

**MAY 22, 2023**  
**WILMETTE, IL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held on Monday, May 22, 2023 at the Mikaelian Education Center, 615 Locust Road, Wilmette, Illinois. President Erin Stone called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Members Present: Erin Stone, Jon Cesaretti, Anne Hart, Bonnie Kim, Allyson Paflas,  
 Amy Poehling, Lisa Schneider-Fabes

Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Kari Cremascoli, Corey Bultemeier, Tony DeMonte, Heather Glowacki,  
 Katie Lee

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Principal Cindy Anderson introduced Romona Elementary Lechner Early Education staff Brittany Nelson and Kristin Johnson and their students to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**STUDENT RECOGNITION**

Dr. Cremascoli and the Board of Education recognized student achievements for Science Olympiad, National Latin Exam and National Pegasus Mythology Exam.

**ARTWORK**

The display in the Board room this month is from Harper Elementary and is a vast variety of artwork highlighting the Dolphin Parade, Texture Painting, Identity Logos, Color Monsters, Self-Portraits, Animated Gifts, Scandinavian Folk Art, Watercolor Landscapes, Myanmar Sand Paintings, Las Molas Inspired Prints, Value Paintings, and Stop Motion Animation.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES**

Mrs. Hart moved, seconded by Mrs. Poehling, to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2023 Board of Education Regular, Reorganizational and Executive Session Meetings. The minutes were approved as submitted by **General Consent**.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Valerie Neumeyer-Tynkol of Wilmette, Autumn Lum of Wilmette, Filipe Jimenez of Wilmette, Gwen Volk of Wilmette, Elizabeth Clark of Wilmette, and Don Schwartz all concerned about the future of fine arts programs and keeping trained music teachers on staff. Mr. Schwartz also expressed concern about the lack of an announcement regarding music staff departures.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Committees met as part of the March 14, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting.

**Facility Development – Mrs. Kim**

The administrative team, in partnership with architect and construction team, provided an overview of the facility projects targeted for completion in 2024. This includes a partial roof replacement at WJHS along with six smaller projects occurring at WJHS, Romona and McKenzie. After review of these items, the Board provided support to the team to begin incurring design costs. This preliminary work will assist the construction team in preparing to be one of the first projects out to bid this fall. The expectation is that the summer of 2024 will be very busy across the school construction industry and getting out to bid early is the recommended way to achieve competitive bidding on the projects. The team also briefly reviewed project updates for the summer 2023 A/C projects.

### **School Finance – Mr. Cesaretti**

The School Finance Committee reviewed the contract renewal with Baker Tilly for auditing services. The initial projections for renewal indicated that renewal costs would increase at least 50% to 60% for FY 2023, the Board directed administration to proceed with a Request for Proposals (RFP) for audit services. Unfortunately, no responses were received. The administration then contacted Baker Tilly to see if they could continue to provide audit services. Baker Tilly provided audit fees for a 1 or a 3-year renewal contract. In either option, the 1st year increase is ~57%. The 3-year renewal then has 5% increases in year 2 and 3. The Board directed the team to proceed with preparing a contract for a 3-year renewal, and that contract is up for approval later on this evening's agenda. Baker Tilly has provided really good service in challenging circumstances the last three years.

In addition, a presentation was shared on the fiscal year 2024 draft budget for the Board's review. The good news is that the FY 2024 budget projects having the Operating Funds end with a fund balance above 40%.

### **Strategy – Mrs. Schneider-Fabes**

The administration provided reports on two key areas. The WJHS administrative team provided the Board an update regarding progress and plans for improving supports for students and families transitioning from 6th to 7th grade. This goal falls under Strategic Plan Goal #4 and follows the work completed last year for the same in support of those transitioning from 4th to 5th grade. The team has made a conscious effort to address the needs of students and families through this important transition while also making information readily available in a variety of ways so that each student has the opportunity to learn more about and begin connecting with WJHS before the start of school.

During Strategy Committee, the team also reviewed the annual report of Student/Staff Planning, which was formally presented to the Board at this regular meeting. While this is an annual report, the action step under goal 5 with this student/staff plan update. The report provides the annual enrollment report, which informs staffing and sectioning across each school each year. In addition, it also reflects a close examination of non-homeroom class sizes, which includes a review of class sizes and course offerings in World Language and Creative Arts classes in grades 5-8 as well as in math classes in grades 7-8.

### **Liaison Reports**

#### **Community Review Committee (CRC) – Mrs. Paflas**

The CRC met on May 9 to review and finalize their report on neurodivergent learning, which will be presented later this evening.

#### **Educational Foundation – Mrs. Poehling**

The Foundation met on May 10. The committee voted on new members and trustees. Voted to fund a special gift for all 4 elementary schools for a permanent book walk. Reviewed recent successful events, movie night, stem in the real world assembly and cheers and beers.

#### **Wilmette Village Intergovernmental Cooperation Working Group – Mrs. Kim/Mrs. Schneider-Fabes** Meeting first week of June.

#### **Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) – Mrs. Paflas**

Considering a resolution related to school safety and security on election days.

Dr. Cremascoli stated Mr. DeMonte has developed a plan to send to the elections board regarding safety on election days and asked the Board for any input before finalizing and submitting for approval.

#### **Legislative Update – Mrs. Paflas**

General Assembly did not introduce or pass a Fiscal Year 2024 budget before leaving Springfield last week; however, Senate and House will return this week and have until May 31 to pass a budget.

Mrs. Paflas noted B1446 Dress Policy at Graduation would ensure that students can celebrate their cultural, ethnic and religious faith at graduation. This bill arose from a situation in which a student was not allowed to wear an eagle feather in his graduation hat to celebrate his Native American heritage at his high school graduation.

HB 3643- Religious Dietary Food Options (Halal and Kosher) is a bill that would require public schools to provide religious dietary food options as part of their lunch program, including but not limited to halal and kosher. This requirement is subject to appropriation, schools would only be responsible for the cost of a Type A lunch, and would require ISBE to engage in a master contract to execute these requests. Vendors must certify that the food provided is halal and kosher and schools can rely on that certification. Language to be included to protect districts that do not have sufficient kitchen equipment or staff to comply with this legislation.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Written Communication – Dr. Cremascoli**

Dr. Cremascoli reported the Board received written communication from: Anna Assenmacher regarding safe gun storage practices and school building safety; Corey Lester regarding KEEP39 fee structure; Rob & Rebecca Toton regarding ongoing student issues. Polly & Kira McClellan, Ariel Knauff, Alecia Romatier, Diana Williams, Tanya Jeong, Julie Hanahan, Sheetal Shah, Kimberly Newman, Stephanie Crocker and Amanda Ault regarding the HMS & WJHS Choir/Fine Arts programs

### **B. Administrative Announcements – Dr. Cremascoli**

#### *End-of-Year Preparations*

Dr. Cremascoli noted the District is wrapping up the current school year with a strong finish academically and socially-emotionally, while also vigorously planning and preparing for the start of the new school year. School teams are completing their fall academic assessments and making sure that their students continue to have rigorous and meaningful instruction while also taking time to celebrate their connections and accomplishments from this school year. Administration is working on staffing and hiring for the upcoming school year. The administration is also planning for summer construction projects and new curriculum work.

#### *Wilmette Junior High School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation*

Dr. Cremascoli stated Wilmette Junior High School will hold its graduation ceremonies on June 8th at New Trier High School. Ceremonies are scheduled to be held indoors this year. In addition, 8th graders are preparing for the end-of-year visit to Great America.

#### *Highcrest Outdoor Concert*

Dr. Cremascoli reported many music concerts were held this month as well, including 4th grade concerts, Highcrest and Wilmette Junior High School band, orchestra and choir concerts, High Five Choir and more. The annual Highcrest Outdoor Concert will be held on May 26.

#### *Elementary Schools Celebrations of 4<sup>th</sup> Graders*

Dr. Cremascoli noted elementary schools are preparing to celebrate and bid final farewells to 4th grade students before they are promoted to Highcrest Middle School. Each school and PTA has activities to help commemorate this important milestone.

#### *Elementary Solarbrations*

Each elementary school has celebrated the installation of Solar Panels this month. A 1 Kilowatt solar array has been installed. This system also includes an online dashboard that can be used to instruct students about science, math, technology, and sustainability, which is an area of emphasis throughout District 39. With the installation of these solar panels, students will get to see first-hand how sunlight is converted into electricity while supporting Green Teams and their sustainability efforts. Dr. Cremascoli

thanked students and staff who contributed toward writing the grant that made this possible as well as Mr. Tony DeMonte for his leadership and coordination of these efforts. She also thanked the *Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation* and *Cook County Solar Schools Grant Program* for their generous financial support of these projects.

### *2023-2024 Staffing*

An update on student enrollment and staffing for the 2023-2024 school year is detailed in a report presented later in this meeting. Parents are asked to annually register students for the new school year as staffing is based upon student enrollment/registration, student needs and course selections.

Dr. Cremascoli announced the administration has successfully hired several new teachers, many of whom bring extensive experience and knowledge. This is always an exceptionally busy time of year as staffing needs are reviewed.

### *New Assistant Principal*

Dr. Cremascoli announced Melissa Feinberg as the new Assistant Principal at Harper Elementary School. Following several years as an elementary classroom teacher, Ms. Feinberg served as an instructional coach for two years where she partnered with her Kindergarten through 2nd grade teachers to strengthen instructional practices via coaching cycles. She then served as the Assistant Principal at Chicago International Charter School Irving Park Campus for five years, where she led her building MTSS team, oversaw the building's curriculum and instructional practices, and planned her school's personal learning vision.

### *Reflections Celebration*

The Board hosts an annual Reflections Celebration of employees being recognized for career milestones. This year, celebration is being held on May 25th and the Board will recognize employees who have completed 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 years of service within District 39. Retirees will also be recognized for their contributions.

### *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Task Force*

The District's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Task Force has met three times this year. The focus of the team's work has been on employee recruitment, hiring and retention/support. The team spent time reviewing and discussing opportunities for focused efforts within these areas to support employees of color, including current and prospective employees. The group will continue this work next year and will make recommendations to the administration for action steps.

### *Audit Services Contract Renewal*

The initial three-year contract with Baker Tilly concluded with the FY 2022 audit. The District solicited proposals for audit services in a Request For Proposal (RFP) process, with no proposals received. After the RFP process ended, the District worked with Baker Tilly on 1 and 3 year contract renewal options for FY 2023 and beyond. Upon review of those renewal options, the Board recommended a three-year audit services contract renewal with Baker Tilly. Approval of this contract is presented within the Consent Agenda.

### *Strategic Plan Updates*

As the end of the school year approaches, administration is evaluating and analyzing the progress made this school year relative to the Strategic Plan and identified Action Steps. DSAT is scheduled to meet again on June 1 and Goal Champions will present the final progress report and Key Performance Indicator outcomes for this school year during the June Board Meeting.

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

The District received FOIA requests from Janie Jordan of Data Research Partners requesting District 39 employees names, title/position, email addresses, and department location: Ben Yarbrough requested

superintendents contracts from 2016 - present including contract extensions/renewals, pay increases/bonuses, amendments and riders.

### **C. Annual Business**

1. Community Review Committee (CRC) Report Presentation: “A Culture of Connectedness: An Empathic and Inclusive Community for Neurodivergent Students.”

Community Review Committee (CRC) President Amy Wechsler Ross and Vice President Ariel Ruby presented their report, “A Culture of Connectedness: An Empathic and Inclusive Community for Neurodivergent Students.” This report is the culmination of many, many hours of collaborative work, research, and study on this topic. CRC brings together 25 parents, community members, teachers, administrators and other support staff who all contributed to study this important topic and provide a meaningful report of recommendations and suggestions. In past years, CRC’s work has led to significant, sustained changes to the Strategic Plan and work within District 39 schools.

Discussion amongst Board members included the lack of understanding about neurodiversity and students behaving badly; the importance of open discussions with parents, students and teachers using the shared vocabulary to open up the doors for understanding; the research reports 15%-20% of the population as neurodivergent, however, this does not require a diagnosis so the reality is 40%-50% of the population falls under the neurodivergent umbrella. Members were very appreciative of the efforts and hard work dedicated to this report and the focus on streamlining the process for CRC within the audit and edits to bylaws.

2. 2023-2024 Student/Staff Planning

As part of this annual report, administration aligned the action step under goal 5 with this student/staff plan update. The report provides the annual enrollment report, which informs staffing and sectioning across each school each year. In addition, it also reflects a close examination of non-homeroom class sizes, which includes a review of class sizes and course offerings in World Language and Creative Arts classes in grades 5-8 as well as in math classes in grades 7-8. Based on the Board discussion at Committee of the Whole, longitudinal enrollment data as well as enrollment projection data shared in the fall is referenced in this report.

Mrs. Hart appreciated the report especially as it is difficult to anticipate the fluctuations in enrollment. She noted the recent report reflecting a decrease of nearly 10% in enrollment over the past three years.

3. Fiscal Year 2024 Draft Budget

A review of the FY 2024 draft budget was presented. Looking forward to FY 2024, the Operating Funds budget includes a small surplus after accounting for transfers out to cover construction projects and debt service payments. At present time, the draft budget has FY 2024 projected to end with a 42% fund balance.

### **D. Board Policy Review**

1. First Reading of Board of Education Policies 2:20; 2:30; 2:50; 2:105; 2:110; 2:210; 2:250; 2:265; 3:10; 3:40; 3:50; 3:60; 4:60; 5:30; 5:90; 5:150; 5:260; 5:290; 6:20; 6:50; 6:60; 6:65; 6:135; 6:160; 6:280; 6:340; 7:10; 7:20; 7:100; 8:20

Dr. Cremascoli stated these policies are presented as first reading based on PRESS policy updates issued in March. Not all of the policies were revised. Members proposed edits to policies.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Valerie Neumeyer-Tynkol enjoyed the report on neurodivergence. She reiterated the benefits of employing a good choral director to inspire children and teach them how to perform in public in front of an audience.

Julie Hanahan of Glenview, has a neurodivergent child in choir and was aware the choir program was not being cut but expressed concern about eliminating the choir director position stating not every music teacher has choral training.

Kimberly Newman of Wilmette, stated the dialogue should be about whether a dedicated a choir director position. is needed and suggested reasons for having the position in District 39.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Personnel Report dated May 22, 2023 which included administrative full-time employment of **Melissa Feinberg**, effective July 1, 2023; licensed full-time reemployment of **Mary Kleiner**, effective August 21, 2023; **Carly Louis**, effective August 21, 2023; licensed part-time reemployment of **Hillary Rosenthal**, effective August 21, 2023; licensed full-time employment of **Kathleen Docter**, effective August 21, 2023; **Elise Higgins**, effective August 21, 2023; **Megan Julseth**, Harper, Learning Behavior Specialist, effective August 21, 2023; **Jaclyn Kostrzewski**, effective August 21, 2023; **Jordyn LeVay**, effective August 21, 2023; **Sydney Padula**, effective August 21, 2023; **William Thompson**, effective August 21, 2023; educational support personnel full-time employment of **Romane Marcelin**, effective April 28, 2023; temporary employment of **Ana Bach**, effective August 21, 2023; **John McGregor**, effective May 25, 2023; administrative resignation of **Jeffrey Dees**, effective June 30, 2023; licensed resignation of **Natalie Farley**, effective June 9, 2023; educational support personnel resignation of **Carrie Diamond**, effective June 22, 2023; **Esther Kaplan**, effective June 9, 2023; **Victor Krichevsky**, effective May 10, 2023; licensed retirement of **Josh Andrews**, effective the end of the 2027-28 school year; **Cherie Einum**, effective the end of the 2027-28 school year; **Catherine Linehan**, effective the end of the 2027-28 school year; **Jenny Rosene**, effective the end of the 2027-28 school year: approve the FY 2023, 2024, and 2025 year-end audit services from the financial auditing firm of Baker Tilly US, LLP for the District 39 financial statements, SELF (School Employees Loss Fund) report, and the Wilmette Community Special Education Agreement (WCSEA) in the following amounts: Fiscal Year 2023: District 39 \$42,000; SELF \$750; WCSEA \$4,000; Total \$46,750; Fiscal Year 2024: District 39 \$44,100; SELF \$750; WCSEA \$4,400; Total \$49,250; Fiscal Year 2025: District 39 \$46,300; SELF \$750; WCSEA \$4,600; Total \$51,650: motion to approve as first reading of Board of Education Policies 2:20 *Powers and Duties of the Board of Education; Indemnification;* 2:30 *Board of Education Elections;* 2:50 *Board Member Term of Office;* 2:105 *Ethics And Gift Ban;* 2:110 *Board Officers;* 2:210 *Organizational School Board Meeting;* 2:250 *Access To District Public Records;* 2:265 *Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure;* 3:10 *General School Administration;* 3:40 *Superintendent;* 3:50 *Administrative Personnel Other Than The Superintendent;* 3:60 *Responsibility of the Building Principal and Assistant Principal;* 4:60 *Purchases and Contracts;* 5:30 *Hiring Process and Criteria;* 5:90 *Abused and Child Neglected Child Reporting;* 5:150 *Personnel Records;* 5:260 *Student Teachers;* 5:290 *Educational Support Personnel Employment, Termination and Suspension;* 6:20 *School Year Calendar and Day;* 6:50 *School Wellness;* 6:60 *Curriculum Content;* 6:65 *Student Social Emotional Development;* 6:135 *Accelerated Placement;* 6:160 *English Language Learners;* 6:280 *Grading and Promotion;* 6:340 *Student Testing and Assessment Program;* 7:10 *Equal Education Opportunities;* 7:20 *Harassment of Students Prohibited;* 7:100 *Health, Eye, and Dental Examinations; Immunizations; and Exclusion of Students;* 8:20 *Community Use of School Facilities:* approve the accounts payable for bills listed between April 25, 2023 – May 22, 2023 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$476,129.01; O&M Fund \$65,638.53; Debt Services \$66,151.25; Transportation \$229,075.38; Capital Projects \$1,084,216.00; total all funds: \$1,921,210.17: to approve the manual checks issued between April 25, 2023 – May 22, 2023 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$888,272.10; O&M Fund \$139,402.93; Transportation \$63.32; Capital Projects \$275.19; total all funds: \$1,028,013.54.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” – Jon Cesaretti, Anne Hart, Bonnie Kim, Allyson Paflas, Amy Poehling, Lisa Schneider-Fabes, Erin Stone; voting “nay” – none; absent – none: **Motions Carried.**

## CONFERENCE ITEMS

### Old Business

Dr. Cremascoli noted 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation ceremony is approaching and asked Board members to inform her which graduation session they planned to attend.

### New Business

None

### Good and Welfare

Mrs. Kim stated her son at Highcrest started playing chess in a chess tournament in Skokie. Three students from the same school could enter as a particular bracket. The last challenge of the year took place a couple of weeks ago. A Highcrest team won 1<sup>st</sup> place and was allowed to take the trophy to Highcrest. Her son was not on the team but they were all so proud of the team.

President Erin Stone noted a year and a half ago, 6<sup>th</sup> graders gave her a box of rocks as her last name is ‘Stone’. She said it was the best gift she had ever received. 36 sixth graders each made a rock special by decorating it. As Ms. Stone drove by McKenzie, she saw a tree with brightly colored rocks around it. She looked at the rocks and saw different words painted on them. Words such as love, kindness, brave, proud, creative, amazing, strong, determined, curious, leaders, unity, supportive, helpful, caring, joy, be you, follow your dreams. She was overwhelmed at the inner emotions and dreams of these students on the rocks outside by this tree. She commended the people who work on behalf of these children, they ‘ROCK’ and their parents ‘ROCK and the children ‘ROCK’.

Mrs. Poehling acknowledged and congratulated President Stone on her completion of her Master’s degree and her new teaching position.

Mrs. Hart moved, seconded by Mrs. Poehling, to adjourn to executive session to discuss collective negotiations, specific personnel and special education/specific student matters.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” – Jon Cesaretti, Anne Hart, Bonnie Kim, Allyson Paflas, Amy Poehling, Lisa Schneider-Fabes, Erin Stone; voting “nay” – none; absent – none: **Motion Carried.**

The meeting adjourned to executive session at 9:31 p.m. and returned to the regular meeting of the Board of Education at 10:17 p.m.

Being no further business, Mrs. Peohling moved, seconded by Mrs. Paflas, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education. It adjourned at 10:18 p.m. by **General Consent.**

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President

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Secretary