

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 6, 2025 – Beach Street Middle School

PRESENT: Mr. Tussie, Mrs. Brown, Mr. Antoniello, Mr. Bedell, Mrs. Kelly, Mrs. Marks, Mr. McCann

ABSENT: None

ADMINISTRATORS: Dr. Romanelli, Mrs. Morrison, Mrs. Pellati, Mr. Cameron

ABSENT: None

ATTORNEY: Mr. Vigliotta

Meeting called to order 7:36 p.m. followed by the Pledge.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Tussie congratulated the winners of our Founder's Day Awards who were honored at last week's event. It is a great recognition for a lot of people that go above and beyond for the children of West Islip. Thank you to the West Islip PTA Council for putting together this event.

Student Representative Report

Mr. Tussie spoke on behalf of the student representatives, reminding everyone that *P.S. I Love You Day* is on Friday, February 14, 2025 and Higbie Lane and Udall Road are lined with purple flags to commemorate this day. Mr. Tussie thanked Mr. Jablonski and the High School Student Government.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Romanelli reported on an article that Syracuse.com published last week ranking school districts across the state based on last year's ELA Regents results. We are tied for #1 overall (with 22 other districts) out of 634 districts! We are also among the top 5 on Long Island and top 2 in Suffolk County. In actuality, of the districts in the top 35, only Scarsdale and Syossett tested more students than us. In terms of students tested, many are in double digits (or single as our co-leaders in Suffolk) while we tested a total of 316 students.

Dr. Romanelli congratulated our district administrators, building administrators, and teachers for making this tremendous accomplishment possible. Beginning in the early years with building a solid foundation in literacy, to the middle and HS years where our educators work to strengthen the reading, writing, and communication skills our students need to be successful, this is truly a team effort and a HUGE collective accomplishment! Dr. Romanelli noted that we are ahead of districts on Long Island like East Williston, Garden City and Jericho and stated that anyone doubting that we can be the best school district in NYS should take a look at the data. Dr. Romanelli stated that he is extremely proud of this accomplishment and recognition!

Dr. Romanelli proudly announced that this week, West Islip was noted as having a 98.7% graduation rate from the past year. This places the district 24th in New York State out of 670 districts, 6th on Long Island, and 3rd in Suffolk County.

Dr. Romanelli reported on the district's New York State Accountability System status and the different accountability measures that take place for the New York State assessments. Manetuck Elementary was recently removed from the Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) designation and Oquenock Elementary has received this designation for next year. Dr. Romanelli explained that New York State looks at the achievement on the New York State Math and ELA assessments for grades 3-8 and breaks it down by individual student groups including different ethnicities and social economic statuses to see if any different student groups in the district are struggling on these assessments. Previously there needed to be 10 students per grade level to be considered and evaluated in these different areas of student groups. This has now been changed to a combined amount of 10

students in the building being assessed. The two student groups identified at Oqunock Elementary as not making progress on the New York State assessment are the English Language Learners and our economically disadvantaged students. Dr. Romanelli stated that the district feels this was unfair. The English Language Learners group had 11 students combined from grades 3, 4 and 5 take the New York State assessments which is about 3 or 4 students per grade. Less than half the students in this group, who have limited English proficiency, took the assessments and are being assessed on an English Languages Arts exam at the state level. Additionally, there is an overlap between the English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students, with some falling into both categories. This overlap contributes to the district being classified as a Target District. This represents a small segment of our students at one of our schools.

Christina Marks spoke about the Annual Regional Legislative Workshop that the Administrators and several Board members attended on Saturday, February 1, 2025 which included Assemblymen, Congressmen and Senators from Long Island. They discussed increasing grant funding for Pre-K, in addition to the district's existing funds, which has not been updated in 18 years. Mrs. Marks suggested the community reach out to our local Representative to advocate for additional grant funding for Pre-K.

Dr. Romanelli stated that a letter was sent to our local Assemblymen, Congressmen, Legislators and Senators with the following message:

I am reaching out today to discuss Universal Pre-Kindergarten, and specifically, how the West Islip community is impacted by our current system.

In 1997, New York State launched a major initiative to expand access to high quality early childhood education. Since its inception, Universal Pre-kindergarten has provided those opportunities for over two million children. But changes are needed to enable the program to achieve its full promise.

In West Islip, we receive \$5400 for each of our 213 students allocated for via Pre-K grant funding. This funding amount has not changed in 18 years. In addition, community interest in the program has far exceeded the allocated amount of 213 students. We are currently turning families away above our allocated amount, while other districts are not fully utilizing the funding and student spaces available to them. Many never reach their capped number. Districts should not only be allocated the necessary amount of spaces for all interested students, the overall per pupil amount should be raised to reflect current costs and needs.

Just as a quick point of reference, in West Islip, we had 276 families apply for Pre-K. Based on our allocation of 213 students, we will have to turn away 63 students this year. Those families are forced to either pay for a private program or keep their child home because it is not affordable. The issue of students with special needs and economically disadvantaged families being turned away is one that is very difficult pill for us to swallow as well. In years past we have funded the program's cost difference above our grant allocation to provide this opportunity for all students; however, this has become unsustainable for us financially with growing costs and enrollment. We would truly appreciate your advocacy in this area!!!!

Thank you, as always, for your leadership and support!

Dr. Romanelli encourages our community to reach out to our legislators as well and share their own message about why the expansion of Pre-K funding is important to them.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2025 Planning Session.

PERSONNEL

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve consent agenda A-1, T-1, CL-1, CL-2, CL-3, CL-4, and Other as listed below:

ADMINISTRATIVE

A-1 RESIGNATION

Lisa Di Sibio, Assistant Director Information Technology
Effective March 1, 2025
(District Office)

TEACHERS

T-1 REGULAR SUBSTITUTE

Ana Christodoulou, Special Education
Effective January 7, 2025 through June 30, 2025
(Udall; Step 1A MA; replacing Ashley Smar {LOA})

CIVIL SERVICE

CL-1 PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENT SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD

Employee	Building
A	District Wide
B	Beach
C	Manetuck
D	Manetuck
E	Udall
F	Paul J. Bellew
H	WIHS
I	Bayview
J	District Wide
K	Bayview
L	District Wide

CL-2 RESIGNATION

Susan Barbieri, Paraprofessional
Effective January 27, 2025
(Oquenock)

Anthony Mayers, Guard
Effective July 19, 2024
(Districtwide)

CL-3 TERMINATION

Sharon Stoehrer, Cafeteria Aide
Effective February 10, 2025
(Paul J. Bellew)

CL-4 SUBSTITUTE FOOD SERVICE WORKER (\$16.50/hr.)

Theresa Galatro, effective February 7, 2025

OTHER

ADULT EDUCATION SPRING 2025

Marilyn Balkam (Beginner Line Dancing) \$45/hr.
Diane Sharkey (Beginner Line Dancing) \$45/hr.
Lenny Butler (Community CPR/First Aid) \$35/hr.
Kim Crichton (Yoga, Stretch, Body Sculpt) \$45/hr.
Matthew Haszinger (Volleyball) \$45/hr.
Phyllis Hintze (Ballroom Dancing) \$35/hr.
Evan Levy (Social Security Planning) no cost to West Islip
Bruce Lieberman (Defensive Driving) no cost to West Islip
Jake Caramico (How Money Works) no cost to West Islip
Jane Loehle (Aquacise) \$45/hr.
Kaitlin Murphy (Lifeguard) \$25/hr.

ADULT EDUCATION SPRING 2025, continued

Matt Corbett (Lifeguard) \$25/hr.
Michael Harbord (Lifeguard) \$25/hr.
James Grover (Basketball) \$45/hr.
Nizza Tasayco (Volleyball) \$45/hr.
Richard Tesoro (About Boat Safety) no cost to West Islip
Robert Watts (Introduction to Guitar/Piano) \$40/hr.

CLUBS/ADVISORS 2024-2025

BAYVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Geography Club, Edward McManus

ENRICHMENT INSTRUCTORS SPRING 2025 (AMENDED) (\$408 per session)

Katherine Keller (Coding 1 & 2)
(change in name from Kristin Keller)

REGENTS REVIEW 2024-2025

<u>Algebra 1</u>	<u>ELA</u>
Christina Bivona	Tina Schaefer

SPRING 2025 HIGH SCHOOL COACHES

GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL

Craig Perrino, J.V. Coach
Vincent Grabinsky, Assistant J.V. Coach

SPRING 2025 MIDDLE SCHOOL COACHES

SOFTBALL

Rebecca Schwartz, 7-8 Udall Coach

CURRICULUM REPORT

Mrs. Morrison stated that this week is National School Counselors week and thanked all our K-12 counselors throughout the district. She stated that the district is very fortunate to have an amazing group of counselors that not only support our students here in the school environment but help them to do what they need to do to be successful and move on to colleges or careers once they graduate. Mrs. Morrison acknowledged that we had two teams participate in the Science Olympiad, where they competed against sixty-three teams at the Eastern Long Island Regional competition on January 25, 2025. Two students earned an eighth-place medal and four students earned an eleventh-place medal. Mrs. Morrison congratulated all the students and gave a special thank you to all of our science teachers that supported those students in their endeavors.

Mrs. Morrison stated that excitement awaits next week as fourteen of our students embark on their trip to Eswatini, Africa. The West Islip Thirst Project is headed to see the fruits of their labor over the last many years. They will be visiting rural communities where they will help build a well, work with primary school children, meeting and connecting with high school and college students. They will also have time to enjoy themselves, take a safari and zip lining. An amazing experience awaits them and we wish them an amazing trip.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

Safety Committee: Christina Marks reported on the meeting that was held on 2/4/2025. Items reviewed included technology updated with the camera servers and door strikes added at the high school. A Gallagher lockdown, which is a remote lockdown from our main camera room, was performed at Oquenock Elementary. Some new hires were done in conjunction with the new model for after-school security, two additional armed guards were added as back-up. Progress has been made at the high school regarding ID cards, only 1 student did not have their card last week. Discussion was had regarding a more permanent senior parking placard for next year.

Mrs. Marks reported that our security staff and member of our community met with Good Samaritan Hospital regarding an incident that occurred last month around the area of Bayview Elementary. The hospital stated if you see something, say something, and call 911. The hospital stated they have a procedure in place with car services to get patients where they need to be.

Mrs. Marks report that ongoing conversations are being had with Buildings and Grounds regarding weekend facility fees, usage and safety concerns.

Education Committee: Richard Antonello reported on the meeting that was held on 2/4/2025. Items reviewed included the district's ranking regarding the ELA Regent's exam, graduation ranking, TSI status and the Geometry regents which will take place on June 11, 2025. Due to the exam being held earlier than usual, the high school has requested an asynchronous day be held on that day for grades 10, 11 and 12.

Mrs. Morrison presented a draft plan for Mastery of Learning and Equitable Grading Practices across the district which includes consistent grading policies and homework policies.

Finance Committee: Grace Kelly reported on the meeting that was held on 2/4/2025. Item reviewed included treasurer's report, school district funds for December, November extra-curricular funds, payroll summary and financial statements for December, internal claims audit report and system manager audit trail for January, payroll certificates for 1/8/2025 to 1/22/2025, review of warrants, review of budget of board agenda finance items, approval of budget transfers, approval of resolution and donation, approval of contracts, and review of the tax calculations for 2025-2026 school year.

Policy Committee: Mr. Cameron reported on the meeting that was held on 2/4/2025. Items reviewed included first reading Use of Credit Cards Policy 5440 which is a new policy to our current policy manual and is also going to be part of our 8000 section of our new policy manual and a first reading of modifications to Graduation Requirements Policy 7220 discussing the math credits required for graduation. In addition, the committee had a conversation regarding the Board of Education Self-Evaluation Tool Policy 0310 which is part of the new manual that is being worked on through

NSSBA and Volz & Vigliotta, PLLC. This policy gives the Board of Education an opportunity each year to do a self-assessment across 12 categories including Leadership, Communication, Parent and Community Participation, Planning and Setting Goals, Decision Making, Resource Allocation, Evaluation of the Superintendent, Working with the Superintendent, Expectations for Board Member Conduct, Board Operations, Board Meeting Effectiveness, Board Development and Accountability and modifications to Facilities Development Series 7000 and Support Services Series 8000. There are 6/10 sections completed of the new manual with 4 remaining sections to be completed which are 4000 - Instruction, 5000 - Student Policies, 6000 - Fiscal Management, 9000 - Personnel. The goal is to complete one section at each of our next two meetings of the year. This leaves two sections remaining in our overhaul of our entire policy manual for next school year.

Special Education Committee: Debbie Brown reported on the meeting that was held on 2/5/2025. Items reviewed included IEP, CSE and CPSE recommendations from respective committees and will be approved at this evening's meeting. Ms. Dowling reported on the preparation that goes into planning for the annual review season and that full staff meeting are currently taking place to review procedures for annual review meetings. Ms. Dowling also reported on upcoming professional development opportunities occurring within the Special Education Department with topics focusing on specifically designed instruction and IEP development. The second round of pre-school observations are currently taking place and continue to project increasing numbers within CPSE.

The SEPTA January Jump event had 206 attendees and was very successful. Tickets are on sale for the SEPTA Bowl which will be held on April 5th. The committee discussed ways to have more parent involvement.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve 2024-2025 General Fund budget transfers # 4468, 4470-4473 and Capital Fund budget transfer # 4469.

Motion was made by Debbie Brown seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve Contract: South Huntington Union Free School District Special Education 2024-2025.

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve resolution re: Donation from New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR) in the amount of \$1,000.00 to the West Islip High School.

DONATION

WHEREAS, the West Islip Union Free School District is in receipt of donated funds in the amount of \$1,000 from New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR), which has been donated to support the purchase of furniture for the West Islip Senior High School Bistro.

RESOLUTION: INCREASE 2024-2025 BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education hereby authorize the appropriation budget for the 2024-2025 school year to be increased to \$138,770,188.40, an increase of the \$1,000 donation from NYSIR for the West Islip Union Free School District.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve the 2025-2026 Student Teacher Calendar – Version 5.

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve Resolution re: Real Property Tax Exemption Section 467 (c) for eligible persons sixty-five (65) or over.

Board Resolution – Senior Citizens

WHEREAS, New York State Real Property Tax Law (“RPTL”) § 467 permits school districts to adopt a sliding scale income level provision for a partial exemption from real property owned by certain qualified persons sixty-five (65) or over; and

WHEREAS, the West Islip Union Free School District has, by resolution, provided for the partial exemption from real property taxation for its senior citizens pursuant to RPTL 467; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Legislature periodically amends RPTL § 467(3) to increase the maximum income eligibility for senior citizen partial exemptions annually; and

WHEREAS, on August 8, 2022 the Governor signed into law Chapter 488 of the Laws of 2022 to amend Town Codes to increase the maximum allowable annual household income requirements to qualify for this exemption;

WHEREAS, on October 18, 2022, the Town of Islip’s governing board passed a resolution Amending Chapter 48 of the Town Code of Islip by amending section 48-3 to increase the income limits of senior citizens for subsequent years; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has held a public hearing on the proposed amendment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the annual income of the owners or combined income of the owners for the calendar year set by RPTL § 467(3) shall determine the percentage exemption granted to senior citizens of the West Islip Union Free School District; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the income of the owner or the combined income of the owners for the calendar year prior to the date that the application is filed, shall determine the percentage of assessed valuation which is exempt from taxation in accordance with the attached schedule,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the partial exemption shall be made in accordance with the chart contained in the attachment to this resolution.

ATTACHMENT:

Annual Income	Percentage of Assessed Valuation Exempt From Taxation
Up to and including \$50,000	50 per centum
More than \$50,000 but less than \$51,000	45 per centum
At least \$51,000 but less than \$52,000	40 per centum
At least \$52,000 but less than \$53,000	35 per centum
At least \$53,000 but less than \$53,900	30 per centum
At least \$53,900 but less than \$54,800	25 per centum
At least \$54,800 but less than \$55,700	20 per centum
At least \$55,700 but less than \$56,600	15 per centum
At least \$56,600 but less than \$57,500	10 per centum
At least \$57,500 but less than \$58,400	5 per centum

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve Resolution re: Real Property Tax Exemption Section 495-c for eligible Persons with Disabilities and Limited Income.

Board Resolution – Persons with Disabilities

WHEREAS, Section 459-c of the New York State Real Property Tax Law authorizes taxing municipalities, including school districts, after a public hearing, to adopt a resolution exempting real property owned by certain qualified persons with disabilities to the extent of up to fifty per centum of the assessed valuation thereof; and

WHEREAS, Section 459-c of the Real Property Tax Law allows school districts to adopt a sliding scale income level provision for property owned by certain qualified persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, on October 18, 2022, the Town of Islip’s governing board passed a resolution Amending Chapter 48 of the Town Code of Islip by amending section 48G-1 increase the income limits of disabled persons with limited income for the 2024/25 tax year and subsequent years; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Legislature periodically amends RPTL § 459-c (5) to increase the maximum income eligibility for persons with disabilities’ partial exemptions; and

WHEREAS, on August 8, 2022 The Governor signed into law Chapter 488 of the Laws of 2022 to amend respective Town Codes to increase the maximum allowable annual household income requirements to qualify for this exemption, and

WHEREAS, the West Islip Union Free School District has, by resolution, provided for the partial exemption from real property taxation for its qualifying persons with disabilities pursuant to RPTL 459-c; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has held a public hearing with regard to the proposed amendment,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the annual income of the owners or combined income of the owners for the calendar year set by RPTL § 459-c (5) shall determine the percentage exemption granted to persons with disabilities of the West Islip Union Free School District; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the income of the owner or the combined income of the owners for the calendar year prior to the date that the application is filed, shall determine the percentage of assessed valuation which is exempt from taxation in accordance with the attached schedule; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the partial exemption shall be made in accordance with the chart contained in the attachment to this resolution.

ATTACHMENT:

Annual Income	Percentage of Assessed Valuation Exempt From Taxation
Up to and including \$50,000	50 per centum
More than \$50,000 but less than \$51,000	45 per centum
At least \$51,000 but less than \$52,000	40 per centum
At least \$52,000 but less than \$53,000	35 per centum
At least \$53,000 but less than \$53,900	30 per centum
At least \$53,900 but less than \$54,800	25 per centum
At least \$54,800 but less than \$55,700	20 per centum
At least \$55,700 but less than \$56,600	15 per centum
At least \$56,600 but less than \$57,500	10 per centum
At least \$57,500 but less than \$58,400	5 per centum

Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve resolution re: the Board of Education approves the recommendations of the Special Education Committee of students as listed in the District's backup and authorizes the District to arrange for appropriate services.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Romanelli discussed live-streaming of the Board of Education meetings and stated that all future meetings will now be live-streamed.

Dr. Romanelli congratulated 11th grade students Mike Hazelton and Noah Butler on their work with Habitat for Humanity in constructing a home in Brentwood. This is the first home to be built by Habitat for Humanity using a 3D printer. These IB students will be attending the dedication of this home next week and the district is really proud of their hard work.

Dr. Romanelli shared that the Class of 1975 will be having their 50th class reunion in July. Dr. Romanelli stated he and Mr. O'Farrell will be leading the alumni on a tour of the High School.

The following residents wished to speak during "Invitation to the Public":

Roberto Nicola Jr. ~ Mr. Nicola thanked the Board for taking the time to listen to him and he expressed his frustration with the Pre-K lottery. Mr. Nicola appreciates the district advocating to the local government regarding additional grant funding. Mr. Tussie stated that the Board understands his frustration and explored all options. He advised Mr. Nicola that advocacy is the best option.

Diane Petito ~ Ms. Petito stated she has been a resident of West Islip since 1984 and encourages the Board to think about the future and possibly having a Pre-K/Kindergarten building instead of renting some of the buildings that the district owns. Mr. Tussie stated that the Board is putting together a study regarding student enrollment and population.

William Tarpey ~ Mr. Tarpey questioned if the 9th grade students taking the Geometry regents on 6/11/2025 will have to attend classes virtually upon completion of the Regents exam. Mrs. Morrison stated the 9th grade students will come to school to take the Regents exam and will go home for the remainder of the day. Mr. Tarpey questioned if President Trump defunds and/or dismantles the Department of Education how, as a student who wants to help and represent the student body for the high school, would this affect the students and their education. Dr. Romanelli stated defunding/dismantling the Department of Education would require an act of Congress to fully dismantle the department with the states running their education system. The views of President Trump and the New York State Education Department do not align with one another and will be a big part of the conversation. Dr. Romanelli stated the biggest impact to school districts would be some of the federal funding that is received and that the district will be keeping an eye on the issue. Dr. Romanelli stated that the Department of Education does not create curriculum and we will make adjustments to whatever comes our way.

Mr. Tarpey asked if the Department of Education is dismantled how would this affect our current standing as a safe space school for our LGBTQ+ students. Dr. Romanelli stated the district has an Equity committee and has heard from residents asking if the Equity committee is going to end based on the conversations regarding DEI at the federal level. Dr. Romanelli stated that the district is proud of the Equity committee which was developed a few years ago and invites anyone in the community to join the committee. There are people with different viewpoints and it is a space that is focused on the idea of meeting the needs of all students to make sure that every student in the district meets with success. The guiding principle that the district has is that you can have your opinion on any topic however discrimination will not be tolerated.

Annemarie LaRosa ~ Ms. LaRosa asked if resources are going to be put towards the TSI program at Oquenock Elementary in order to increase the students' performance on the ELA assessment. Dr. Romanelli stated yes,

absolutely and stated that the most effective intervention was the virtual tutoring program that was put into effect when Manetuck Elementary had received this designation.

Mrs. LaRosa thanked the Board for mentioning and wearing the color purple to commemorate P.S. I Love You Day.

Mrs. LaRosa thanked the Board for saving and continuing the Pre-K program as much as they can right now and stated she understands how hard it is to be left out of the lottery. She stated that because the state does not fully fund this program, it is not a universal program and advocacy is at the state level where those voices need to be heard.

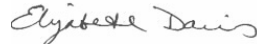
Motion was made by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:53 p.m. for the purpose of discussing personnel, negotiations, and/or litigation.

Meeting reconvened at 10:31 p.m. on motion by Debbie Brown, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor.

Motion was made by Quinn Bedell, seconded by Grace Kelly, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve resolution re: WITA Memorandum of Agreement between WITA Chapter and the West Islip UFSD.

Meeting adjourned at 10:32 p.m. on motion by Grace Kelly, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Davis
District Clerk

All correspondence, reports or related materials referred to in these minutes are on file in the District Office.