SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Security Update
In introducing district security consultants, Mr. Marcus DePontes and Mr. Errol Brudner of StoneGate Associates, I remarked that those of us who have children or are responsible for children have all been consumed by recent events and that, as administrators and teachers, the safety of our students is never and has never been far from our minds. I spoke of two important mental health presentations at a recent staff professional development session and of the importance of students, staff and parents reporting any concerns when something does not look right.

Mr. Brudner discussed the status of district security measures in Westfield Public Schools, including “a state of the art communications system,” annual staff training using current case studies on school security, the district partnership with local law enforcement, and the importance of “see something, say something.” “If every teacher and administrator is paying attention, that’s 100 eyes and ears,” said Mr. Brudner.

Mr. Brudner answered questions from members of the public as did Business Administrator/Board Secretary Dana Sullivan. Mrs. Sullivan noted that the district has spent 6 million dollars over the past 6-7 years on new alarms, internal and external cameras, shatterproof windows, door replacements and other security upgrades at every school.

I also thanked our teachers for keeping our students calm, following the rules, making sure students are out of sight, whether during a standard security drill or in a true emergency.

Board vice president Peggy Oster said that “we as a board are never complacent” and that the Board remains committed to “keeping up on measures needed to keep our students safe.”

Please visit the district website to view the full security presentation in the video of the board meeting.

2018-2019 Budget
Business Administrator Dana Sullivan, presented a report on the budget proposed for the 2018-2019 school year. She noted that the Board started working on the budget last November. In December 2017, the Board held a workshop to develop a Guiding Change Document to set parameters for the budget, resulting in these priorities:

- Keep technology a priority
- Consider funding to support wellness
- Explore the possibility of expanding kindergarten WRAP program
- Stay within the 2% CAP, plus eligible waivers
- Continue to budget $750,000 of excess surplus as revenue

The increase to the operating budget is estimated at $1,173,777:
- Increase in health insurance $234,706
- Increase of 1 counselor at elementary schools $65,000
- Increase of 0.6 teacher at HS $39,000
- Increase of 1 teacher at intermediate level $65,000
- Increase of 0.2 teacher at elementary level $13,000
- Increase of 1 district auditorium manager $55,000
- Increase of 1 paraprofessional $16,000
- Increase of 0.5 athletic trainer $32,500
- Increase in salaries $1,201,242
- Increase in other employee benefits $116,295
- Increase in special education costs $607,644
- Decrease in state aid (anticipated) $(216,658)
- Decrease in technology $(676,361)
- Decrease in all other accounts $(161,004)
- Transfer out of capital reserve $(217,587)

$1,173,777

The tax impact on the average homeowner would amount to approximately $164. Mrs. Sullivan reported that state aid for 2018-2019 should be released by March 15, noting that she did not budget for an increase, however, without knowing if the district will be awarded any state aid. In a chart comparing similar school districts, it was again pointed out that Westfield’s cost per pupil is on the lower range and less than the state average as well. Mrs. Sullivan noted that district health insurance costs increased 1.4% from the previous year, compared to an average increase of 11% in other school districts she surveyed. Additionally, Mrs. Sullivan reported that the district has seen savings from its solar energy initiative and other efficiencies.

PERSONNEL
The Board ratified a two-year contract with the Westfield Education Association (WEA), effective July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2020. The contract represents approximately 588 teachers, nurses, librarians, guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and educational specialists.

Westfield chief negotiator and former board member Christopher Langhart praised the teachers for their “dedication, passion and commitment” and described the negotiations as “reasonable and open-minded.” WEA negotiating team member Gail Alston took note of the cordial and respectful relationship between the teachers and the Board of Education, thanking the board for approving the contract.

Fall coaching assignments were among the personnel items approved by the Board.

The Board also accepted with regret the retirement of the following staff, effective June 30, 2018.
- Theodore Hendricks, Music, Wilson/Franklin Schools
- Maryanne Morrison, Teacher, Special Services
- Kristine Smith-Morasso, Music, Edison Intermediate School

We wish Mr. Hendricks, Ms. Morrison and Ms. Smith-Morasso all the best in retirement.

FACILITIES
Business Administrator/Board Secretary Dana Sullivan reported that the intermediate school auditoriums are “very close” to completion, with grand opening celebrations planned on April 11 for Edison and April 12 for Roosevelt. Regarding other facilities matters, Mrs. Sullivan noted that:
- Bids on summer work on Kehler Stadium will be received next week.
- Temporary lights approved for the Westfield Soccer Association may not be used this season.

POLICIES
The Board approved for first reading the following district policies:
- 1110 - Organizational Chart (Administration)
- 6160 - Grants from Private Sources (Finances)
- 6230 - Budget Hearing (Finances)

The Board approved for first reading to abolish the following policy:
- 5772 - Questioning and Apprehension (Pupils)

Policies Committee Chairman Brendan Galligan noted that all provisions in Policy #5772 are included in other existing policies.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS
The Board approved for first reading the following curricula:
- Ancient & Medieval Traditions
- AP European History

The Board also approved district field trips to correlate with curriculum.

Curriculum Committee Chairman Michael Bielen reported on the committee’s February 23 meeting at which topics included a five year review cycle, social studies curricula, overnight field trips, and Google Sites for teachers. The committee will next meet on March 23.

FINANCE
Among the items approved, the Board accepted with gratitude the following donations, as noted by Finance Committee Chairman Charles Ostroff:
- A gift of $3,500.80 from the Franklin School PTO to be used to purchase replacement folding chairs and shelving for new science materials.
- A gift of $362.00 from the Westfield High School PTSO to be used to purchase 3 chairs to be presented to teachers at awards night.
- A gift of $4,200.00 from McKinley School PTO to be used for additional blacktop work for the playground.
- A gift of $175.00 from Wilson School PTO to be used for a phone sidecar, a part of the school’s security system.

The next committee meeting is March 2.

TECHNOLOGY
Technology Committee Chairperson Peggy Oster reported that teachers were trained on Google Sites at the recent professional development in-service and that a template for the new
district website has been selected, per the district’s chief technology officer Brian Auker. Mrs. Oster said the committee looks forward to seeing the template.

NOTES FOR THE RECORD
Board member Brendan Galligan noted that, among the policies reviewed with no changes, were ones pertaining to service animals. “We made sure our policy and practice is in line with state/federal requirements,” Mr. Galligan said. “Our policies go above and beyond. No changes are needed.”

PUBLIC COMMENTARY
A parent expressed continued concerns about the security presentation, stating that he did not feel a sense of urgency in the district response. Several board members reiterated that safety and security remains in the forefront of their thoughts and actions. I outlined again certain security measures, assuring the parent that I understand the urgency and that the district is anything but complacent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL
Congratulations to Westfield High School senior Benjamin Kevelson, a 2018 National Merit Scholarship Finalist! The program honors students who show exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies. National Merit Scholarship winners are expected to be announced in April.

The Westfield High School Parent-Teacher-Student Organization (PTSO) recently hosted "Hidden in Plain Sight," with approximately 600 parents and other adults in attendance. For those unable to attend this important event, a video of the presentation can be found on the district website at www.westfieldnjk12.org.

The Westfield High School Wind Ensemble received the honor of being one of only three high school bands in the state to be invited to perform at the New Jersey Music Educators Association’s annual conference on February 22. Congratulations to our talented student musicians and to band directors Christopher Vitale and Trevor Sindorf.

Westfield High School football coach James DeSarno, girls volleyball coach Beverly Torok, and former cross country & winter/spring track coach John Martin will be inducted into the New Jersey Scholastic Coaches Association (NJSCA) Hall of Fame on April 8 at a ceremony hosted by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA). The late Charles Gantner, a former swimming coach, will receive posthumous induction into the Hall of Fame.

Westfield High School hosted a National Letter of Intent signing ceremony on Wednesday, February 7, 2018 for six members of the WHS football team and a member of the WHS girls soccer team. Congratulations to the following student-athletes:

Soccer:
- Katherine Butler, Lafayette College

Football:
- Shea Elliott, University of Chicago
Juandre House, Fitchburg State University  
Drew Ortiz, Bowdoin College  
John (Jack) McCauley, College of the Holy Cross  
Adam McDaniel, University of New Haven  
Jake Vall-Llobera, Johns Hopkins University

Congratulations to sophomore wrestlers C.J. Composto and Luke Hoerle who took home Region IV titles on Saturday. The two advance to the state championship tournament in Atlantic City this weekend.

INTERMEDIATE
Roosevelt Intermediate School will perform Legally Blonde: The Musical, the fabulously fun award-winning story of self-discovery. Harvard’s beloved blonde takes the stage by pink storm on Friday, March 9 and Saturday, March 10 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 11 at 2 p.m. Tickets are $10 each and are now available on ris.booktix.com. Advance purchases are recommended; tickets are reserved seating. Any tickets not sold in advance will be available for purchase at the door. All performances will be held in the RIS auditorium located at 301 Clark Street in Westfield.

The Sound of Music will echo in the hallways as Edison Intermediate School performs this beloved classic based on the true story of the Von Trapp Family Singers. Performance dates are Friday, March 23 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, March 24 at 7:00 p.m., with a special afternoon matinee on Thursday, March 22. Advanced tickets are $8 and will be on sale after school in the school lobby during the week preceding the show. Tickets purchased at the door are $10 while the special matinee performance costs $5. All performances will be held in the EIS auditorium located at 800 Rahway Avenue.

ELEMENTARY
Jefferson School will hold a charity volleyball game tomorrow, February 28 at 7:30 p.m. in the Westfield High School Gymnasium. This year’s match between staff and PTO members will be in honor of former Jefferson student, Terry DiFalco. The money raised will be donated to a writing scholarship in Terry’s honor. Tickets will be sold at the door on a first come, first served basis at $5.00 for children and adults. Please pay by cash only and try to bring exact change, if possible. If you cannot attend but would like to make a donation, checks should be made payable to “Jefferson PTO.”

January was the “Month of Hope” at Wilson School. Whether collecting more than $2,000 for the Ronald McDonald House, more than 1,000 items for local food pantries, nearly 2,000 books for children in a Brooklyn school, or blankets, chew toys and pet food for two animal shelters, the “Month of Hope” was a charitable tour de force. Students, staff and parents joined together to make this month-long event a great success.

COMMUNITY
Calling all Substitute Teachers! At its January 23, 2018 meeting, the Board of Education approved a $10 increase in the daily pay rate for substitute teachers in the Westfield Public Schools. Effective February 6, 2018, substitute teachers are now paid $90 per day, with that amount increasing after 76 cumulative days to $95 and at 151 cumulative days to $110. Please
visit the Human Resources Office at 302 Elm Street to apply. The deadline to submit an application is April 1.

Imagine, a grief support center in Mountainside, is holding a “Bullies to Buddies” workshop on Thursday, March 8 from 6:30-8 p.m. The “Bullies to Buddies” method fosters resilience by teaching students how to respond to verbal aggression. This workshop is open to anyone in the community in grades 3 and above and will be presented by Connie Palmer, Clinical Training Director at Imagine. The event is free for Imagine participants and volunteers; a donation of $20 is suggested for other families and individuals. The workshop will be held at 244 Sheffield Street in Mountainside. Please RSVP by Tuesday, March 6 to connie@imaginennj.org or 908-264-3100.

The Rotary Club of Westfield will hold its 52nd annual “Breakfast with the Bands” on Saturday, March 3 from 8 a.m. to 12 noon at Westfield High School. The event features performances by bands from Westfield High School and Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools, along with lots of great food. Tickets are $10 and are available from Rotarians or at the door. All proceeds benefit the Rotary Club’s scholarship and community grants programs. For more information, contact www.facebook.com/westfieldnjrotary/

NEXT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
The next Westfield Board of Education meeting will be held on Monday, March 19 at 7:30 p.m. at 302 Elm Street. Please note that this is a change from the original meeting date of March 13. The complete agenda will be available on Friday, March 16 on the Board of Education website.

Margaret Dolan, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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