

Welcome back to school, and welcome to the first in-person CPC meeting since March 2020! It is a pleasure and a relief to meet again collectively as friends and neighbors. I am grateful to see all of you healthy and safe after the ordeals of the past eighteen months.

Over the summer, while many of us had the chance to relax or take a vacation, a great deal of work was occurring in our district's buildings. Our new superintendent Jill Gierasch, our new assistant superintendents Mona Hecht and Genevieve LaGattuta, and our new high school principals Dan Danbusky, Caitlyn Coffey, and Jason Huntsman have all hit the ground running. After just a few short months, they've become part of the Cold Spring Harbor social and academic fabric, teaming up with our veteran administrators, principals and faculty.

The July BOE meeting was the first in-person school-hosted gathering for the community since the start of the pandemic. Two newly minted trustees were sworn in. In some ways, the meeting looked and felt like 2019 again: COVID cases in the community were at very low numbers, and it seemed that we had rounded the corner on the pandemic. Speakers from the parent community turned their attention to the state's new DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) educational initiative—a prospect that has inspired hopeful anticipation for some parents, and deep concerns for others. The administration will be sharing the DEI status report at the October 12th BOE meeting. At that time, we will hear about relevant trainings that occurred last year, as well as programs and practices within our schools.

By the end of August, it was heartbreakingly clear that we are not yet free of the pandemic. At that month's BOE meeting, the administration unveiled a thorough, detailed reopening plan. Although in-school learning is obviously not back to the pre-pandemic normalcy that our kids all miss so much, many of the most frustrating restrictions and quarantine parameters that we had last year have been lifted. Given the realities of community transmission and of federal, state, and local health guidelines, the district has reduced physical and social barriers between the students as much as possible, while maximizing the likelihood that our schools remain open and quarantines are kept to a minimum.

At the pre-CPC meeting earlier this month, the board and I had a chance to reflect upon our good fortune to live in a district that helped kids get back in their classrooms earlier last year than many others. While school and office buildings throughout the nation are saddled with ventilation and filtration systems that are outdated and inadequate, Cold Spring Harbor's schools have enjoyed cleaner air since last fall, thanks to a comprehensive analysis of our own buildings' airways. We also spoke about the importance and comfort of meaningful community events such as the ceremony held at the football field a few weeks ago to honor the twentieth anniversary of 9/11. Another topic of discussion was the new intra-school communication model put forward by the administration in the September BOE meeting for better, faster responses to parent questions and concerns. District and student achievements over the past year were highlighted at that September meeting as well.

Today we will hear from Ms. Gierasch and our principals about their observations regarding the start of the school year. Later this fall, the CPC will host speakers to tell us more about new mental health outreach initiatives and emotional support for students throughout our schools. If you have ideas for future CPC presentations, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the other board members.

Jennifer Kornreich Cahn
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