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Board Business Meeting

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Agency: [Cleveland Metropolitan School District](#)

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Summary

- CMSD CEO Warren Morgan describes long-term planning for the district.
- 3 new Board of Education members attended the meeting.

Follow-Up Questions

- What real measures are being taken to address problem students?
- What real measures are being taken to ensure that students are truly safe in school?
- What measures are being taken to spend educational funding with students coming out as the winners instead of administration?

Notes

Meeting was called to order about 10 minutes after its scheduled start time of 6 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Board Chair Sara Elaqad made a motion to accept the prior meeting's minutes and the motion was approved. Elaqad introduced the three new board members: Jerry Billups, Rev. Ivory Jones and Caroline Peak. Elaqad gave brief descriptions of each of their respective backgrounds.. Each new board member made remarks regarding their appointments.

Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) CEO Warren Morgan then gave his report (you can see his presentation slides [here](#)). Morgan mentioned various events being hosted during this season. He also spoke about weather issues and the protocol that surrounds the decision of closing school. Long-term district planning for 2025 is two-fold, Morgan said: improve the student experience and become more sustainable.

From Morgan's presentation the main areas of improving student experience are as follows:

- Use evidence-based practices
- Use the expertise and experience of staff

- Give students choices and voice
- Get and use community input

Morgan made the point that many students are fully invested in the system. They have been enrolled since pre-K and many graduate from this system. He used four more points to illustrate elements of the CMSD student experience:

- Clear pathways for post-graduate readiness
- Opportunities to follow co-curricular passions
- Support teachers and staff
- Buildings worthy of students and staff

Morgan said he has done “Lunch and Learn” sessions with students and listened to their concerns. There are pockets of activity and not all schools are active, he said. Fine arts is not offered in all the schools. He also noted that at some smaller schools there might only be one 2nd grade teacher. Morgan said there have been facility studies of 40 CMSD buildings. The goal, he said, is to have structures in place that are climate-controlled, accessible and safe.

Morgan: The overall desire is to have students prepared for college and careers. They have been connected to the district and they and their parents see value in the system.

Morgan said his goal is to increase funding overall, protect those funds, and continuously improve the methods of funding to support healthy enrollment at these schools. This includes the passed levy last month, he said. He anticipates long-term planning with the board. Morgan said that despite the passage of the recent levy and bonds, for the next three years the forecast predicts shortfalls in funding. The district will be \$96 million in the hole by 2027 if no action is taken. Morgan cited inflation and other costs as the reason why the district is struggling. He plans on meetings with the community and board. He will have more information in January.

Board member Diana Welch Howell asked (referring to page 15 of [Morgan's presentation](#)) if more attention will be on the bottom line cash balances of upcoming years or on moving from “red to black”?.

Morgan answered by illustrating the idea of closing schools to help this situation. He said that each school closing would only save \$1 million to \$2 million. And that \$96 million is a large amount of money that would not be closed by that gap. He is focused on a multi approach of student experience and finances.

New board member Peak asked about the role community partners would play in the student experience. Morgan answered that the district had a lot of community feedback already, pointing to the CEO search of two to three years ago and the listen and learn tours he did last year. Peak suggested reaching out to churches, libraries and cultural institutions with after-school programs and other ways of hands-on learning. Morgan commended her and said he is open to her suggestions.

Elaqad asked Morgan to speak on how enrollment issues affect school staffing. Morgan said that enrollment has been consistent over the past five years districtwide. However, birth rates are down, he said, which changes enrollment trajectories going forward. This affects what schools can offer to students.

Public comments are next, forms should have been submitted prior to this meeting and are limited to 3 minutes. There is one person who has requested to speak, CMSD paraprofessional Roberta Cathcart. Cathcart is advocating for the students and their safety (especially special education students). She quoted Morgan's prior writings on creating places for students. Cathcart said that when teachers speak up for the students who may not be comfortable doing so for themselves, they are told that students are over-identified. She spoke of a student so disruptive that teaching seldom occurs most times, saying it is trying to get order in the space. Often others are harmed during said times, she said. In this case six people were advocating for this child, which wasn't fair to the other students. Cathcart questioned whether the school was a safe environment of learning for either this child or his classmates.

She invited the board to visit the fifth period lunch at Joseph M. Gallagher School.. Promising a bang for the time spent, she wants them to witness the physical harm and other frustrations that she deals with on a regular basis.

Next the board considered 11 resolutions for approval. Ten of them were discussed at the December work session meeting. Among the items was a collective bargaining agreement through 2027. All the resolutions passed.

Next were items for three tax issues. Morgan spoke about each of them as they appeared on the [agenda](#). All resolutions passed.

There was a resolution authorizing utilities management for the district. It passed.

There was a resolution authorizing an agreement with the Educational Service Center of The Western Reserve for services. It passed.

There was a resolution expressing intent to renew an agreement for sponsorship with Citizens Academy Southeast. It passed.

There were four staff-related resolutions. All passed.

Next meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 6:30 p.m. was announced.

Next, the board went into executive session

They returned from that and voted on a resolution for a three-day suspension of a non-teaching employee. The resolution passed.

The meeting was adjourned.

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