

HARBORFIELDS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
GREENLAWN, NEW YORK

Kind of Meeting	-	Special Meeting
Date of Meeting	-	April 9, 2014
Place of Meeting	-	OMS Auditorium
Board Members Present	-	Dr. McDonagh, Mr. Banks, Ms. Boba, Ms. Gaughan, Mr. Giuliano, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Mastroianni
Board Members Absent	-	None
Others Present	-	Ms. Todaro, Mr. Nimmo, Dr. Ianni, Ms. Whelan and Community Members

Dr. McDonagh called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Banks, seconded by Mr. Giuliano, and carried unanimously, the Board and district office administrators moved to Executive Session at 7:04 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the potential leasing of district facilities.

The Board reconvened the special meeting at 7:50 p.m. Dr. McDonagh led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance, and he instructed those in attendance where to exit the building in case of an emergency.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS**

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Todaro welcomed everyone and explained that the purpose of tonight's meeting was for the Board to adopt the budget for the 2014-2015 school year. She announced that in addition to the budget presentation this evening, two other presentations were planned that align with some of the initiatives that are included in the district's budget.

OMS Club Presentation – Science Research Club

Mr. Drew Lockwood, Science Research Club Advisor, introduced several of his students (Tyler Bentivegna, Steven Danielkutty, Kevin Dougherty, Owen Fleming, Erik Heidenfelder, William Howard, Bryce Kent-Susswein, Rochelle Kris, Richard Mazur, Genie Miraglia, Cormac Murphy, Samantha Ousey, Christopher Thompson, Bobby Tornese, Ben Treanor, Billy Waring, Jonathan Weisberg, and Albert Zhang) who provided a robotics demonstration. Working together as a team, the students demonstrated the skills and knowledge they have attained through the design, creation, assembly, and operation of robots which is an exciting way to bring science, technology, engineering and mathematics into the classroom. Mr. Lockwood acknowledged the generosity of the PTA and HACEF who have provided much of the equipment used by the students.

### Wilson Tech Program Presentation

Sabrina Meehan, Guidance Counselor at Harborfields High School, introduced a few of her students (Mark Polcer, Colton Schwartz, and Sydnie Wittenberg) who attend the Wilson Tech program offered through the Career and Technical Education Division at Western Suffolk BOCES. Ms. Meehan described the various programs that are offered to meet the career aspirations of students preparing to enter the work force, and noted that over 66% of these students pursue further education, many with advanced standing. Each student provided a brief overview of their course work at Wilson Tech and displayed their award-winning project, *Saucie Burger*, which they developed through the advertising art/graphic design program; achieving a first place finish in the Huntington Chamber of Commerce's Business Leadership Competition.

### Budget Presentation – Budget Adoption

Ms. Todaro opened her discussion on the 2014-2015 budget with a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the items that will be maintained in the budget, items that will be enhanced and/or restored, as well as necessary reductions. The presentation also included class size guidelines, an overview of district reserves and fund balance, and information on the recently released state aid data. Ms. Todaro thanked community members for their input during the budget development process, noting that while it is not possible to include every suggestion, the feedback provided is always given careful consideration.

Ms. Todaro explained that in developing the budget, the district utilized a slightly different strategy this year whereby they included an anticipated allocation of additional state aid in the amount of \$400,000. Ms. Todaro noted that the approved state budget included an actual allocation of an additional \$342,391; however, the approved state budget also resulted in the postponement of the recalibration of building aid for 2015-2016. As a result, building aid for 2014-2015 will increase by approximately \$52,998. With the newly released information from the state, the district's tax levy cap was recalculated at 1.66%; a significant difference from last year's cap of 3.18%. Ms. Todaro stated that in order to remain within the tax levy cap and keep to the commitments made during the budget development process, the district will be utilizing some of its reserve funds and fund balance.

Ms. Todaro further explained that the new state budget provides for a two-year property tax freeze to residents in school districts and local municipalities that agree to abide by the property tax cap in the first year. For the second year, in addition to remaining within the cap, additional criteria must be met. She noted that the district has reached out to the State Comptroller's Office for additional information and clarification with regard to this matter and is waiting to hear back from them. However, in light of this new legislation, the Board and district administration agreed that presenting a budget which remains within the tax levy cap was the appropriate action to take. A copy of the budget presentation is available on the district's website.

Ms. Todaro spoke of a recent *Newsday* article regarding the move by some Long Island school districts to a longer kindergarten day. Ms. Todaro stated that she does not believe that full day kindergarten is in the best interests of the district at this time, citing the costs involved (roughly \$450,000 to \$500,000) and the fact that our students are performing quite well. She announced that Harborfields High School was recently ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in Suffolk County according to the *Washington Post's* annual list of America's Most Challenging High Schools.

Ms. Todaro also announced that the district would be establishing two sub-committees within the District Advisory Committee: the Capital Improvement Committee and the Educational Facility Planning Committee. Applications are available on the district's website and by contacting the Superintendent's office.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A resident expressed concern on the district's use of reserve funds and wondered what kind of financial impact it would have on the district going forward? Mr. Nimmo explained that using reserves heavily year after year could eventually have an adverse impact; however, the district is currently in a good position and accessing these funds is not detrimental at this time.

A resident questioned why we received less state aid than neighboring districts and also inquired on how much the district has in reserves? She also expressed disappointment that the librarian at Washington Drive was not included in the budget. Mr. Nimmo provided information on how a district's wealth factor is used in calculating the amount of state aid they receive and also provided an overview of our reserve figures. Ms. Todaro explained that state law only mandates a librarian at the middle and high school levels; it is not required at the elementary level.

A resident questioned why the two percent tax cap really isn't two percent? Mr. Nimmo acknowledged that the phrase "two percent tax cap" is misleading and explained that the law does not restrict any proposed tax levy increase to two percent, rather, the law requires every school district to calculate its own tax levy limit (two percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less). This calculation is achieved through a complex, eight-step formula.

A resident inquired as to what we know about the property tax freeze rebate and will it intimidate districts from breaching the cap going forward? Ms. Todaro stated that the property tax freeze is a two-year proposal and the district has reached out to the state for additional information on it. Dr. McDonagh noted that the effect of the legislation on our budget is an entity unto itself, acknowledging that it may at some point in the future place the district in a position of having to breach the cap.

A resident inquired about the Governor's proposed \$2 billion dollar bond referendum for technology. If it's passed in November, does the district plan on using it for Wi-Fi? Ms. Todaro stated that the district has decided to continue with BOCES for Wi-Fi, noting that

our instructional program will benefit from utilizing Wi-Fi sooner rather than later. Should the proposal pass in November, it still may take several months before actual implementation gets underway. The district will be able to make good use of the state funding for other items should the referendum pass. The resident also encouraged the Board to look into what the conversion aid may be for next year in order to continue exploring the possibility of full day kindergarten.

A resident noted that the district's budget is increasing by approximately \$2.3 million dollars over last year's budget, and he inquired as to how much of that increase will actually be applied toward the instructional program enhancements noted in the budget presentation. Ms. Todaro explained that in addition to supporting the instructional program, a good portion of the budget increase must also be used to fund contractual salary increases, pension and health insurance costs, and general operating expenses.

The Board members offered several comments regarding the budget adoption:

- Expressed support of the adopted budget; it's educationally sound and fiscally responsible. Thanked the Superintendent and her administrative team for their leadership throughout the process.
- Acknowledged that state aid remains a disappointment and vowed to make a concerted effort to keep on top of the legislative leadership. GEA and declining enrollment represent some of the challenges we face going forward; however, several members expressed confidence that the Board and community can work together to make things happen.
- Expressed confidence with the decision to use district reserve funds at this point in time; believes it is the appropriate choice and is hopeful the community will endorse that sentiment as well. The tax rebate under the governor's property tax freeze legislation represents a significant amount of money coming back to our residents.
- Proud of the district's ranking as 3<sup>rd</sup> in Suffolk County, but would prefer to be number one. We must continue the investment in our school district; maintain and enhance is a good thing and at some point down the road the time may come when we do have to consider piercing the tax cap.
- Wireless connectivity is an absolute necessity. Pleased that we are pursuing that initiative now since it will enhance a number of functions throughout the district; certainly to the instructional program through the use of Chrome Books, but also providing the opportunity to broadcast district events such as graduation, sporting events, etc.

## **FINANCE**

### **4.1 2014-2015 Budget Adoption**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Mastroianni, seconded by Mr. Banks, and carried unanimously, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education adopted the 2014-2015 school district budget in the amount of \$79,679,165 to be presented to eligible voters of the Harborfields Central School District at the Annual Election and Budget Vote to be held on May 20, 2014.

## **4.2 Budgetary Transfer of Funds**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Giuliano, seconded by Ms. Boba, and carried unanimously, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approved the budgetary transfer of funds as attached to the official minutes of April 9, 2014.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **5.1 Revision of Leave of Absence**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Banks, seconded by Ms. Boba, and carried unanimously, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following revision of a leave of absence was approved:

<b>Revision of Leave of Absence</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Dates Paid</b>	<b>Dates Unpaid</b>
Erica Scholl-O'Connor	Elementary Teacher	WDPS	From: 4/2/14 – 8/31/14 To: 3/26/14 – 8/31/14	N/A

### **5.2 Termination of Employment**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Mastroianni, seconded by Mr. Banks, and carried unanimously, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, this item was tabled until the April 24, 2014 Board meeting.

## **INSTRUCTION**

### **6.1 Denial of Appeal for Student Suspension**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Mastroianni, seconded by Mr. Banks, and carried unanimously, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education hereby denies the appeal of the parents of the student identified on confidential schedule "A", as attached to the official minutes of April 9, 2014, relating to suspension from school.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Banks, seconded by Ms. Banks, and carried unanimously, the Board adjourned the special meeting of April 9, 2014 at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Whelan  
District Clerk