



Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools *Board Highlights*

A summary of
Board of Education
meetings published
by Superintendent
of Schools Jim Schultz

Meeting of October 23, 2007

External audit, Interscholastic Sports Committee & options for Hostetter Building on Board meeting agenda

Since this is NY School Boards Appreciation Week, representatives from several staff unions took advantage of Privilege of the Floor at the start of the evening's agenda to recognize the seven BH-BL Board of Education members for their hundreds of hours of volunteer service to the school district. Principal DON GERMAIN spoke on behalf of the members of the Administrators Union, secretary JANET TOWNSEND shared the thanks of BH-BL staff in the CSEA, and teacher ROCCO MONTESANO expressed the appreciation of members of the Teachers Association. "It always amazes me the energy and the agonizing that you put into every decision, no matter how small," said Mr. Montesano, who attends most meetings. "It's clear that you understand and you care. Thank you for continuing the legacy of the Burnt Hills culture."

Action items

Board of Education members accepted the annual external audit of the school district's financial books prepared by Dorfman-Robbie P.C. Auditor ALAN WALTHER stated that his firm was once again giving the district an "unqualified report, which is the highest level of assurance we can give." This means that the auditors found no reportable problems or areas of weakness within the scope of their audit and that BH-BL followed all applicable regulations and accepted business practices in its 2006-07 financial record-keeping.

A team of Dorfman-Robbie auditors spent weeks examining hundreds of purchasing and payroll records as well as federal aid reports before reaching their positive opinion.

Assistant Superintendent JACKIE St. ONGE said "This is really a testament to the integrity of the district and its attention to fiscal responsibility. Also because it's School Board Appreciation Week, I want to say that this reflects the integrity of you our board members and the clear message you send our staff with your long range financial planning."

The Board of Education approved members for the new Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning for Interscholastic Sports. The committee will be co-chaired by community

member CHUCK GRISWOLD and High School assistant principal TIM BRUNSON and will develop recommendations for the Board of Education related to four specific charges. Other community (non-staff) members will be: DON ALLOCCO, KEN MADEJ, LIZA McERLEAN, MARIA WEEKS and ANDRIS BEINIKS. Staff members appointed to the committee are: GEORGE SEYMOUR, MATT SHELL, MELISSA THOMAS, RICH BATTENHAUSEN, and KEVIN AHERN. Ex-officio members will be Superintendent JIM SCHULTZ, Athletic Director BOB McGUIRE and Board members MIKE WOLF and JOHN BLOWERS.

Mr. Wolf said that he and Mr. Schultz had more volunteers than were needed to fill the committee and that "our interest first and foremost was to include as many sports as possible in committee members' background." The group is expected to begin meeting very soon in order to report its recommendations back to the Board in February.

Also approved were recommendations from the Committee on Special Education, the gift of books valued at over \$500 from KAREN KELLEY for the Professional Development Library, and a proposed trip to Costa Rica for Spanish program pupils.

Discussion Items

Two groups gave reports related to the Hostetter Building, reports that the Board had earlier requested as preliminary steps toward developing an answer of the question of what to do with this former elementary school building that now houses the district offices and several tenants.

Assistant Superintendent RICK EVANS introduced the report from the Hostetter Building Use Task Force, which only met for one full day. He noted the task force was NOT charged to make recommendations for the building, but rather to create a list possible options for its use so that these could receive further study to the extent that the Board wishes. The task force looked at enrollment projections, former Hostetter Building studies, and also at state aid regulations and how these might impact the question of

renovating or selling the building. They also received 134 responses to date to a survey about the building posted on the district website.

Options for the building reported by the task force include selling the building and its adjoining acreage, maintaining the status quo, or converting the building into a school. Options for a school in the building include converting it to a Kindergarten Center, a traditional neighborhood K-5 school, a school for all grade 6 or grade 9 pupils, a magnet school or some sort of high tech school. The task force also shared a chart showing a few of the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Teacher and task force member ANDY HALUSKA said that their work uncovered many questions about costs and about what use of the building would best address district space and programs needs. Survey responses revealed that there are many community members with misconceptions about the Hostetter Building, he said. Some people think the facility is in good shape, which is far from true. This means there will be significant communication needs as the Board proceeds with this decision making process.

A second report from Ms. St. Onge gave Board members insights into what it could cost to renovate the Hostetter Building. Ever since the building ceased being an elementary school in 1981, renovations to it have not been eligible for state aid reimbursement. This means the district has needed to pay 100% of the cost of any renovations (rather than the 23 - 25% that we typically pay for renovations to student-occupied buildings). Hence, only critical maintenance projects have been done in the past 25 years. With no students in the building, few renovations have been undertaken, Ms. St. Onge noted, but plumbing, heating and other building systems continue to age and wear out.

Ms. St. Onge, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor DAN DIGGINS, Construction Managers JIM MARTIN and TOM QUINN and members of our architectural firm met several times to develop preliminary estimates of what it would cost to reopen the Hostetter Building as a K-5 school similar to Charlton Heights. (Charlton Height's floor plan is identical to the original Hostetter Building layout back when it was know as the Glenhaven Elementary School.)

An estimated \$18.8 million would be needed to bring the building up to the same standards as Charlton Heights at present. This amount was based on a visual inspection only, and a more detailed analysis would be needed to determine a precise figure. The \$18.8 million includes bringing the building up to current state codes and requirements for an elementary school, but does not include any outdoor work on a potential playground or playing fields.

Calculating the potential budget and tax impact of this type of spending is complicated by various factors that limit how state building aid is paid. For instance, Ms. St. Onge explained that BH-BL would not receive state aid on renovations to elementary classrooms at the Hostetter Building unless we could justify them as necessary to meet enrollment or special education needs. Another idea that has been proposed is adding new classrooms onto the three existing elementary schools; however, such projects would not be aidable as long as Hostetter Building classrooms are not being used.

The state also calculates a maximum cost allowance for aid on each building. Whatever plan the Board eventually decides to put before district voters will need to be structured very carefully to generate the most state aid, she said.

Architect MIKE FANNING also recommends that the board consider hiring an outside group do a formal demographic study to document our projected enrollment needs because this is something the State Education Department looks for to assess a district's eligibility for state building aid for classrooms.

Personnel Action

APPOINTMENTS

PHYLLIS GAVIN	High School Cleaner effective 10/24/07
DANIEL SHEPARD	High School Math Teacher effective 11/13/07

The Board also approved a long list of winter coaching assignments and a list of 12 staff who are eligible to be considered for tenure this year.