

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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OCEAN CITY HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA GUILD ASKS SEA ISLE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION TO SUPPORT HIGH SCHOOL THEATER EDUCATION

Sea Isle City, New Jersey – When theater is a big part of your life, you're passionate about it. And that's the message that five Ocean City High School students delivered to the Sea Isle City Board of Education at the Board's meeting on Tuesday, September 13, 2016.

The five students, Elizabeth Buch, a junior and Sea Isle resident since 2013, Caroline Byrne, a junior and lifelong Sea Isle resident; T. J. Rumer, a junior with deep family ties to Sea Isle; and Gabrielle and Micah Waid, a sophomore and freshman respectively, residents since 2014, each took a few minutes to tell the Board of Education about their personal histories with theater education. Each student then linked his or her presentation with a request for greater support of theater education at the high school.

"Strange as it may sound, these students actually came to a Board of Education and asked for more education," said Ellen Byrne, representing the Theater Boosters organization.

Buch and Rumer asked the Board to contribute toward the salary of a part-time teacher of theater education, and asked that such a teacher hold "highly qualified" certification as required by the NJ Core Curriculum Content standards. Buch stated that the NJCCCS require a four-year theater education track for high schoolers. Rumer informed the Board that several local high schools, including Middle Township High School and Mainland Regional High School, already offer four year theater tracks, with multiple courses from which interested students may choose. Buch also asked the Board to provide funding to create a theater curriculum.

"I want high school to help make me college and career ready for a life in the theater," urged Rumer. "This is what I want to do. I'm passionate about it, and I know that not everyone makes it to Broadway. But there are also lots of opportunities in regional and local theater, teaching, publicity and marketing, technical and stage craft skills. There are lots of jobs and job opportunities in and related to theater," Rumer concluded.

Caroline Byrne asked the Board to help increase the "production value" of the club's performances, by providing access to important resources.

"Probably our biggest need at this time is storage. We have access to three closets in the school, but we share some of that space with other groups. We have nowhere to store large set pieces, backdrops, furniture, etc. Right now, every time we build a set of stairs to use in a show, or a bookcase, or a castle wall, we have to tear it down at the end of the show and throw away the materials. If someone wants to donate a sofa to us, we have to store it in someone's garage or we can't take it. It's wasteful, and not a good use of our limited resources," Byrne argued.

The Waid siblings urged the Board to support greater access to a variety of theater programs, by supporting a theater workshop series proposed by the group. Gabrielle Waid explained, "We would like to host a Saturday of workshops, with professionals experienced in playwriting, directing, lighting, special effects, make-up, improvisation or comedy, to come work with us. It would be open to the entire school community."

At the conclusion, Board of Education President Dan Tumolo thanked the students for their enthusiastic presentation, and promised to consider the group's request. Tumolo explained that while the Sea Isle Board cannot fund teaching salaries and "bricks and mortar" construction, the presentation had offered several good ideas.

PHOTOS & CAPTIONS:

(Image: Elizabeth Buch) On September 13, Elizabeth Buch, a junior at Ocean City High School, spoke to the Sea Isle City Board of Education while other members of her school's Drama Guild looked on.



(Image: Mike Boyle) Local thespian and carpenter Mike Boyle (standing) attended the Sea Isle City Board of Education's September 13 meeting to encourage the board to support the Ocean City High School's theater program. Boyle, a Sea Isle City native who attended OCHS, is a member of the Actor's Equity and the Screen Actors Guild. "Theater helps turn students into good citizens...it teaches them how to speak in public and makes them comfortable working with crowds," he said.



(Image: T.J. and Board) T.J. Rumer, a junior at Ocean City High School, was among several students who spoke to the Sea Isle City Board of Education about the value of their school's theater program.



(Image: Group Photo) Students from the Ocean City High School Drama Guild attended the Sea Isle City Board of Education's September 13 meeting to encourage the board to show additional support for their school's theater program. Shown during the meeting are (front row) freshman Micah Waid, junior Elizabeth Buch, sophomore Gabrielle

Waid, junior Caroline Byrne, and junior T. J. Rumer, (back row) Board of Education President Dan Tumolo, BOE Business Administrator Jason Frost and board members Kerry Mullane, Patricia Halfpenny and John Birkmeyer. Missing from the photo is BOE Vice-President Lynne Shirk.



This press release was sent to the media from Sea Isle's Public Relations Department at the request of the Ocean City High School Theater Boosters.