

DECEMBER 18, 2023
WILMETTE, IL
REGULAR MEETING

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held on Monday, December 18, 2023 at the Mikaelian Education Center, 615 Locust Road, Wilmette, Illinois. President Erin Stone called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Members Present: Erin Stone, Jon Cesaretti, Anne Hart, Bonnie Kim (remotely), Allyson Pafas, Amy Poehling, Lisa Schneider-Fabes

Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Kari Cremascoli, Corey Bultemeier, Tony DeMonte, Heather Glowacki, Katie Lee, Kristin Swanson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Principal Kelly Jackson introduced Highcrest Middle School students to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Mrs. Jackson previewed a video of HMS Broadcast News featuring Mrs. Raccuglia's homeroom students who led the Monday broadcast last week and decorated their set with a winter scene. Each student introduced themselves and noted the role they played in the broadcast. Teachers Mayan Sloan and Sammy Smith serve as broadcast technology specialists and reported on the evolution of the broadcast.

ARTWORK

Carole Nimrod's McKenzie artists created the artwork on display in the Boardroom this month. Fourth graders explored several different art styles using the McKenzie garden as their inspiration for their flower drawings. Students chose three historical art styles after learning about impressionism, pointillism, cubism, pop art, and surrealism. Students drew the same flower in each style using a variety of mediums.

Second graders observed patterns in and around McKenzie school and used them to fill their painted pattern color wheels. For their final step, students added something they learned from their exploration of patterns and color families and shared how color makes them feel.

APPROVE THE MINUTES

Mrs. Poehling moved, seconded by Mrs. Pafas, to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2023 Public Hearing on 2023 Tax Levy and Board of Education Regular and Executive Session Meetings. The minutes were approved as submitted by **Roll Call Vote**.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Corey Lester, Kari Esposto, Kristen Youngman, Jeremiah Miller, Brittany Farris, Kevin Robinson, John Ritchell, spoke regarding KEEP39 program fees and implementing full day kindergarten sooner than the 2027 mandated date issued by Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS – December 11, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting

Facility Development – Mrs. Kim

The Facility Development Committee met as part of the December 11, 2023 Committee of the Whole. Mr. Bultemeier reviewed the projects planned for summer 2024 construction. Mr. Papanicholas noted the bid opening held on November 30 was successful receiving four bid packages with very favorable numbers.

The proposed projects include, at Wilmette Junior High, a partial roof replacement, a new mechanical rooftop unit, renovation of the conference room to have the ability to divide into two smaller conference rooms, and new stage lighting for the WJHS auditorium. At McKenzie, second level flooring will be replaced as well as renovation of the teachers' lounge. At Romona, one mechanical rooftop unit will be replaced along with installation of a water booster pump to increase water pressure. Replacement of the blacktop at Central school will include a new drainage system from the middle of the blacktop to the street.

The total bid recommendation for these projects is \$5.1M. Several alternates were presented for review; six are recommended for approval and one alternate was recommended to hold for future endeavors.

Mr. Papanicholas of Nicholas & Associates noted that the two rooftop units were pre-purchased last October to avoid supply issues and are expected to arrive by the start of projects.

School Finance – Mr. Cesaretti

A. ESSER III & COVID Mitigation Plan

Dr. Kristin Swanson presented this report. In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education released three grants to provide support to schools. The final year of funding for the ESSER III grant has been released and the Committee reviewed these grant funds and their proposed use. As part of ESSER III, the District is required to review and update the COVID mitigation plan as well, and this plan was also briefly reviewed.

B. Five Year Financial Projections

Mr. Bultemeier reviewed baseline five-year financial projections with the Board. Based on current financial projections, the District is projected to remain above its goal of maintaining a 40% fund balance for the next five years. These projections will be presented again later on the agenda and throughout the upcoming year as additional funding and expenses are known.

C. KEEP39 Financial Review and Fees

Mr. Bultemeier reviewed the KEEP39 financials and provided several fee options for consideration by the Board, in accordance with the Board's prior requests. The optional fee-based enrichment program will continue until the District is able to transition to offering a full-day kindergarten program. Options included maintaining KEEP39 fees as flat, consistent with prior year's fees of \$6,460, with fees offsetting the costs of operational expenses of running the program as well as the capital expenditures to bring the program onsite; aligning fees for the next three years to match and recoup the construction (or the capital investment) costs, which would mean setting the annual fee for optional enrichment program at \$5,525; or aligning fees to offset only the operational costs of the optional enrichment program subsidized through the District, which would mean setting the fees at \$4,392.

Discussion also ensued regarding when to implement full-day kindergarten. Illinois mandates full day kindergarten by 2027-2028 school year. It was also noted kindergarten is not a mandated grade level for public schools in Illinois at this time.

Administration reviewed the work required in order to prepare for implementation of a full-day kindergarten program and to replace the District's current model of a half-day academic kindergarten program with an optional afternoon enrichment offering available. Katie Lee provided a project list of tasks to be accomplished before implementation of a full day kindergarten program. In order to implement full-day kindergarten in the 2025-2026 school year, the Board would need to provide direction to administration no later than April 2024 so that it may initiate and have adequate time to complete the curriculum, instructional alignment, and professional development work needed.

Members discussed the history of KEEP39 inception, the work needed to transition to full-day kindergarten, funding for the optional enrichment program until such time as a full-day kindergarten is implemented, its fiscal responsibility, and maintaining fund balances at 40% or higher. After a thorough review of options, the Board expressed support for reducing KEEP39 fees to cover the operational expenses of the optional enrichment program with the future consideration to implement full day program sooner than 2027. The Board agreed to consider approval of KEEP39 fees of \$4,392 for the 2024-2025 school year.

Members' opinions varied on whether to decide on an implementation date now or wait until spring. Members agreed to reassess implementation in the spring. In the interim, Mr. Bultemeier will provide additional information regarding finances, operations, staffing, and upcoming projects during the February or March committee meeting.

Strategy – Mrs. Schneider-Fabes

Members received an update regarding the Strategic Plan Goal 3 Professional Community Action Steps. Katie Lee and Heather Glowacki led this review, which included a brief discussion of the District's work with regard to DSAT, onboarding and support for staff, engagement of teachers and staff on district and school committees, professional development needs, culture and climate work, and the DEIB Task Force.

Liaison Reports

Community Review Committee (CRC) – Mrs. Poehling

The CRC met on December 5. The committee had previously voted to study the importance of free play, the role and value of free play in education. Work from last year regarding neurodivergent students will be woven into subcommittee segments of this study. The three subcommittees will study: context benefits and challenges, local school and organization approaches, and national and international approaches.

Educational Foundation – Mrs. Poehling

The Foundation met via Zoom on December 12 and introduced the new Foundation manager. The upcoming College Paddle Night on January 27 is sold out; however, a wait list is available. The Foundation is gathering donations for the Wall of Honor. Parents can donate to honor a District staff or administration member.

Wilmette Village Intergovernmental Cooperation Working Group – Mrs. Kim/Mrs. Schneider-Fabes

Mrs. Schneider-Fabes stated she and Mrs. Kim attended the meeting on December 7. The group reviewed accomplishments since conducting a sustainability review and hiring a sustainability coordinator. The coordinator provided an outline of work done within each organization in Wilmette. They focused on surveying possibilities to support the Wilmette community with mental health issues by creating a comprehensive database listing all mental health services and a communications campaign to share awareness and resources. Another option was to hire a consulting firm that does pro-bono work to facilitate a communications campaign of awareness and database. Mrs. Kim stated the group will obtain direction from each entity's board and bring substantive options to set direction for the future for the next meeting in February 2024,

Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) – Mrs. Paflas

Mrs. Paflas, Ms. Stone, Mrs. Kim and Mr. DeMonte attended the Joint Annual Conference held in Chicago in November. Mrs. Paflas represented the D39 Board at the Delegate Assembly. The Delegate Assembly had representatives from 417 Illinois school boards to consider resolutions for approval. Resolutions approved were School Resource Officer funding (SRO) requesting Illinois legislature provide educational funding for all school districts to offset SRO costs. Also approved was a resolution related to bus driver regulations supporting driver training and licensing and to increase the transportation reimbursement rate from the state.

Legislative Update – Mrs. Paflas

The Illinois General Assembly is not in session until January 2024.

INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Written Communication – Dr. Cremascoli

The Board received written communications offering comment regarding Kindergarten and KEEP39 from the following individuals: Jenna Griffin, Brittany Farris, Elizabeth Garvey, Kasey Mitria, Katelyn Spinney, David Mitria, Katie Klein, Jocelyn Brockland, Sara Kennedy, Cory Lester, Nakesha and Chris Jasper, Susannah Strange, Matthew Herrmann, Kellen Spadafore, Katie Alm and Katie Ericson.

B. Administrative Announcements – Dr. Cremascoli

Community Review Committee (CRC) Members-at-Large

The Community Review Committee (CRC) serves in an advisory capacity to District 39’s Board of Education to research specific topics that lead to improvements in teaching, learning, or managing the District’s operations. In accordance with CRC bylaws, the Board of Education annually approves the CRC Members-at-Large. This year’s CRC Members at large include Yilin Zhang, representing Romona School, and Masha Abramovitz, representing McKenzie School.

Attendance

Administration continues to monitor and support positive school attendance for students. School attendance is strongly correlated to strong academic outcomes as well as a strengthened sense of connection, belonging and community with the school environment. The District has emphasized the importance of school attendance throughout the school year and continues to raise awareness of its importance.

To maintain healthy school environments and minimize absences, parents were reminded to keep children home from school when they are experiencing illness. The school nurse can assist with guidance regarding return-to-school protocol; however, students may generally return to school after symptoms, including fever, have been resolved for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. If a student has tested positive for COVID, the student may return to school after a five-day isolation period. If a student has been diagnosed with any communicable disease, parents should contact the school nurse to discuss isolation length and clearance to return to school.

2024-2025 Calendar Committee Update

The Calendar Committee met this past week to begin planning the 2024-2025 school calendar. The committee consists of teachers and paraprofessionals. The committee seeks to align winter and spring break with New Trier while also seeking opportunities for connected instructional time. A draft calendar was shared. The Board will approve the 2024-2025 school calendar at the January 22 Board of Education meeting.

Mid-Year Curriculum Committee Updates

K-2 English Language Arts Curriculum Committee has focused their attention on reflecting and reviewing the materials teachers need to address foundational reading skills (phonemic awareness, phonological awareness and phonics instruction). The committee is reviewing several curriculum materials with the use of an evaluation criteria.

5-8 Social Studies Curriculum Committee has focused their attention on the newly released Social Science Standards. The members have spent time reviewing and understanding what the grade level expectations are for students. They will also be evaluating curricular resources available for alignment to the standards.

Property Tax Assessment Appeals

The District received one appeal notice and posted the potential liability of these appeals.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The District received a FOIA request from Jennifer Smith Richards and Jodi S. Cohen of ProPublica requesting all records from D39 to Shrub Oak and from Shrub Oak to D39 regarding appropriate certification of teachers for Shrub Oak student population; demonstrate Shrub Oak has an age-appropriate curriculum; how Shrub Oak will provide enrollment and attendance data; how Shrub Oak will provide special education and related services.

C. Annual Business

1. 2024-2025 KEEP39 Fees

The Board has been reviewing and considering multiple options for the KEEP39 fee in the 2024-2024-2025 school year. The option being recommended allows for the fee of \$4,392 per student to cover the estimated operational costs of running the program. If this fee is approved, then no future fees will be reimbursing the District for construction costs related to expanding and renovating the four elementary schools.

2. Bids for Summer 2024 Construction Projects

The District opened bids on November 30 and saw some very competitive and favorable bids in each trade package area. The multiple summer 2024 projects include work at four D39 schools for a total bid award of \$5.1M. The projects will take place at WJHS, Central, Romona, and McKenzie.

3. Five Year Financial Projections

The annual five-year financial projections were presented. The projections include many different assumptions and estimates for the next five years. A baseline scenario and alternate were included in the presentation. Baseline being the status quo on the KEEP39 fee, while the alternate has the fee drop to \$4,392 per student. The positive news for D39 is that both scenarios show the Operating Funds maintaining a fund balance above 40% in all five years of the projections.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Corey Lester, Kristen Youngman, Kari Esposto, Leigh Slovitt, Kevin Robinson, Jeremiah Miller noted their appreciation for the reduction in KEEP39 fees and requested fees be lowered further.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Consent Agenda

Mrs. Schneider-Fabes requested the motion to approve the 2024-2025 KEEP39 fees be pulled from the Consent Agenda.

Mrs. Hart moved, seconded by Mrs. Poehling, to approve the Personnel Report dated December 18, 2023, which included educational support personnel full-time employment of **Selma Besic**, effective January 8, 2024; **Francesca Gagliano**, effective December 14, 2023; **Rebecca Owen**, effective December 6, 2023; **Olivia Tado**, effective December 7, 2023; temporary employment of **Gayle Garrou**, effective January 3, 2024; educational support personnel resignation of **Franklin Makowski**, effective December 22, 2023; **Andrew McCarthy**, effective December 21, 2023; release of a probationary employee **Benjamin Kutelik**, effective November 15, 2023; educational support personnel retirement of **Sophia Theodoropoulos**, effective January 10, 2025: approve Yilin Zhang and Masha Abramovitz to serve as a members-at-large on the Community Review Committee (CRC): approve the accounts payable for bills listed between November 14, 2023 – December 18, 2023 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$184,827.33; O&M Fund \$196,591.94; Transportation \$204,046.96; Capital Projects \$255,069.68; Tort Fund \$314,800.00; total all funds: \$1,155,335.91: to approve the manual

checks issued between November 14, 2023 – December 18, 2023 in the following amounts: Educational Fund \$1,784,678.19; O&M Fund \$78,292.47; Debt Services \$1,892,505.42; Transportation \$1,308.27; Capital Projects \$260,087.88; total all funds: \$4,016,872.23.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” – Jon Cesaretti, Anne Hart, Bonnie Kim, Allyson Paflas, Amy Poehling, Lisa Schneider-Fabes, Erin Stone; voting “nay” – none; absent – none: **Motions Carried.**

Motion to approve KEEP39 Fees

Mrs. Hart moved, seconded by Mrs. Poehling to approve the 2024-2025 KEEP39 fees.

Mrs. Schneider-Fabes referenced public comments and proposed to further reduce KEEP39 fees to \$3,230 which is 50% of the current fee. Board members discussed how KEEP fees were originally based on local area fees and members would need to learn how this proposal would affect five-year projects, the projected 40% fund balance, and a review of this proposal in relations to other programs that are subsidized such as lunch and transportation. Members agreed going to full day kindergarten is a priority not just based on the fee issue but as the best option for students.

President Stone noted a prudent course of action would be to table the 2024-2025 KEEP39 fees and review the financial projections, fund balances and implications at the January committee meeting. Board members agreed to table the 2024-2025 KEEP39 fees until January.

B. Approve Bids for Summer 2024 Construction Projects

Mrs. Poehling moved, seconded by Mrs. Paflas, to award the base bid package plus alternates C1, C2, R1, J1, J2, and J3 in the amount of \$5,127,300 per bid specifications for the summer 2024 construction projects at Central Elementary School, Wilmette Junior High School, Romona Elementary School, and McKenzie Elementary School. Monarch Construction for an amount not to exceed \$1,891,900; G.E. Riddiford Co. for an amount not to exceed \$2,094,900; Helm Mechanical for an amount not exceed \$463,000; Shoreline Electric for an amount not to exceed \$677,500; total summer 2024 rprojects cost: \$5,127,300

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” – Jon Cesaretti, Anne Hart, Bonnie Kim, Allyson Paflas, Amy Poehling, Lisa Schneider-Fabes, Erin Stone; voting “nay” – none; absent – none: **Motion Carried.**

CONFERENCE ITEMS

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Good and Welfare

Ms. Stone appreciated the HMS Broadcast group presentation and how it changed from engaging a few students to having the entire student body participate. She reflected on the many District 39 and New Trier High School avenues that paved the way for her children.

Mrs. Hart and Mrs. Paflas attended the Romona Blue Ribbon Celebration which was such a tremendous honor for the school. They commented on how much positive energy and excitement flowed throughout the school.

Being no further business, Mrs. Hart moved, seconded by Mrs. Poehling, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education. It adjourned at 8:46 p.m. by **Roll Call Vote.**

President

Secretary