

Grand Island  
Town Board

**Playgrounds,  
rec programs  
to open**

**BY MICHAEL BILLONI**  
Contributor

The Town of Grand Island Board approved motions at its meeting on Monday to open playgrounds and begin accepting registrations for adult and youth recreation programs this summer because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions being lifted by the state.

The Town Board authorized the town's Parks Department to open playgrounds on Tuesday with recommendations for its staff to regularly clean the equipment and for residents to wear masks and continue to follow social distance restrictions.

Additionally the board authorized the town's Recreation Department can open online registrations for adult and youth programs on June 23 with the plan to begin the programs on July 6, which would be after phase 4 is implemented if everything continues to go as planned in the state.

"We are currently following the mandates of phase 3 of the New York state reopening plan and we will make adjustments when phase 4 opens," explained Joseph A. Mentor, the town's recreation supervisor. "We are continuing to compile information so everyone is aware of the mandates that must be followed while participating in a recreation program."

Information about recreation programs that will be offered this summer and their registration details are available at [www.grandislandny.myrec.com](http://www.grandislandny.myrec.com).

- In other Town Board actions:
- A motion was passed for a public hearing on July 6 for a solar law proposed amendment.
  - A motion was passed to request written feedback from all advisory boards and committees on the Project Olive proposal.

Grand Island Central School District

**5K vote as school budget passes**

**BY LARRY AUSTIN**  
Island Dispatch Editor

After a long Tuesday night and Wednesday morning of counting absentee ballots for the budget vote and trustee election, the Grand Island Central School District announced Wednesday passage of its \$64 million 2020-21 school budget.

The budget passed by a 2,932 to 2,028 vote (59% voting "Yes") with incumbents Sue Marston and Ashli Dreher re-elected to the Board of Education unopposed.

"We are grateful to our community for approving this budget. I think this budget balances the needs of our taxpayers and our students, and it was developed with a fiscally responsible mindset," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Brian Graham Thursday. "Everybody from the board of education, the administrators and supervisors really came together to have a fiscally responsible budget that really meets the needs and provides the best diversified educational program that our students deserve."

The vote was conducted entirely by absentee ballot after Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 4,960 absentee votes cast on the budget proposition are almost as many votes cast on the budget in the last four years combined.

The vote came at a significantly greater cost to school districts. Graham estimated the cost to the district, not including human resources, at close to \$20,000 for the printing of envelopes and ballots, mailing and return postage.

"We're definitely in favor of the traditional practice of voting in person," Graham said. "And those who need absentee ballots should

**GRAND ISLAND CENTRAL  
SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE &  
TRUSTEE ELECTION**

**Proposition No. 1:  
2020-21 School  
Budget of  
\$64,626,568  
Yes: 2,932  
No: 2,028**

**Proposition No. 2:  
Buses purchase,  
not to exceed  
\$685,000  
Yes: 2,935  
No: 1,983**

**Board of Education  
Trustee Election  
(2 seats)  
Sue Marston 4,039  
Ashli Dreher 3,545  
Write-ins 199  
Total voters: 5,052**

absolutely utilize those. But I would say to you that one of our frustrations is that the executive order indicated that we needed to have this process be all absentee ballot on June 9, and then on June 23, the primary voting can be in person and/or absentee ballot. So the frustration is why couldn't that have all been combined?"

"This process has been pretty intense," said Graham Thursday upon reflecting on the four-week voting process. He said District Clerk Jude Kuehne and her team

of election officials opened up over 5,000 ballots on election night Tuesday starting at 5 p.m. In a typical election, Kuehne said she sends out 150 absentee ballots and receives 30 back. This year, due to Cuomo's directive to conduct the vote entirely with absentee ballots, the district sent out 16,000.

"Some districts across the state were unable to have printers and vendors provide them with the necessary materials in a timely fashion," Graham said. "We were all set. We mailed out 15,686 absentee ballots to our community. That was mailed out on May 22. But some districts across the state not necessarily Western New York, but across the state, were just not able to do that in a timely fashion to have access to all of the proper affidavit envelopes and the ballots, so the governor then changed the voting date from June 9 to June 16.

"And then by choosing June 16, that was in the middle of the early voting process for the primaries. So that meant that machines were being used for the early voting process in communities across Erie County, which limited the availability of machines for school districts, which then, fostered the idea of using the one high-speed scanning machine at the board of elections."

Graham said opening 5,052 ballots took until about 10 p.m. He and Kuehne took the ballots downtown at 11 p.m.

"And all along at the same time across Western New York, districts had appointments to go downtown to the Erie County Board of Elections office to scan their absentee ballots with the high-speed scanning machine that they have there," Graham said.

"But the machine ended up having some technical difficulties,"

Graham said, adding that some WNY districts still did not have vote totals on Thursday.

Kuehne said at the Board of Elections "those employees were phenomenal." She said one election employee told her they were working "on day 24 of 15 hour days."

"I'll tell you that as stressed as they were, they were always very professional, very thorough," Kuehne said.

Graham said he was "grateful that we had a lot of people take the time to vote. That's always appreciated, and obviously grateful that in a time of such certainty because of COVID-19 and a pandemic that there's still tremendous support for the educational program offered our children."

A preliminary analysis by New York State United Teachers showed 99 percent of school budgets are on track to win approval by voters, according to returns available Wednesday afternoon.

"Even in challenging times, voters resoundingly made clear that funding public schools at the local level is a top priority," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. "Especially in times of crisis, public schools serve as cornerstones of our communities, providing not just an education but also meals, mental health services and other critical services. Students need our support, and voters overwhelmingly delivered."

NYSUT reviewed 388 school budget votes and found that 383 passed. Five were defeated. More than 95 percent of budgets have been passed each year since 2013, according to NYSUT, a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care.

**WNY Welcome Center to be used as additional early voting polling location ahead of upcoming elections**

The Town of Grand Island and the Erie County Board of Elections announced this week that the Western New York Welcome Center on Alvin Road will be used as an additional early voting location for the upcoming elections in New York state.

Board of Election's officials recommend that voters utilize absentee balloting as the safest means of voting, however, for those choosing to vote in person, social distancing and avoiding areas with larger groups remains some of the most effective measures to prevent the spread of

COVID-19 while casting a ballot.

The WNY Welcome Center will be used for early voting prior to the elections in New York state, including the 2020 primary election on June 23 and 2020 general election on Nov. 3.

The WNY Welcome Center, located at 1999 Alvin Road on Grand Island, will be used as a polling location during the following dates and times:

- Early voting for state and federal primary elections from Saturday, June 13, to Sunday, June 21, on weekends from noon to 5 p.m. and on weekdays from noon

to 9 p.m.

- Early voting for general election day from Saturday, Oct. 24, to Sunday, Nov. 1, on weekends from noon to 5 p.m. and on weekdays from noon to 9 p.m.

Voters using the WNY Welcome Center are required to use face masks or other cloth face coverings and will be required to maintain social distance. Additionally, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, poll workers will clean and disinfect voting areas during polling site hours.

The Western New York Welcome Center will remain open to

travelers during the scheduled polling dates and times.

Residents can find guidance on voting during the COVID-19 pandemic, information about how to register to vote, how to search for poll sites and more on the New York State Board of Elections website or by calling 518-474-6220.

Registered voters in Erie County can cast their ballot at any designated early voting location. For a complete list, voters can visit the Erie County Board of Elections website.

**nfp** Niagara Frontier Publications  
[wnypapers.com](http://wnypapers.com)

Island Dispatch  
Niagara-Wheatfield Tribune  
Lewiston-Porter Sentinel  
Grand Island PennySaver




**For Home  
Delivery of the  
Island Dispatch  
Call 773-7676**

**SHOW HIM YOU CARE**

**HAPPY FATHER'S DAY**

**JUNE 21**

**Joan Dlugokinski**

**C: 716-310-4238**

Client Focused.....Results Driven.  
*Use a professional*

NYS Lic. Assoc. R.E. Broker  
Howard Hanna Real Estate Services  
2139 Grand Island Blvd., Grand Island

