

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
East Rockaway, New York
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education
7:00 P.M., February 11, 2020, East Rockaway Jr. / Sr. High School
Preceded by Recognition of PTA Reflections Contest Winners, a
Mental Health and Wellness Presentation, and a Public Forum

MINUTES

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

Absent: Neil Schloth

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. Keith Gamache introduced Rhame Avenue School sixth grade student Emily Valdebenito who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Ruiz welcomed everyone to the meeting. She thanked Emily for leading the Pledge of Allegiance. The first presentation this evening is the recognition of the Rhame Avenue School PTA Reflections Contest Winners. Ms. Ruiz thanked the PTA for volunteering their time and giving this opportunity to our students. She introduced Dr. Ayesha McArthur, Rhame Avenue School Principal. Dr. McArthur thanked the PTA, Mrs. Elliott, Mrs. Palumbo, Mrs. Petraro and Mrs. Elias for their time and work in making this possible for the students. She also thanked the judges, Dr. Meagher, Ms. Massa, Ms. Cooper and Ms. Renner who were presented with certificates of appreciation. This year's theme was "Look Within." A video was shown highlighting the students' artwork. All students were called to the stage and presented with recognition awards. Dr. McArthur congratulated Jason Margiotta whose artwork was moving onto the New York State level. Dr. McArthur also thanked Claire Maini who worked on the video with the students. Ms. Maini was presented with flowers. Ms. Ruiz thanked all of the students for their wonderful art work and told them how proud she was of them.

Ms. Ruiz then introduced Mona Hecht, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction. Ms. Hecht spoke about the next presentation on Mental Health and Wellness. She stated that mental health and wellness is the real foundation of our school system. A PowerPoint outlining the five pillars of mental wellness was shown. Ms. Hecht spoke about Positive School Culture, Continuum of Services (Intervention and Response), Safety and Security For All, and Partnerships: Family and Community Connections. Ms. Hecht then introduced social workers Amy Weissman and Dawn McCabe who spoke about Classroom

Curriculum. A video showcasing lessons and student reactions and experiences was shown. Questions were asked and answered. Ms. Hecht thanked the social workers, guidance staff and psychologists for their continued involvement and assistance. Ms. Ruiz commented that the partnership with Northwell Health was a huge step for the district to take. We are pioneers and hope additional funding from New York State and the federal government are received in the future. We are the first responders and are on the front line. Our mental health team is amazing. Ms. Ruiz thanked the administration and Board of Education for supporting these initiatives.

At 8:00 p.m. 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 Dominick Vulpis, seconded by Peter McNally, and unanimously passed, the following minutes were approved:

A. January 21, 2020, Meeting of the Board of Education

5. Acknowledgment of Monthly Reports and Correspondence

A. Receipt of Monthly Financial Reports: December 2019

B. Correspondence – One (1)

6. Recommendations of the Superintendent of Schools

Upon motion made by Kristen O’Hagan, seconded by Peter McNally, and unanimously passed, the following Items A through D, were approved on a consent agenda.

A. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the revised club advisor assignments for the 2019-2020 school year as more fully set forth on the schedule of club/advisor assignments at the stipend salaries established by the East Rockaway Teachers Association contract for the 2019-2020 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the charters.

B. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the 2020 Spring Coaching Schedule dated February 11, 2020.

C. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Emily Pisani to the position of Part-Time Typist-Clerk, 12-months, effective February 12, 2020, at the prorated Step 3 annual salary set forth in the East Rockaway Secretaries Association Agreement for 12-month typist-clerks for the 2019-2020 school year.

D. 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. Joseph J. Coughlin, substitute security aide, effective February 12, 2020
2. Kayla Rein, substitute registered professional nurse, effective upon Civil Service approval
3. Paula Rae Sands Singer, substitute monitor, effective upon Civil Service approval
4. Mary Orzano, Proctor for AP, ACT and SAT exams, effective February 10, 2020

7. Other Items

Upon motion made by Peter McNally, seconded by Kristen O'Hagan, and unanimously passed, the following Item A was unanimously approved.

- A. Approve the employment agreement with Vincent J. Healy, as the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, effective July 1, 2020, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.

Ms. Ruiz commented that she was thrilled to recommend Mr. Healy to this appointment. At the same time, she is sad to say good-bye to Susan Kosser who finally may retire after working as an interim director for the past three years. Mrs. Kosser is leaving the department in great shape. The District will formally acknowledge her at the June Board of Education meeting.

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

- B. Approve the following resolution:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Education of the East Rockaway Union Free School District, Nassau County, New York, as follows:

Section 1. The following qualified voters of the East Rockaway Union Free School District, Nassau County, New York, are hereby appointed to constitute the Board of Registration of said school district to attend for the purpose of the preparation of the registers for all school-related elections of said school district pursuant to Section 2014 of the Education Law and to serve until the 30th day following the next annual meeting of the district:

1. Vitina Fazi (District Clerk)
2. Theresa Garcia
3. Leira Serrano
4. Barbara Winters

Section 2. In addition to the District's continuous registration previously approved by the Board of Education conducted in the District Clerk's Office on days that school is in session, special registration shall be conducted, and shall take place, at: Rhame Avenue Elementary School and Centre Avenue Elementary School, on May 4-8, 2020, between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.

Section 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

- C. Approve the Consulting Services Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and Altaris Consulting Group, LLC dated February 11, 2020, for security services for the 2020-2021 school year, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- D. Approve the Consultant Services Contract between the East Rockaway UFSD and Nancy Kaplan dated February 11, 2020, for professional development services for the 2019-2020 school year, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
- E. Approve the Consultant Services Contract with Engtze Pan for piano accompaniment for the 2019-2020 winter and spring choir concerts and elementary chorus winter concert.
- F. Approve the Health and Welfare Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and Rockville Centre UFSD 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.
- G. Approve the Health and Welfare Agreement between East Rockaway UFSD and Hicksville UFSD for the 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 Health and Welfare Agreement between East Rockaway UFSD and Uniondale UFSD for the 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.
- I. Approve the Health and Welfare Agreement between East Rockaway UFSD and Lynbrook UFSD for the 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.
- J. Approve the 2020-2021 school district calendar.
- K. Declare obsolete for the purpose of disposal and/or recycling, the items listed on the

Textbook Removal Form dated February 6, 2020.

L. Accept the following donations:

1. From the Centre Avenue PTA, a curriculum enhancement grant in the sum of \$550
2. From Tara-Marie Gonzalez and Daniel Gonzalez, a check in the sum of \$3,500 for East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School Class of 2020

8. Upon motion made by Peter McNally, and seconded by Kristen O’Hagan, the CSE and CPSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.

9. Budget Transfers

Upon motion made by Kristen O’Hagan, and seconded by Dominick Vulpis, the following budget transfers were unanimously approved:

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

1. Transaction No. 20-0012
2. Transaction No. 20-0013

10. Policy Matters

A. Policy Subcommittee Report

Ms. O’Hagan reported that the Committee met on February 3, 2020, to review the six policies below. Policy 1741, Home-Schooled Students is being adopted tonight. The only revision made was the addition of a sentence. The Committee will continue to review the remaining policies for adoption. The next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2020. The Board will continue to review the Field Trip and Excursions policy at its next work session.

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) was approved for adoption.

B. For Adoption

1. 1741, Home-Schooled Students

C. For Review

1. 4531, Field Trip and Excursions
2. 5420, Student Health Services
3. 8121.1-R, Opioid Overdose Prevention Regulation
4. 8130.1, Extreme Risk Protection Orders (The “Red Flag Law”) “New” “Notice”

5. 9150, Non-Fraternization “New”
6. 6705, Federal Funds Purchasing

11. Reports

A. Board President’s Report

Realtor Breakfast: On Thursday, March 12, 2020, the District will host our second Realtor Breakfast. This is an opportunity for the District to celebrate the quality of our schools and programs. Helping local realtors to be knowledgeable about the quality of our schools and what we have to offer is positive for continued enrollment and our home values. It is one of the many ways we continue to connect to our community as part of our strategic plan.

Athletics transportation: The high cost of transportation continues to be something we have to look carefully at especially when considering any new athletic opportunities for our students. Our athletic director will continue to assess the interests and needs of our students, reach out to neighboring districts for possible partnerships and evaluate transportation needs as part of any recommendations

Budget Work Session: Mrs. Scrio provided another budget update including the Governor's Budget Proposal, an overview of our debt service payments as well as current Capital and Technology projects being considered. The CPI for the 20-21 school year is 1.81% allowing for an estimated Tax Levy Increase of 2.26% or \$693,279. Proposed Capital projects include painting at the high school, shade replacements and lavatory drain installation at Centre Avenue and new electronic message signs at both Centre and Rhame Avenue. There will also be security enhancements district-wide including a new visitor management system, upgraded cabling to allow for high definition cameras, expanded 3M security film to common area glass and classroom doors, improved LED lighting for better and more efficient light, and additional door alarms for the high school. Technology reserve projects (at no additional cost to the tax payer) include the replacement of approximately 300 Chromebooks for our 1:1 initiative that have reached their end of life cycle.

As part of our ongoing effort to reduce our reliance on reserve funds to pay for technology that is now part of our regular instructional program, we will also be replacing 70 computer work stations at Centre and Rhame Avenue Schools that will be seven years old at the end of this school year. The smart and strategic use of eRate reimbursement by Mrs. Scrio and Mr. Araoz will allow the district to purchase \$60,000 of technology for a net cost of only \$9,900 after reimbursement and BOCES Aid is factored in. The complete presentation is available on the District’s website and any questions can be directed to Mrs. Scrio. The next budget work session is scheduled for

March 10th. Topics will include: transportation, salaries, fringe benefits, contractual expenditures, supplies, textbooks/workbooks, BOCES and the proposed 3-part budget.

B. Communication Subcommittee Report

In lieu of Mr. Schloth's absence, Ms. Ruiz provided the Committee's report. The Committee met on January 28, 2020. The meeting began by sharing successes that have been implemented as a result of recommendations from last year's members. One of the recommendations was increased engagement. Examples of this increased engagement included inviting 25 senior citizens to view the dress performance of *The Wizard of Oz* and treated to dinner; elementary students entertained the seniors at the senior center before the holidays; and having our students help seniors with technology skills in the future. The committee reviewed the charge of the committee to increase and make additional recommendations for communication strategies. The next project is the realtors' breakfast on March 12, 2020. Recommendations were asked from the committee members and we received some great ideas. Committee members were invited to the breakfast and asked to serve as ambassadors.

C. Superintendent's Report

The first meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee took place on January 29, 2020. Over 30 people were present. A "state of the district" presentation took place which included the status of where we currently are. The members will be given a survey to identify areas from their perspective and then break into focus area groups. We will continue with the four focus points of our plan: Achievement, Innovation, Opportunity and Connection. We have asked each member to decide what area of the plan they will like to work on.

Achievement:

Centre and Rhame K-3 teachers received training on the Balanced Approach to Literacy in preparation for the implementation of the new Reading Program. Grade 4-6 teachers received training on Writers Workshop and will receive training on Balanced Literacy in an upcoming session.

Ten seventh-grade students have advanced to the Junior Long Island Science Congress taking place in April.

Our January Regents Academies were a success, providing support for 12 students that had previously struggled to pass Regents exams across five different subject areas (US History, Global History, ELA, Algebra, and Living Environment.)

Twenty-eight East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School art students won a total of 51 awards this year across seven categories at the 2019 Northeast Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. The nine Gold Key winner's artwork will go on to be judged at the national level. Congratulations to Ms. Cabasso and Ms. Galante for their work with the students in this area. It is quite an achievement for our students and teachers. Our District is creeping up to other districts in winning awards; however, when you compare the number of students with awards, we have less students winning more awards.

Innovation:

In Grade 6 STEAM classes, students are learning about Rovers and are working collaboratively to develop a Rover that drives, flies, or in some cases, does both.

Sixth grade teachers and math specialists received training on the new Techbook in Math and Science. Teachers found this very beneficial as it helped them to use the Techbook to plan more strategically and learned how to use it appropriately for independent student learning.

Professional development for TechBook for Social Studies, Math, and Science teachers took place during the week of February 6, 2020. Content trainers focused on new features of the platform and how teachers can best integrate Techbook into their lessons.

School Counseling Week allowed students to share notes of appreciation to staff, family and friends. Morning announcements provided students with words of encouragement and a reminder that their counselors and trusted adults in the buildings are here to support them. The week included the start to student programming.

Over 25 senior citizens watched the dress rehearsal of *The Wizard of Oz* on January 30, 2020, followed by dinner prepared by Home & Career students. Honor Society students assisted in serving the food. The three performances of this year's district musical were phenomenal, and the community came out in large numbers each night to support our students. Congratulations to Peter McNally on his daughter's performance as Dorothy. Thank you to the music department, Ms. Murano, Mr. Gerken, Mr. Ceglie and all who supported and worked with our students.

Opportunity:

Centre and Rhame students will celebrate *Kindness Week* beginning Monday, February 10th. They will celebrate a theme for each day that focuses on being positive, showing kindness towards others, being kind to yourself and being inclusive. On Friday, both buildings, along with schools around the country, will participate in *No One Eats Alone*

Day.

All students in the new EMT course, taught by Mr. Andrew Rinn and in collaboration with Mr. Barth, will have the opportunity to be CPR/AED trained and certified.

Students in Grades 11 and 12 participated in a hands-on activity about the "3-pound universe," the human brain. This activity served as a collaborative icebreaker for the class before segueing to an important lesson on mental health, specifically a TED Talk on the topic of Emotional Hygiene.

East Rockaway High School Junior Post-Secondary Planning Night reviewed options after graduation, as well as the college application timeline. Our guidance department was on hand to answer parents' questions and outline the supports that they offer our juniors and their families during this process.

On Thursday, February 6, 2020, the art department had the privilege of welcoming Nicolas Bruno into their classrooms as a visiting artist. In addition to presenting his work and discussing his process, he explained how he works as a one-man team where he builds his own props, creates his own clothing and poses in his own photos as well. He even took the time to sit one-on-one with some of our AP students and offered them feedback on their portfolios. It was a truly inspiring and fascinating opportunity for our students.

Connection:

Rhame Avenue's Connection Team hosted "Book Bingo" to engage families with a focus on reading. Bingo winners received prizes in addition to a new book. Books were contributed through a successful book drive. In late January, Centre Avenue kindergarten teachers held an interim conference parent meeting and they reviewed ways to support literacy and math at home.

The School Quality survey window has closed, and we are awaiting the results of our survey. Our team will be meeting to review the data and plan next steps. We will report to the board and community shortly as well as to the strategic planning committee.

Northwell Cohen's Behavioral Health Center

The official opening and ribbon cutting ceremony was held last week. We have referred families to the center and are very pleased with the services. We will hold our first advisory committee meeting with local superintendents and medical and administrative personnel from the Center on February 28, 2020.

2020 Census

April is Census Awareness Month. On April 1st the federal government begins the census process which occurs every 10 years attempting to count every person living in the United States, collecting demographic data from individuals. The census has significant implications for school districts. The data is used to determine how federal education monies are distributed, as funding formulas rely on population and poverty levels. The New York State School Boards Association has issued a report entitled “*Stand Up and Be Counted*”. We will post this on our website for your information. This report explains why an accurate census count is important to ensuring that schools receive the funding we are entitled to. States with the highest number of people and the highest concentrations of poverty receive proportionally greater amounts of federal aid than other states. In addition, the census data also impacts education by determining the number of seats each state has in the United States House of Representatives. I encourage everyone to participate in the census by completing your packet once received and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same.

On tonight’s agenda we accepted a donation of \$3,500 from Mrs. Tara Gonzalez to support graduation activities. Ms. Tara Gonzalez, together with other senior high school parents, fundraised this amount to offset the costs of graduation activities. This was very generous of our parents to support our seniors as graduation costs have gone up. Many thanks to those parents who contributed and to the Centre Avenue PTA for their donation as well.

12. Good and Welfare

- A. Condolences to Peg O’Neill and family on the passing of her mother Mary O’Neill on February 5, 2020

13. Public Comments: Mr. Gamache stated that next on the agenda is the public comment period. Please note that anyone wishing to speak at this time should fill out a card and comply with all provisions of board policy. Please keep your comments to three minutes, refrain from addressing topics related to personnel matters or individual students. Such concerns should be discussed privately with an administrator or the superintendent at an appropriate time. The board is here to listen and cannot provide immediate feedback or engage in open dialogue.

Randi O’Moore: Ms. O’Moore questioned why there were no board members present at the first Strategic Planning Committee meeting. Mr. McNally responded that he was home sick and not able to attend but will be at the next meeting. Mr. Gamache stated that the Board is committed to the continuation of the strategic plan.

Jeanine Araoz: Ms. Araoz questioned Policy 9150, Non-Fraternization “New” under policies for review. Ms. Ruiz responded that the policy is not on the website since it is new and there is no sample policy available from NYSSBA. The policy deals with how faculty and staff can communicate with students through appropriate channels. Samples have been received from other districts and the board will continue working on this policy.

14. Board Member Comments

Kristen O’Hagan: Ms. O’Hagan thanked Ms. Hecht, Ms. Weissman and Ms. McCabe and the entire mental health team for tonight’s presentation. She also thanked Ms. Ruiz for working with the Board of Education to make mental health a top priority. Ms. O’Hagan congratulated the cast of *The Wizard of Oz* for a wonderful performance. Many thanks also to all the adults involved who clearly played a role in the development of these students. She thanked Ms. Scio for all the work she is doing to prepare for the next budget vote. The Board is looking forward to her presentation at the next budget work session to learn about where we are going. Ms. O’Hagan thanked Ms. Ruiz for her commitment to continuing the District’s Strategic Plan. She was not able to make the first meeting due to a prior commitment with her daughter but is looking forward to hearing what the members have to say for the four areas of focus. She congratulated the students who participated in the PTA Reflections Contest. The entries were awesome. Many thanks to the PTA volunteers, teachers, and parents who supported all the students in this contest. Ms. O’Hagan congratulated Mr. Healy on his appointment as PPS Director.

Peter McNally: Mr. McNally wished Mr. Gamache a very happy birthday. He congratulated all the students who received art awards. Their pieces are inspiring, and they did such a great job. Many thanks to Ms. Hecht, Ms. Weissman, and Ms. McCabe for their focus on mental health which is so important. Ms. Hecht is correct when stating that mental health is the foundation of our school system. As trustees, there are times when we all don’t agree on issues. However, when making decisions, everyone’s opinion is respected, and the best interests of the students and district are always the priority.

Many thanks to Ms. Ruiz for her commitment to the District’s strategic plan. Mr. McNally is looking forward to sitting on the committee. He thanked Susan Kosser for all her hard work during her tenure in East Rockaway and congratulated Mr. Healy in his new role as PPS Director. The District will be in “good hands” under Mr. Healy’s leadership. Congratulations to everyone who worked on *The Wizard of Oz* production. Every year the music and art departments do such an awesome job. It is amazing how much talent there is in this tiny district.

Dominick Vulpis: Mr. Vulpis spoke about the Field Trip and Excursions policy. Although it may appear that we are delaying adoption of this policy, the Board continues to review it. The policy is intricate in that the Board believes that students are enriched outside the

classroom with these experiences, but there are other issues that require careful consideration. He thanked Susan Kosser for her time here at East Rockaway. It is not easy to come into a District, run and groom the “ship” and then leave. Mrs. Kosser has done a wonderful job and will be leaving the department in good shape. Mr. Vulpis thanked Mr. Healy for speaking with the Board. After speaking with Mr., Healy, it became apparent that he has grown in his position and we are happy to have him continue with the District in this new role.

Everything we heard tonight about what goes on in East Rockaway is another example of the engagement of this community. All the volunteerism is a sign of an engaged community that we take pride in, otherwise known as “rock pride.” This is evident with each of the reports that come out. We speak about engagement at every level from the orchestra pit to the art awards. It is all about how and who engages our students from the teachers who are entrenched with them every day to the parent volunteers who assist with all the activities. If a student is not engaged, they will not perform. There is no better engagement or tradition in our community than Rock Rivalry which is coming up. This allows the students who participate in it to bring their academic experiences with them in the real world. Sitting as a board of education member is not an easy task. You work at it every day serving not only as a board member but serving the community as well. The board is aware that the community comes first, and it is hoped that there is appreciation within the community for the work that the board does.

Keith Gamache: Mr. Gamache commented on Ms. Ruiz’s statement that our art award numbers are creeping up to other districts when in fact they are actually surpassing local schools. As an art teacher, the art department in the District has inspired him to reach out to his students and have them participate in art contests. East Rockaway had 28 students winning 51 awards and Mr. Gamache had only 9. Ms. Ruiz is correct in stating what a wonderful job they are doing and grateful that the teachers are making that extra effort which can be challenging. Many thanks to the Rhame Avenue PTA and the Reflections Committee. He thanked Mrs. Elias for her continued efforts. Some of these young artists can actually be Gold Key winners in the future. The mental health initiative has had some positive changes. The school day is going to a 6-day cycle. This will assure that students have a dedicated lunch. This helps with their mental health and well-being. Tweaks like that demonstrate the District’s commitment to providing the best learning environment.

Mr. Gamache reminded everyone that the budget vote is coming up in May. There will be two seats on the board available as two terms are ending. He announced that he will not be running for the Board of Education. All interested candidates can pick up a nominating packet. Mr. Gamache is willing to speak to anyone who might be interested in running for the Board. He stated that it has been six wonderful years that he served on the Board.

15. Upon motion made by Kristen O'Hagan, seconded by Peter McNally, and passed unanimously, the public meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vitina Fazi
District Clerk