

Semi-Annual Report of the Fiscal Monitor to  
the Wyandanch Union Free School District

July 1 – December 31 2021

Albert T. Chase, NYS Fiscal Monitor  
March 2022

## **Introduction / Executive Summary**

The November 2020 Fiscal Improvement Plan for the Wyandanch UFSD (“the District”) contained recommendations for actions to be undertaken by the District to enable it to develop operational and fiscal efficiencies. It can be reported that the vast majority of the recommendations made at that time have been enacted in full, while others have been partially enacted and are on their way to completion.

It should be noted that many of the recommendations made in the plan submitted to the Commissioner in December 2020 were not one-time actions but are continuing activities where the recommendations need to become integral components of District operations.

In November 2021, an update to the Fiscal Improvement Plan was completed and presented to the Board of Education (“the Board”) and the Wyandanch community at a public hearing. That update contained a total of seven (7) additional recommendations, which are addressed in a subsequent section of this document.

The Administration continues to be cooperative in enacting c

-The Wyandanch UFSD undertook its annual Tax Anticipation Note borrowing for the 2021–22 school year. Because the District had the last two years with a surplus, borrowing needs decreased from \$15 million to \$1 million. A positive change in the District's credit rating by Standard & Poor's, precipitated by better overall management and positive cash flow, resulted in a savings in borrowing costs. The upgrade in the District's credit rating, if maintained or further upgraded, will be extremely helpful when the possible consideration of a capital improvement bond is put forth.

- The Wyandanch UFSD continues to plan for the long-term improvement of its facilities. It is hoped that these initiatives will result in a bond proposition being voted on within the next two years.

-A new Director of Facilities has been hired. Starting in October, the individual has shown great initiative and has made meaningful strides in the maintenance of school facilities.

it difficult for the District to operate in an effective and efficient manner with the hiring of key staff being delayed. Continued training will only be effective if individual board members are determined to utilize the best practices to which training has exposed them. The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) and other qualified organizations should continue to be utilized as primary resources.

***-Continue to ensure that backup personnel are up-to-date with current functions and ready to step in when called upon.***

The staffing in the Business Office is lean when compared to other comparable school districts. While I have been assured that backup personnel will be in a position to assume the duties of any staff member who may be out for a period of time, I remain concerned that this process would not be problem-free. Having spoken extensively with the new Business Administrator about this, we are determined to work together to ensure that operations can continue in the temporary absence of key personnel.

***-Obtain payment schedules for each of its PILOT payments to allow the District to accurately project its income from this source.***

The Wyandanch UFSD has made significant strides in obtaining necessary agreements at PILOT payment schedule. I would like to see the Business Office obtain the individual payment schedule for each PILOT so as to be able to determine which properties will be returning to the tax rolls yearly. I realize that obtaining this information may largely depend on the extensive cooperation of the Town of Babylon assessment office.

***-Continue the services of the Internal Auditor to assist the Business Office in achieving greater operational efficiency.***

The Board, Superintendent and Business Administrator have met with the internal auditors on at least two occasions recently. However, it does not appear that the internal auditors have been actively working in the District. No reports were issued by the internal auditors concerning 2020–21 school year operations. The auditors have stated that they anticipate ‘doubling up’ on audit activities to the District during the second half of the 2021–22 school year.

***-Submit an updated five-year financial plan to the Monitor by September 1 each year. The financial plan will be balanced as to revenues and expenditures. The plan shall include statements of all estimated revenues and expenditures, including a cash flow plan.***

It is agreed that the District should work in collaboration with the Monitor to update the financial plan. However, I have realized that September was not a realistic date because the independent auditors generally do not complete their work by that time, and so the final numbers serve as the foundation of future year financial planning are not available in time to complete this work by September 1. November 1 is a more realistic date for any updates, given the turnover in the leadership of the Business Office in 2021. A long-range plan should be completed by November 2022, covering the 1. ( )Tj E (,i)-2 (n)-10 (g t)-2 (he)dBr-5.1 1J -3y.t4 (n t)92r

My previous Semiannual Report, covering the period of January 1 – June 30, 2021, was submitted to the Board in November 2021, and after a public hearing was finalized and submitted to Commissioner Rosaon December 6, 2021. Given the abbreviated timeframe between then and now, I did not realistically expect substantial progress on any of my additional recommendations contained in that report to have

***Upon approval of the annual update to the improvement plan by the Commissioner, the Board of Education and Administration shall make every reasonable effort (e.g., bargaining in good faith, providing timely responses to requests for information, avoiding canceling scheduled bargaining sessions without good cause, maintaining open lines of communication) to settle outstanding employee contract negotiations in the 2021-22 school year in order to ensure accurate budgets for the 2022-23 fiscal year and beyond.***

District labor counsel is in active negotiations with several of the District's bargaining units. Ideally, negotiations with the Wyandanch Teachers Association (WTA) whose contract expires in June 2022, should commence by early spring 2022.

***The Board shall develop a policy under which a series of objective criteria are established to guide the Superintendent in determining whether a prospective employee is to be recommended to the Board for approval. Such policy shall have the goal of the Board rejecting recommended candidates only based upon cause. (Cause shall be defined as withholding approval for reason connected to the failure of the candidate to meet the qualifications of the position, conflicts of interest, or reasons connected to the candidate's moral character that would preclude him or her from working in a public school setting). Personal or subjective considerations shall not be the basis for the Board's refusal to approve recommended candidates for positions within the district.***

No action or Board discussion has taken place. The need for clear guidelines is very apparent.

***By January 31, 2022, the Board of Education shall set forth specific dates by which the following actions related to facility improvements shall take place:***

- ***By mm/dd/yyyy, the Board shall appoint an architect to make a determination of possible capital projects.***
- ***By mm/dd/yyyy, the Facilities Committee shall submit to the Board a long-term capital improvement plan.***
- ***By mm/dd/yyyy, the Board shall approve the plans as submitted or as amended by the Board.***
- ***By mm/dd/yyyy, if the Board has not identified other funds to implement the plan, the District shall set a date to place a bond issue before the voters.***
- ***By mm/dd/yyyy, the District shall implement the capital improvement plan.***

***The dates set forth shall be acceptable to the Fiscal Monitor.***

The timeline stated for this activity were not within the timeframe of this report. However, a meeting of the Facilities Committee did take place at the end of January 2022, and a Request For Proposal (RFP) for architectural services has been distributed to qualified firms.

## Focus for the Remainder of the 2021–22 School Year

There are a number of individual areas that should be focused on in an effort to create a model operation. Among these are

- **New Leadership:** The new Business Administrator is providing qualified and experienced leadership. I expect that day-day operational matters will now be handled both timely and professionally. The Business Administrator has shared a number of ideas aimed at increasing operational efficiency as well as possible revenue increases.
- **Better integration of Business Office activities with Human Resources:** These offices interact in terms of position control and budgeting, as well as payroll activities. There is a need to coordinate processes and procedures and to define the roles and responsibilities of each office in regard to their intersecting activities. Improvements need to be made in the assignment of staff to specific budget/function areas as a means of achieving greater fiscal accuracy. Much progress was made last year, but a preliminary analysis shows that work remains to be done. For example, up to now, coding corrections were made through the Fiscal Monitor, but a system needs to be put in place by the Business Administrator as final sign-off prior to a new hire being assigned to a particular budget code. This is a process that will require a thorough review each year.
- **Long-term planning for capital improvements:** There is a real need for both upgraded and new facilities, and the planning must come up to speed in calendar year 2022. The District building aid ratio should provide a generous level of financial partnership with the State in this endeavor. Anticipate working closely with the administration and school board to advance the planning necessary prior to proposing a referendum.
- **Financial Plan Update:** There is a need to update the District's long-term financial plan to recognize changes that occurred in the 2021–22 school year budget, as well as to incorporate the proposed 2022–23 budget into that planning. Due to changing conditions, the plan will need to be substantively updated at least annually to ensure its continued relevance. The updated annual report to be submitted to the Board each November will be reflective of those changes. The eventual end of ARP and its effects on future budgets will need to be factored into the plan.
- **The use of funding provided through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA):** These funds need to be closely monitored to assure their appropriate use in meeting the needs of the Wyandanch students. It will be particularly important to ensure that the use of these funds do not create long-term or unsustainable obligations on the part of the District.
- **The Fiscal Monitor will continue to work with the Board** to provide fiscal training that may be requested in order to ensure that financial decisions are made using a complete





Wyandanch UFSD

Contracts Entered Into With Outside Parties

Contracts 2021-22

July 2021 through December 2021

Entity	Service	Date Approved
US Medical, Inc	Nursing services	7/21/2021
Horizon Healthcare Staffing	Nursing services	7/21/2021
Stericycle	Biohazard waste management	7/21/2021
Educational Data Services	Cooperative bidding service	7/21/2021
Broadspire	Insurance services	7/21/2021
Salerno Brokerage	Insurance services	7/21/2021
Dr. WafaDeeb Westervelt	Administrative leadership consulting	7/21/2021
RJ Consulting Math	Professional staff development	7/21/2021
One World United	College and career services	7/21/2021
JSlichko Consulting	Professional staff development	7/21/2021
Change Impact	Professional staff development	7/21/2021
Always Learning	Professional staff development	7/21/2021
Logic Wing	Professional and student development	7/21/2021

St. Joseph's College	PreKindergarten learning services	8/25/2021
SAVVAS Learning Company	Curricular assessment services	9/15/2021
Teachers College Reading & Writing Project	Staff development	9/15/2021
LLK Consulting	School counselor professional development	9/15/2021
Branching Minds	Student evaluation and data aggregation	9/15/2021
Hicksville UFSD	Special education services to Wyandanch students	9/15/2021
Guercio & Guercio	District labor counsel	9/15/2021
Montgomery Granger	Two day consulting w new Facilities Director	10/20/2021
LIU Veterinary College	Cooperative program between District and LIU	10/20/2021
John S. Goess Realty Appraisal	Appraisal- District Sewer Project	10/20/2021
O'Brien Speech, Language & Learning PLLC	Special education services to Wyandanch students	10/20/2021
East Islip UFSD	Special Education services to Wyandanch students	10/20/2021
Advanced Cardiovascular Diagnostic	Covid19 testing as needed	11/17/2021
K-Piano Learning Foundation	Musical instruction for students	11/17/2021
Half Hollow Hills CSD	Special Education services	11/17/2021
The Hagedorn Little Village School	Special Education evaluation services	11/17/2021
Beyond Boundaries Therapeutic Services	Special Education services	11/17/2021
Farmingdale UFSD	Special Education services	11/17/2021
Central Islip UFSD	Health & Welfare services	12/15/2021
Half Hollow Hills CSD	Special Education services	12/15/2021
Law Firm of Bond, Schoeneck, and King	Special counsel for Board matter	12/28/2021