

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

East Rockaway, New York

Meeting of the Board of Education

7:00 P.M., January 19, 2021

Preceded by Stern Essay Contest Winners, Guidance Plan Presentation,

Tenure Recognition and a Public Forum

Meeting Open to the Public and Livestreamed

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Dominick Vulpis, Kristen O'Hagan, Peter McNally, Daniel DeMatteo, Joseph Kilgus, Superintendent Lisa J. Ruiz, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, Jacqueline A. Scio; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Mona Hecht, District Clerk, Vitina Fazi

Absent: None

1. Mr. Vulpis called the meeting to order at approximately 7:14 p.m. in the auditorium of the East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School.
2. Mr. Daniel DeMatteo introduced Sara Neljkoic, a fifth-grade student at Rhame Avenue School, who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Ruiz welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting. She thanked everyone for coming out and began tonight's presentations with the winners of the Stern Essay Contest. She then introduced Ms. Lisa Burch who will be presenting the winners. Ms. Burch spoke about her brother, Andrew J. Stern. Mr. Stern, a former graduate of East Rockaway High School, was killed in the terror attacks on September 11th. The Stern family continues to honor the memory of Andrew by sponsoring this contest each year. Ms. Burch introduced her family members in attendance: Mrs. Barbara Stern, and brother Michael Stern. Ms. Burch stated that the Stern Family is extremely grateful to Ms. Ruiz and the District for allowing the family to continue this contest. This year's topic was:

"When people would gather at 7 pm every night during the pandemic to cheer for the healthcare workers, many people compared that to how crowds gathered to cheer for the rescue workers in the days and weeks after 9/11. In what ways do you think 9/11 and the current pandemic are similar, different or both?"

There were over 700 student entries. The following students were chosen as winners: Danielle Ramos (elementary); Sophia Pappas (middle school), and Nicholas Pannullo (high school). The students read their essays and were presented with awards. Ms. Ruiz thanked the Stern family for this opportunity and presented Mrs. Stern and Ms. Burch with flowers. She also congratulated the winners and thanked the students as well as their teachers and parents for their

guidance. This year's entries clearly were amazing.

The next tenure presentation usually takes place in the Spring. However, due to the hiring schedule and leaves, tenure dates change. This evening Ms. Ruiz is happy to recommend one teacher to the Board of Education for tenure. Ms. Ruiz then introduced Centre Avenue School principal, Mrs. Calia Kelly. Mrs. Kelly spoke on behalf of Katie Kuck, AIS Math Teacher and recommended her tenure to the Superintendent and Board of Education.

Ms. Ruiz then introduced principal Richard Schaffer who spoke about the Comprehensive School Counseling Plan. Mr. Schaffer thanked Janna Bonacorsi, Director of Guidance, and the school counselors for their work in creating the Plan. He then introduced Janna Bonacorsi and Jennifer Melecio, School Counselor, who conducted the Power Point presentation. They discussed the role of a school counselor and described the many "hats" they wear during a typical day. The Plan has been posted on the District's website. Ms. Bonacorsi thanked the Board of Education and the Superintendent for the opportunity to present their plan to the community. Questions were asked and answered.

At 8:18 p.m. the presentations concluded. The Board continued with the public portion of the agenda.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Mr. Vulpis stated that Board will be managing Board of Education email items this evening. If you have any questions regarding the agenda times, now is the time to contact the Board's email. You will also have an opportunity at the public comments section to contact the Board.

Mr. Kilgus stated that he did not receive any email comments.

4. Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Vulpis asked if there were any questions regarding the minutes below. There were none and Mr. Vulpis asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Upon motion made by Kristen O'Hagan, seconded by Peter McNally, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following minutes were approved:

A. December 15, 2020, Meeting of the Board of Education

5. Acknowledgment of Monthly Reports and Correspondence

A. Receipt of Monthly Financial Reports. The Board acknowledged receipt of the November 2020, monthly financial reports.

B. Correspondence – None received.

6. Recommendations of the Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Ruiz questioned the resignation date of Margaret Orgera in Item 6-C (2) below and requested that the Board move to amend the date to reflect “December 21, 2020” and not 2021.

Upon motion made by Joseph Kilgus, seconded by Daniel DeMatteo, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; Item 6-C (2) was amended to reflect the correct date of December 21, 2020.

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Items A, B, C (as amended), D-M below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Items A-M (as amended).

Upon motion made by Peter McNally, seconded by Kristen O’Hagan, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Items A-M (as amended) were approved on a consent agenda.

- A. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept, with regret, the resignation of Leon D. Araoz, for the purpose of retirement, from his Director of Technology and Learning Analytics position, effective February 28, 2021.
- B. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, grant tenure to Katie Kuck, elementary teacher, effective January 21, 2021, upon continued satisfactory evaluation.
- C. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept the following resignations:
 - 1. Josephine Buglione, monitor, effective December 30, 2020
 - 2. Margaret Orgera, substitute teacher, effective December 21, 2020
 - 3. Ethel Davis, part-time Public Information Aide, effective January 8, 2021
 - 4. Lisa Zeilberger, part-time monitor, effective January 13, 2021
 - 5. James Zervas, Chairperson for Mathematics, effective February 12, 2021
- D. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the request of Joseph Cracolici for a FMLA leave of absence from his foreign language teacher position, effective January 4, 2021, through February 8, 2021.
- E. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the request of Briar Falvo for a FMLA leave of absence from her English teacher position, effective March 8, 2021, through June 30, 2021.
- F. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the request of Rachele Banducci for a FMLA leave of absence from her special education teacher position, effective March 9, 2021, through May 27, 2021.
- G. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Alyssa Grunfelder to the position of permanent substitute teacher, effective January 20, 2021, at the

per diem salary established by the East Rockaway Board of Education on the Non-Contractual Salary Schedule for the 2020-2021 school year.

- H. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the request of Laura Clarke, teacher aide, to extend her leave of absence from January 27, 2021, through June 30, 2021.
- I. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve an increase in the part-time appointment of Fernando Gomez to be .8 FTE, effective January 7, 2021.
- J. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve a change in the appointment of Jeannine Iadevaia to the position of Senior Account Clerk in accordance with the District's request for the promotional examination, the East Rockaway Secretaries Association's collective bargaining agreement, and in compliance with Nassau County Civil Service regulations, effective January 20, 2021.
- K. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve a change in the appointment of Joanna Postiglione to the position of Senior Account Clerk in accordance with the District's request for the promotional examination, the East Rockaway Secretaries Association's collective bargaining agreement, and in compliance with Nassau County Civil Service regulations, effective January 20, 2021.
- L. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Serena Zingale to the position of School Monitor, Part-Time, effective January 20, 2021, at the prorated Step 1 annual salary established by the East Rockaway UFSD Monitor and Security Unit and the United Public Service Employees Union agreement for the 2020-2021 school year.
- M. 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. Daisy Espinal-Urena, substitute cleaner, effective upon Civil Service approval
 - 2. Dakota Terenzi, substitute teacher aide and substitute monitor, effective upon Civil Service approval

7. Other Items

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Item A below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Item A.

Upon motion made by Joseph Kilgus, seconded by Daniel DeMatteo, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Item A was unanimously approved.

- A. Approve the terms of the Settlement Agreement dated December 17, 2020, between the

East Rockaway UFSD and the United Public Service Employees Union (“UPSEU”), East Rockaway UFSD Monitor and Security Unit, and authorize the Superintendent to execute the Settlement Agreement.

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Item B below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Item B.

Upon motion made by Kristen O’Hagan, seconded by Peter McNally, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Item B was unanimously approved.

B. Approve the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the East Rockaway UFSD hereby authorizes Lisa Ruiz, Superintendent of Schools, to sign the Grant of Funds Agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway UFSD, and the Town of Hempstead claim form seeking reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenditures and that these expenditures have not been submitted for reimbursement to any other entity.

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Item C below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Item C.

Upon motion made by Daniel DeMatteo, seconded by Joseph Kilgus, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Item C was unanimously approved.

C. Approve the Contract for Consultant Services between the East Rockaway UFSD and FBA of Syosset, dated January 19, 2021, for services on behalf of the District’s Flexible Spending Plan, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Item D below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Item D.

Upon motion made by Peter McNally, seconded by Kristen O’Hagan, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Item D was unanimously approved.

D. Approve the Memorandum of Agreement with the Nassau County Board of Elections for use of the optical scan voting systems on May 18, 2021 and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the Memorandum of Agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Items E and F below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Items E and F.

Upon motion made by Joseph Kilgus, seconded by Daniel DeMatteo, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Items E and F were unanimously approved.

- E. Accept the IDEA – Part B, Section 611 Federal Funding Grant Award for the funding dates of July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 with an approved budget total of \$321,911.
- F. Accept the IDEA – Part B, Section 619 Federal Funding Grant Award for the funding dates of July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 with an approved budget total of \$20,362.

Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding Item G below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve Item G.

Upon motion made by Kristen O’Hagan, seconded by Peter McNally, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the following Item G was unanimously approved.

- G. Accept the following donation:
 - 1. From Dominick Vulpis, four athletic equipment bags valued at approximately \$260

- 8. Mr. Vulpis asked if the trustees had any questions regarding the CSE and CPSE Recommendations. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis then asked for a motion to approve the CSE and CPSE Recommendations.

Upon motion made by Joseph Kilgus, seconded by Daniel DeMatteo, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the motion was unanimously passed, and the CSE and CPSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.

- 9. Budget Transfers - None

10. Policy Matters

A. Policy Subcommittee Report

Mrs. O’Hagan provided the following report:

The entire board met on January 6th to review the Equity, Inclusivity, and Diversity in Education policy. The policy sub-committee met on January 11th. All of the policies up for adoption this evening have been amended to reflect language that addresses equity, inclusivity, and diversity in education.

Policies for Adoption:

Mission Statement and Vision

This policy, that defines why the district exists and what it aspires to be has been updated to reflect the current district mission statement and vision. Goals were revisited to ensure they align with the strategic plan and language was added to address equity, inclusivity, and diversity in education.

4000, Student Learning Standards and Instructional Guidelines

This policy that the district develop a quality educational program designed to prepare all students to be college and/or career ready. Minor changes were added to make sure this policy is reviewed on an annual basis and ensure there is equitable support services to enable all students to succeed.

4513, Library Materials Selection

This policy outlines the guidelines for the selection of materials for instructional resources. Minor changes have been made to address equity, inclusivity and diversity in education.

4810, Teaching About Controversial Issues

The Board recognizes that as a natural part of preparation for assuming an adult role in society, matters of a controversial nature will arise and should be dealt with as part of the student’s learning experience. Language has been added to reflect equity, inclusivity, and diversity.

We will continue to review the following policies:

1. 5500, 5500-R, Student Records
2. 0105, Equity, Inclusivity, and Diversity in Education
3. 9150, Non-Fraternization “New”
4. 6705, Federal Funds Purchasing
5. 9420, Recruiting and Hiring
6. 9700, Professional Learning and Staff Development
7. 4511, Textbook Selection and Adoption
8. 4000, Goals for Instructional Programs

Thank you to Ms. Hecht, Ms. Scio, and Mr. Araoz for joining us for the discussion on some of these policies. The date for our next meeting is TBD.

Mr. Vulpis asked if there were any questions regarding Item 10 B below. There were no questions. Mr. Vulpis asked for a motion to adopt the policies listed in Item B (For Adoption).

Upon motion made by Peter McNally, seconded by Kristen O’Hagan, all in favor AYE, opposed: NONE; abstained: NONE; the following policies listed in Item B (1-4) were unanimously approved for adoption.

B. For Adoption

1. 0000, Mission Statement and Vision

2. 4000, Student Learning Standards and Instructional Guidelines
3. 4513, Library Materials Selection
4. 4810, Teaching About Controversial Issues

C. For Review

1. 5500, 5500-R, Student Records
2. 0105, Equity, Inclusivity, and Diversity in Education
3. 9150, Non-Fraternization “New”
4. 6705, Federal Funds Purchasing
5. 9420, Recruiting and Hiring
6. 9700, Professional Learning and Staff Development
7. 4511, Textbook Selection and Adoption
8. 4000, Goals for Instructional Programs

11. Reports

A. Superintendent’s Report

Ms. Ruiz thanked the Board for their work on the Policy Committee. It is very tedious work, and she appreciates the time and detail that the Board has given.

COVID-19 Update

I would like to provide a brief update about our response to COVID-19.

As you are aware, we have had an uptick in the number of positive COVID-19 cases and the number of people who have had to quarantine. As of Friday, our numbers are as follows:

Positive Cases

BUILDING	STUDENTS	STAFF
ERHS	18	8
RHAME	10	7
CENTRE	7	2
Total	35	17

Quarantine due to exposure

BUILDING	STUDENTS	STAFF
ERHS	155	51
RHAME	51	12
CENTRE	37	12
Total	243	75

Some parents have questioned why we have not closed schools. The positivity rate of our school population is very low, much lower than that of the general population in our area. Schools generally pivot to full remote instruction when there are staffing shortages of teachers and support staff who have either tested positive or must quarantine or when large numbers or clusters of positive cases occur in a building. We have had neither. In fact, our faculty and staff attendance has been strong. We are truly appreciative of the effort that our staff, faculty and students are making to follow safety protocols so we can keep our buildings open. Our students need to be in school and keeping our schools open and safe is the best thing we can do for our children. Please be assured that we are closely monitoring the number of positive cases and we evaluate the format of our instructional model ongoing.

The Governor has maintained, and we agree, that schools need to stay open for our students. Of course, if our numbers increase, we will thoroughly evaluate the situation and do what is necessary to protect our students and staff. Governor Cuomo has said that when the positivity level in an area/county reaches 9% it would be up to schools whether to close or initiate testing. Fortunately, we are not at that point.

On January 5, 2021, the percentage in Nassau County for individuals testing positive was 10%. As of January 17, 2021, the percentage is down to 6.3% and the 7-day rolling average

is 7.1%, indicating a downward trend. This is good news! This decrease suggests that the increase in positive cases in early January was probably the result of the surge of infections that took place during the holiday recess and the gatherings that occurred. We must be aware that the UK strain of the virus has reached Long Island and reports indicate that this strain is much more contagious but not more deadly. We must continue to be vigilant by practicing frequent hand washing, always maintain social distancing, and wear face coverings.

East Rockaway Retirees

Retired teachers, Fran Kohn, and Lorraine Liberti, organized a “Gift Card Adventure” inviting their retired colleagues to participate in donating gift cards for East Rockaway families in need. This was an amazingly generous undertaking of their time which resulted in a total donation of \$3,700. This outreach and care the retirees have displayed on behalf of our students is heartwarming and much needed at this challenging time. The gift cards will be delivered to families in need along with a personalized message from the retirees.

***“Have a safe, happy and healthy New Year!
Best Wishes from East Rockaway Retired Staff, Faculty and Administrators.”***

Thank you as well to Mr. Vulpis for his generosity as he is a part of this illustrious group!

January has been a relatively short month, so far having only 11 school days.

Achievement

During our monthly faculty meeting, Centre and Rhame teachers met with their grade level colleagues to engage in collaborative planning for their upcoming reading units in the new Wonders Reading program. Rhame fourth grader Adam Kolakawski won the Achieve 3000 “Winter Break Contest” for New York State.

Counselors are connecting with new students to our District to make sure they have created peer connections. This is a follow up to assigning peer buddies to our new entrants.

Our middle school guidance counselor pushed into Advisory to conduct reflective self-analyses of students' social emotional wellness. Information will be discussed at forthcoming 7th and 8th grade team meetings to plan for future advisory activities.

Students in advisory competed in a charade challenge with great energy. Next week in advisory, students will participate in a scavenger hunt throughout the building. They will have to collaborate to solve complex riddles, which will lead them to key people and destinations throughout the building. It is wonderful to hear the laughter.

Students in Science Research participated in the Cyberstart Game to discover cyber talents and identify and develop the next generation of cyber superstars. CyberStart’s immersive gamified learning platform can take students from zero cybersecurity knowledge to possessing the skills

necessary to compete in a national level Capture the Flag challenge, open to Grades 9th-12th. The National Cyber Scholarship program allows America's future cybersecurity superstars to compete for millions of dollars in college scholarships to support cybersecurity training at the highest levels.

Students in social studies classes at the high school discussed the historical significance of presidential inaugurations as a cornerstone of our democratic government from a variety of perspectives. Tomorrow, all students will have the opportunity to view the Presidential Inauguration live in their classes.

Congratulations to Sophia Pappas (8th Grade), Nick Pannullo (12th Grade), and Danielle Ramos (elementary), who are this year's Andrew Stern Essay Contest winners.

Innovation

Rhame and Centre students are working in art on developing their self-portrait. Students were all given mirrors to draw their self-portrait as if they were taking a selfie. Rhame sixth graders concluded their exploration into Ancient Egypt by creating Flipgrid videos of highlighting key technical vocabulary, pictures, and the work of a Greek historian who detailed the mummification process.

The use of breakout rooms in classrooms at the high school has continued, as students in seventh grade math classes worked to create their own proportional relationships in four different ways: graphs, tables, equations and verbal descriptions.

Connection

Rhame and Centre students will be creating Valentine cards, videos, and donating items to support our Veteran communities in collaboration with the County Executive and Councilman D'Esposito.

Opportunity

Centre Avenue's fully remote students by grade level, engage in virtual chat and lunch events with Mrs. Kelly and support staff. During these meetings students discuss how remote learning is going, eat lunch together, and play fun virtual games. Some of the games that they played were scavenger hunts and STEM activities using items around the house. It continues to be a fun way to get to know the students.

On January 14th, 2021, Science Research students participated in the SPARK! Challenge sponsored by Northwell Health. Students were able to select from one of four tracks ranging from Behind the Scenes, Clinical Professionals, Non-Clinical Professionals, and Frontline Workers. They then participated in interactive workshops and webinars and learned about the various opportunities and professions within health care systems. Students will now work as a team to create a poster presentation or career promotional video regarding one of the careers

from their experience as they compete against other schools on Long Island to help promote professional opportunities in health care.

Students are submitting an initial interest form for BOCES/Barry Tech Programs. Counselors are meeting with students upon learning of their interest to discuss programs of interest, how it relates to their post-secondary planning, and next steps.

Winter athletic intramurals have continued with boys and girls basketball, co-ed cheerleading and junior high girls volleyball being offered to ALL students in Grades 7-12. This program, led by our coaching staff, is intended to provide our students with a safe, healthy, and positive experience after school while we wait for interscholastic athletics to return!

Parents of students in Grades 7-11 were invited to attend to hear about the course selection process for the 2021-2022 school year. Information about new course offerings, high school electives, AP and concurrent enrollment courses, was presented by our department chairs and teachers.

Tenth and eleventh graders at the high school will have the opportunity to participate in a free after school SAT Prep Course. An initial survey was sent out on Friday and we already have over 50 students that have expressed interest.

Ms. Hecht will provide us with an update on our instructional model:

As was stated, we are proud of the fact that we can continue our instructional program despite all obstacles in the way. At this point as we approach the end of the semester those students who are fully remote have the option to return to in school learning. It appears the majority of those students have chosen to remain on the full remote model. We have eight (8) students returning to Centre Avenue, five (5) students returning to Rhame and nine (9) students returning to the Junior/Senior High School. We will continue to support our fully remote learners as best as we can. The majority of our students continue to attend school and our instructional program is being maintained in light of the challenges. We were fortunate to be able to combine some of our classes at Centre Avenue at the start of the new calendar year. Again, with all that we continue to face, our students and faculty are safe, and we are very proud of our staff and faculty for all they are doing.

Mrs. Scerio will provide us with an update on the bond projects and Living with the Bay:

Tomorrow we have the bid opening for the electrical portion of the Centre Avenue HVAC project which is scheduled for the Summer of 2021. This is the second bond project that has been approved by SED. The Centre Avenue masonry work was awarded in June. This project will also take place in the Summer of 2021. The plans for the athletic field and high school electrical work were sent to the State in December for review. We hope to begin the athletic field in the Spring of 2021 after the Living with the Bay project completes the bulkhead.

Living with the Bay Project (LWTB)

The bulkhead contractor received their equipment on Friday and Saturday and began accepting bulkhead sections yesterday. They have made steady progress and have had good luck with both the weather and the soil conditions. By the end of today's shift approximately 100 feet of bulkhead has been installed. The LWTB onsite project manager is very confident the project will be completed on schedule. There will be a fuel delivery for the crane this evening and additional material is scheduled for delivery tomorrow and Friday at 5:00 pm. We are trying to work out the best time for deliveries to keep the crew working while not disrupting the school day.

Since the weather has been mild, they have also begun digging the footings for the new generator. Yesterday the excavation crew ran into underground electric conduit and the engineer has been called out to solve the location issue. Since this portion of the project started early no delays are expected.

The website has an area specifically designated for the bond. Timelines are posted on a regular basis for your review. Please be sure to visit the website for updated information.

Ms. Ruiz thanked Ms. Scio and Mr. Daly for keeping on top of everything. We are thrilled that this is finally happening.

12. Good and Welfare

- A. Congratulations to Kristie Galante and husband Phil on the birth of their son, Greysen, on December 23, 2020
- B. Congratulations to Tom Canale and Amy Weissman on their engagement!
- C. Condolences to Kim Barbaro and family on the passing of her mother-in-law, Rosalia Barbara on December 12, 2020
- D. Condolences to Kristen Mednick and family on the passing of her father-in-law, Barry Mednick on December 26, 2020
- E. Condolences to Brianne Allgier and family on the passing of her grandmother, Eileen Loftus, on December 17, 2020
- F. Condolences to Sally Agro and family on the passing of her father-in-law, Michael Agro

13. Public Comments

Tara Elias: emailed the Board thanking them for continuing to livestream the meetings. Mrs. Elias asked if there are plans to hire a new parent coordinator. Mr. Vulpis replied that the Board has not discussed it yet and it will be added to a work session agenda.

Christine DelValle: As president of the Monitor/Security Aide Unit, she expressed her gratitude to the Board for their continued support during these difficult situations.

14. Board Member Comments

Daniel DeMatteo: Mr. DeMatteo shared the following quote: “The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate action of its members.” *Coretta Scott King*

Joseph Kilgus: Mr. Kilgus recognized Superintendent Ruiz and everyone that makes up the District’s Emergency Response Team. He had the opportunity to sit in on a meeting last week and he found it commendable that even during a pandemic where the health of our children has been the primary focus, the East Rockaway District continues to strive to make our schools safer from all threats. While thank God, school violence has been down this year, we cannot take our foot off the gas and we need to continue to make East Rockaway a healthy and safe environment for our children to learn. So, great job and thank you!

Peter McNally: Mr. McNally congratulated all the Stern Essay Contest winners. All the entries were awesome. He also congratulated Katie Kuck on receiving tenure and commented that he would love to be in her class. She is kind and enthusiastic and the District is lucky to have her. Many thanks to Ms. Bonacorsi and Ms. Melecio for tonight’s presentation. It was very informative. Lastly, to Lee Araoz, we are going to miss you. Much luck to you and your family as you pursue new employment.

Kristen O’Hagan: Congratulations to the Andrew Stern Essay contest winners honored this evening, to Katie Kuck on your tenure, and Lee Araoz. You will be missed. Thank you to Ms. Bonacorsi and Ms. Melecio for your Guidance Plan Presentation. As we are all settling back into the daily schedules after the holiday break remember the words of Henry Ford regarding “TEAMWORK”: “Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success.” The school community is a TEAM of administration, staff, students, and parents, all working hard to provide the best for the kids. It is certainly not easy in this hybrid learning environment and positive COVID cases. For all your hard work and determination as well as the continued motivation passed on to the students – I thank everyone who is a part of this TEAM!

Dominick Vulpis: Mr. Vulpis reminded the Board to email their comments to Tina. He also commented on how far our students have come in their communication skills, writing skills and ability to make comparisons between the events of 9-11 and COVID. Even from the perspective of an elementary student, our students were able to articulate and formulate clear and concise essays. The Stern family is certainly showcasing East Rockaway’s finest students. Many thanks to the Stern family for continuing to sponsor this contest. Mr. Vulpis congratulated Katie Kuck on her tenure and commented on what an inspiration it is for Mrs. Kelly to have her in the building. Many thanks to Ms. Ruiz who had the insight to hire her. There are always unassuming people present each and every day who are always there when you need them. Lee Araoz is one of those people. With Mr. Araoz, it is always how much more can he do for us. He will surely be missed in the District and I wish him much luck and success as he relocates to Florida.

I am so proud of the work we are all doing! One of the responsibilities of the Board and its greatest achievement is to develop policy for the school community. As this policy process continues, we have an opportunity to create the future and I believe we are up for the challenge. The Board is currently reading a book right now, *The Flat World and Education* and will be applying what we learn to our work sessions.

15. Mr. Vulpis asked for a motion to adjourn. Upon motion made by Peter McNally, seconded by Kristen O'Hagan, and passed unanimously, the public meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vitina Fazi
District Clerk