

Orange County School Boards Association

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MINUTES: DELEGATES' MEETING March 3, 2021 VIRTUAL

In Attendance: Bill Boss, Ed Estrada, Bill Hecht, Jean Pavek (OU-BOCES), Sandy Nagler, John Pasichnyk, Frank Sambets (Chester), Larry Berger (Cornwall/OU-BOCES), Margaret Quinn (Cornwall), Rob Scheuermann (Florida), Martha Bogart (Goshen/OU-BOCES), Susan Selsler, Sarah Hadden (Greenwood Lake), Faith Aprilante (Highland Falls), Karen Brooks (Marlboro), John Williams (Middletown), Joseph Flaherty (Minisink Valley), Staci McCleary, Dawn Tauber (Monroe-Woodbury), Kristin Graessle (Pine Bush), Linda Van Horn (Port Jervis), Meg Vaught (Tuxedo), Art Fitzgerald, Sarah Messing (Valley Central), Dave Eaton (Warwick/OU-BOCES), Keith Parsons (Warwick), Robin White (Washingtonville), Karyn Meier (OCSBA). **Guests:** NY Regent Frances Wills

Call to Order

President Joe Flaherty called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Presentation

Regent Frances Wills

President Flaherty welcomed Regent Wills and introduced her to OCSBA members. Regent Wills affirmed that she was happy to be able to spend time with Orange County school board members. Regent Wills discussed the essential necessity of ensuring that rescue aid funding be used properly to meet educational needs. She reviewed some demographic statistics regarding the impact of the pandemic on Orange County, and discussed how current circumstances may transform public education. She discussed a variety of equity issues including the need for accountability but with an eye towards the repercussions of high stakes testing. Regent Wills talked about 21st century education evolving to incorporate social justice, and the need to prioritize mental health as a condition for the readiness to learn. She discussed the need for "courageous conversations" and the use of restorative practices, social emotional learning, and the need for students to have a voice and to have agency in their educational experiences.

A variety of questions and conversations ensued with Regent Wills ranging from how Regents Exams will be handled for remote learners, the need to recognize and address ACE's in students yet maintain their privacy and avoid labeling, to understanding the pros and cons of in-person and remote learning recognizing that while a majority of students have a great need to return to in-person learning, that there are also students who are thriving more in a remote environment. All in all, everyone appreciated Regent Wills candor and comments.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Robin White asked for a motion to approve minutes from 2/3/21, which was m/s/c.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Faith Aprilante presented her report and noted that due to the association's limited activities during the pandemic, the organization is in a sound financial position regarding the projected budget for the coming year. She asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for 3/3/21, which was m/s/c.

President's Report

President Flaherty discussed the need for a Nominating Committee to form to recommend a slate of officers the next school year. OCSBA members in attendance agreed to let the Executive Committee act as the Nominating Committee. Per OCSBA Bylaws, the Executive Committee serves as the Budget Committee and will present a proposed 2021-2022 budget at the May meeting. He noted that our topic for our May 5th meeting will be "Best Practices During the Pandemic to Stay Engaged with our Students". He announced that our Annual Meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, June 2, 2021.

Executive Director's Report

Exec. Director Karyn Meier noted that ten people had already registered for OCSBA's virtual Workshop for Prospective Board Members, which is being offered at two different times, March 20th at 9:00 AM, and again on March 23rd at 7:00 PM. She also shared that legislation passed

which would require board of ed nominating petitions to have a minimum of 25 signatures or 2% of 2019 voter turnout, with small city schools having a minimum requirement of 50 signatures (instead of the usual 100).

NYSSBA Area 9 Report

Middletown Board of Ed President John Williams reported that the NYSSBA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee had its first meeting. He shared two points that stood out. The first was a statement made by Dr. Oliver Robinson that “excellence without equity equals privilege, and equity without excellence simply equals tokenism”. The second point was that equity is not a trend; it’s the fundamental work of schools, and until we can say that all of our children are doing well, we haven’t done our work.

OU-BOCES Report

COO Bill Hecht reported that information was sent to all districts inviting them to a virtual April 7th presentation of BOCES proposed 2021-2022 budget. He reported that the group Superintendents United Against Racism met last week to continue their efforts and are working with the Mid-Atlantic Equity consortium. He confirmed what Regent Wills shared earlier, that per the commissioner students learning remotely will not be able to take Regents exams remotely. Finally, Mr. Hecht reported that BOCES has been working with districts to establish a COVID-19 vaccination database of school personnel who have yet to be vaccinated. This information is to be shared with OC Health Department so that when additional shipments of vaccines are received, the Health Department can reach out to unvaccinated school personnel.

OCSBA 2021 Legislative Appointments

Joe Flaherty, Bill Boss, Staci McCleary and others reported on our February meetings with our state legislators. It was stated that Orange County was very well represented in our meetings, and that it was impactful for our legislators to directly hear our frustrations with health guidance, the overall well-being of our students, and our financial concerns. Our representatives were well-versed on issues and responsive.

Delegates Comments/Concerns

Delegates continued conversations about the well-being of our school districts as the pandemic continues. Larry Berger from Cornwall led a discussion regarding the need to engage in further advocacy to address issues with OC Health Department guidance. Cornwall shared several versions of a letter that they were sending to Governor Cuomo regarding this issue. They have also asked their district’s parents to send letters. Samples of these letters were emailed to all districts to be used or adapted to meet the needs of each district, with the hopes that additional districts would advocate for more clarity and change in guidance as well.

Members shared how things were progressing in their respective districts, with health guidance, financial hardships, and negative social media campaigns remaining great concerns.

Adjournment

President Flaherty thanked all for attending. Motion to adjourn was m/s/c at 9:25 PM.