Board of Education Meeting

August 14, 2018

Meeting was called to order….Pledge of Allegiance said….inspirational message read…

BOE approved Maureen Gorman to be appointed as acting District Clerk (while Joanne Long is on a well-deserved vacation).

Approval of July 2nd BOE reorganization and July meeting and approval of warrants, budgets transfers and wire transfers as detailed in the Thursday mailing.

Wendy Gargiulo asked for information to be corrected under new business. She was the one who wanted the BOE to look into the PA system. She also wanted the minutes to reflect what she said at the July BOE meeting. Ed Corona said the authority to close schools always lies with the superintendent. Ms. Gargiulo said, “the power was only given for one year to Dr. Seniuk….only for the 2016/2017 school year not years.”

That was the only time it was ever to given the superintendent and it was revoked by the BOE

Approval of treasure’s report as detailed in the Thursday mailing.

There was some confusion about the first public comments section. Ms. Hyland, the BOE president, clarified that “it’s for anything in the agenda.”

***Superintendent’s Report***

Dr. Seniuk reported that all the summer programs went really well this summer. The children had an amazing summer with the various programs the school district offered. She mentioned the bond work being completed didn’t make it feasible to spread the programs out this year and that’s why all the programs had to be at HDF. Even though it was crowded, the children had fun, amazing experiences. She also encouraged parents to send suggestions if they have ideas for how to expand the programs being offered.

Dr. Seniuk told us Mr. McDaid and the business office got an amazing report from the state creditors who came into our district to go through the finances and purchasing procedures. The state came in for three months and found no findings and had no recommendations for the North Merrick School District. Mr. McDaid said, “We were clean and perfect” and he was very proud of the business office, the faculty, and all the staff who made it happen.

Dr. Seniuk wanted to dispel rumors about the after care program. She said a resident stated a concern about it and she personally met with June Smith to discuss it. They had a nice discussion and discussed possible different ways of doing things. Dr. Seniuk also very clearly stated that the North Merrick School District has an agreement with the Bellmore Merrick Child Care Program (BMCCP) for the 2018-2019 school year.

She gave a shout out to the custodial staff and the awesome job they are doing every day (deliveries, boxes getting delivered, boxes getting moved, getting the teachers into their classrooms and all that comes with those tasks.) She said appreciatively, “No lazy days of summer” for our custodial staff.

***BUSINESS***

Tracey Miller cannot go to both days of the NYS School Board Association Annual Convention (letter C) so she questioned if it would be a lesser expense to only go one day (Friday).

Wendy Gargiulo suggested letter o (Camp Avenue donation to the BOE) needed to be made more clear.She said donations were made using leftover fundraising money. Some parents told her they had no idea leftover fundraising money they contributed to help with 6th grade costs were given to the school. This hadn’t always been the case with donations, only the last few years. She said it needed to be clear to parents that that was where the money was going. The new Camp Avenue principal said she met with the chairs and the chairs said she and the teachers knew. Gargiulo said it’s a BOE issue because “we are asking to approve it” and she wanted to make sure information is being given to parents. Ed Corona asked, “How did we do it last year?” and was told it was done the same way.

Jen Hyland wanted to explain the 1.2 million dollar budget and how to leverage our budget money the best we can as a district. Thanks to Dr. Seniuk, we are now leveraging our budget using BOCES services (because we get back 50% of the money).

Jen Hyland questioned what the $7, 192.22 (letter q) was being used for and Tracey Miller said it was for adding CHROME books.

Finally, did any more of the BOE members want to attend the NYS School Board Associations Leadership Conference (letter b) besides Jen Hyland, Wendy Gargiulo, and Dr. Seniuk.

*Motion carried on the Consent Agenda items A-T.*

BOE approves the first reading of policy 2564 (no action).

Jen Hyland read the final policy reading for policy 9310. It’s about updating our tables policy –bringing up to date.

*Personnel Actions Report* – motion carried

*Consent Agenda A-D* – motion carried

***Report of Committees***

High School report (Wendy Gargiulo and Ed Corona)

Wendy Gargiulo said there is a new district clerk, orientation for MAMS is August 28th, Superintendent’s Conference Days for staff are August 29th and 30th, and September 4th is the first day of school for students. She mentioned there are 4 components of summer school. It’s offered to kids who live outside of our district in grades 9-12, in middle school for kids that fail 2 or more subjects, drivers ed, and special education students who receive services all year. The theme for Calhoun is Wellness Matters. A science teacher at Calhoun is now the department head and they are on phase 4 of the Bond work. Lastly, she mentioned an emergency was declared when there was 100 feet of electrical cables that had to be removed and replaced. It was costly for the district but obviously the $75, 000 fix had to be done. Ed Corona mentioned that the Bellmore Merrick Central School District was named in the top 100 in the country (94th) joining other LI schools like Jericho, Syosset, Herrick, and East Williston. Parking is an issue at Calhoun High School so students will not be able to park there this year. The school is going to try and come up with creative ways to resolve the situation. Mr. Corona also said there was no PTA council over the summer so noting to report.

**Buildings AND Grounds**

Mr. Carder said HDF is pretty much done. They just have some touch ups to do and classroom and hallway cleanings to get done. OMR is 97% done. PSEG had to cancel twice because of the weather. The second floor of Camp Avenue is in very good shape. They are cleaning classrooms and waxing. The first floor getting back together also. The ceilings are done. The kindergarten wing should be done by the end of the week. Mr. Carder mentioned possibly bringing over some OMR staff to help get Camp ready for the start of school. He said he’s meeting with the new principal, the head custodian, and Dr. Seniuk and “nobody is sitting around.” Once the school year starts, work will once again happen after school hours.

Dr. Seniuk mentioned that she hears from teachers on July 1st asking when they can get into their classrooms so she wanted to give them “a big shout out” for their devotion to the students.

**Communications/Correspondence**

The BOE received one email and they will respond.

Jen Hyland gave the email address nmboe@nmerrick.org and went over the chain of command for school communication. She says it starts at the building level with the teacher, then the principal, then the assistant superintendent Beth Friedman, and finally the superintendent.

**Unfinished Business**

Vacant Trustee Seat

Ed Corona said he made a motion to accept applications at the July BOE meeting but it was never voted on. He brought up a motion form the BOE to accept applications for the vacancy.

Wendy Gargiulo reminded the BOE that when this first happened, she wanted the 3rd highest vote getter to get the seat since almost 50 percent of the community voted for that person (only losing by 12 votes) and she doesn’t want to alienate those people. She then said Mr. Lentini had a great resolution – which was to leave it vacant – since there has been contention and it leaves the emotion out of it. She mentioned the Massapequa school district that also has a vacancy. (She said two residents petitioned the commissioner to force a special election since they have the right to all seats being filled. Commisioner said no because filling the seat is a local decision.) Tracey Miller said we have a right to have the seat filled also. Wendy Gargiulo then said leaving the seat vacant isn’t a problem “until there is a problem.” She added it might be in the community’s best interest. Jen Hyland mentioned leaving it vacant could be problematic if a quorum is needed. She said it changes the amount the amount to constitute a quorum. Gargiulo said “whether it’s a 7 person board or a 6 member board, you still need 4 people to constitute a quorum. It doesn’t change at all. Vinny Lentini asked to take a vote and the BOE voted 4-2 in favor of accepting applications from the community. Hyland, Miller, Gordon, and Corona votes to take applications and Lentini and Gargiulo voted to keep it vacant. Lentini then asked to discuss the process for accepting applications. Wendy Gargiulo said the sending out the Connect Ed limits the candidates to parents who have children in the 3 elementary schools. She said we need to be sure the entire community knows about it and can apply. Ed Corona asked how we did it two years ago and Gargiulo said people emailed their applications and the BOE met and went over resumes. ***More information to follow about this topic once we learn their next steps!!!***

**Aftercare Program**

Dr. Seniuk said there is no intent to remove the BMCCP, rather, she wants to look to ways to improve what we currently have. She mentioned she researched the Huntington Learning Center since at least one parent mentioned academic concerns. But HLC doesn’t do aftercare. She said some school districts use SCOPE. She then mentioned her meeting with Ms. Smith and how she found her cooperative and collaborative. They discussed that space has been an issue for some parents. Finally she said the information that she provided to the BOE was what other school districts were doing. This will be ongoing, no action will be taken. Michelle Gordon said her children use the aftercare program and she was happy with it. Lastly, Seniuk reported that the BMCCP has been in complete compliance…”always shining reports.” SEE PUBLIC COMMENTS #2 at the bottom of this document!

**Closing Facilities During February Break**

Ed Corona said this discussion should first take place in executive session. Tracey Miller sais she was given a lot of stuff, it’s a tremendous amount of information, and she’d like time. Wendy Gargiulo said the audience kind of has an idea “because it’s out there from the July meeting.” She went on to say that if the BOE is trying to be transparent, “not speaking in general terms doesn’t look transparent at all.” Jen Hyland then gave a brief summary - this topic is whether or not to close the buildings for 3 days in February – they need to look at the cost savings, there is a tremendous amount of information…. Wendy Gargiulo said she asked for a cost analysis and “we’re getting volume. Taxpayers don’t pay money in volume.” Jen Hyland said she wanted to table this discussion. Ed Corona said it’s not just money. It’s also about the powers of the superintendent. Discussion tabled again.

**Teacher Center**

Dr. Seniuk is concluding her interviews and thanked everyone who came out. She’ll be making her recommendations soon.

**Security Update**

License scanners are ready for the first day of school. Vestibules will be ready by September 15th (due to a backlog with the permits). BOE discussed and said security will be funded until additional physical security is in place. Dr. Seniuk will provide different options in terms of security companies.

**New Business**

* 1. devices (Vinny Lentini asked which students will have them, how often, grades) He was told 1-1 devices started in 6th grade and went down to 5th grade. They are in the classrooms. Leasing from BOCES has helped with costs and they’re hoping to get more devices into other grades.

**BOE meeting minutes**

Jen Hyland asked the BOE if they can post their “draft minutes” since the lag time is problematic and misinformation is spread. Gargiulo said it presents a problem since nothing is final until action is taken and minutes are voted on. If the BOE posts minutes, “it’s not a problem until it’s a problem” and there is incorrect information in there too. Hyland and Miller said that rarely to never happens. Hyland went on to say maybe twice in the 2 years she’s been on the Board – she said “it’s relatively rare.” Gargiulo reminded her there were mistakes in tonight’s minutes. The BOE decided to talk to Joanne Long when she gets back from vacation about this topic.

**STEM-STEAM**

Vinny Lentini wanted to include art into our district’s STEM program and call the program STEAM. Ms. Friedman discussed all the fabulous STEM happenings in our district and the arts are a part of all of it (liberal arts, physical arts, etc…). Mr. Lentini asked if we could call it STEAM. BOE will discuss.

**Policy schedule**

1. year policy going through table

**BOE retreat and BOE goals**

It’s going to happen….schedules have to be coordinated…will discuss ways to be a more efficient, high functioning BOE…goals for the BOE, etc…

**High School Building Use**

Wendy Gargiulo mentioned that the 4 component districts use the Bellmore Merrick Central high school district at a cost of $22,000 (to the BM central high school district) and we use it a lot more then they use our facilities (since we use it for graduations, awards, concerts, theater arts, etc….) She said N. Merrick actually uses it the most. Gargiulo said there was talk at the high school of shifting that cost to the elementary schools and have it come out of the elementary budget since it’s at the central district’s cost. No action was taken but the high school asked that the relationship be more reciprocal. She mentioned it would be nice if we allowed them to use our facilities when necessary and it doesn’t happen often (ex: a bond vote). Gargiulo suggested that the elementary schools can absorb the cost for all the central district does for us. Jen Hyland’s response was, “Hopefully that doesn’t happen.”

**Public Comments #2**

An individual took to the microphone to share her unhappiness that her son who is entering kindergarten will have to go to HDF rather then the school two blocks from her house (Camp Avenue). She and her husband both work and this is a hardship for her family for many reasons. The superintendent is meeting with the family to discuss.

An individual took to the microphone to discuss her love of the current aftercare program and asked for the district to reach out to all the parents who use the program when looking for information or making any decisions.

An individual, who has been an educator for 25 years and whose children are all grown up, said the Bellmore Merrick Child Center Program is the best program out there because of all of the outstanding people who work there.

An individual came to the microphone to compliment the website and asked if the BOE will consider hiring media specialists for all 3 elementary schools. She’d really like that

An individual came to the microphone to tell how much she loves the aftercare program, how it isn’t transient (in terms of the people who work there), all the people who work there are wonderful, etc…

An individual came to the microphone to say how much she loves the aftercare program. Her daughter has a life threatening disease and she does not have to worry about her daughter’s illness because of how well she gets looked after in the aftercare program. She also mentioned her dislike of the carts and how the school district needs to be WIFI ready. Her daughter’s continuing glucose monitor didn’t work as it should because the school WiFI wasn’t up to date. Finally she said the one to one devices were the way to go and improving our WIFI is necessary.

Wendy Gargiulo mentioned the technology bond we had years back and Jen Hyland mentioned the WIFI hotspots that were placed throughout the district. Beth Friedman said she remembered the technology presentation. Gargiulo said “this is the first she’s hearing about this” and didn’t realize connecting to WiFi was still an issue in the district Michelle Gordon said she was on the technology committee and she’ll discuss this. Jen Hyland wanted to look into medical devices and WiFi for the schools.

An individual came to the microphone to say how much she adores the aftercare program. “It’s not broken, it doesn’t need to be fixed. They’ve been around for 28 years.”

An individual came to the microphone to express her love and gratitude for the aftercare program. She said “it’s an extension of my family.” She also said it’s not scholastic…it’s running and playing, being social, kids making friends with other kids….its cost effective…not educational…”

An individual came to the microphone and said the vacancy for the trustee seat should be attached to a mailing so everyone in the community sees it.

An individual came back to the microphone to ask about the OMR sign.

An individual came to the microphone to say how much he likes the aftercare program but so many people had already mentioned what he was going to say. He also thanked Mr. Mc Daid and Dr. Seniuk for their help with the parking situation in July. He had spoken at the July BOE meeting to mention his safety concerns and he was appreciative for their immediate help with the situation.

\*\*\*\*When all the individuals came to the microphone to discuss the aftercare program, the audience clapped and cheered loudly (until they were reminded they weren’t allowed.) But even after the reminder, the audience continued to share its support of the people going to the microphone.\*\*\*\*