing a centralized location for information specific to Enhanced Remote Learning and families of the remote learners. They also conducted an In-Person Learning Program Review that will be shared later during this meeting.

## **B. Liaison**

Community Review Committee (CRC) – Mr. Steen reported the CRC met with Consortium for Education Change (CEC), the consulting firm hired to help with development of a multi-year strategic plan. CEC previewed elements in the development process, which included collecting information from stakeholders and discussion of goals. The strategy review work will begin in January 2021.

Educational Foundation – The Educational Fund continues to work on the Fall Annual Appeal. Due to the pandemic, normal fundraisers will not be held so the annual appeal will be the sole source of revenue for the Foundation.

Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) – Mrs. Sternweiler represented the Board at the recent Illinois Association of School Board Members (IASB) Delegate Assembly. Representatives voted on proposed resolutions and results were provided. She noted the IASB Virtual Summit will be held on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

Wilmette Community Special Education Agreement (WCSEA) – Mrs. Poehling stated WCSEA had its first advisory committee meeting today, with representatives from both members, District 39 and Avoca District 37. The committee discussed the Annual Financial Report, which was completed by Baker Tilly and indicated that all is in order. The committee also approved the Fiscal Year to Date Activity, and discussed the current plans for the Summer Enrichment Program and Extended School year, which occur in the summer of 2021. The next scheduled meeting is March 22nd, 2021.

## **C. Legislative Update**

Ms. Stone stated there was no information to report.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Written Communication**

Dr. Cremascoli noted the Board received several written communications from Rucha Patel appreciative that students are able to remain in in-person learning; other communications supporting in-person learning and for schools to remain open during the holiday months were from Kathleen Sullivan, Rachel Heiligman, Katie McCalla, Krista Robinson, Stacey Woehrle, and Chris Woehrle. Abby and Steve Karasick wrote to express strong interest in having District 39 implement a COVID surveillance testing program. Walter Keats of “Wilmette Park Friends” wrote to suggest proposed enhancements to the Community Playfields and the east-west bike path. Rachel Heiligman emailed to suggest adjustments to the discussions of some members of the Metrics Committee.

**B. Administrative Announcements**

Dr. Cremascoli announced November 15<sup>th</sup> was designated as School Board Members Day in Illinois. She thanked Board members for their commitment as elected officials in providing a local governance voice for public schools. She noted her appreciation for the Board's leadership and countless hours of volunteer work.

Dr. Cremascoli stated District 39's Parent Teacher conferences were held last week. Teachers reported having productive and connected conversations with parents, even in the remote environment.

Dr. Cremascoli reported the Metrics Advisory Team meetings have been more critical than ever as the data begins to fall more in the substantial range. The team discussed action steps agreed upon at the last meeting, which included additional preemptive substitute staffing orders, a close review of operational issues, and consideration of COVID-19 testing options. The team reviewed external metrics related to community spread of COVID-19 and also focused on internal operational metrics, wherein mitigation procedures and their impact on schools, staffing, student attendance, COVID-19 cases and quarantines are all reviewed. There remains a very real risk that increasing community spread will impact school operations. The numbers of students and staff on quarantine due to exposure outside of school has risen, as have the number and length of unfilled staff absences. Unfortunately, school districts are not being given clear guidance from the Governor's office or the CCDPH regarding school closures, stay-at-home orders, travel restrictions and related quarantine orders. The Board expressed support for an adaptive pause to in-person instruction for the week following Thanksgiving break. Additional consideration of mitigation procedures, COVID testing, and staffing needs continue to be reviewed.

Dr. Cremascoli stated the District has been exploring options for COVID-19 testing offerings for staff and students. The District has had very good experience with the PCR testing option made available to staff. The District negotiated a contract with Ambry Genetics that facilitates testing in order to expand access to employee household members. In each case, testing will be available to individuals who are symptomatic and/or exposed. Families who wish to access this testing for their symptomatic or potentially exposed child will be able to purchase a test kit for a \$20 fee. Administration is also exploring a variety of options for screening or surveillance testing of students and staff to help identify asymptomatic or presymptomatic individuals during periods when community spread metrics are high. The hope is to pilot a surveillance or screening program in December with a broader launch date the first week of January.

President Fabes thanked the Board, the administration, and the metrics committee for the incredible amount of work tracking the metrics. She expressed support for remote learning the week following Thanksgiving to maximize the ability to reopen following that pause. She pleaded to the community to be vigilant in safety precautions, to watch outside exposure, and mitigate risk. She asked everyone to rethink travel plans and not have large gatherings to minimize the risk for the school community and community at large. The District plans to reopen on December 7<sup>th</sup> if metrics stabilize.

Board members also supported the decision to pivot to remote learning for the week following Thanksgiving and reiterated the importance of taking responsibility for the entire community by practicing safe, healthy protocols, and limit large group gatherings so in-person education could resume in December. Members recognized the difficult decision to pause in-person education and supported pursuing testing options to further commit to in-person learning.

Dr. Cremascoli reported administration has been developing plans for second semester enrollment commitments. Communication was sent to families regarding enrollment selections for second semester. The District is committed to honoring all enrollment commitment selections received by November 30th for either in-person or the fully remote program. Dr. Cremascoli emphasized there is the possibility of changes in teacher assignments if a child moves from one program to another and a possibility that some changes in class assignments may be needed otherwise, too, depending on the number of students moving programs. The goal is continuity for students and to minimize staffing changes but there may be a need to reassign teachers or students if there are significant changes to enrollments. Dr. Cremascoli stated a question/answer webinar regarding second semester enrollment would be held on Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. with links posted on the D39 website.

Dr. Cremascoli noted November 30, 2020 has been deemed a Remote Learning Planning Day. The state allows five days to use throughout the school year for staff training. The District has used three days with this being the fourth.

Dr. Cremascoli stated the District received a FOIA requests from: Jeff Axelrod, November 6, 2020, requesting spreadsheets created after January 1, 2020 with information about families and children withdrawn from D39 to either homeschool or attend elsewhere or changed from remote to in-person and vice-versa; Jeff Axelrod, October 29, 2020, requesting a list of staff who resigned for any reason along with dates of resignation, resignation letters or other documents explaining the reason for resignation from October 16, 2020 to present. Also requested from October 16, 2020 to present any documentation about suspected/confirmed COVID-19 exposure, suspected/confirmed cases for D39 staff; Jeff Axelrod, October 29, 2020, requesting a list of staff requested/received leaves of absence for any reason along with dates, correspondence, or documents explaining the leave request; Jeff Axelrod, October 29, 2020, requesting any documentation about suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases for D39 students and school attended.

## C. Strategic Plan Updates

### 1. In-Person Learning Program Review Update

Dr. Cremascoli stated similar to the review of enhanced remote learning model presented last month, an In-Person Learning Program Review is being conducted to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The report provided initial data collected through the District 39 administered surveys to teachers, families/parents, and students. Miss Lee, Mrs. Jackson and Dr. Swanson provided survey details and next steps. A few action items under each recommendation that administration felt could be implemented immediately. Some example action items shared were: prioritizing synchronous learning time for additional small group instruction, balance online/offline time, increase opportunities for social interaction across all grades, and providing a centralized location for information specific to Enhanced Remote Learning and families of the remote learners.

### 2. 2020 Fall Assessment Report

Miss Katie Lee stated with the absence of Fall 2019 to Spring 2020 comparison period data to measure student progress for last year's academic achievement and growth, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction presented data for *Fall 2019 to Fall 2020* achievement and growth comparison period. This data serves two purposes; it provides data that will offer an opportunity of reflection for the unique 2019-2020 school year as well as serve as a baseline/starting point for the current 2020-2021 school year to measure achievement and growth.

Mr. Panzica requested the data be separated by gender to identify learning curves. Mrs. Sternweiler asked to explore and identify areas where students have unleashed potential. Mr. Steen expressed his appreciation for the progression and development of this report to improve student outcomes.

## **D. Annual Business**

### **1. 2020 Fall Enrollment Report**

Dr. Cremascoli stated annually, District 39 provides a Fall Enrollment report that captures the number of students attending District 39's schools as of enrollment on October 1st. This year, there are 3,385 students educated in District 39 schools. In addition, the District examines the number of students the District has a responsibility to educate. This number is higher as it includes early childhood students receiving itinerant speech, students outplaced at therapeutic settings, and students receiving special education services at St. Joseph and St. Francis. District 39 overall fall enrollment total is 3,428 students.

Members discussed the enrollment trends, impact of COVID-19 on enrollment for kindergarten and KEEP39 program, and the potential of families quarantining elsewhere. They also discussed the large enrollment bubble that recently passed through the grade levels.

### **2. Long Term Enrollment Projections**

Dr. Cremascoli stated long term enrollment is an annual report. Overall, District 39's long-term enrollment projections show steady enrollment with a slight decline projected. Elementary schools show a slightly larger decrease at McKenzie and Romona than at Harper and Central. Highcrest Middle School's enrollment is projected to be on a slight downward trend. Wilmette Junior High is projected to be stable over the next couple of years, then potentially decrease thereafter. It is unclear the impact of the pandemic on enrollment projections, especially at the youngest grade levels, as well as the impact of potential future in-migration to the district.

Mr. Steen suggested comparing fall enrollment numbers to the long-term enrollment. He noticed that individual grade levels increase from year to year while the overall enrollment decreases. He suggested reviewing how grade to grade increases occur, outside of kindergarten enrollment, while there is less of an increase at higher grades historically.

## **E. Board Policy Review**

### **1. First Reading of Board of Education Policies 5:10, 5:100, 7:10, 7:180, 7:185**

Dr. Cremascoli stated the review and update of these policies are directly related to updated requirements to Title IX. There are no suggested revisions to 5:100, however, that is a policy that is suggested to be reviewed as a result of the new Title IX regulations. It has been reviewed, but no revisions are suggested. The other policies did have minor/moderate revisions.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Lindsay Rattey, Romona parent, spoke about how her first grader's education has improved since participating in in-person learning. She asked the Board to consider that the Department of Public Health is now including probable positive cases to enhance the COVID-19 numbers.

Written communications submitted via public comments email were from:

Rucha Patel submitted several communications supporting in-person learning; Soo Kim emailed on behalf of the Wilmette Parent group, Brian Novelline and Christina Ballester all emailed to support in-person learning; Rachel Heiligman emailed several thoughts supporting in-person education and expressed concern about the number of subjective viewpoints shared at the metrics meeting; Lauri Fisher emailed to share while they chose in-person learning, they have kept their student home on in-person hybrid days due to the increase in positive COVID cases and suggested the District take an adaptive pause until cases decrease; Abby & Steve Karasick emailed to suggest District 39 implement weekly COVID testing program for students and staff; Kara Fleming emailed to ask the Board to reject the proposal to pause in-person education the week of November 30<sup>th</sup>; Cathy Peach, Support Staff Union (SSU) President emailed to request the District pivot to remote learning as soon as possible due to the increase in COVID positive cases and

hospitalizations; Loreline Meyer emailed with concerns about second semester in-person/remote changes and home schools; Jessica Meyers emailed to request two weeks of remote learning after Thanksgiving; Michele Coffey emailed to express her dismay about moving to fully remote the week of November 30<sup>th</sup> and requested a plan for weeks in December be shared.

Dawn Taylor spoke as a staff member and co-president of Wilmette Education Association (WEA). She stated (their) passion for and commitment to in person instruction remains resolute. She noted there are competing nobilities in the great debate about COVID-19 and its impact on instruction. She said the WEA is grateful for the continued collaboration with D39 administrators, the Board, and Metrics Advisory Team and look forward to respectfully and productively being a part of that conversation.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Ms. Stone, to approve the personnel report dated November 16, 2020, which included licensed full-time employment of **Brianna Wright**, effective October 26, 2020; educational support personnel full-time employment of **Rogelio Heredia**, effective October 29, 2020; educational support personnel part-time employment of **Colette Couper**, effective November 5, 2020; licensed resignation of **Brianna Wright**, effective November 4, 2020; educational support personnel resignation of **Patrick Miller**, effective November 20, 2020; educational support personnel retirement of **Maria Diaz**, effective February 1, 2021: to accept the fiscal year 2020 annual financial audit and Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Wilmette Public Schools as presented by Baker Tilly US, LLP of Oak Brook, Illinois: to approve service agreements with Rapid Reliable Testing, LLC and Ambry Genetics Corporation for COVID-19 testing and laboratory services, subject to the final review and approval of the Board’s attorney: to approve the Ambry PCR COVID-19 testing fee of \$20 per test for the 2020-2021 school year: to approve as first reading of Board of Education Policies 5:10 *Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Recruitment*; 5:100 *Staff Development Program and Professional Opportunities*; 7:10 *Equal Educational Opportunities*; 7:180 *Preventing Bullying and Other Aggressive Behaviors*; and 7:185 *Teen Dating Violence Prohibited*: to approve the accounts payable for bills listed between October 27, 2020 – November 16, 2020 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$244,653.63; O&M Fund \$108,001.00; Debt Service Fund \$1,605,622.09; Transportation Fund \$155,379.81; Capital Projects \$398,484.00; Tort Fund \$589.77; total all funds: \$2,512,730.30: to approve the manual checks issued between October 27, 2020 – November 16, 2020 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$589,717.49; O&M Fund \$12,771.40; Transportation Fund \$31.48; total all funds: \$602,520.37.

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.**

### **B. Adopt the 2020 Levy**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Ms. Stone, to approve the 2020 Levy and accompanying resolutions contained herein for requested amounts that can be summarized as Educational \$44,308,218; Operations & Maintenance \$9,642,757; Transportation \$896,904; Working Cash \$87,174; IMRF \$383,702; Social Security \$1,359,467; Life Safety \$0; Tort Immunity \$602,044; Special Education \$391,382; Total Aggregate Levy: \$57,671,648.

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

### A. Old Business

#### 1. Board Work Regarding Equity

Mrs. Poehling stated she and Mr. Steen had reached out to Dr. Logan to act as facilitator, and determine a date and the best structure to discuss the book, *What Does It Mean To Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy* by Robin DiAngelo. She also stated she would be participating in one of IASB's virtual educational webinars on equity and would report back to the Board.

President Fabes noted the superintendent's evaluation process would be reviewed next month.

### B. New Business

Dr. Cremascoli noted there may be a need for special meeting on COVID testing and future plans.

### C. Good and Welfare

President Fabes stated in honor of National School Board Members Day, she expressed her appreciation for her co-members and their service and the seriousness with which all have handed this job. It is no small task being a board member in time of COVID. She also thanked the administration and staff for their continued commitment as it has been relentless since March. She noted parents and children able to attend school and they are grateful; we are grateful.

Being no further business, Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Ms. Stone, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education. It adjourned at 10:33 p.m. by **General Consent**.

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President

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Secretary