Board of Education
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Mr. Ahmad Sulaiman, Secretary
Mr. James Chow
Mr. Christopher Edmonds
Mr. Cabin Kim
Mr. Lou Paskalides
Dr. Heidi Wennstrom, Superintendent

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Butler School District 53

Board Report

A news report of the Jan. 22, 2018 Board of Education meeting

New playgrounds planned

The Board heard plans to collaborate with the Butler PTO and the Oak Brook Park District to install a new playground at both schools. Schematics of the playground were also shared. The PTO will raise funds to purchase the equipment and the park district will help install the playground at Butler Junior High. “It’s a fabulous opportunity to work with the PTO and Park District toward something we’ve wanted for a long time,” said Board President Dr. Elizabeth Chun. Details on the projets, including bids for the work and plans for any matching District funds, will be brought back to the Board in April.

Transportation costs, options discussed

The Board heard a report from Finance Chair Christopher Edmonds on the work of the committee. He said the committee discussed raising student registration fees but deferred making a recommendation until after strategic planning is complete. He said the outcome of the strategic plan could impact the budget. In related news, Edmonds reported on discussions about rising bus transportation costs, which totaled $383,000 this year, a 150 percent increase over the Consumer Price Index, and options to reduce costs. He noted concerns over the lack of competition of bus companies and fees that don’t cover all of the costs. Another challenge is that an attempt is made to keep one-way bus routes to a maximum of one hour whenever possible. Due to the lack of sidewalks in the Village, buses make more frequent stops to ensure student safety. Administrators will continue to study options to bring to the committee, including raising fees. Board President Dr. Elizabeth Chun also invited community input. The Board hopes to vote on the matter next month.

School calendars reviewed

The Board held off on voting on a new calendar for the 2019-20 school year and changing the 2018-19 calendar, which had been approved last year. The administration recommended changing the number of Institute Days at the start of school in 2018-19 from three to two, and moving that teacher training day to October. The superintendent said that the three days of training prior to school was challenging for teachers who are focused on readying their classrooms and finalizing teaching plans.

Board members asked the District to look at neighboring School Districts 181 and 86 in formulating the District 53 calendar. Most school districts’ calendars are unique depending on the needs of parents and families, but efforts are made to line up large holiday breaks with Hinsdale High School District 86. The District 53 calendar is unique in that there are five half-days for teacher training and three evening parent teacher conferences, a move made four years ago after the PTO requested evening time so more working parents could attend. Superintendent Dr. Heidi Wennstrom said that the vote could be delayed until next month after gathering more information and after Districts 181 and 86 approve their calendars.

Board meeting dates, location

The Board discussed the locations of board meetings and the meeting calendar. Both will be considered and brought to a vote at the next board meeting. Board member Chris Edmonds said he would like to move the meetings to the Village of Oak Brook's large meeting room to better accommodate presentations and guests. No user fee is required but some technology costs and staff time would be needed. Other board members expressed concern about logistics of the move – bringing materials to the village hall, the hall closing to the public after 10 p.m. and confusion about the location change. Board President Dr. Elizabeth Chun expressed concern about Oak Brook tax dollars being used to accommodate District 53, which does not have the same boundaries of the Village. One member considered a trial move for a handful of meetings. They also discussed moving the meeting to a different Monday of the month so the meetings don't conflict with the District 86 Board and Oak Brook Park District meetings. Finally, they asked the administration to send a text reminder monthly to parents about board meeting dates.

Guest teacher, committees, new parent group

In other news, the Board:

■ Heard about Board Secretary Ahmad Sulaiman's experience guest teaching 5th grade at Brook Forest. He taught a lesson on helping students discover the meaning and context in poetry using the Preamble of the Constitution. "What teachers do is amazing," he said. "Students were so creative. I was so happy, impressed and proud of our students." The offer was made by the Oak Brook Teachers Association as part of American Education Week and School Board Member Day.

■ Heard an update from the Buildings and Grounds Committee Chair Lou Paskalides. He said the committee reviewed the playground equipment, discussed engaging an architect to develop keyless entry for internal doors, discussed repairs needed for the handicap lift at Brook Forest and detailed the final installations of flooring and other work related to summer roof leaks at Brook Forest.

■ Heard information from the Technology Committee on plans for research-based professional development for educators and preliminary plans to expand coding lessons to the classroom. Right now, coding is taught K-5 during library time and in STEM classes at Butler Junior High. Technology Director Farheen Beg said the tech team is exploring three different programs to use in the curriculum K-5 and an update to the grade 6-8 STEM curriculum to include artificial intelligence, virtual reality and other coding-related learning.

■ Heard information on the new parent group Success for All Students and its second meeting held on Jan.17. The group, facilitated by in-house experts, discussed time management, work completion and other ways to improve executive functioning. The group also shared ideas to grow and maintain collaboration between families and schools, said Director of Student Services Andrea Prola. A future session will be held on social emotional learning.

■ The Board approved the first step in the 2018-19 budget, authorizing the business manger to take action to start preparing the budget.

Schools' update

In the schools' report, Brook Forest Principal Chad Prosen thanked families and teachers for the 5th grade Literacy Night. Other upcoming activities are the school-wide reading incentive planned for Feb. 28; Peter Reynolds author visit; Child Lures program presented by the Oak Brook Police Department; and a shoe drive by the Student Council. He also commended teachers who contributed to a "data retreat" to study ways to improve student achievement and growth.

Butler Junior High Principal Amy Read noted that as the third quarter starts, a highlight for students is taking new electives in the areas of fine arts, communications, STEM and social emotional learning. Also, Parent Teacher conferences are planned Feb. 16, International Day will be held Jan. 26 and 7th grade lockout will be held in February.

Policy updates

On first reading, the Board approved changes in five policies and four new policies, all recommended by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). The new policies outline superintendent-board relations, another relates to American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and accessibility of the website, and another addresses parameters for teaching about religion. The policies will be considered for second reading and adoption next month.

Board Calendar

Jan. 30	Tech Committee, 7 a.m.
Feb. 2	Buildings & Grounds Committee, 7 a.m.
Feb. 6	District Leadership Team, 4 p.m.
Feb. 12	Board of Education Meeting - 6:30 p.m. Administrative Center
March 12	Policy Committee, 5 p.m.
TBD	Finance Committee

School Calendar

Jan. 26	End of second trimester, BF
Jan. 23	Kindergarten registration, 9-11 a.m.
Jan. 25	Kindergarten registration, 3-7 p.m.
Jan. 31	Kindergarten registration, 9-11 a.m.
Feb. 8	BF Parent Teacher Conferences, 4 -8 p.m.

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