

Board of Education Highlights: 7/8/20 Meeting

The following are highlights of discussions and actions from the July 8 Board of Education meeting. For the full minutes and audio recordings from the meeting, please refer to “Agendas and Minutes” under the “Board of Education” section. This meeting was held in person and via teleconference in light of COVID-19 concerns and in accordance with Executive Order 202.1 from the governor, suspending certain requirements of the Open Meetings Law to allow for remote attendance.

The public was invited to attend the meeting in a virtual setting. A web link and phone number to dial in were posted on the district website and communicated to the public via an e-blast and Twitter.

The public participation portion of the meeting was suspended. The public was invited to email ~~any~~ comments and/or concerns to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kusum Sinha: sinhak@gcufsd.net.

- The Board of Education held its annual reorganization meeting. Newly elected trustee Matthew Wakeham, who was elected to the open seat created by the retirement of Angela Heineman in June, was sworn in. The Board also unanimously elected William C. Holub as president, succeeding Ms. Heineman, and unanimously reelected Tom Pinou to serve as vice president. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kusum Sinha also took the Superintendent’s oath, and Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance Dana DiCapua was sworn in to continue serving as the District Clerk.

Board reorganization meetings are held to swear in members to new terms, appoint officers and make other appointments related to the business of the school district. These appointments are often made annually.

- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kusum Sinha announced that the District Safety Plan has been updated to include a section regarding pandemic response, which consist of new training requirements for administrators. A safety consultant praised the district for being ahead of the curve with its safety planning. The plan will be posted to the district website www.gardencity.k12.ny.us 30 days prior to final Board approval.
- Dr. Sinha said the district will also post its strategic plan for special education, which is currently being finalized with Director of Pupil Personnel Services Janine Villez.
- Trustees Stefanie Granville and Michael Cassaro provided an update on the school re-entry and the significant progress made working with multiple subcommittees to cover all complex circumstances involved with planning for a potential reopening of school

buildings. Dr. Sinha announced that Gov. Cuomo released a timeline that included all district plans to be submitted by July 31 in advance of a final decision by the governor no later than August 7. The district has established a task force, inclusive of multiple subcommittees, comprised of various stakeholders including parents, teachers and administrators. She said the task force is planning for three possible scenarios: traditional plan, where all students and teachers can return to our school buildings; a hybrid approach that consists of both in-person and virtual instruction; and fully remote, where all students participate in live and prerecorded instruction from home.

- Dr. Sinha updated the Board and community on plans for the high school graduation ceremony, scheduled for July 21. Two ceremonies will be held, enabling the school to adhere to the governor's restrictions and safety protocols. The event will be live streamed on the district's website www.gardencity.k12.ny.us and Principal Kevin Steingruebner will send additional information to families of graduating seniors.
- The Board ratified a memorandum of agreement with the CSEA and approved employment agreements with three central administrators. Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Leadership Development Nanine McLaughlin provided an update on the recent hiring of two special education teachers, a middle school nurse and a high school guidance counselor.
- Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Ted Cannone provided an update on the district's virtual summer enrichment options for students K-6. Due to pandemic concerns, the in-person summer enrichment provided in conjunction with SCOPE, as well as Camp Invention, were cancelled this year. Dr. Sinha also provided a report on the district's summer program for special education students as well as opportunities in essay writing and instruction on the college application process for high school students.
- Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance Dana DiCapua provided an update on summer facilities projects, which include high school tennis court renovation, high school library renovation, two new hot water heaters at Stewart School, new radiator covers at all three primary schools and the middle school, new high school uninvents and other fresh air projects.
- The Board of Education gave annual readings of several Board policies, including antibullying and harassment, attendance and code of conduct.