

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
East Rockaway, New York  
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
7:00 P.M., November 19, 2019, East Rockaway Jr. / Sr. High School  
Preceded by a School Climate Survey Presentation,  
Recognition of Tenure Candidate, and a Public Forum

MINUTES

Present: Members of the Board of Education: Keith Gamache, Dominick Vulpis, Neil Schloth, Kristen O’Hagan, Superintendent Lisa J. Ruiz, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, Jacqueline A. Scio; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Mona Hecht; District Clerk, Vitina Fazi

Absent: Peter McNally, Trustee

1. The meeting was called to order by Keith Gamache at 7:05 p.m. in the auditorium of the East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School.
2. Kristen O’Hagan introduced Rhame Avenue School fifth-grade student Kylie Lazaro who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Ruiz welcomed everyone to the meeting. She thanked Kylie for representing Rhame Avenue School. Ms. Ruiz stated that the first presentation this evening is a recommendation for tenure. Ms. Ruiz introduced high school principal, Mr. Richard Schaffer who joined Ms. Ruiz in the tenure recommendation presentation. Mr. Schafer spoke about the many accomplishments of “art teacher extraordinaire”, Kelly Cabasso. He acknowledged that some of her former students, as well as current students, were in the audience to share this evening with her. Mr. Schaffer and Ms. Ruiz recommended her tenure to the Board of Education. Ms. Ruiz congratulated Ms. Cabasso and called her a true “superstar.” She said it is a true honor to have students come out to support Ms. Cabasso.

Ms. Ruiz then spoke about the next presentation “School Quality / School Climate” survey. This is a survey required by New York State. The survey will give us important information to help make our schools better than what they already are. The survey will be rolled out in January for parents, students, and staff members. Ms. Ruiz proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation describing in detail the specifics of the survey, which will also be posted on our website. Ms. Ruiz then asked if there were any questions. Questions were asked and answered. Ms. Ruiz thanked Mr. Schaffer for conducting a draft version of this survey last year with our students.

Ms. Ruiz then spoke about the District’s Strategic Planning Committee. The Committee will reconvene in January and will review starting points for the continuation of the District’s

strategic plan. She encouraged all community members to sign up to be a part of the committee. Information regarding the committee will be posted on the website. Ms. Ruiz thanked all the committee members who served on the committee for the tremendous amount of work and time they devoted.

At 7:38 pm the presentations concluded. The Board continued with the public portion of the agenda.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items – None

4. Approval of Minutes

Upon motion made by Kristen O’Hagan, seconded by Neil Schloth, and unanimously passed, the following minutes were approved:

A. October 22, 2019, Meeting of the Board of Education

5. Acknowledgment of Monthly Reports and Correspondence

A. Receipt of Monthly Financial Reports: September 2019

B. Correspondence (3 received)

6. Recommendations of the Superintendent of Schools

Upon motion made by Neil Schloth, seconded by Dominick Vulpis, and unanimously passed, the following Items A through G, with Item G (7) amended to reflect the correct spelling of “Brendan”, were approved on a consent agenda.

A. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, grant tenure to the following staff member on the effective date indicated and subject to satisfactory evaluation:

<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Tenure Date</u>
Kelly Cabasso	Art Teacher	December 3, 2019

B. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept the following resignations:

1. Ashley Tavormina, substitute teacher aide, effective November 19, 2019
2. Lynne Castellano, monitor, effective November 15, 2019
3. Jason Andrews, business teacher, effective December 20, 2019
4. Lisa Henshaw, substitute monitor, effective November 27, 2019
5. Allyson Reynolds, substitute teacher, effective November 27, 2019

C. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve an increase in the FTE of Fernando Gomez, part-time Foreign Language teacher, from .4 FTE to .6 FTE, effective November 18, 2019.

- D. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the revised winter sports coaching schedule dated November 19, 2019.
- E. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Ashley Tavormina to the position of teacher aide, effective November 20, 2019, at the Step A hourly salary established by the East Rockaway Teacher Aides Association agreement for the 2019-2020 school year.
- F. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Lisa Henshaw to the position of part-time monitor, effective December 2, 2019, at the Step 1 hourly salary set forth in the East Rockaway UPSEU Food Service and Monitor Unit Agreement for the 2019-2020 school year.
- G. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following temporary assignments at the salary approved by the East Rockaway Board of Education on the Non-Contractual Salary Schedule for substitute workers:
  - 1. Jacqueline Ludwig, substitute teacher aide, effective upon Civil Service approval
  - 2. Michael Baron, substitute security aide, effective upon Civil Service approval
  - 3. Elizabeth Rubin, temporary teaching assistant, effective November 12, 2019 through November 22, 2019
  - 4. Dana Stuono, temporary teaching assistant, effective November 25, 2019, through December 17, 2019
  - 5. Stephanie Hector, concert supervisor, effective December 17, 2019
  - 6. Rikki Quaas, athletic supervisor (day/evening), effective November 20, 2019
  - 7. Brendan O'Reilly, substitute teacher, effective November 20, 2019

7. Other Items

Upon motion made by Dominick Vulpis, seconded by Kristen O'Hagan, and unanimously passed, the following Items A through J were approved on a consent agenda:

- A. Approve the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education accepts and approves the Board Resolution, attached hereto as Exhibit A, setting forth the results of the November 14, 2019, special district election.

- B. Approve the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the East Rockaway Union Free School District retained Arrow Steel Window Corp. for window replacement services pursuant to a contract awarded on or about November 13, 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, the District's architect has recommended modifications to the existing contract as follows: add \$2,300.00 for transform panels and deduct \$8,500.00 for unused

allowance for unforeseen conditions; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby accepts and approves Change Order No. 1 to the contract with Arrow Steel Window Corp., resulting in a total reduction of the contract price by the amount of \$6,200.00, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education hereby authorizes the Board President and the Superintendent to execute Change Order No. 1 on behalf of the Board.

- C. Approve the Contract for Oasas Youth Drug Abuse Services between the East Rockaway UFSD and the Nassau County Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency and Developmental Disabilities Services, for chemical dependency services, for the period January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019, and authorize the President of the East Rockaway Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- D. Approve the Consultant Services Contract between the East Rockaway UFSD and Shari Berman of Be Independent Productions, LLC, dated November 1, 2019, for choreography services, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- E. Approve the Special Education Services Contract with Hewlett Woodmere UFSD for special education services for one parentally placed student for the 2019-2020 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- F. Approve the Special Education Services Contract with Rockville Centre UFSD for special education services for two (2) parentally placed students for the 2019-2020 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- G. Approve the Health and Welfare Agreement between East Rockaway UFSD and Seaford Union Free School District for health and welfare services for the 2019-2020 school year and authorize the Superintendent and the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- H. Approve the Professional Development Consultant Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and Joseph Sciame, dated September 17, 2019, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- I. Approve the Consultant Services Contract between the East Rockaway UFSD and George Christopher Marzuk, dated November 19, 2019, for hearing officer services, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.

J. Accept the following donations:

1. From Club Rock, \$100 for the girls' JV volleyball program
2. From Susan Torborg, "batter's leg guards" for the softball program, valued at \$50
3. From the Centre Avenue School PTA:
  - a. A curriculum enhancement grant in the sum of \$50
  - b. A curriculum enhancement grant in the sum of \$50
  - c. A curriculum enhancement grant in the sum of \$52.58
4. From the Rhame Avenue School PTA:
  - a. An enrichment grant valued at \$95 for the band set and musical score of "Peace"
  - b. A physical education enrichment grant valued at \$305
  - c. A check in the sum of \$1,399 from the Rhame Avenue PTA Sixth Grade Activities Fund to cover half the cost of the bus for the Greenkill trip
  - d. A check in the sum of \$1,399 from the PTA to cover the balance of the cost of the bus for the Greenkill trip

8. Upon motion made by Neil Schloth and seconded by Kristen O'Hagan, the CSE and CPSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.

9. Budget Transfers

Upon motion made by Dominick Vulpis, seconded by Kristen O'Hagan, the following budget transfer was unanimously approved:

A. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education approves the following budget transfer:

1. Transaction No. 20-0005

10. Policy Matters

A. Policy Subcommittee Report

Ms. O'Hagan reported that the Policy Subcommittee met on November 4, 2019, to review four polices: Voter registration for students, which would be a new policy; Investments; Child Abuse in an Educational Setting (amended to reflect changes in NYS law); and Field Trip and Excursions. The Field Trip and Excursion policy will remain on the "review" list and will be looked at by the full board when they meet next on November 25, 2019.

Mr. Gamache asked for a vote of adoption for the policies listed in Item B below. By a unanimous vote the policies in Item B (1, 2, and 3) were approved for adoption:

B. For Adoption

1. 5605, Voter Registration for Students
2. 6240, Investments

3. 9620, Child Abuse in an Educational Setting

C. For Review

1. 4531, Field Trip and Excursions
2. 4710, Grading
3. 4750, Promotion and Retention of Students
4. 6150, Budget Transfers
5. 6741, Contracting for Professional Services

11. Reports

A. Board President's Report

**Budget Timeline:** We discussed the budget timeline for this year. I want to remind you that most of the in-depth discussions regarding the budget will take place on the same nights as our budget work sessions and we really encourage you to sit in on these meetings. The first budget planning discussion will be on December 10, 2019. Summaries will be provided at each monthly regular business meeting.

**Northwell Health:** The district received a contract for the Mental Health Clinic we are considering joining with neighboring districts. We are currently reviewing the contract with our attorneys as well as BOCES. If we are able to engage in this service through a BOCES COSR, it will come at a significant cost savings to the district. We continue to be excited about this opportunity and will keep you informed as things progress.

**My School Bucks:** Members of the community have requested the possibility of being able to pay for school lunches and other purchases using credit cards. Mrs. Scio has investigated various possible ways to achieve this and we are excited to be providing this service during this school year through a program called "My School Bucks". As soon as we work out the details of the agreement, we will let you know.

**Bond:** On the night of our last work session was the Bond Vote. The Board is thrilled at the passage of the bond with 64% voter approval. We'd like to acknowledge the contributions of past trustees Patti Nicoletti and Kristin Ochtera who were a part of the earlier stages of the bond process. We share this success with you. We want to thank the initial facilities committee comprised of community members, faculty, and administration (most notably Mrs. Scio and Mr. Daly) for looking at all of our facilities and identifying areas to be considered; the building principals for representing and advocating for the needs and interests of their respective buildings including the children who learn and the professionals who work within those walls; our Superintendent, Mrs. Ruiz, who got answers to board questions, coordinated and attended all meetings and logistics facilitating communications necessary for all phases of bond preparation while continuing to oversee all of the regular day to day operations

of our district; John Grillo, our district architect, for providing historical knowledge of our buildings, past bond projects, technical and cost expertise as well as process knowledge of submitting and filing plans with the state; Syntax, our public relations firm for helping establish a timeline and develop print and media promotional materials that helped spread the word and ensure that the community was informed; all of you who attended work sessions, board meetings, and forums asking tough questions, offering suggestions, and providing words of support; the ERTA and staff who live in the community who helped spread the word and vocally supported the bond; and finally we want to thank all those who voted. Communities are healthier and stronger when their citizens participate. Thank you for your participation and support! Now that the bond has passed, more specific details will begin to unfold. As a timeline for plan submissions and work is established we will continue to keep you updated on all phases of development.

## B. Superintendent's Report

I would like to thank the community and those who voted in support of the bond. We look forward to beginning the planning process for the projects.

### **Achievement**

In addition to professional development sessions, teachers in kindergarten through second grade are making site visits to Lynbrook schools to learn more about the Eureka math program. The visits have been productive and the discussions with neighboring colleagues were valuable in gaining a deeper understanding of the program.

At this year's Walk-along-for Lupus, Team East Rockaway High School/Jennifer's Circle had over 55 students from grades 7-12. Students raised nearly \$1,500 for the Lupus Alliance of Long Island/Queens.

Two hundred seven East Rockway Jr/Sr High School students were recognized as September Students' of the Month in various subject areas at the November PTA meeting.

Congratulations to our Girls Varsity Volleyball for being the Runner-Up in the Nassau County Championship Game.

Mairead Connor competed in the NYS Cross Country Championship in Plattsburgh, NY. She finished the course with the best time of her career.

Eighty-eight (88%) of our Fall Varsity teams earned Scholar Athlete Distinction: Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Volleyball, Boys Cross Country, Girls Cross Country, Cheerleading, and Tennis.

Madelyn Miel (10th Grade) and Stephanie DeAngelis (8th Grade) were selected to participate in this year's LISFA ("Long Island Strings Festival Association") Nassau Secondary music festival.

This year and for the second time, a team of East Rockaway high school students participated in the annual design and build competition known internationally as CANstruction. Though primarily a competition for professional architects and engineers, select student teams have recently begun participating in this unique food drive. This year, our design was a Rubik's cube, which totaled 1,764 cans of food. This year our team won BEST CANCEPT for use of labels.

### **Innovation**

Congratulations to Nicholas Iannucci for being recognized as a Student of the 1st Quarter from the Nassau BOCES Joseph M. Barry Career and Technical Education Center. His first year in the program, Nicholas was recognized and nominated by his teacher.

In second grade Coding Club students have been writing algorithms to solve puzzles. They have been pair programming and are developing strong collaboration skills to solve puzzles.

Superintendent's Conference Day on November 5, 2019, included training for teachers on Google Form, PearDeck, Newline Interactive Boards, and Discovery Education TechBook. Teachers were given time to work these instructional strategies into their lesson plans. The day began with a powerful session about suicide prevention. Many thanks to Mona Hecht for facilitating the day's events. The feedback she received was positive and constructive.

### **Connection**

The Mental Health and Wellness Steering Committee held its first meeting of the year on Wednesday afternoon. Twenty-five faculty, staff and administrators have joined this important committee and were in attendance. Mr. David Hymowitz, social worker and mental health and wellness expert, provided an informative presentation on things we need to consider in developing a district wide approach to mental health and wellness. Mr. Hymowitz is working with our district at no charge through his role as mental health consultant with Nassau County.

The charge of the committee is as follows:

- (1) develop, implement and communicate a clear Districtwide vision for Mental Wellness;
- (2) identify wellness focused approaches, programs and initiatives that support the NYSED's Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools; and



(3) make recommendations for professional development to support our school community to address the mental wellness needs of our students

The following essential questions guided the work of this week's meeting:

What is our vision for Mental Health and Wellness in East Rockaway Schools?

How do we create and share our vision?

How do we engage our school community to support our vision?

What do we hope to accomplish long term?

What would success look like?

How can we reframe the name of our committee to better engage our school community?

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 3, 2019.

Centre Avenue Senior Choir members will be visiting the East Rockaway Senior Center on November 22, 2019, to spread some holiday cheer singing carols and playing board games with local senior friends. Rhame Avenue K-Kids collected candy to send to troops overseas in conjunction with the East Rockaway Kiwanis and provided candy to area hospitals.

In Advisory, students focused on bully prevention strategies for the month of October. Students are now creating posters to spread positivity; the work will include actual pictures of our students, locations within the building, and real-school scenarios and settings.

ENL Parent University was held on November 4, 2019. Students and families came to learn about technology options and ways to help their children excel. Small group workshops ran from 5-6:15 pm, followed by a lovely whole group dinner that allowed administrators, teachers, students, and families to connect in a pressure-free setting. Spanish translation was provided by volunteer high school students who have successfully learned English in our ENL program. Many thanks to Mrs. Kosser and her team for facilitating the night's events. Thanks also to Mr. Araoz for presenting to our families that evening.

On Saturday, November 16, 2019, East Rockaway Junior Senior High School hosted the Vex IQ Robotics "Squared Away" Tournament. Approximately 125 children from 15 different schools/organizations participated. There are several more tournaments at different schools in the upcoming months, providing more opportunities for our students to employ engineering principles to continually improve their robots, and experience success.

### **Opportunity**

Many students in 5th and 6th grade were chosen to participate in All-County music groups and the Long Island String Festival. In total, 15 students from the elementary schools were

selected. They will be individually recognized at a later Board meeting.

Senior Chorus members of the Junior-Senior High School earned the exciting opportunity to perform with the eVoco Voice Collective. Mairead Connor, Samantha Marx, Angela Polizzi, Ashley Proto and Spencer Senzon were among a handful of students from Long Island who were selected to participate in the “Journeys and Awakenings” concert. The event was held at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City.

Joseph Sciame, VP of Community Relations at St. John’s University, met with about 20 families to discuss filling out the FAFSA forms and the CSS Profile to receive financial aid for post-secondary education programs.

Thirty-seven students visited Barry Tech on November 13, 2019, to explore the BOCES programs available to them as an 11th or 12th grade student. Guidance counselors will be working with students to complete preliminary applications for the 2020-2021 school year.

Approximately 60 students have begun rehearsals for this year’s District Musical, *The Wizard of Oz*. As the performance approaches in February, the student participation will increase to more than 100 students.

Due to a large turnout, an additional Junior High Girls’ Volleyball team had to be created.

## 12. Good and Welfare

- A. Condolences to Frank Altamore and family on the passing of his grandfather, Bob Adamczyk, on October 24, 2019
- B. Condolences to Christine Cartmell-Moy and family on the passing of her father-in-law, Yoke Toon Moy
- C. Condolences to Carolyn Fernandez and family on the passing of her father John D. Vogt, on October 29, 2019

## 13. Public Comments - None

## 14. Board Member Comments

Dominick Vulpis: Mr. Vulpis is looking forward to working with the Board, administration, coaches, and others in shaping what the bond will be in the end. The District will eventually reap the rewards of the improvements and projects planned as a result of the passing of the bond. The first meeting of the Communication Sub-Committee will take place on December 3, 2019, at 6:00 pm in the Rhame Avenue School Library. This committee provides many opportunities for its members to share their views and ideas and bring them to the Board of Education. Mr. Schloth will once again join him as a Committee Co-Chairperson. Mr. Vulpis encouraged anyone interested to join the committee. Mr. Vulpis echoed the comments of Mr.

Gamache in thanking everyone involved with the successful passing of the bond vote.

Neil Schloth: Mr. Schloth thanked Ms. Ruiz for last month's presentation on the strategic plan. She provided a very thorough report and has moved our school district forward in a positive direction. Mr. Schloth also echoed the comments of Mr. Gamache in thanking everyone involved in the passing of the bond vote. It's almost a dream come true and we are finally going to be able to give our kids something that we've been trying to do for a very long time. He thanked Ms. O'Hagan and Mr. McNally for jumping in on the Policy Sub-Committee. As new board members this is a very difficult task and their enthusiasm and hard work is very much appreciated. He thanked the audience for coming tonight and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Kristen O'Hagan: Ms. O'Hagan also shared her thanks to the administration, staff and community members in supporting the bond. The schools will receive exciting enhancements and she is looking forward to seeing the improvements take place. Ms. O'Hagan participated in the Empty Bowls fundraiser which was a testament to our community involvement. Our students learn more about life and gain an understanding of life and the opportunities afforded to them through events like this. She congratulated Ms. Cabasso on receiving tenure and thanked her for all she does for our students. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and thanked them for coming out tonight.

Keith Gamache: In my bond thank you report, I forgot to thank Mrs. Fazi who also worked so diligently in preparing our district for the bond vote.

On October 25 and 26, 2019, I attended the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary NYSSBA annual convention. On the first day I participated in workshops entitled: *Redefining Ready! New York Style* (a possible way to redefine college and career readiness and improve high school graduation requirements), *A New Look at Homework* (one district's efforts to make homework both more meaningful and less burdensome), *Full Steam Ahead* (one district's implementation of STEAM related programs); and *The Mental Health Initiative: Leading the Way*, which highlighted the role school boards can play in better ensuring the mental health and well-being of the students in their care. During the convention hundreds of workshops are held on various topics allowing me to sit in on ones I feel are of particular interest to our district's goals and initiatives.

On the second day I acted as our voting delegate at the annual resolutions business meeting, one of my favorite responsibilities while serving on the board. Though less contentious and shorter in duration than past meetings, it still had a few thoughtfully debated items resulting in close votes requiring a manual count. I spoke to our position on a few items, perhaps the most important being our opposition to the requirement that local school districts be responsible for evaluating the substantial equivalency of education delivered in non-public schools. Since this was a position supported by the NYSSBA

Resolutions Committee, getting a no vote by the majority of boards is that much more difficult. I'm pleased to say that the resolution was voted down, will not have the support of NYSSBA, and our voice helped in the successful opposition. I also want to thank Mr. Schloth for attending as well going to the Pre-Law Conference and various workshops held throughout the day as well.

One of the most powerful aspects of the convention is realizing the sheer magnitude, power, and responsibility of the work done by school boards here at home, throughout our region, the state and nationally. As a relatively short tenured board member serving for just over 5 years now, I look in awe to those who have served for 20, 30, or even more years in service to their communities and public education in general. The experience is always inspiring and rejuvenates me to continue in this important work here at home.

Last month Mrs. Ruiz delivered an in-depth report on the status of our strategic plan. Part of me feels disappointed that more people were not in attendance to see this meaningful summary of the hard work of our administration and staff as well as the success of our students, but that feeling of disappointment is overshadowed by the pride I feel in our accomplishments and the appreciation I have for all of the people who have made the strategic plan a success. Not every school district has a strategic plan, and now in our fifth year, I feel at times that we take the Strategic Plan for granted, it feels like it's always been here, it's like our lungs inhaling and exhaling, or our hearts beating without having to think about it. It's easy to forget how it even came to be, or to lose sight of whose plan it is. Setting a Course for Excellence, the four focus areas (Achievement, Opportunity, Innovation, and Connection) and the compass logo were developed by the board during a full day retreat. Once direction was developed by the board, the Superintendent and her team worked with the Strategic Planning Committee, a group of 35 stakeholders including administrators, staff, parents, and board members representing all schools within the district. Their collaborative efforts added all of the details to complete the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan belongs to all of us. It guides our financial planning and informs our instruction. It relies heavily on the daily efforts of our teaching staff for its ultimate success and I hope they are aware of how much we appreciate their contribution to its success. As a board member, some of my proudest moments have been meeting candidates during the interview process who bring up the Strategic Plan as a reason for their interest in our district. It gives them a clear sense of who we are as a learning community and what we value most. It provides comfort, a sense of purpose, and direction. The Strategic Plan is a living plan. Last year we met for another retreat to develop vision and mission statements that compliment ideals of our Strategic Plan and to commit to embarking on the next phase of its development. Once again, Mrs. Ruiz will be working with a committee to move that next phase forward. It is our hope that you will consider playing an active role in this important process.

15. Upon motion made by Dominick Vulpis, seconded by Neil Schloth, and passed

unanimously, the public meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vitina Fazi  
District Clerk