

SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

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Board President Shawn Lemay asked for 17 seconds of silence to commemorate the 17 victims from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School deadly shooting on February 14, 2018.

BOARD ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – Mrs. Teresa Leatherbarrow acknowledged Amherst Middle School for a program it hosted March 7 featuring the documentary, *ScreenAgers*. Mr. Mark Mecca recognized the PTSA Council for its advocacy on school safety. He also announced that the Maple West PTA would be addressing school safety at its meeting Wednesday night.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Six individuals addressed the Board, including three high school juniors who spoke in favor of keeping class rank saying it was unfair to those students who have been working toward class rank for most of their academic careers. They asked the Board to abide by its original decision, which eliminated class rank beginning with current ninth graders. A parent applauded the Board's decision to eliminate class rank and voiced support for expanding the policy to include current sophomores and juniors. Mr. Brian Hogan sought the Board's nomination to represent Williamsville CSD on the Erie 1 BOCES Board of Education. Meghan Hall, a senior at Williamsville South and coordinator of the student walkout event to remember the lives that were lost in Parkland, FL, thanked school administrators and the District for supporting the student efforts to draw attention to the critical importance of school safety.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION

- Under the **President's Report**, the Board:
 - ➔ Nominated three candidates for the Erie 1 BOCES Board of Education: Mr. Brian Hogan (Williamsville); Ms. Helaine Sanders (Williamsville); and Mr. Edward Cavan (incumbent from Sweet Home). A school board can nominate as many candidates as they want and may nominate candidates from outside their district. Two seats are open on the Erie 1 Board and only one candidate from the same school district may serve on the board. The election will be held during a Special Board Meeting April 17 at 6 p.m.
 - ➔ Approved the annual District vote resolutions and authorized public notices. The Annual Budget Vote and School Board Election will take place on Tuesday, May 15 from 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. at Williamsville North HS, 1595 Hopkins Rd. The ballot will include the proposed budget (Proposition #1) and the school board election (Proposition #2). The Annual Budget Hearing is May 3. Candidate packets are available online and at the district office. District Clerk Lynn Carey reported that, to date, Board President Shawn Lemay is the only candidate who has submitted the necessary paperwork to run.
 - ➔ Announced its third community forum on Saturday, April 28 at Williamsville South High School, 9 a.m. – Noon.
 - ➔ Members Philip Meyer and Mark Mecca reported on their recent attendance to the NYS-DECA Career Conference and a BOCES presentation, respectively.
- Under the **Superintendent's Community Update**, Dr. Martzloff thanked all the students involved in organizing the March 14 walkout events to remember the victims of the Florida school shooting. He also commented on the strong partnership the district has with the Amherst Police Department, calling it 'unrivaled' and critical to keeping schools safe. Dr. Martzloff also announced that a parent survey on foreign language instruction would be sent out March 16 seeking input on the district's foreign language curriculum and its future direction.
- The Board adopted the 2018-19 School Calendar. The first day of school for students is Tuesday, September 4, 2018. The winter recess runs from December 24 through January 1, 2019 with students returning to class Wednesday, January 2, 2019. The mid-winter recess coincides with Presidents' Day, February 18-22, 2019, and the spring recess is scheduled from April 19-26, 2019. There are seven emergency days built into the calendar for next year. Dr. Martzloff thanked Dr. Anna Cieri for her work and leadership in developing the calendar every year.
- **Ms. Moira (Molly) Cooper** was appointed to the new position of Labor Relations Specialist for the school district, effective March 28, 2018. Ms. Cooper has served in the same capacity at Erie 1 BOCES since November 2016.
- **Class Rank** – In two separate motions, the Board defeated proposals to eliminate class rank for sophomores and juniors. The motion to eliminate class rank for sophomores was defeated, 4-5, while the proposal for juniors was defeated, 2-7.

In September, the Board eliminated class rank beginning with current ninth graders. Shortly afterward, a number of students and parents asked the Board to consider eliminating class rank for current students in grades 10-11. Member Suzanne VanSice, with

backing from the Board, asked the district to survey students and parents on the issue. The survey was conducted in January with two-thirds of all respondents supporting the elimination of class rank for current sophomores and juniors. However, during their discussion Tuesday night, several Board members cited the potentially adverse impact on some students, especially juniors, who have structured their academic careers with class rank in mind. "I don't think it's fair to change the rules of the game in the middle of the game," said Mr. Mecca. Referring to the student speakers earlier in the evening, Mrs. Bieger said, "While I see the merits of eliminating class rank, I have come to believe that changing the rules so close to the finish line is not fair." Mrs. Toni Vazquez joined Mrs. VanSice in supporting both motions.

- **Update and Review of School Safety & Security:** Amherst Police Chief John Askey (*shown on left*) and APD Captain Jim McNamara joined Dr. Martzloff and Dr. Cieri in an hour-long presentation and discussion on school safety and security. Chief Askey stressed the importance of strong relationships and two-way communication between the police and the schools. He explained the School Liaison Officer program used in Williamsville, as well as the after-hours security program and the collaboration in conducting drills. "Our officers are in and around your schools on a regular basis, at any time, all the time," he said. Capt. McNamara addressed the school safety plans, explaining the importance of lockdown protocols. According to Capt. McNamara, the APD's average response time for a school incident is less than three minutes. Dr. Martzloff provided board members with a copy of the threat assessment guide developed by the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Education. He also reviewed the district's efforts to enhance school security including the installation of cameras, intercom systems, employee swipe-card access, locked door protocols, and staff training. Dr. Cieri provided an overview of programs and tools used to address the emotional wellbeing of students including school counseling services, asset development, student wellness programs, ongoing professional development for mental health staff, and annual training for all staff members.



During its discussion, Board members asked about conducting school-specific security audits, communication with parents, the use of cameras, how safety drills are conducted, and the importance of mental health supports for students. Mrs. Vazquez cited a need for commonsense gun control legislation and eliminating access to military-style weaponry. Moving forward, the Board supported conducting security audits at each school and expanding membership on the standing District Safety Committee. The Board thanked Chief Askey, Capt. McNamara, and the entire Amherst Police Department for their service to our schools and the community pledging continued partnership to help ensure safe schools. [Watch the entire presentation and discussion online at www.williamsvillek12.org](http://www.williamsvillek12.org), [video on demand for March 13, 2018](#).

- **Repair Reserve Hearing:** Assistant Superintendent Thomas Maturski reviewed planned summer work to maintain and preserve District facilities. Funds, not to exceed \$1.1 million, would be drawn from the Repair Reserve Fund, established in 2001, for funding specific repairs to buildings and site improvements that do not recur on an annual basis. Recommended repairs extend the useful life of major school building systems. Following the hearing, the Board unanimously approved the Repair Reserve funding for the work outlined. The list of projects, by building, is available on the Facilities Department webpage, www.williamsvillek12.org/facilities.
- **In other business, the Board:**
 - ➔ Adopted revisions to seven policies: #5660, School Food Service Program; #5710, Transportation; #5741, Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus Drivers and Safety-Sensitive Employees; #7222, Diploma or Credential Options for Students with Disabilities; #7320, Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs and Other Substances; #7550, Dignity for All Students; and #8470, Home Instruction.
- The Board accepted the resignations for retirement purposes from the following employees: **Dr. Anna Cieri**, Assistant Superintendent for Exceptional Education and Student Services, after 21 years of service, effective October 2, 2018; **Maria Deighan**, a Science teacher at South High School, after 25 years of service, effective July 1, 2018; **Ellen Fenimore**, a School Counselor at South High School, after 30 years of service, effective July 1, 2018; **Nancy Ryan**, a Math teacher at Transit Middle School, after 25 years of service, effective July 1, 2018; **Tracie Zappia**, a LOTE teacher at South High School, after 23 years of service, effective July 1, 2018; **William Dohn**, a District Groundsworker, after 28 years of service, effective March 17, 2018; and **Sharon Pastwick**, a part-time Teacher Aide at North High School, after 12 years of service, effective June 22, 2018.
- **Committee of the Whole:** Mr. Meyer suggested that the district contact the Amherst Youth and Recreation Department to inquire about its safety protocols for after school programs, which many district students attend. He voiced support to expand membership on the District safety Committee to include students, parents, community members, and representatives from the APD, and advocated for a building-by-building security audit. Following some discussion, members agreed to send a letter to lawmakers addressing school security and safety, including a request for more resources to support safety measures. Mr. Meyer and Mrs. Vazquez volunteered to draft the letter. Mrs. VanSice acknowledged Dr. Cieri for her "incredible diligence and outstanding service to the district".

In discussing correspondence, Mrs. Leatherbarrow shared a parent's comments about transporting students for field trips during the school day. In response to a resident's inquiry, Mr. Lemay asked the district to provide the board with more information about expanding the current veterans' tax exemption to include cold war era veterans.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

During the second Public Express period, a senior from Williamsville South thanked the Board for its serious consideration and positive actions concerning school safety. A substitute teacher aide requested training on lockdown drills for substitutes.

2018-19 BUDGET WORK SESSION & PUBLIC FORUM

Dr. Martzloff and Mr. Matuski reviewed the 2018-19 Preliminary Budget, providing an overview of planned expenses and anticipated revenues. Dr. Martzloff began with a review of past budget reductions totaling more than \$15 million in real budget cuts over the past seven years. Program continuation plus certain added supports result in a \$190.5 million budget for 2018-19, an increase of \$4.35 million. Salary savings from retirements would be used to close a \$1.55 million budget deficit. The draft budget maintains the current level of academic and extracurricular programming; enhances Academic Intervention Services for students; increases professional development for teachers; adds an Instructional Coach; and strengthens administrative support at elementary and high schools.

The projected 2.24 percent tax levy increase is under the state cap. Taxes on a home assessed at \$150,000 that is eligible for the Basic STAR exemption would increase \$43.43, or \$29.96 with the Enhanced STAR exemption.

Following the presentation, Mr. Mecca asked how comments recently made by the Erie County Executive about school consolidations and the possible withholding of sales tax income to local school districts would affect Williamsville schools. According to Mr. Matuski, the impact is unknown at this time, while Dr. Martzloff said, "It would be unfortunate if we had to get into that battle but hopefully, that won't happen."

During the Public Forum portion of the work session, Mr. Ronald Shubert, former board member and PTSA Council President, called for funding to support additional school social workers.

The school board will review the preliminary budget again during a budget work session on March 27. The board is expected to adopt the 2018-19 budget April 10 and residents can vote on it May 15.

This Board of Education meeting will be televised on Spectrum News Channel 20 Saturday, March 17 at 7:30 P.M. and Sunday, March 18 at 1 P.M.
The meeting video is available for viewing online anytime at www.williamsvillek12.org by clicking *Video on Demand*.

UPCOMING MEETINGS *(held in District Office Boardroom unless indicated):*

Tuesday, March 27, 2018 ♦ Budget Work Session, 7 PM

Tuesday, April 10, 2018 ♦ Regular Meeting & Budget Adoption, 7 PM

Tuesday, April 17, 2018 ♦ Special Board Meeting, BOCES Admin Budget and BOCES Board Member Election ♦ 6 PM

Saturday, April 28, 2018 ♦ Community Forum at Williamsville South High School ♦ 9 AM - Noon