

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
East Rockaway, New York  
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
7:00 P.M., January 24, 2017– East Rockaway Jr. /Sr. High School  
Preceded by an AVID Presentation, September 11<sup>th</sup> Essay Contest Winners,  
Councilman D’Esposito presentation of Citations to Girls’ Volleyball Athletes,  
Recognition of Team Scholar Athletes, and a Public Forum

MINUTES

Present: Members of the Board of Education: Patti Nicoletti, Keith Gamache, Neil R. Schloth, Kristin Ochtera, John Giannotti, Jr., Superintendent, Lisa J. Ruiz; Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, Jacqueline A. Scio; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Technology, John Piccarella, District Clerk, Vitina Fazi

1. The meeting was called to order by Patti Nicoletti at 7:07 p.m. Kristin Ochtera led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board President Patti Nicoletti welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced Mr. Jonathan Heidelberger, from Frazer & Feldman LLP, the school district’s attorneys, who will be in attendance tonight. She stated that Ms. Ruiz has several presentations for the Board this evening. The business part of the meeting will take place after the presentations and she invited everyone to stay. Ms. Nicoletti reminded the audience that they will have an opportunity to ask specific questions about the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. She reminded the audience to fill out a card with any questions or comments for “privilege of the floor.” She then turned the meeting over to the Superintendent.

Ms. Ruiz welcomed everyone to tonight’s meeting and thanked them for coming out tonight despite the terrible weather. She said we will be recognizing students for their special achievements.

Mr. Ruiz then announced Councilman Anthony D’Esposito, Town of Hempstead 4<sup>th</sup> District Council Member, and Mr. Dom Vulpis, Director of Physical Education. Mr. Vulpis introduced and called to the stage volleyball coaches, Ms. Ferrand-Brito and Ms. Peknic. Councilman D’Esposito congratulated the Lady Rocks varsity volleyball team and the East Rockaway Community for a successful season. The coaches called the students to the stage and Councilman D’Esposito presented them with certificates. Ms. Ruiz congratulated the athletes and coaches and thanked Councilman D’Esposito for coming out tonight.

Mr. Ruiz then introduced members of the Stern family who were presenting awards to the winners of the 2016 Andrew Stern Essay Contest. Present were Ms. Lisa Burch, Mrs. Stern, and Mr. Michael Stern. Ms. Burch spoke about her brother, a former graduate of East Rockaway High School. She was appreciative of being able to continue this contest in honor of her brother.

Winners Angelina Palma, Jason Miller, and Andrew Schwarzman were asked to read their essays and were presented with awards. Ms. Burch thanked the winners, principals, teachers and students who participated and also thanked Ms. Ruiz for allowing the contest to take place. Ms. Ruiz thanked the Stern family for providing this opportunity to our students. Ms. Ruiz is looking forward to next year's topic and talented writing. She congratulated the students and parents.

Ms. Ruiz then introduced Mr. Dom Vulpis who recognized the team scholar athletes. Mr. Vulpis introduced volleyball coach Ms. Ferrand-Brito. Ms. Ferrand-Brito introduced Diana Locoteta, captain of the team. She spoke about what it means to be a scholar athlete. Ms. Ferrand-Brito then called the members of the volleyball team who were recognized as team scholar athletes and presented them with certificates.

Mr. Vulpis then introduced Cross-Country coaches Ms. Falvo and Mr. Anderson. Mr. Anderson spoke about the varsity cross-country team scholar athletes and presented them with certificates. He also announced that Kevin Howard received the Section 8 Class D Sportsmanship Award.

Mr. Vulpis then introduced the girls' varsity soccer assistant coach Katie Kuck. She introduced Laura Millar who spoke about the team and what being a scholar athlete is all about. All the team scholar athletes were called and presented with certificates.

Mr. Vulpis announced that the East Rockaway community received two citations. One citation was given to the East Rockaway Community Athletic Varsity Football Team for work off field and the other was a Sportsmanship Award from Nassau County. Mr. Vulpis thanked Ms. Ruiz, Mr. Spero and the Board of Education for supporting the physical education program.

Mr. Piccarella then introduced Mr. Joe Spero who spoke about the AVID program. He gave an in-depth presentation about the benefits of the program and shared some of his experiences he and staff members had at the summer institute for staff development that took place this past summer in Philadelphia. He answered some questions from the audience. Mr. Spero thanked the Board of Education for supporting this wonderful experience for the students and staff. Ms. Ruiz thanked Mr. Spero, the AVID team and teachers in the audience for their support of the program.

At 8:10 p.m. the meeting was turned over to Ms. Nicoletti. Ms. Nicoletti announced that there was a revised agenda and gave the audience an opportunity to review the revised agenda. She then continued with the agenda.

2. Upon motion made by Keith Gamache, and seconded by John Giannotti, Jr., the Minutes of December 20, 2016, were unanimously approved.
3. Acknowledge Receipt of Financial Reports – November 2016
4. Correspondence - None
5. Hearing of visitors on items in the Agenda - none

## 6. Action Agenda

Ms. Nicoletti announced to the audience that Item 1 on the agenda was Mr. Piccarella's retirement. Before moving on this item, Ms. Nicoletti asked if any of the Board members would like to say a few words about Mr. Piccarella.

Ms. Ochtera: Ms. Ochtera stated that she has had the opportunity to work with Mr. Piccarella for the last 10 years. The amount of insight and work he puts into a topic has always been appreciated. The improvements he has made to the District in his position have been very impressive. She wished him a future to include the writing of the great American novel.

Mr. Gamache: Mr. Gamache commended Mr. Piccarella and the staff for their work with the Robotics Program which has become the District's point of pride. Due to Mr. Piccarella's dedication and assistance, we have a healthy program.

Mr. Schloth: Mr. Schloth stated that he is fortunate enough to have been on the Board when Mr. Piccarella started moving the district forward in technology. Mr. Piccarella's expertise and involvement in cyber activity has kept our district up to date and current with other districts. Mr. Piccarella is credited with the tablet initiative for our students. Mr. Schloth stated that he is relentless in his pursuit and will be missed.

Mr. John Giannotti, Jr.: Mr. Giannotti, Jr. agreed with his fellow board members' comments. He said he will recognize Mr. Piccarella in June when all retirees are recognized.

Ms. Nicoletti: Ms. Nicoletti agreed that we have five months to recognize Mr. Piccarella and the list of commendations for him will continue to grow. She looks forward to his formal recognition in June along with other retirees.

Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the following Item 1 was unanimously approved.

### A. Personnel

1. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept with regret, for the purpose of retirement, the resignation of John Piccarella from his position as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Technology, effective June 30, 2017.

Upon motion made by John Giannotti, Jr., and seconded by Keith Gamache, the following Items 2 – 6 were unanimously approved on a consent agenda.

2. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, grant tenure to the following staff member on the effective date indicated and subject to satisfactory evaluation:

<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Tenure Date</u>
Wendy Gorman.....	Elementary Teacher .....	January 19, 2017

3. Approve the Centre Avenue School and Rhame Avenue School revised club advisor assignments for the 2016-2017 school year as more fully set forth on the schedule of club/advisor assignments and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the charters.

4. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Robin Boll to the position of Part-Time Monitor, effective upon Civil Service approval, at the Step 1 hourly rate set forth in the East Rockaway Food Service & Monitors Unit Agreement for the 2016-2017 school year.

5. 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 for the 2016-2017 school year:

- a. Vicki Perlman, substitute teacher aide, effective upon Civil Service approval
- b. Megan Hulse, substitute teacher, effective January 25, 2017
- c. Kristin Klemm-Smith, athletic supervisor (day/evening), effective January 18, 2017

6. BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the East Rockaway Union Free School District accepts the decision of Hearing Officer Lisa Brogan in a proceeding pursuant to Education Law section 3020-a concerning tenured teacher Stavroula Gretes-Coyle; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the penalty of termination imposed by the hearing officer be implemented effective immediately, i.e., close of business January 24, 2017.

**B. Other Items**

Upon motion made by Kristen Ochtera, and seconded by John Giannotti, Jr., the following Items 1 through 8 were unanimously approved on a consent agenda

1. Approve the employment agreement with John Marek as the Interim Facilities Director and Asbestos Designee effective January 9, 2017.
2. Approve the terms of the Consultant Services Contracts with Kristin Starkey and Vincent Muscarella for the District Musical *SHREK* leading up to and including the public performances, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute

the Contracts on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.

3. Approve the 2016-2017 Consultant Services Contract between the East Rockaway UFSD and John Groshans, for Internet Awareness Presentations and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
4. Accept the Title IIIA LEP Federal Funding Grant Award for the funding dates of September 1, 2016, to August 31, 2017 with an approved budget total for East Rockaway of \$4,293.
5. Declare obsolete for the purpose of disposal the items more fully set forth on the Change of Disposition form dated January 17, 2017.
6. Approve the Health and Welfare Services Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and Malverne UFSD for health and welfare services for the 2016-2017 school year and authorize the Superintendent and President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
7. Accept the following donations:
  - a. Check in the sum of \$100 from the Centre Avenue PTA for copy paper
  - b. Check in the sum of \$191.14 from the Centre Avenue PTA for US Games exercise equipment
  - c. Two checks from the East Rockaway Education Foundation:
    - i. \$7,798.24 for eight grants
    - ii. \$4,190 for a technology grant

Mr. Dan Caracciolo, President of the East Rockaway Education Foundation was introduced. Mr. Caracciolo presented checks for the technology grants to the District. Ms. Ruiz thanked the Education Foundation for their amazing support and for providing funds that will enhance much needed programs and to do the things that the District may not be able to do at this time.

8. Approve the 2017-2018 school district calendar.

#### C. Budget Transfers

Upon motion made by Neil Schloth, and seconded by Keith Gamache, the following Item 1 was unanimously approved.

1. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education approves the following budget transfer:

- a. Transaction No. 17-0003
- D. Upon motion made by John Giannotti, Jr., and seconded by Keith Gamache, the CSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.
- E. Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the CPSE Recommendations below were unanimously approved.
  - a. CPSE Recommendations December 20, 2016
  - b. CPSE Recommendations January 24, 2017

7. Policy Matters - None

8. Good and Welfare

- a. Congratulations to Christine Ericson and family on the arrival of daughter, Giulia Rose Liani, born on December 16, 2016
- b. Condolences to Karen Callaghan and family on the passing of her mother-in-law, Joan Callaghan

9. Superintendent's Report

Ms. Ruiz congratulated all the Andrew Stern Essay contest winners as well as the students that participated. She announced the winners: Angelina Palma, Jason Miller, and Andrew Schwarzman.

**Achievement:**

Elementary teaching assistants, reading teachers, and classroom teachers are in the middle of administering the middle of the year assessments. This information will help the staff to structure the data meetings coming in a few weeks to track student progress and make informed decisions about services provided to the students.

Additionally, teachers from both elementary schools recently worked with the literacy consultant to focus on text structure and how to incorporate the use of thinking maps as a tool to teach text structure. In the following weeks, teachers will continue to meet with the literacy consultant to deepen their knowledge base and practice the newly acquired tools and strategies with the students.

Mrs. Beyrer's third grade class has moved into first place after the New Year with Achieve 3000. These students have made the most progress in their Lexile growth this year by using the program both in school and at home. As a result, the class received special prizes and a pizza party this past Friday that was funded by the Achieve 3000 company and the kids are extremely motivated to reach their goals.

Six students in the newly-created DECA club qualified for the State level competition in

Rochester this March by competing in the regional event at Freeport High School. Special thanks to James DeTommaso, Donna Robbins and Joe Lores for their leadership. Six members have been selected to compete at the state competition at the Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center from March 8 – 10, 2017. Congratulations to the following students:

Corrinne Haab, Job Interview  
Conor Irvine, Public Speaking  
Marie Lisondra, Public Speaking  
Katelyn Reddy, Job Interview  
James Tierney, Public Speaking  
Andrew Schwarzman, Business Services Marketing

At the state level competition, East Rockaway students will compete against other high school students from across New York State. In the Job Interview category, the students will role-play an interview for a sales associate position at Men’s Warehouse; the public speaking students will prepare a 4-6 minute speech regarding DECA (How will you use DECA to shape the future?). In the Business Services Marketing category, students will take an exam and demonstrate marketing functions and tasks involved in providing services to businesses on a fee or contract basis or providing services to consumers through role-play.

Most Physically Educated Person Competition at Adelphi University - Andrew Machovec and Gabby Walsh took second place in Nassau County in the yearly competition hosted by Adelphi University. The day consists of physical tests using the Fitnessgram and an Essay on “The Value of a Physically Educated Person.”

Thirty-one All-County Students performed at the LIU Post Tilles Center the weekend of January 14, 2017: Conor Kelly, Katie LaBarbera, Sofia Ramirez, Emma Araoz, Isabella DeCunzo, Alyssa Walsh, Gabby Walsh, Luke Araoz, Brianna Marcia, Grace McNally, Michael Mistretta, Anthony Zappala, Nicholas Zappala, Daniel Salazar, Scott Buzzolani, Andrew Schwarzman, Elizabeth Son, Natalia Cuttitta, Claire Acuti, Ava Araoz, Katie LaBarbera, Sofia Ramirez, Emma Araoz, Isabella DeCunzo, Grace Muller, Victoria Haltigan, Tara Torborg, Alexis Butler, Maximilian Dengal, Erik Krudis, Shannon McMahan.

The Middle School Science Fair was held on January 12, 2017. We had a wide variety of amazing projects and each year they are developed at a higher level.

7th Grade Living Environment Awards:

- 3rd Place – Jason Miller
- 2nd Place – Kathryn McMahan
- 1st Place – Madeleine Prucha

7th Grade Behavioral Life Science Awards:

- 3rd Place – Isabelle Anderson
- 2nd Place – Anthony DeSano

- 1st Place – Emily McLaughlin

8th Grade Physical Science Awards:

- 3rd Place – Alexa Panzarella
- 2nd Place – Julian Palma
- 1st Place – Abigail Davila

8th Grade Earth Science Accelerated Awards:

- 3rd Place – Grace McNally
- 2nd Place – Sofia Bertolotti
- 1st Place – Matthew Machovec

The Spellman Memorial Award was given to Madeleine Prucha.

### **Opportunity**

Both Rhame and Centre Avenue students in fifth and sixth grade will be participating in this year's "Geography Bee" sponsored by National Geographic. Teachers in each classroom will be hosting their own "in-class Bees" this week and the winners will compete in a championship round next week on stage in front of an audience of their peers. The ultimate winner for the school will then take a test to determine if he or she will make it to the next round which is the New York State level competition.

The Varsity Basketball team will take on Wheatley High School at the Barclay's Center in Brooklyn on January 30, 2017, at 2:30 p.m. This is a wonderful opportunity for our students to experience an NBA venue.

College portfolio students have submitted work to The Art Guild (February 4-26, 2017). The theme – "From My Perspective" – a juried photography competition and exhibition, angle, standpoint, viewpoint. What makes your photographic perspective special and captivating?

East Rockaway High School and the District were recognized by the New York State Board of Health as a registered Opiate Overdose Prevention Program. Thank you, Dom Vulpis, for your efforts.

### **Innovation**

The STEAM Robotics unit is currently underway at Centre Avenue. Students have been working collaboratively to build Lego robots. As the building portion is almost complete, this week students will change their focus to programming their robots. They will apply some of the skills they learned from the coding unit to program the robots. They will also have to problem solve as a team and program the robot to successfully complete specific tasks. The students are truly enjoying their time participating in hands-on learning through our STEAM Program!

Students in sixth grade at Rhame Avenue recently met with their first grade buddies to teach them

about "Coding" which was something they learned from Mrs. Healy during the first cycle of this year's new STEAM initiative. The students researched age appropriate activities on Code.org and acted as teachers and facilitators while working with the first graders. This experience was highly engaging for all students and not only taught the first graders how to "code," but provided our sixth graders with an opportunity to show off their innovative tools and recently developed teaching talents!

East Rockaway's middle school robotics teams, which consist of students in Grades 6-8, competed with 32 teams in a tournament hosted by South Side Middle School in Rockville Centre on January 12, 2017. Three East Rockaway teams finished in the top 10, and two teams finished second overall in the Cooperative Challenge. The district will host a tournament on Saturday, February 11, 2017, for both high school and middle school levels, each level with 40 teams competing.

The Art department held its first Paint Night on January 18, 2017, in the High School Cafeteria. The event was well-attended and fun for all.

### **Connection**

The Positive School Culture committee at Centre Avenue is ready to launch their second school wide character education book called Enemy Pie. All classroom teachers will read this book with their classes, do a follow up activity, and relate the discussion back to the importance of being kind and respectful. In addition, Centre Avenue will begin its "Caught Being Good" program. Throughout the second half of the year, students who go above and beyond to demonstrate acts of kindness, character, and effort will be acknowledged on the "Caught Being Good" bulletin board. Each child will receive a certificate, a bracelet, and his/her name will be announced on Fridays.

Career week was a huge success across the District during the week of January 9, 2017. Rhame Avenue and Centre Avenue students were treated to a number of activities, experiences, and guest speakers across all grade levels. Students updated their individual career folders and interviewed people in their own lives about their careers to report back to the class. Additionally, we had a large number of visitors that gave career presentations to our students. Some of the occupations that the students learned about first-hand were police officer, firefighter, occupational therapist, lawyer, doctor, nurse, principal, marketing director, veterinarian, professor, pilot, welder, sports photographer, video game designer, and judge, among others.

At the High School, Career Week began with a kick-off keynote presentation for all students in Grades 6-12 by acclaimed author, speaker and career development expert, Brooks Harper. During the remainder of the week, we welcomed 20 members of the East Rockaway and surrounding community to present information about their individual career paths to students in a total of 43 classroom sessions. The following career opportunities were presented to our students: Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Scenic Design, Electrician, Social Work, Sports Marketing, Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, Writing, Psychology, Accounting and Business, Cybersecurity and IT, careers in the Music Industry, and Public Service/Politics. We are grateful for all the family, friends, and community members that took the time to come speak to the students and provide insights on various occupations.

We are moving forward with additional security enhancements. Our blue strobe lights and emergency buttons will go live shortly. When you see blue lights flashing outside of the building it means we are in lockdown and you should not approach the building. Signs will be posted. We will be sharing further information with parents about this new security measure shortly.

The newly adopted Opioid Overdose Prevention policy in our District allowed us to run an opioid overdose prevention program. Many thanks to Mr. Vulpis for all his work in this program and filling out the many applications needed. This permits the District to administer naloxone (Narcan) to any person displaying symptoms of an opioid overdose.

The STEAM presentation will take place at our March or April meeting.

I would like to recognize Mr. Howard and Mr. Cimorelli for their involvement with the robotics program. They continually put much effort and motivation in the program and we appreciate all that they do.

Thank you also to Josh Warner for participating in Career Week. It is always nice to see a former graduate speaking with our current students.

#### 10. Privilege of the Floor

Mrs. Lonergan: Ms. Lonergan wished Mr. Piccarella good luck on his retirement. She questioned the blue light system for all the schools and asked about drills being done when students are outdoors. She thanked the Board for starting a Mascot Committee and asked the Board to look into enhancing and upgrading our fields.

Mrs. Tara Elias: Mrs. Elias attended Curriculum Night and found it very inspirational and thanked the staff. She told the audience that a BOCES field trip was available to students.

Mr. Dan Caracciolo: Mr. Caracciolo informed the Board that he is on a Rebuild by Design Committee involving a local community project. He offered his services in facilitating information between his Committee and the District. Ms. Ruiz stated that a meeting did take place in the Fall with NYS representatives. The project is very complex and the District is equally frustrated with the delay.

#### 11. Board Member Comments

Kristin Ochtera: After brainstorming about all the things going on in the District, Ms. Ochtera realized that most of the initiatives that have taken place in the District over the past 10 years have been under the leadership of Mr. Piccarella. The District was always known for Rock Rivalry; then our inclusion classes, then life skills, and tonight we heard about DECA, AVID, Robotics, the art club, etc. It is really impressive to see and hear what is going on in the District. We can attribute many of these to the Five Year Strategic Plan. The Board must also follow through with issues, which at times, are easy to choose; while others are not so easy. Developing a policy on opioid

prevention was not an easy choice. There are many decisions that have been made that have not been so easy. With that being said, no matter what decisions have been made, they are guided by one thread, one principle; the growth and development of our students so they will feel safe, secure, loved and worthwhile. She commended parents, staff, and the Board of Education for always supporting, advocating and guiding us for the well-being of our students.

Neil Schloth: Mr. Schloth thanked the Stern Family for their dedication and involvement with the Andrew Stern Essay Contest for the past 15 years. It is a positive experience for our students and an opportunity to keep them thinking about ways for it not to happen again. He welcomed to the District, Mr. John Marek, Interim Director of Facilities. Mr. Marek is a well-qualified individual, recently retired from the Lindenhurst School District, with many certifications and background experience. The District is moving forward with finding a permanent replacement. He thanked Mr. Marek for accepting the interim position and said we are very happy to have him.

Mr. Schloth thanked Mrs. Hecht and school staff for Career Week. He also thanked Josh Warner for participating and gave much credit to Mrs. Hecht for reaching out to former graduates. He said the program has grown and been enhanced since his son Jonathan graduated in 2014. The program will give our students a chance to make a meaningful living.

He also thanked Mr. Howard and Mr. Cimorelli for their involvement in pursuing the robotics program before other districts.

Mr. Schloth thanked the Board of Education for the security enhancements. It is starting to make a difference and people feel safer to know that we are protected by these security enhancements. He thanked Mr. Dan Caracciolo for his work on the Rebuild by Design Committee and expressed an interest in getting involved with it. He said we should continue to actively pursue this and not let it lapse. He thanked everyone for coming and wished everyone a good evening.

John Giannotti, Jr.: Mr. Giannotti, Jr., congratulated all the winners of the Andrew Stern Essay Contest and thanked all the students who participated. He also congratulated all the student athletes who were recognized tonight and thanked Mr. Spero for his AVID presentation. He thanked the community for coming out tonight.

Keith Gamache: Mr. Gamache thanked the East Rockaway Education Foundation and the PTA's for their ongoing support and financial help. He stated that the forces that threaten the well-being of public schools do not belong to any one party. There are people in both major parties that support the ideals of public education and its role in fostering a healthy, knowledgeable and civil democracy and there are people in both parties who believe education will improve if left to free-market forces rather than public and governmental input and oversight. Regardless of political affiliation, I hope you will join me in advocating for our children, our schools, and our community by speaking out against free market reforms, charters and vouchers.

Patti Nicoletti: Ms. Nicoletti shared the sentiments and thoughtful comments from her Board members. She congratulated all the students who were recognized tonight. Special thanks to the East Rockaway Education Foundation, PTA's and Mr. Spero. She also thanked Ms. Ruiz who

always makes it a point to highlight our students and staff. She spoke about the Governor's State of Address in connection with public education. Proposals were made to provide free tuition for state colleges for families making \$125,000 per year or less. The Governor was quoted as saying there will be an increase in funding for education at record level all- time highs. The Board is watching what is going on and will keep you informed. She stressed the importance of staying involved in your child's education.

12. Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera and seconded by Neil Schloth, and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Vitina Fazi  
District Clerk