

**Synopsis of
Westfield Board of Education Meeting on June 18, 2019
By Superintendent Margaret Dolan**

The Board meeting took place in the Westfield High School auditorium where Board President Peggy Oster presented Certificates of Recognition to approximately 95 students for extraordinary achievements in academics, athletics, and the performing arts. The honorees included a National Merit Scholar, Municipal Alliance Volunteer of the Year, two New Jersey State Middle School Public Forum Debate champions, members of the WHS Band who performed with state and regional ensembles, WHS thespians who received prestigious drama awards, our sectional champion Baseball, Boys Tennis, Boys Golf teams, and four Girls Track & Field athletes who performed exceptionally well this season.

Following the recognition of our amazing students, I spoke to the immediate steps we are taking to address security concerns following the arrest of an armed individual in the Tamaques School parking lot on Thursday, June 13 after school. As Mrs. Oster and I mentioned in the statement we issued on Monday, doors at each of our 10 schools have remained locked beyond school hours through the end of the school year, as we conduct a formal review. Westfield Police Chief Battiloro is providing an ongoing police presence in and around our schools, along with enhanced security at our middle and high school graduations this week. I met this week with other school administrators and law enforcement for a meeting with the district's security consulting firm, StoneGate Associates, to examine where to go from here. We will share more information with parents before the start of the school year, after we have conducted our review.

This has shaken all of us. We are grateful to the Westfield Police Department for their swift response. And we appreciate your understanding that we cannot answer all of your questions about the incident until it is fully investigated by the Union County Prosecutor's Office. I cannot speak to details of that afternoon; that information must come from the prosecutor's office.

Mrs. Oster reiterated that keeping students and staff safe is our number one priority. As a parent and a resident, she noted that she understands the desire for immediate action and immediate answers. She commended the administration for moving quickly to address initial security concerns and to conduct a review of security protocols going forward. Mrs. Oster reminded us that any investigation takes time and that we need to let the prosecutor's office do its job while we focus on what the school district should and can do to guard against this in the future.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Board heard from many parents with questions and concerns about school security and communications, following the events at Tamaques. Parents also offered suggestions on ways to improve security including locking all doors at all times, requiring all visitors to show identification before entering, reviewing security protocols with organizations offering after-school programs in school buildings, posting security guards or police officers at key entrances, installing vestibules, and training parent volunteers on lockdown and evacuation procedures.

Business Administrator Dana Sullivan addressed some of the existing security upgrades that have been and are being installed as part of a \$6-million investment in our district's physical safety, including, but not limited to, new doors that will automatically lock when a lockdown is initiated; impact resistant film on certain ground floor windows as recommended by StoneGate; multiple cameras and upgraded alarm systems in every school; a School Resource Officer at

the high school and both middle schools; and in-district, monthly training on security protocols for staff. Mrs. Sullivan reiterated that the district has been proactive in securing our schools and that not all measures are shared with the public.

Also discussed at the meeting was security surrounding special events, such as student concerts and graduations where many family members may be attendance. StoneGate's Errol Brudner noted the inherent difficulties experienced by all school districts in managing and securing special events. Mr. Brudner stated that situational awareness, with those in attendance reporting anything that does not look right, is an important deterrent.

A question was raised about the summer playground camp run by the Westfield Recreation Department, which is very knowledgeable about our schools and grounds. Recreation officials have been revisiting each of our elementary schools this week to discuss their security protocols.

Mrs. Oster thanked all those who shared their observations and suggestions, noting that the Board and the school district will re-examine security protocols for both the school day and after school lets out, along with entry and exit practices.

We have extremely busy schools with musical concerts, variety shows, scouting groups, after-care programs, "moving up" ceremonies and graduations, and so much more. We do not want to limit those opportunities, which provide enrichment and growth for our students. What we will again ask ourselves is how do we balance access to those wonderful opportunities with keeping everyone safe? That is the conversation that will take place this summer and, again, we will provide parents and the community with information after we determine what additional measures are needed. We will continue to take all necessary precautions to keep Westfield schools safe.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Long Range Planning Committee Chair Amy Root noted that, at last week's board workshop, the Board agreed to hold a special election in March 2020, followed by a second public vote in November 2021 to let voters decide whether full day kindergarten should be implemented in Westfield. It is important to note that both measures would need to be approved for full day kindergarten to be available in September 2022. Please read my [June 11, 2019 synopsis](#) for a workshop recap, which includes details on the anticipated cost of the project. Mrs. Root stated that the Board will continue to update the public as a plan for the March 2020 special election is formalized.

POLICIES

The Board affirmed my decision on one HIB incident.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS

The Board approved district field trips and overnight field trips as correlated with curriculum.

The Board approved for first reading the following curricula:

Science

AP Physics I

Physics II AP-C Mechanics

Social Studies

Elementary Social Studies, Grades K-4

Humanities, Grade 9

The Board approved for second reading the following curricula:

English

English I

English II and II Honors

English III and III Honors

English IV

Mathematics

Discrete Math

Math of Personal Finance

Probability & Statistics

LIAISON REPORTS

Board member Kent Diamond reported that he would attend a board meeting of the Westfield Memorial Library this week.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A special Board of Education meeting will be held next Tuesday, June 25 at 302 Elm Street in the Board meeting room to consider personnel matters. The special meeting, which is open to the public, will begin at 8 a.m.

Margaret Dolan, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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