



**RYE NECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
300 HORNIDGE ROAD  
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
MARCH 13, 2024**

Present: President Rebecca Mansell  
Trustee Jason Carmel  
Trustee Gloria Golle  
Trustee Patty Nashelsky  
Trustee Erica Wagner  
Trustee Elizabeth Yong  
Dr. Eric Lutinski, Superintendent of Schools  
Carolyn Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Business  
Corinne Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction  
Mary Ellen Chiera, District Clerk

**I. Adjournment of Executive Session**

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Golle and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

**RESOLVED**, that the executive session be adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

**AYES: All Present**  
**NAYES: None**

**II. Second Budget Presentation**

Dr. Lutinski began by informing the community of the remaining budget presentation dates (April 17th and May 8th) and the date of the budget vote (May 21st). He reviewed the budget goals which are a commitment to favorable class size, a tax cap compliant budget, maximizing efficiencies in scheduling and personnel, strategic planning, extracurricular opportunities, and a continued breadth and depth of core course offerings. He stated that the proposed budget is \$51,067,925, which is a 2.19% tax levy increase and will be at the tax levy cap. In addition, the projected enrollment for 2024-25 is 1,461.

Next, Mrs. Mahar reviewed proposed revenues, the largest amount coming from property taxes (\$43,459,590), then estimated State aid (\$5,173,335). She explained the components of the tax cap and tax cap calculation - this is the thirteenth consecutive year of tax cap compliant budgets. With regard to the State Aid estimates, Mrs. Mahar stated that Foundation Aid is the largest category (\$3,665,676) and reviewed the ten year Foundation Aid history.

With regard to expenses, Mrs. Mahar advised that salaries and benefits are the largest part of the budget totaling \$37,596,365 or 73.62%. She advised that active and medicare health insurance rates are increasing by a composite rate of 10.05%. Employer retirement system contributions are also increasing from 9.76% to 10.02% for TRS and from 13.10% to 15.20% for ERS. Additionally, the District is allocating \$350,000 to capital improvements, renovations and upgrades to the high school entrance and the temporary parking lot and bike/walking path at the Middle/High School.

Dr. Lutinski then reviewed the staffing changes for next year. The District will be adding 2.7 positions and losing 3.7 positions which is a \$28,994 impact on the budget. In addition, he advised that a new \$30,000 budget line has been added to support the Strategic Plan and provide additional professional development opportunities for staff which include a permanent building sub to allow teachers to attend professional development opportunities during the school day.

Next, Mrs. Mahar explained the factors which influence the tax rate change, including changes in the budget, in equalization and in assessments. She reported that the draft 2024-25 tax rate changes are +7.99% for Rye City and -5.43% for Rye Town.

Finally, Mrs. Mahar reviewed Proposition II - Use of the Capital Reserve Fund. It is anticipated that the balance of the Capital Reserve Fund will be \$2,700,000 on June 30, 2024. Its use does not require any additional levying of taxes, but to use the money for project work, the District needs voter authorization. The District would like to use the money to complete some of the work from the 2022 Building Condition Survey which identified all immediate and future building and site work. Mrs. Mahar then reviewed the specific work that needs to be performed at each building and stated that the estimated cost is \$2,700,000 - the amount in the Capital Reserve Fund.

Following the presentation, Mrs. Mahar entertained questions from the community regarding the condition of the ERS and TRS reserve funds, the actual cost of utilities versus proposed costs, how the District will measure the success of the Strategic Plan, and whether or not the technology budget includes hardware, software and security.

### **III. Opening of Meeting**

President Mansell called the meeting to order at 7:46 p.m.

### **IV. President's Report**

President Mansell began by stating that she hopes community members will consider running for the Board of Education. The three primary responsibilities of boards of education are to hire and evaluate the superintendent, propose an annual budget to voters, and propose and adopt policy to govern the operations of the district.

Next, President Mansell reported that later in the meeting the Board will be discussing a board code of ethics and the creation of a board operations manual for purposes of streamlining onboarding of new board members and codifying their operating procedures. They strive to evolve their practices, ensuring the Board is a welcoming and affirming professional organization and source of pride for the District and the community. Anyone interested in running can reach out to the Board for information

about becoming a board member, or visit the “Becoming a Board Member” page on the website.

**V. Superintendent’s Report**

Dr. Lutinski began by reporting on the Superintendent’s Conference Day at which the administrators worked with the entire K-12 faculty on the Strategic Plan. They gave a recap of the planning process, reviewed the new mission statement, and began to unpack and understand the goals in detail. The staff engaged in an exercise where they looked at what needs to be done to successfully implement the goals. Once action plans are finalized, the next phase will be to engage the entire school community, starting with students and the principal advisory groups. The staff came up with various ways of communicating and branding the work ahead. Following work on the Strategic Plan, the balance of the day was spent training on the new Workplace Violence Prevention policy and back in the respective buildings working in all content areas.

Dr. Lutinski then addressed the community with regard to the recent antisemitic social media issue which took place last Friday on Snapchat. The administrators spent many hours from Friday through today investigating and speaking with both students and parents and applying the student Code of Conduct.

He stated that rules and consequences must be balanced with varieties of education. The entire social studies curriculum is aimed at broadening the perspective of young people by offering history and perspective. Social Studies and English classes feature lessons that are applicable to antisemitism and discrimination against other groups. In addition, we’ve had student-led presentations, guest speakers, including holocaust survivors and camp liberators, and we’ve been following the Anti-Defamation League’s No Place for Hate program for over a decade. In addition, the director of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center will be presenting “Exploring the Language and Symbols of Hate” to grades 6 to 12 next week, and Rye Neck teacher, Kathie Offner, will be sharing her parents’ experience as holocaust survivors with students in April.

Dr. Lutinski advised that the District educates its students in online etiquette during Digital Citizenship Week warning them about the dangers of social media. In addition, they receive education through Bellows’ town halls, Character Ed classes, Library Research Tech, and DARE courses. He stated that parents can help by monitoring their children’s social media and internet activity. If they need advice or help navigating technology, they should reach out to their respective schools for age-appropriate guidance or see the parent resources on the District website.

**VI. Approval of Consent Agenda**

Upon Motion duly made by Trustee Nashelsky and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

**RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District approves the following consent agenda:

1. Approval of the Minutes of the February 28, 2024 Board of Education Planning Session
2. Approval of Personnel Appointments, Leave and Tenure

3. Approval of Rescission of Appointment
4. Approval of Agreement to Participate in SWBOCES Joint Bidding Cooperative
5. Approval of Change to List of Impartial Hearing Officers
6. Approval of Sale of Musical Set
7. Rescission and Approval of Change Order
8. Approval of Tax Certiorari Settlements
9. Approval of Extraclassroom Activity
10. Approval of Homebound Instruction
11. Approval of Budget Transfers
12. Approval of Financial Reports

**AYES: All Present**

**NAYES: None**

**VII. Financial Reports for Information**

The Board was presented with the Warrant Schedule - All Funds for information Purposes.

**VIII. Communications to the Board**

President Mansell reported that the Board has received no communications since the last meeting.

**IX. Citizens' Privilege of the Floor**

There were no comments made by the public.

**X. Reports - Community School Groups**

**Student Senate - Dylan Schneider**

There was no report given by the Student Senate.

**PTSA - Ruth Homberg**

PTSA President Ruth Homberg reported that the PTSA is preparing for the Panther Party and Fun Run on April 27th from 12 - 3 at the Middle/High School campus. She congratulated Solene Thinat, whose design was selected to be the official logo this year.

The free event will kick off with a Fun Run on the Middle/High School track, registration for which will open shortly. Anyone who registers prior to March 27th will have the opportunity to purchase a t-shirt. There will be raffle items, food trucks, vendors, and an opportunity to order Rye Neck gear. In addition, they are working to have Fenom Fitness run some games and activities, and the Village Police Department is hoping to sponsor a bike rodeo if the weather is good.

At the elementary schools, Winter Clubs are wrapping up and registration for Spring Clubs is underway. They are offering 16 clubs at Daniel Warren and 15 clubs at F.E. Bellows, and the session will run from April 8th through June 14th. The Elementary School Theater Club will be performing *Wizard of Oz Junior* on June 15th in the Middle/High School PAC. Sign-ups start tomorrow and students will have 2½ weeks of after-school rehearsals starting May 30th. Daniel Warren's used book drive is happening

now and ends on Friday. The books are donated to the Darien Book Aid for kids in need throughout the world.

With regard to STEAM programming, Mrs. Homberg reported that students at Daniel Warren were treated to a Lunar New Year Celebration and performance by the New York Chinese Cultural Society. F.E. Bellows had the Skydome Planetarium for 5th graders and a bilingual musical performance by the Pushcart Players. The Sundog Theater will present “Ellis Island: Gateway to Dream” to 4th graders next week. In the Middle School, 7th graders learned to make their own lava lamps and 6th graders extracted DNA from wheat germ. In the High School, holocaust survivor Judith Altman shared her story, virtually, with students, and Stephen GOLDBERG will present “Exploring the Language & Symbols of Hate to Middle and High School students next week.

Next, with regard to health and wellness, Mrs. Homberg reported that Max Stossel talked with Middle/High School students about social media and its impact on mental health; the Rye Y is teaching Cardio Boot Camp in Daniel Warren gym classes this week; the Daniel Warren Playdate/Sports Exchange is scheduled for March 20th; and the the Daniel Warren Family Fitness Night is scheduled for March 21st. In addition, Heard in Rye held a virtual event with Dr. Sarah Evans entitled “Toxic and Forever Plastics in our Homes: What They are and How to Minimize Exposure”. The next Heard in Rye presentation is scheduled for April 16th regarding “The Emotional Lives of Teenagers.”

Finally, Mrs. Homberg stated that the next SEAC meeting is scheduled for April 9th. The RNIC is meeting tomorrow and are hard at work helping to plan the Panther Party.

#### **Booster Club - Jocelyn Donat**

Booster Club President Jocelyn Donat reported that the Booster Club will be supporting, along with the Alumni Association, the 2nd Annual Panther Palooza on Saturday, April 18th. They will be selling concessions, supported the ordering of t-shirts, and contributed \$1,000 to help fund the event.

In addition, they have started planning for the scholarships given to senior athletes and thespians, the application process for which will begin in April; will be selling lawn signs for senior athletes in April and F.E. Bellows, Middle and High School graduates in May; planning for the year-end barbeque scheduled for Saturday, May 4th; and selling spirit wear.

#### **RNTA - Tom Graziano**

RNTA Representative Tom Graziano reported that the staff participated in the Superintendent’s Conference Day on March 8th at which they began working on the Strategic Plan. It was a very productive day filled with curriculum mapping and vertical alignment conversations to help create engaging learning environments in the classrooms.

In Daniel Warren, teachers and students continued their Noon Pursuits Program, and Kindergarten teachers and students will be taking a trip to the Westchester Children’s Museum.

At F.E. Bellows, the 4th grade concert took place on March 7th; there was an enrichment assembly for 4th graders today about the immigrant experience through Ellis Island; 3rd

graders continue their Town Hall meetings with Principal Mike Scarantino; and the 5th graders will be visiting the Middle School very soon.

At the Middle/High School, the High School Musical was a big success; speaker Max Stossel spoke to Middle/High School students about appropriate social media use and responsible behavior with cell phones; and Steve Goldberg will be presenting to Middle/High School students on the symbols of hate.

## **XI. Reports - Board of Education**

### **Office Hours**

Trustee Nashelsky and Trustee Yong will represent the Board at the next Office Hours, April 3, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. Please call the District Clerk by Friday, March 29th to make an appointment and state your topic of interest.

### **West/Put Report**

Trustee Wagner reported that she is registered for a virtual program on March 18th entitled *The Public Process of Developing Curriculum*. She will report back at the next Board meeting.

### **Audit Committee**

Trustee Golle reported that the Audit Committee met on January 25th. The next meeting is scheduled for May 14th with the external auditors for the kickoff meeting for the annual external audit. In addition, they will be meeting with the internal auditor to discuss the special intensive review project and the annual internal audit risk assessment report.

### **Policy Committee**

Trustee Nashelsky reported that there are three policies up for a first reading during New Business. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for March 21st.

## **XII. New Business**

### **First Reading - Policy 2410-E - Policy Committee Charter**

Trustee Nashelsky reported that Policy 2410-E is a Policy Committee Charter. This is a new exhibit to Board Policy 2410 - Formulation, Adoption and Amendment of Policies. The Charter outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Board's Policy Committee.

### **First Reading - Policy 9260 - Conditional Appointment and Emergency Conditional Appointment - Student Safety**

Trustee Nashelsky reported that Policy 9260 is the Board's Supervision of Conditionally Appointed Employee Policy. The title of the policy was changed to "Conditional Appointment and Emergency Conditional Appointment - Student Safety" in order to be consistent with NYSSBA's policy system. Amendments were also made to address recent changes in the law.

### **First Reading - Policy 9520.6 - Policy on the Rights of Employees to Express Breast Milk in the Workplace**

Trustee Nashelsky reported that Policy 9520.6 - Rights of Employees to Express Breast Milk in the Workplace - is a new policy that is currently not in the Board's Policy Manual. This policy is legally required.

**Adoption of Board Code of Ethics**

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Yong and seconded by Trustee Wagner, it was

**RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education of the Rye Neck Union Free School District adopt the **attached** Board of Education Code of Ethics.

**AYES: All Present**

**NAYES: None**

**Board Operational Manual**

President Mansell reported that the Board will be creating an Operational Manual for the Board. Trustees Golle and Wagner will be taking the lead on drafting the document and obtaining feedback from the Board. She hopes to have the document ready for adoption at the May meeting.

**XIII. Public Comments Concerning Above**

Questions were raised by several community members regarding the facilities and technology committees, the Strategic Plan team, communications/emails from parents, how community members without students in the schools can access information, and year-end spending for technology.

**XIV. Adjournment of Meeting**

Upon motion duly made by Trustee Golle and seconded by Trustee Yong, it was

**RESOLVED**, there being no further business before the Board that the Board of Education Meeting of March 13, 2024 be adjourned.

**AYES: All Present**

**NAYES: None**

President Mansell adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mary Ellen Chiera  
District Clerk