

SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

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RECOGNITION

The Board recognized middle school students from Mill and Transit who finished first and second, respectively, in the recent Western New York Future City Competition. Mill Middle's 8th Grade Team members are repeat champions, having won the contest last year as seventh graders. They will represent Western New York at the national competition in Washington, D.C. next week. In addition to taking second place in the regional contest, the Transit Middle Team took home two special awards for their project: The Student Choice Award and the Pollution Prevention Award. Pictured below left, is the Transit Middle Team and right, members of the Mill Middle Team.



PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Two individuals addressed the Board during the first public expression period. Dr. Michael Littman, who served nine years on the school board and is a past president, thanked retiring District Clerk Mitzie Serafin for her dedication and many contributions to the school district over her 24-year career. Dr. Littman also announced that he is seeking election to the Erie 1 BOCES Board to represent Williamsville CSD. A parent spoke in support of the middle school Gifted and Talented Program, referring to the incredible work of the two Future City Teams honored tonight. He urged the district to devote more resources to the G-T program on behalf of the growing number of students who participate in it.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION

- Under the ***President's Report***,

- As the final meeting for long-time District Clerk Mitzie Serafin, President Shawn Lemay invited past Board members to share their sentiments and memories with the public. Nine former Board members were present and each thanked Mrs. Serafin for her many years of service to the district and the community, wishing her well in her retirement. "You made us all look good," said former member Michael Schmidt, while Dr. Khalid Qazi said, "it was an honor and privilege to work with you". Other former board members present were Mr. Ronald Shubert, Dr. Patti Losito, Dr. Carrie Kahn, Dr. Mohan Devgun, Dr. Michael Littman, Mr. Jay Smith, and Mr. Anthony Laforanara, III. Many cited Mrs. Serafin's 'meticulous' attention to detail, especially when it came to the annual district vote. Mr. Shubert, who now serves as president of the PTSA Council, said Mrs. Serafin has been a great resource for all, adding, "it's hard to imagine Williamsville without Mitzie".

Current members also expressed their gratitude for Mrs. Serafin's expertise, guidance and assistance. Mrs. Vazquez said Mrs. Serafin had encouraged her to run for the Board and thanked her for "seeing my value." Mr. Lemay recounted her years of service, attending more than 280 Board meetings, organizing 24 annual votes as well as numerous special votes, and dozens of forums, retreats, and special meetings. "Many things have changed over the years, but our loyal and determined District Clerk has remained the same," he said.

Superintendent Scott Martzloff read a letter from former Board member Anne Rohrer, who said that over 16 years of working with Mrs. Serafin, “she always kept us grounded and focused on our mission.” In his remarks, Dr. Martzloff extolled Mrs. Serafin’s professionalism during some difficult times and said she set the “tone of excellence” for other district clerks across the state. “You’re not just a colleague but a friend,” he said. He also shared some complimentary comments written previously by former Board presidents and two former superintendents

Mrs. Serafin read a heartfelt statement, thanking the former Board members present and acknowledging several former Board presidents for whom she worked over the past 24 years, especially Mrs. Rohrer who was President at the time she was first hired. She thanked Dr. Martzloff, her family and her husband Bob for all of their support through the years, and pledged support to her successor, Mrs. Lynn Carey.

➔ Mrs. Teresa Leatherbarrow reported on the Board’s January 31 Community Forum, saying the topics discussed included class rank, Special Education, lockdown safety, brain injury in relation to athletic program, time spent on morning buses to/from school, and Chromebook usage by students in middle school versus high school.

➔ Mr. Lemay announced a parent program on Tuesday, March 6 called, “The New Face of Addiction”, to be held at Williamsville South High School from 6:30-8:00 p.m. The presenter, Jessica Hutchings, LMSW, Director of the Kids Escaping Drugs Face 2 Face Program, will address teen substance abuse.

- The Board adopted the procedures and timeline for the 2018 School Board Election. Petition packets for qualified candidates seeking election to the Williamsville Board of Education are now available through the District Clerk’s office. Candidates must obtain at least 68 valid signatures, which represents two percent of last year’s total vote count. Packet information and required forms are available on the District website. Petitions are due in the District Office by 5 P.M. on Monday, April 16. A public drawing for ballot positions will take place on April 17 at 5 p.m. For more information, please contact the District Clerk’s Office at 626-8092. Terms expire for members Mr. Shawn Lemay, Mr. Mark Mecca, and Mrs. Toni Vazquez. Mr. Lemay read a statement, announcing his intention to seek re-election while Mrs. Vazquez and Mr. Mecca remain undecided.

The Erie County Association of School Boards will hold a prospective school board member workshop on Saturday, March 3 at the Erie I BOCES Education Campus, 355 Harlem Rd., West Seneca. Registration begins at 8:15 a.m. and the program runs from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. The workshop is free and open to anyone considering school board service. For more information and to register for the workshop, call the ECASB at 821-7297.

- Under the **Superintendent’s Community Update**, Dr. Martzloff thanked the community members who attended the recent community forum, and thanked those who responded to two recent surveys conducted by the school district.
 - ➔ The Board approved recommended changes to the current-year academic calendar that affect elementary school schedules. The parent-teacher conferences in March will not occur. Friday, March 23 and Monday, March 26 now will be full days for elementary students. According to Dr. Martzloff, parents may contact their child’s teacher at any time and schedule an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Mrs. Leatherbarrow affirmed that the change was made as a result of the recent contract settlement with the teachers and that annual parent-teacher conferences will still be held in the fall.
- **Class Rank** – In September, the Board eliminated class rank beginning with current ninth graders. Since then, a number of students and parents have asked the Board to consider eliminating class rank for current students in grades 10-11. In January, the district surveyed sophomores, juniors and parents on the issue, asking them if they would like class rank eliminated. The parent survey garnered 374 responses while the student survey got 385 responses. Two-thirds of all respondents supported eliminating class rank for current students in grades 10-11.

Mrs. Suzanne Van Sice began the Board discussion, saying she believed the majority of survey comments supported the elimination of class rank for current sophomores and juniors. “Class rank is a hindrance to students earning scholarships,” she said. Mrs. Mary Bieger noted that several parents attended the January 31 forum advocating for the retention of class rank for current-year juniors. Mrs. Leatherbarrow said that she is comfortable with the decision as it stands adding that she believes the Board needs to respect the different opinions shared by both parents and students. Mr. Mark Mecca echoed her sentiments saying the Board already made a decision on the issue and it should stand. Mr. Phil Meyer said he supported eliminating class rank and agreed with the action already taken. Dr. Susan McClary stressed the importance of acting soon in order to give students time for course selection. Dr. Kurt Venator said he would support further action on the issue because of the additional feedback collected. “I think we need action for closure, out of fairness for the added due diligence we did,” he said. Mrs. Van Sice, citing the recent survey, community forum, and feedback from the InterHigh Council, advocated for another vote on whether or not to expand the elimination of class rank to include current students in grades 10-11. She made two separate motions – one for each grade level – calling for a vote at the March 13 Board meeting. After much discussion, the Board voted 6-3 (*No – Mecca, McClary, Lemay*) on each separate motion, agreeing to vote in March on eliminating class rank for current tenth and eleventh graders. At the request of the Board, the survey results will be shared publicly.

- **In other business, the Board:**

➔ Appointed **Mr. Ryan Harding** as the new assistant principal at Casey Middle School, effective February 20, 2018. Mr. Harding has been an assistant principal at Williamsville South for the past three years. Previously, Mr. Harding had taught at the middle school level. “Casey is a place I have admired for a long time,” he said. “I hope to contribute positively to everyone in the Casey community.” Mr. Harding thanked South Principal Keith Boardman for his support and mentorship.

Mr. Chris McDuffie, who has served as Acting Assistant Principal at Casey since the start of the school year, will assume the same position at South High as Acting AP. Mr. McDuffie has been with the school district since 2011. In addition, the Board appointed the 2018 Summer School Principals as follows: **Mr. Corey Gray**, Elementary and Middle School Program; and **Mr. Andre Thomas**, High School Program.

Also, **Mrs. Lynn Carey** was appointed District Clerk, effective March 5, 2018, replacing Mrs. Serafin. Mrs. Carey has worked as a senior clerk typist in Human Resources since 2009.

- ➔ Conducted a first reading on seven revised 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. Mr. Lemay asked about the inclusion of vitamins in Policy #7320 and asked for clarification in reference to the phrase, 'unauthorized use'. The Board will conduct a second reading and adopt the revised policies at its meeting in March.
- ➔ Approved updates to the Professional Development Plan, as presented.
- ➔ Appointed a Legal Review Committee comprised of Mrs. Leatherbarrow, Dr. McClary, and Mr. Lemay for issuing an RFP (Request for Proposal) for legal services.
- ➔ Approved the district's participation in a pilot Unified Basketball program, an inclusive sports program that represents a collaborative effort by Special Olympics New York and the NYS Public High School Athletic Association. The program unites individuals with disabilities and high school partners as teammates for training and interscholastic competition. Board members expressed strong support for the program.
- **Under Facilities**, an update was provided on the Music Improvement and Facility Infrastructure Project. Each high and middle school music team has reviewed the initial architect design for their schools and will provide feedback on their building concept prior to the February recess. The project architect and construction manager will take the input from each school and integrate suggested changes to the individual design plans as much as possible. The updated designs will be presented to each school team in March. The school-based music teams together with the district team will refine the project scopes, as needed, to meet the recommended budget for the new capital project.
- The Board accepted the resignations for retirement purposes from the following employees: **Jacqueline D'Angelo**, a part-time cleaner at North High School, after 12 years of service, effective January 10, 2018; and **Susan Monin**, Cook Manager at North High School, after 21 years of service, effective May 30, 2018.
- The Board accepted a donation on behalf of Williamsville East High School from the East PTSA, which donated a field bench for the new athletic field complex valued at \$500.
- **Committee of the Whole:** Mrs. Leatherbarrow inquired about providing a podcast for Board meetings and at the request of the Board, the district will look into posting audio-only files.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

One speaker addressed the Board about seeking election to the Erie 1 BOCES Board and seeking employment with the school district.

2018-19 BUDGET WORK SESSION & PUBLIC FORUM

Dr. Martzloff updated the Board and the community on the 2018-19 budget planning process. He reviewed the program continuation items presented last month, which represent a status-quo budget to meet existing student needs. He also reviewed program support enhancements, saying that these items are "not getting strong consideration" at this point due to a challenging budget outlook.

Thomas Matuski, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Management Services, summarized the New York State tax cap for the district, which stands at 2.26 percent. According to Mr. Matuski, the district intends to stay under the tax cap. The tax levy would rise by 2.24 percent under the draft budget. He also provided a brief analysis of the state aid outlook under Governor Cuomo's proposal, saying it may change as the state legislature finalizes its budget. Currently, the district's budget outlook for 2018-19 shows a \$1.3 million deficit. Dr. Martzloff noted that teacher retirement notices are due in March and may provide some savings.

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

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

Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 ◆ 7:00 p.m. ◆ District Office Boardroom
2018-19 Budget Work Session: Tuesday, March 27, 2018 ◆ 7:00 p.m. ◆ District Office Boardroom