

# MINUTES OF THE HYBRID REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, October 16, 2023

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Meeting Number: 2491 234 7747

Meeting Password: myYvrhHS676

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair, called the meeting to order (7:05 PM).

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair (in-person); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair (in-person); Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary (in person); Dr. Jay Dahya (in-person); Ms. Brooke Hopkins (remote); Mr. Jeff Hughes (in-person); Mr. Steven Lawrence, (in-person) and Dr. Michael Strambler (in-person).

**STAFF:** Vonda Tencza, Superintendent; Analisa Sherman, Principal; James Sapia, Assistant Principal; Cheryl Tafel, Assistant Principal; Carrie Borcharding, Special Services Director; Donna Coonan, Director of Business Services/Operations; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – Ms. Del Prete acknowledged receipt of several emails from BRS parents regarding Advanced Math.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

John Hall – BRS students deserve the opportunity to have more advanced math offerings to build the foundation they will need at Amity. These students are smart enough to be able to skip topics. Currently, they are not progressing their math education and are losing one or two years. Other schools, similar to BRS, are able to offer this programming and Orange has been doing this for several years. It does make a difference when they get to High School and the more advanced math opportunities they have, the more opportunities they will have in life.

Sara Steinberg Forman – felt there was a disconnect in what we are saying our priorities are versus what is actually happening. If we are committed to all students having a full year's growth, regardless of their starting point, we have to do something different. We need to think creatively to find a solution so that this small subset of students, who have demonstrated mastery, will have their needs met.

Cindy Kruger – we need to focus on raising children in an environment where each one is stimulated and valued to encourage a lifetime of learning. Each of these children deserve a year filled with learning and we need to find a way to serve our advanced math learners. The math petition reflects a community that values and supports the needs of all children. This cohort has the analytical skills and intellectual curiosity to learn 6<sup>th</sup> grade math in 5<sup>th</sup> to move ahead and Pre-Algebra should be offered. Our children deserve to be encouraged, nourished and challenged. We should be proud of them for trying hard and for being outstanding.

Hillary Drumm – children learn in different ways and are challenged in different ways. Whether children are advanced, behind or anywhere in between, we need to meet them where they are and ensure that they have a full year's growth.

Kristen Turkosz – thanked the Board for their recent Halloween Hoot donation of board games. She indicated that some of the worksheets given are simply trial and error busy work with no rhyme or reason for outcome. These students, who were eligible to take Pre-Algebra, just spent an entire year doing busy work and should have the opportunity to go further in math rather than deeper. This group is 2-3% of the student population and they need a math program that meets their needs.

Kris Edwards – has a 6<sup>th</sup> grader who has been able to do computation in his head from a very young age. These students are not being challenged and what is coming home as challenge work is nothing more than busy work with the same repetition of skills turned into a puzzle. There were no student pre-assessments as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade material is all new. There is already an opportunity for them to be on a faster math track and we need to offer differentiation. They need to be with peers that are engaged and excited about math and taught by someone who feels the same way.

Javier Aviles – would like to see the Pre-Algebra program expanded into an Advanced Math class for both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. When opportunities present themselves to go beyond standards of performance that are not determined by the state, we should not hesitate to grab those opportunities.

Betty Miller – Children should be excited to learn in math and it should not be dependent upon on teachers. There are amazing math programs for enrichment acceleration. The Board should invest in a great program and allow teachers to use that program to challenge our kids. Kids will always talk about their abilities and it is ok for each one to learn differently. Let’s celebrate and embrace the differences.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Dr. Strambler

**UNANIMOUS**

PTO Update – Ms. Kruger noted the start of grade level socials, the ordering of student artwork in November, picture day, preparation for the Halloween Hoot, the November kick-off for teacher grants and the restructure of visiting authors. The full report is available in BoardBook.

Finance Committee – Superintendent Tencza noted that as part of the final report from the Ad Hoc Enrollment Committee, one of the outcomes was to obtain a consultant, through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), to explore types of options inclusive of

- Taking no action,
- Construction of addition and renovate as new,
- Construction of a new school in the same location, and/or
- Construction of a new school in a different location, splitting the BRS population.

BRS is unique and one of the largest elementary schools in the state. It is important in this process that we obtain the right information, and we are not sure we would know all of the right questions to ask. Jim Guiliano, President of Construction Solutions Group (CSG), walked the building, has talked with administrators and submitted a proposal.

Jim Guiliano, President of Construction Solutions Group (CSG) outlined their Scope of Services Proposal, the projected timeline, and fees associated with serving as the Project Manager. If everything went according to plan, and there was a successful outcome in a 2024 spring / summer referendum, the project would commence, and dependent upon the option selected, completion could be slated for summer / fall 2027. It was noted that the Town would have to be fully vested in the process, discussions and decisions. BRS is an aging facility with known security, infrastructure and abatement issues. Questions were raised relative to CSDE reimbursement, immediate need based on growing enrollment and the sharing of a facility in a neighboring district. New build options are currently in a ballpark range of \$669-740 per square foot provided the Town already owns the property.

Mr. Lawrence reviewed the October 10 Finance Committee inclusive of staffing, SRO savings, Expendable Trust surplus, the 2025-2030 Capital Budget timeline and the standard monthly reports adopted under the Consent Agenda.

Classroom Cost Supplies – Superintendent Tencza noted that in response to a Board member request, it would cost approximately \$80,000 additional dollars to fund classroom supplies in the 2024/25 budget. It is the responsibility of the district to provide children with the tools they need to learn. As this amount could fund a teacher, further discussion is necessary. It was suggested that a conversation occur with the PTO to explore subsidizing / joint venture options.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Tencza noted that our October 1 enrollment is 885, which is 40 more students than last October. Amity has asked that when BOWA districts review the 2024/25 calendar to consider a full vacation week in February to benefit Amity student interns. As the CSDE has not defined the assessment process for early Kindergarten entrance, guidance from the CSDE is being sought and districts are awaiting their response. The Administrative Team will hold a Community Chat on November 2 at 6:00 PM, everyone is invited to drop in.

BRS Update – Ms. Sherman noted the designation of BRS as an Apple Distinguished School, picture day, the PK-2 fire truck safety visit, bus driver appreciation week, parent / teacher conferences on Tuesday and Thursday, and recognized the respectful parent support group engaged in a collaborative Math discussion.

SBA Report – Mr. Sapia and Ms. Tafel presented an overview for how the assessment is conducted as well as the results from spring testing. SBA is a mandated global assessment aligned to common core standards with testing done completely on-line. Throughout the year students are provided with opportunities for daily exposure to similar web sites, question formats and navigation of the various online tools to achieve individual comfort levels and demonstrate knowledge. Also, it is a multiple choice Q&A computer adaptive test that changes for each student depending upon the answer(s) selected. SBA testing is only one measurement, however, it does provide helpful information in determining strengths and weaknesses in daily instruction. An in-depth analysis is performed on each of the content data areas by BRS data teams / coaches to ascertain individual student growth targets and expected growth levels, cohort growth as well as vertical strengths and weakness to inform and guide instruction.

Overall students performed well with Woodbridge ranking first in its DRG for both Language Arts and Math for the second year in a row. The overall scores for students in Woodbridge (*DRG B*) meeting or exceeding the state standard were: ELA (English/ Language Arts) – 81.7% (*State Average 48.5 %*) and Math –80.7% (*State Average 42.5%*). Grade 5 Next Generation Science – 85.9% (*State Average 48.5 %*). The Growth Rate for students that met or exceeded their individual growth targets as determined by the CT Growth Model were: ELA (English/ Language Arts) – 61.2% (*State Average 37.2 %*) and Math – 64.7% (*State Average 42.4%*). Questions were raised on the transition between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in Math, the infusion of MAG students into Grade 5, the impact of COVID in Grade 3 learners who were in Kindergarten when BRS shutdown, cohort differences, and what is being done to ensure all students across grade levels have growth during the year, including our high performers.

Curriculum Committee – Dr. Strambler reviewed the October 3 meeting which included an overview on the class placement process, the change in Kindergarten age admission, the assessment / criteria change for PreAlgebra, parent feedback on skipping 6<sup>th</sup> grade math, how well students at the upper end of the spectrum are being serviced, combining 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade math prior to taking Pre-Algebra and circulation of a Math petition. Concern was expressed for forming an Ad Hoc Committee to explore this issue as we are headed into budget season and we still do not know CSDE requirements in the literacy program. It was also suggested that the math curriculum be revamped to allow for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to qualify for freshman year Algebra without having to skip a year of Math skills. We need a strategic vision to increase content and differentiate the learning for those grade levels. Perhaps an outside consultant could provide guidance and/or evaluation of performance expectations to create an evidence-based assessment system. We need to identify short- and long-term strategies for this year as well as going forward. Superintendent Tencza was asked to provide a range of plans and associated costs to address these points and present them at the November Board meeting.

Town Building Committee – Mr. Hughes noted that this committee did not meet and will meet on November 3. There is a walk of the exterior grounds scheduled for the next Facilities Committee meeting on November 2.

Ms. Hopkins left the meeting (10:07 PM)

Policy Committee – Dr. Madonick presented two policies for adoption. Policy 1212 was reviewed by the Policy Committee at their meeting on October 3. This is a new policy and modeled after CABA suggested language and procedures. It was suggested that the requirement for fingerprinting and DCF checks be compared to other BOWA districts.

### **MOTION #2 – POLICY 1212 VOLUNTEERS / STUDENT INTERNS**

Move that we adopt Policy 1212 – Volunteers / Student Interns as presented.

Dr. Madonick  
Second by Ms. Hopkins  
**UNANIMOUS**

Dr. Madonick presented Revised Policy 9132.4. This policy has been reviewed several times by the Policy Committee since the spring of 2023 as well as the Finance Committee on September 12.

### **MOTION #3 – POLICY 9132.4 FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Move that we adopt Policy 9132.4 – Finance Committee as revised.

Dr. Madonick  
Second by Mr. Lawrence

Discussion ensued for the lack of Finance Committee responsibilities in the policy. A suggestion was made to include the capital and operating budget schedule, review of the annual town audit report, all routine financial documents, transfers and a financial analysis of all reports etc.

**MOTION #3A – POLICY 9132.4 FINANCE COMMITTEE**

*Move that we table the vote on this motion until the November 20, 2023 meeting.*

*Dr. Madonick*

*Second by Mr. Lawrence*

**UNANIMOUS**

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Del Prete noted various upcoming webinars, the upcoming CABE Conference on November 17 and the recent application submission for a Board Recognition Award. It was also noted that new legislation requires every Board to submit an *Increasing Educator Diversity Plan* for review and approval by the CSDE prior to March 15, 2024. Once the plan is approved by the CSDE, it will be published on the district website. Chair Piascyk noted she attended the Board Check-In and the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan webinars.

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – Capital Budget proposal, Multilingual Learners and requested follow-up information on Math.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Building Usage – Superintendent Tencza presented the request from the Amity Pop Warner Cheerleading Team to be recognized as a Category A rather than Category C thus eliminating any cost for use of the South Assembly and South Gym for cheer practices. The policy is specific, and based on their enrollment configuration, they fall under a Category C organization. As they were only requesting use of the facility through the end of November and as a gesture of goodwill, the Board agreed that they would not be charged for this year. However, going forward they would incur a charge. It was noted that further clarification would be necessary to define what community oversight responsibilities belong to Recreation.

**MOTION #4 – BUILDING USAGE**

*Move that under the current Policy 3515 we treat Amity Pop Warner Cheerleading as a Category A and charge no fee for use through November 2023.*

*Mr. Lawrence*

*Second by Dr. Dahya*

**UNANIMOUS**

Upcoming WBOE Committee / Meeting Schedule – Facilities Committee on November 2 at 7:30 AM, Finance Committee on Tuesday, November 14 at 4:30 PM and the regular WBOE Meeting November 20 at 7:00 PM.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – None

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:** (11:06 PM)

*Dr. Dahya*

*Second by Dr. Madonick*

**UNANIMOUS**

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board