**Summary of the September 12, 2018**

**Board of Education Meeting**

1. Meeting was called to order at 8:06 pm
2. After the Pledge of Allegiance, Tracey Miller asked for a moment of silence for Norbert Billig. Norbert Billig was a North Merrick resident who served as a BOE trustee for 30 years. Mr. Billig also served on the high school board for 24 years. Mr. Billig passed away on September 2, 2018.
3. Approval of Minutes: regular BOE meeting 8/14/18; special BOE meeting 8/17/18, and special meeting 8/23/18.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS—OLD BUSINESS**

* Mary Keene of CRONM asked the Board about the purpose of the 8/17 and 8/23 special meetings. Jenn Hyland advised that the 8/17 Special Meeting was to address and employment issue. Mary asked if the residents were ever notified of these meetings. Jenn Hyland advised that by law, the Board only needs to provide 24 hours notice to public of special meetings. According to Hyland notices about these were posted at Fayette.
* Anna Higgins of CRONM followed up by inquiring why the Board does not utilize the connect ed as a means of communicating with the residents about upcoming board meetings and special meetings. With the security measures in place at schools, residents will rarely go up to the doors and therefore, the notices posted, really don’t give notice to anyone. Further, residents whose children are no longer in school, would never get notice. The Board was asked to consider using connect ed to communicate about upcoming meetings and sending reminders to residents as to upcoming meetings to ensure that as many residents as possible attended the Board meetings. The Board said that they would look into the recommendation.

1. **SUMMER PROGRAM PRESENTATION**

* Beth Friedman gave a wonderful presentation on the myriad of summer programs at Fayette, including: the reading program, Spanish program, Music program, Extended School Year, SCOPE, and Camp Invention. Thanks to the amazing leaders of these programs who collaborated so well with each other (especially since all the programs were in the same building), the students had so much choice, rich experiences, and great summers all around. Superintendent Seniuk said she was proud of the high level of participation. Ms. Friedman thanked Mrs. Schmol for getting our programs and pictures into the Merrick Herald and she gave gift certificates out to the leaders of the above programs: Mr. Oakley (Spanish), Mr. Beck and Mr. Willis (Music), Joan Edom and Christine Talbox (Camp Invention), Jessica Marciana (SCOPE), and Maria Castle (Reading Program).

1. **SUPERINTENDENT’S COMMENTS**
   * The district created the “Chain of Communication Guide” so that Parents knew who to contact on any issue. The guide is posted on the District Website and was a hand out at the meeting. For more information, or if you have questions, you can contact board at NMBOE@nmerrick.org and Dr. Seniuk at cseniuk@nmerrick.org.

* + First day of school went off without a hitch. There was staff from Central Administration present at each of the three schools. The buildings look amazing thanks to our fantastic custodial staffs. The teachers and students were resilient in dealing with the heat and humidity.
  + Security – The superintendent discussed the letter sent to NM families about security and how “the children are safer when the doors are locked…” Parents, guardians, and caretakers MUST call ahead when going to the schools and give an estimated time when they’ll be arriving at the schools.
  + Superintendent thanked Mr. Carder and the door monitors for learning the new security system. The new security company is very responsive - the Wisdom Security Company - which is head by a former police officer. (Merrick uses this same security company.)
  + Vestibules are hoping to be ready by mid to late October.
  + BOE will revisit the need for security guards once all the vestibules are installed.
  + Mr. Carder discussed how all the corridor doors are being replaced. Corridor doors include classrooms, offices, custodial closets, etc….All the doors will be fire raided. The doors will also have will have new locks that lock from the inside and can only be opened with a key from outside. Keys cannot be duplicated.
  + WIFI – Some concerns were brought forth about the lack of WIFI in the schools, especially as it pertains to students who have medical devices. There are areas of the schools where there is no wifi access and concern is that children with devices that rely on wifi, may be put at risk. The technology department is working on this issue.
  + Tablets were discussed. Grades K-3 share their tablets. Grades 4-6 have one to one devices. District is working on ensuring that the schools and classrooms have updated wifi and that the tablets are able to be used ot the best of their capacity. Computer lab at OMR will be ready in a couple of weeks. Superintendent discussed how the district saves a lot of money by leasing the technology from BOCES as opposed to purchasing the expensive technology that breaks after two years. This way, BOCES is responsible for repair and maintenance of the devices.

1. **BUSINESS**

* Jen Hyland asked the Board for a consent agenda for items A-J including a walk on item K. These agendas related to numerous transfers from different accounts. The walk on K agenda pertained to money being transferred from FUEL account to pay for LLI Intervention Kits….instead of having to share kits…..the district now has LLI kits for all levels, for all grades…at all the schools. This allows for more individualized attention, the kits will accompany the Fontas and Pinnell benchmarks, etc….
* Ed Corona asked Tom McDaid “how do we decide which fund to go to?” Tom McDaid replied, “there was surplus in the fuel fund because with the bond upgrade of the boilers in each of the three schools, the district is using less fuel because the boilers are more energy efficient so the fuel costs are lower. of energy efficiency…”

1. **BOARD of EDUCATION**

Approved the appointments of Tracey Miller and Michelle Gordon (as an alternate) to represent NM School as the voting delegate for the annual business meeting at 99th annual convention on October 27, 2018.

1. **TEACHER CENTER**

* Lisa Katz is the community representative.
* Brian Pascarelli is the industries representative.
* Dr. Seniuk thanked everyone for applying for these two positions and said, “I might be reaching out to you for other committees and positions…”

1. **REPORT ON COMMITTEES**

* **High School** – Ed Corona reported that from the sale of the Jerusalem School, the Bellmore Merrick Central High School District (BMCHSD) has $12 million dollars in their reserve fund. These funds can be used to reduce real property taxes for the North Merrick residents over the next 10 years. Mr. Corona then went discussed other school districts highlighting that majority of the school districts had significant increases in their budgets where the BMCHSD only had an increase of 3.95%; “the lowest increases on Long Island.” Tom McDaid added that the reason North Merrick was able to keep costs low was because “North Merrick did not budget for anything that wasn’t necessary.” According to Mr. McDaid, our district was audited by the State and budget between April 2010 and 2017 revealed North Merrick budgeted perfectly and there were no changes or recommendations suggested by the State. The Board of Ed in prided in being fiscally responsible and only budgeting for what was necessary. Our budgets were always very tight, which is why are taxes have been reasonable. According to Mr. McDaid “we’re only asking taxpayers for what’s financially responsibility.” Thank you Mr. McDaid! Wendy Gargiulo reported on how smooth the opening of the High Schools went, thanking Superintendent DeTommaso calling him “phenomenal as usual….” There were 84 hires over the summer, the big focus in the BMCHSC is wellness (wellness center, guidance counselors will be present in the wellness center after school…). Ms. Gargiulo also emphasized the community cupboard is currently helping 44 families in the community. Anything people or groups (like girl and boy scouts) can contribute will be very appreciated (school supplies, gift cards, food, etc…). Ms. Winkle (the NMFA president) said the North Merrick Faculty Association will again contribute using what they collect from volley for kids, etc…Former Police officers are monitoring the schools……still no parking at Calhoun…..all vestibules are up and running…..pep rally and homecoming are September 28th. The BOE meetings for the BMCHSD are usually the first Wednesday of each month.
* **School Community Relations/PTA Council** – Michelle Gordon attended the Superintendent’s conference and it really showed her what a tight knit community we have in North Merrick. She said, “Once you’re here, you stay here…”
* Camp Ave – their first PTA meeting is 9/26, the meet the teacher tea is getting moved to the evening, “the big theme is consistency.” All schools should imply the same start time for the each event. Reflections starts 9/26, International Walk Day is coming soon, and the Camp back to school picnic is 9/16.
* Fayette – teacher appreciation breakfast, parent tea went over very well, they’re planning an outdoor movie night as a fundraising event on 9/21 (the rain date is 9/28) , the movie is Paddington Bear, and picture day is 9/25.
* OMR – back to school picnic was postponed to 9/21 due to the weather last week, some of the school kits have different price points so everybody being charges different prices is not ideal – especially families with multiple children.., picture day is next week on the 28th….

**BUILDING AND GROUNDS**

* Mr. Lentini reported that there was a tour of all three schools and “it’s so impressive how good our custodial staff is” He also said windows looked great because they have a new look, allow great light, etc,,,, , the buildings are “super clean”…floors look great, gym floors were done also, the locks on the doors are magnetic so they have lots of advantages, the new fire doors will be installed shortly, electrical thermostats are in the rooms and will be controlled by the custodial staff and Mr. Carder….” Mr. Lentini ended by saying, “Overall…FANASTIC job by Mr. Carder and the custodial stuff…” Thank you Mr. Carder!

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

* BOE goals will be discussed at the BOE retreat on 9/27/18
* Policy schedule – in the process of looking at all policies, they’re getting put on a tractable spread sheet so people can see when the last revisions were done on our NM website….people can go to website to look at all the policies….The major goal for this BOE has been to revisit all of the policies and make sure they are up to date every few years. Policy meetings and special meetings will be scheduled soon with appropriate notices going out to the residents.
* Meeting minutes – there was a discussion between Ms. Hyland, Dr. Seniuk, and Joanne Long about possibly getting the meeting minutes up quicker or possibly put up a draft of the minutes to avoid any misinformation from being spread around the community……Joanne said, “It would make it more complicated…” if there were too many drafts to constantly check, upload, edit, upload, etc.. **During the public session, a resident advised the Board that per law, the Board was required to get a draft of the minutes up on their website, 2 weeks after the meeting and then formal minutes to follow. Taking a month to two months to get final minutes up for the resident is too long.**
* **Vacant Trustee Seats** – 13 people applied for the vacant seat and the BOE is in the process of reviewing applications……they would like to fill the seat by October BOE meeting. Jen Hyland read the names in approximately this order (apologies in advance for any misspellings):

1. Steve Enella
2. Michael Schaeffer
3. Matt Kushner
4. Meghan Ryan Smith
5. Jerry Acuna
6. Mark Davis
7. Mike Spattaro
8. Lisa Junta
9. Sue Moeller
10. Maria Small,
11. Skip Haile
12. Lisa Katz, and
13. Brian Pascarelli,

* The Board advised that they will hold a special meeting and have decision by the October meeting. There was a lengthy discussion on whether the Board would go into executive session to discuss and determine who to fill the seat. There was a debate between Wendy Gargiulo and Jenn Hyland about the proper procedure.

**NEW BUSINESS**

* ***Sidewalks*** around Fayette are not in great shape because of the tree roots – tripping hazard in some spots on Merrick Avenue and on Little Whaleneck, Ed Corona and Sam Carder had a discussion about the costs of grinding roots vs replacing the entire sidewalk. Per Sam Carder, it would cost at least $11,000 to grind the roots to prevent further sidewalk damage. The school is responsible for maintaining and repairing the sidewalk flags. There was a lengthy discussion on the most judicious means of addressing the tree root issue and damage to the sidewalk. Per Sam Carder, grinding and then repairing only those sidewalk flags damaged vs. repairing entire length of the sidewalk was recommended. Sam Carder will obtain the final figures and costs which will be discussed at the next board meeting.
* **Air conditioning** – BOE asked Mr. Carder how much will it cost to put central AC in all the schools. While Mr. Carder didn’t have the final figure, Mr. Carder spoke to the architect and it would be at least $2.4 million dollars to get central AC in all the schools. While the new boilers installed per the bond work all have cooling coils which can be used to upgrade to central air system, the costs will still be in the millions because each school would need a complete overhaul and upgrade of their electric as the current electric is outdated and would not be able to support central AC. Window ACs were discussed. Out of all three schools, Fayette has window units in all classrooms. Per Mr. Carder, window units are a viable alternative, however, they are not very efficient and use a lot of electricity. Wendy Gargiulo gave some background as to the Board two years ago discussing whether to add central A/C to the bond project. The Board voted 4 to 3 not to include central A/C in the bond work because doing so would increase the bond and the Board did not want pass on the expense to the tax payers. The trustees who voted against the AC work being added to the bond wanted to wait a few years because they were nervous taxes would go up too much for residents. According to Mr. Carder, the costs associated with upgrading electrical in each building to accommodate the central AC would be approximately $200,000-225,000 **per building in addition to the 2.4 million** figure previously discussed. There was an OT report. Mr. Carder advised that there were 60 hours of OT charged in August. However, there was less OT used this August vs. last year. Wendy Gargiulo asked that for next meeting he differentiate the OT and break it down as it was done in the past. for the OT to be differentiated in the future. Mr. Carder agreed to differentiate.
* **Focus groups and Surveys** – Jen Hyland discussed surveying the residents to get their feedback on any issues and concerns. Wendy Gargiulo questioned on the efficiency of sending surveys and cautioned about the added responsibility on the district for having to implement and review the surveys from the residents. Wendy Gargiulo cautioned that it would be a lot of work to gather 11,000 resident’s opinions… then have administration tally the results etc.” Tracy Miller agreed with Wendy Gargiulo’s concerns. The need for focus group would be discussed during the Board retreat.
* **Tech Committee Update** – Michelle Gordon said they’d like to come up with a better program ….for example…there’s been confusion about the band and orchestra schedules…so it would be nice to have a reliable music app…….Committee is looking into reliable apps that will lessen the frustration of parents, rolling down carts for grades 3-5, virtual backpack, remind me apps.
* Wendy Gargiulobrought up 3 new business items; 1. Governor Andrew Cuomo has now allowed parolees to vote between the hours of 7-9 pm. Gargiulo said this is a HUGE concern because there are kids in the schools for basketball practice, girls and boys scouts during those times and nobody has to show ID when voting. She asked the Board to look into options about removing voting on school grounds for the safety of the students. 2. Ms. Gargiulo said we have a super active community right now, we have more people than ever attending board meetings and wanting to be involved with the teacher center, ect.. Wendy commented on the fact that more and more districts are live streaming and she thinks it’s something our district should consider to reach more people so more are informed in general. Ed Corona agreed with Wendy Gargiulo’s statement adding that “he had mentioned and brought up livestreaming at prior BOE meetings and the live streaming was voted down. Gargiulo agreed that it was voted down but because at that time it was cost prohibitive and at that time the meetings were sparsely attended. But because now more residents are attending meetings, it makes sense to revisit this issue. Corona and Gargiulo both agreed times are different and more people are involved so it would be good to look into the cost, the legality, etc….3. Gargiulo brought up Bob Freeman, who is the executive director of NYS open meetings recommending that the Board consider permitting him to come to the district and discuss “the open meetings law…” Hyland advised that the Board would think about this new matter and possible continue discussing during retreat.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS: NEW BUSINESS**

* A resident asked the Board whether it was going to discuss the vacant seat and the 13 letters of intent in public or in executive session. Jenn Hyland replied that that most likely executive session would be used because the Board was going to be discussing “employment issues.” The resident pointed out that board trustees are elected officials and not employees of the district. The resident inquired on whether there as a law that the decision to fill seat should be discussed publicly? The Board was not sure. Hyland believed that because it dealt with employment the Board could discuss in executive session. Wendy Gargiulo cautioned that that may not be correct. The resident advised Board that she would “check with NYSBA.”

* A resident spoke about the aftercare program and what was addressed at the last board meeting regarding the aftercare program. The resident reiterated that the Board’s reaction to some concerns raised about the aftercare program at the two prior meetings should not have been “knee jerk.” Rather, she had hoped that the Board and community would discuss and address concerns appropriately. She agreed putting out a survey to all residents in NM wasn’t the right way to handle addressing concerns about the afterschool program. This same resident commented on the District’s reluctance in installing air conditioned window units in the school because it was not energy efficient. This is not an energy efficiency issue, but a health issue and safety issue for the children. Wendy Gargiulo attempted to respond to the resident’s concerns but was stopped by Jen Hyland. Gargiulo asked Hyland if she could give some history from when her daughter was little and how things were done ten years ago when the temperatures were similarly hot. Hyland said she couldn’t “because there is no back and forth.” Gargiulo asked the BOE lawyer if she was allowed to comment and give background. However, counsel advised that as the Present of the Board, it was up to Hyland’s discretion and she already determined that back and forth was not permitted.
* Wendy Gargiulo came up to the microphone and gave history about what the school district did on heat advisory days when her daughter was younger. About 10 years ago, the school district had decided to close school early one time because of a heat advisory. When she was both the PTA president and BOE trustee, she advocated for early school closures. Jenn Hyland commented that Wendy Gargiulo’s behavior was “ inappropriate.”
* A resident complimented the BOE and district for doing a great job of ensuring the security of the children, the staff, and the parents. He mentioned he was in the Army and they had a saying,” There is no such thing as 100% safe..” So he wanted to know if we were still going to keep the same sense of community and pleasant feelings of safety without changing the overall feel of North Merrick, especially since we’re talking about little children and we need to be aware of their total wellness…
* Mary Keene from CRONM asked about the next stems about filling the seat vacancy. Will the Board interview all 13 candidates? Would the public be permitted to interview the candidates? The Board did not answer the questions.
* A resident asked about the status of formation of the mental health committee and focus group. Dr. Seniuk advised that it was in works.
* Mary Keene asked for clarification on the new add on regarding a change to the parent teacher conferences as it was not clear what the change was or its impact on the residents. Other than staying that the “structure and time” of the upcoming parent teacher conferences was going to changed, the Board gave no further details. WELL, we all received the phone calls today, and in short, parents originally had 3 days for parent teacher conferences (November 1st, November 5th, and November 6th) Now, there will be only one day in November for parent teacher conferences – Tuesday, November 6th.
* A resident commented on the Board’s decision to utilize Executive Session to discuss filling the empty seat. The resident advised that she ran for the BOE a few years ago and put herself out there in the community. The resident objected to the Board keeping discussion outside the public behind closed doors. It was not appropriate because this is a public matter, it has nothing to do with personnel, medical, etc… “All of you ran on transparency.” Invoking executive session is hardly transparent. The resident also wanted to correct the record to note that it was John Pinto who brought up live streaming years ago and not Ed Corona.

Meeting ended at 10:10 p.m.

Next Board Meeting is October 9, 2018.