

MINUTES OF THE BELLMORE-MERRICK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING FEBRUARY 2, 2022

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A regular meeting of the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District Board of Education was held on Wednesday evening, February 2, 2022, in the Auditorium of the Administrative Offices at the Brookside Educational Center at 1260 Meadowbrook Road, North Merrick, New York.

The following members of the Board of Education were present:

Edward Corona, President
Nina Lanci, Vice President
Marion Blane
Melissa Cmar-Grote
Janet Goller
Dr. Nancy Kaplan
Tracey Miller
Gina Piskin

Also present:

Michael Harrington, Superintendent of Schools
Mikaela Coni, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Scott Bersin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
David Seinfeld, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and Administration
Eric Arlin, Executive Director of Alternative Education
Emily Paluseo, Director of Special Education and Pupil Services
Eric Caballero, Director of Physical Education/Health Ed/Athletics/Driver Education
Cheryl Fontana, Director of Music/Fine and Performing Arts and Adult Education
Joseph Innaco, Director of Administrative & Instructional Technology and Data Protection/Security
Maura Kempton, Assistant Director of Special Education and Pupil Services
Jon Simpkins, Director of School Facilities and Operations
Christopher Powers, School Attorney
Pattianne Guccione, District Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Corona at 6:40 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Corona led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

On a **MOTION** by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Goller and carried 8-0, the Board of Education moved to appoint Michael Harrington as the Acting District Clerk during Executive Session.

On a **MOTION** by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Goller and carried 8-0, the Board of Education moved into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation and a specific personnel issue.

On a **MOTION** by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Cmar-Grote and carried 8-0, the Board of Education reconvened to Public Session at 8:03 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Corona led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Corona asked for a moment of silence to honor Police Officers Wilbert Mora and Jason Rivera, who lost their lives in the line of duty last week.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a **MOTION** Ms. Lanci, seconded by Dr. Kaplan and carried 8-0 the Board of Education approved the minutes from the January 12, 2022 meeting.

IV. TREASURER'S REPORT

On a **MOTION** by Ms. Piskin, seconded by Ms. Goller and carried 8-0, the Board of Education approved the Treasurer's Report dated December 31, 2021.

V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Harrington welcomed everyone and said it is remarkable that we sit here tonight on February 2nd and are already in the third quarter. He said that January was our most challenging month to date and he remains so proud of our students and staff. Despite a surge in cases and disruptions caused by student and staff absences, our school community worked collaboratively and tirelessly to overcome the challenges, keep schools open and continue to engage students in wonderful curricular and extracurricular experiences.

Mr. Harrington welcomed David Seinfeld, as the Interim Assistant Superintendent of Personnel. He said that Mr. Seinfeld previously worked in the District as Principal of Calhoun, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and various interim positions; he is the perfect person to help us navigate the remainder of the school year. Mr. Harrington said he looks forward to working side by side with him again.

Mr. Harrington discussed the events of the past two weeks, explaining a temporary lifting of the mask mandate based on the NYS Supreme Court's decision, a return when a temporary stay was granted, and finally a stay extended. He said this has certainly caused confusion throughout the school community and it is very sad that school districts have been left to try to manage so many challenges as a result of politics. He said this Board of Education and our leadership team have worked tirelessly to stay ahead of communications, work closely with legal counsel to make informed decisions that follow guidance and law. Mr. Harrington stated that yesterday, the District communicated that the Stay Order was extended and attached the letter which the District sent to Governor Hochul asking for clarification and communication about our future. Mr. Harrington said he is more hopeful and optimistic than ever. The District has worked extensively to give students a normalized school experience and as the rates continue to decrease across the district, he looks forward to the day when COVID-19 is in the rearview mirror and schools are completely normal. He explained that the District's administration, faculty and school re-opening team are currently working on plans and preparations for the time when the decision is made for schools to be mask optional and how to do that in the safest and smartest way possible. He also said that more work needs to be done and we all have to do a better job at teaching kids to be more respectful and tolerable. He mentioned that there were some negative interactions among kids and said that all students should feel welcomed, safe and cared for.

Mr. Harrington said that despite the challenges stemming from COVID-19 this last month, students and staff continue to thrive. He mentioned the MLK Day of Service and Holocaust Remembrance Day. Mr. Harrington also mentioned that due to the snowstorm over the weekend, athletic games and practices were cancelled. Mr. Caballero and the coaches inspired the student athletes to go out and help their neighbors resulting in remarkable photos of kids helping their community.

Mr. Harrington congratulated the Regeneron Semifinalists and Finalists. He said these six brilliant students were among the 300 best and brightest young scientists in the Nation and our two finalists are among 40 in the Nation. He congratulated science chair Mr. Soel, and teachers Mrs. Frank and Mrs. Alfonso for their incredible work, support, guidance and mentorship through the process.

A. Presentations

Regeneron Science Competition Scholars

Ms. Lanci presented Michelle Brown from Kennedy High School with an Award of Honor certificate and said that Michelle is a scholar, musician, scientist, leader and so much more. Michelle is a role model to all and someone you can rely on for anything. She is a genuine learner and excels in all academic areas accepting nothing less than her best.

Ms. Goller presented Brandon Lin from Kennedy High School with an Award of Honor certificate and said that Brandon is one of the most impressive students to grace the hallways of Kennedy High School, is multifaceted and resolute, self-award and perceptive, and unrelenting in his approach to attack the most difficult of tasks.

Dr. Kaplan presented Christopher Luisi from Kennedy High School with an Award of Honor certificate and said that Christopher is hardworking, intelligent and kind-hearted. He is well-respected by his teachers and peers due to his active participation in his classes, friendly and kind demeanor, and his consistent involvement within our school community.

Ms. Cmar-Grote presented Christopher Prainito from Kennedy High School with an Award of Honor certificate and said that Christopher is intellectually curious and will always take risks to follow his passions. He is wise beyond his years and is a student who is most magnificently prepared for the rigor and lifestyle that a college environment presents.

Ms. Piskin presented Desiree Rigaud from Kennedy High School with an Award of Honor certificate and said that Desiree is a special young lady who hopes to do all that she can to educate others, bring light to social injustices, and spark positive change. She is a champion for the “little guy” and a natural leader among her peers.

Ms. Miller presented Shannon Su from Kennedy High School with an Award of Honor certificate and said that Shannon is a young woman of great character and insight. Shannon is highly motivated, extraordinarily focused and a natural leader by example. She cares deeply about others and has a unique ability to balance multiple leadership roles and a most demanding academic course load.

Mr. Harrington said that last week, Dr. Mara Bollettieri completed her last day in the District after 13 years of incredible service as Deputy Superintendent of Personnel. He said that she leaves a great legacy because she had the ability to combine great leadership with her kind, caring and compassionate heart. In addition to selflessly serving the students, families and 1000 employees in this district, she will be forever remembered for all she has done to make our school community a better place.

Ms. Lanci said Dr. Bollettieri has taught us all about community service and outreach. Dr. Bollettieri created the Community Cupboard to serve a few families and over the years, the cupboard has grown to serve between 50-75 families bi-weekly. In honor of Dr. Bollettieri, as she leaves behind this tremendous legacy of service, the cupboard will now be called “The Dr. Mara Bollettieri Community Cupboard”.

Ms. Goller thanked Dr. Bollettieri and said there was no other way to better honor her. She thanked her and her family for her many years serving the community.

Student Representatives

Julie Moehringer from Calhoun High School said there are many exciting things happening in school. She said the girls track and boys wrestling teams are conference champions. She also said that Calhoun hosted a Captain's Academy where the captains from all of the fall and winter sports teams got together to be congratulated on their leadership and invited to rally their teams to donate to the Community Cupboard. She also said that students are receiving college acceptance letters and the guidance department has them on display to show the accomplishment and hard work of the students. She congratulated Dr. Bollettieri on her retirement and said Dr. Bollettieri's joy and light shines through, she will be missed.

Nicole Rosen from Kennedy High School said that January was an exciting month at Kennedy. She congratulated the 6 Advanced Science Research students that were honored tonight. She said Kennedy students in the leadership course presented their Cougar Talk Program, the school also hosted a cheer competition, a successful MLK Day of Service and the Jam the Gym nights. Nicole also said their virtual enterprises company "SkySource" is in the top 40 business plan presentations on Long Island and is moving to the next round. Finally she said that the student body is incredibly appreciative of all their teachers and administrators for all they are doing to make this a terrific school year.

Anthony Scotto of Mepham High School said that Mepham continues to be a busy place. He said that Mepham participated in the MLK Day of Service and Spirit Week, culminating with students packing 2,100 books, all of which were donated to the Book Fairies organization. He said they also took part in International Holocaust Remembrance Day and celebrated their 100th day of school. He congratulated many students on various accomplishments and the Future Business Leaders of America students.

Wellness Center Presentation

Mr. Bersin said the District has done amazing things regarding social and emotional well-being. He said the District has Wellness Centers in each building and he asked Mr. Arlin, Ms. Paluseo and Ms. Kempton to give a presentation on the Wellness Centers.

Mr. Arlin explained how years ago, the District started to consider re-branding our guidance departments as counseling centers. Every year the District has a theme for the school year, which all have been related to mental health and wellness. He said the number one indicator of success in a school is for students to feel connected to an adult in the building and they realized that there was a need to improve on that. The District realized some families needed access to counselors and more mental health support in the community. We partnered with Northwell/South Oaks Hospital which enabled us to add psychologists in every building with expanded hours and access to group or individual counseling which put people in connection with the help they needed.

Ms. Paluseo and Ms. Kempton, along with the counselors and psychologists from each school explained the various programs and support they offer, some of which include mentoring, helping with decreasing negative symptoms while increasing positivity, mindfulness sessions, stress reduction, peer plans and community outreach.

Mr. Harrington thanked everyone for their continued support and mentioned the future dates.

B.	<u>Future Dates</u>	
	February 5	Calhoun On Tour Winter Show
	February 9	Mephram Art Honor Society
	February 11-12	Calhoun On Tour Winter Show
	February 21-25	Winter Recess – Schools Closed
	March 2	Board of Education Meeting

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *Agenda Items Only*

Mr. Corona stated:

“The Board of Education encourages public participation on school related matters at Board meetings. To allow for public participation, a period not to exceed 30 minutes shall be set aside during each Board meeting. Any person wishing to make comments or raise questions shall complete an information card. Questions are to be addressed to the Board President, not to individual board members. Personal attacks on individual board members, administrators and staff will not be tolerated and may be cause to adjourn the meeting. There will be no back and forth dialogue. Out of courtesy and fairness to the rest of the audience, it would be appreciated if each visitor would limit his/her remarks to not more than three minutes or ask only one question. Public discussion on matters relating to staff and students, by which their reputation, privacy, or rights to due process, or those of others could be in some way violated, is prohibited.

Having said that, please note that the Board is here to listen. The public comment period is not designed to be a discussion. Accordingly, please do not expect the Board to respond to your concerns and questions tonight. This is because we take your concerns and questions seriously and want to have sufficient time to process and research issues, if need be. We will, however, respond to your questions and concerns at a future meeting, or have the proper staff member get back to you at the appropriate time.

I also want to point out that under state and federal privacy laws we are unable to entertain any comments or questions about school personnel. Please know, however, that we take personnel concerns very seriously. On these matters, we would ask you to go through the appropriate administrative channels.”

There were no public comments made on agenda items.

On a **MOTION** by Dr. Kaplan, seconded by Ms. Lanci and carried 8-0, the Board of Education approved by consent agenda items VII.A through IX.C.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT’S RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. School Calendar 2022-2023
BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approve the recommended 2022 – 2023 school year calendar.
- B. Dignity Act
BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approve the revised appointments of the 2021-2022 Dignity Act coordinators in each of the district schools.
- C. Special Education
BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approve the following Special Education placements as recommended by the CSE: 000011702, 000013187, 000013372, 000512629, 000513460, 082140000, 091110001, 103140000, 131261607, 131262157, 131262197, 131262239, 201700054, 202100041 and 202100194.

VIII. PERSONNEL REPORT – February 2, 2022

- A. Resignations
- B. Appointments
- C. Recommendation for Continued Employment
- D. Leave Requests
- E. Assigned Services – Non-Athletics – Cancellation
- F. Assigned Services – Non-Athletics
- G. Assigned Services – Athletics – Winter
- H. Assigned Services – Athletics – Spring

IX. BUSINESS

A. Bills and Corresponding Warrant – January 5, 2022

The Board of Education reviewed the bills and corresponding warrant.

B. Budget Summary – December 31, 2021

The Board of Education reviewed the budget summary.

C. Undue Burden Independent Evaluator Hardship Waiver

WHEREAS, the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District has an approved Annual Professional Performance Review (“APPR”) Plan in place, effective for the 2021-2022 school year;

WHEREAS, the District has submitted an Undue Burden Independent Evaluator Hardship Waiver application to the State Education Department since compliance with the independent evaluator requirement would create an undue burden on the District;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education hereby approves and ratifies the District’s January 26, 2022 submission of the Undue Burden Independent Evaluator Hardship Waiver application to the State Education Department.

X. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

No old or new business was discussed.

XI. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Corona stated the Board of Education did not receive mailed correspondence and received 91 emails between January 12, 2022 and January 28, 2022.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Corona stated:

“The Board of Education encourages public participation on school related matters at Board meetings. To allow for public participation, a period not to exceed 30 minutes shall be set aside during each Board meeting. Any person wishing to make comments or raise questions shall complete an information card. Questions are to be addressed to the Board President, not to individual board members. Personal attacks on individual board members, administrators and staff will not be tolerated and may be cause to adjourn the meeting. There will be no back and forth dialogue. Out of courtesy and fairness to the rest of the audience, it would be appreciated if each visitor would limit his/her remarks to not more than three minutes or ask only one question. Public discussion on matters relating to staff and students, by which their reputation, privacy, or rights to due process, or those of others could be in some way violated, is prohibited.

Having said that, please note that the Board is here to listen. The public comment period is not designed to be a discussion. Accordingly, please do not expect the Board to respond to your concerns and questions tonight. This is because we take your concerns and questions seriously and want to have sufficient time to process and research issues, if need be. We will, however, respond to your questions and concerns at a future meeting, or have the proper staff member get back to you at the appropriate time.

I also want to point out that under state and federal privacy laws we are unable to entertain any comments or questions about school personnel. Please know, however, that we take personnel concerns very seriously. On these matters, we would ask you to go through the appropriate administrative channels.”

Barbara S. discussed mask mandates and said she wants the Board of Education to work harder to end the mask mandate.

Nicole K. discussed mask mandates and wants the Board of Education to disobey them even if it affects funding.

Laila K. is a student and feels that we don't need masks in school.

Angie K. discussed mask mandates and feels they are unconstitutional.

After several failed attempts to get members of the audience to be respectful during the meeting and to comply with the mask mandate while inside a school building, Mr. Corona motioned to adjourn the Public Session of the meeting and move into Executive Session.

XIII. POTENTIAL EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a **MOTION** by Mr. Corona, seconded by Ms. Miller and carried 8-0, the Board of Education moved into Executive Session at 9:38 p.m. to discuss a specific personnel issue.

On a **MOTION** by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Lanci and carried 8-0, the Board of Education moved to appoint Michael Harrington as the Acting District Clerk during Executive Session.

On a **MOTION** by Dr. Kaplan, seconded by Ms. Lanci and carried 8-0, the Board of Education reconvened to Public Session at 10:54 p.m.

On a **MOTION** by Dr. Kaplan, seconded by Ms. Lanci and carried 8-0, the Board of Education approved the following motion that was added to the agenda:

Motion to appoint new Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Administration

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education hereby appoints Eric Gomez as the new Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Administration effective July 1, 2022.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

On a **MOTION** by Dr. Kaplan, seconded by Ms. Lanci and carried 8-0, the Board of Education meeting adjourned at 10:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pattianne Guccione
District Clerk