

Pine Bush: No comment on lawsuit

Posted Wednesday, February 5, 2014 1:14 pm

The Pine Bush School District Board of Education's Jan. 28 meeting agenda included an executive session to discuss pending litigation and discussion that could lead to the hiring of an individual or firm. Though directly questioned regarding a lawsuit by an individual during the public participation portion of the meeting, Superintendent Joan Carbone stated the board had no comment about the matter at this time. The district retained the services of Hogan Lovells a few months ago regarding anti-Semitic/harassment lawsuits. The first Pine Bush school board meeting in January included some background information from Town of Wallkill resident and retired Air Force veteran Michael Brennan about Gov. Cuomo's intention to offer American veterans reduced varying rates on school taxes based on their service, whether or not it was during combat and if they suffered a disability. The second January meeting also included a few minutes of background and the question, "What language would teachers be teaching children in our schools if not for veterans," by another resident of the Town of Wallkill and a Korean War veteran. The board did have a review of the Veterans Tax Exemption on the agenda and held a brief discussion regarding the range of exemptions allowable. A vote in the matter of setting the district's rate was tabled to enable board members the opportunity to review the allowed ranges for Basic, Combat Zone and Service-Connected Disability rates. Budget presentations and an explanation for how to build a budget continued by Assistant Superintendent for Business Michael Pacella, though Pacella said he would prefer to offer the board more accurate numbers rather than projections. Board Vice-President Judy Pulver expressed her concerns, saying, "We need to have time for discussion," as part of the rationale for holding budget discussions well in advance of the vote. Board member Roseanne Sullivan agreed. "Public input comes with the presentations," with the understanding the hard numbers would be available for March. Both February board meetings will include budget presentations. Discussions were also held regarding the implementation of a new in house student management system, Schooltool, to replace the current program, Cross Point. The system would allow parents access to grades online and will be responsible for all critical student data. Expense for the new program will be an additional \$83,000 this school year; the district will be paying for the use of both systems until all data is transferred and the need for Cross Point is complete by the 2015-16 school year. Additional information was requested of Robert Martinelli following his summary of student placement activity within the Special Education programs to provide the board information regarding students who are currently classified with 504's. According to the U.S. Department of Education, a Section 504, "... requires recipients to provide to students with disabilities appropriate educational services designed to meet the individual needs of such students to the same extent as the needs of students without disabilities are met. An appropriate education for a student with a disability under the Section 504 regulations could consist of education in regular classrooms, education in regular classes with supplementary services, and/or special education and related services." Martinelli responded, saying that the process is different, but that he would provide the board with more information next month.

By SHARON MacGREGOR