

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
OF THE
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
MT. LEBANON SCHOOL DISTRICT

September 21, 2020

A Regular Meeting of the Board of School Directors was held at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, September 21, 2020, in the Mt. Lebanon High School Auditorium. Due to Allegheny County Health Department's prohibition of indoor gatherings of more than 25, public participation will be remotely through Zoom.

Ms. Olbrich called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mr. Hugh Beal, Mrs. Elaine Cappucci, Dr. Aviva Diamond, Ms. Valerie Fleisher, Dr. Justin Hackett, Dr. Stephen Strotmeyer, Mr. Jacob Wyland, Ms. Sarah Olbrich

Absent: Mr. Michael Riemer

ATTENDING:

Dr. Timothy Steinhauer, Superintendent
Mr. Thomas Peterson, Solicitor
Administrative Staff: Ms. Cissy Bowman, Dr. Ronald Davis, Dr. Heather Doyle, Mr. Robert Geletko, Dr. Marybeth Irvin, Mr. Richard Marciniak, Ms. Tenecia Ross, Mr. Christopher Stengel, Mrs. Deanna Hess

MINUTES

It was moved by Strotmeyer and seconded by Diamond that the Board approves the minutes of the Discussion Meeting held on August 10, 2020, the Continued Discussion Meeting held on August 13, 2020, and the Regular Meeting held on August 17, 2020.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE

BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Olbrich reported that across the country, school districts like ours are grappling with the same difficult decisions of how education will be conducted during this once in a 100 year pandemic. Parents, in turn, are again faced with important decisions about their children's education, and most importantly, their children's health and safety. We are all part of this unwanted but very necessary conversation.

We are all bound by a common desire to do what's best for our children as we make these difficult decisions. Reading through resident's emails, she was moved by a quote from one parent who wrote: "I hope our community finds common ground to unite together in support of the schools in whatever teaching mode we may be in at any given time." Mt. Lebanon has a 107 year tradition in our school community of looking out for one another. We need to draw on that sense of community now more than ever.

As the Board and the community learn more about the instructional options from the administration, parents will have the information they need to make the best decision for their family.

In regards to comments made by a board member prior to the Discussion Meeting on September 14, Ms. Olbrich received Mr. Michael Riemer's resignation from the board today. It is unfortunate that the use of a derogatory term has ended his long service to the Mt Lebanon School District. The word that Mr. Riemer used is one that should never be uttered. It is derogatory and demeaning to women of all ages. The Mt Lebanon School District strives to be inclusive and welcoming. There is work to do and we hope that the District Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force can provide guidance for moving forward.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Steinhauer read the following statement:

Last week I recommended that the school board consider transitioning to, in person, in building instruction. We targeted it to begin the week of October 5th. Our middle and high school students would begin the transition back to in person/cyber learning beginning October 5th and our elementary students would begin this same transition on October 13 for 5, half day per week in person instruction. Since early April it has been our goal to return students to in person instruction as soon as it could be done safely and effectively. I believe that time is approaching.

I indicated that my recommendation was based on many factors including PDE/DOH recommendations for instruction based on incidence rate and percent positivity. Both have been trending in the right direction. And although we remain in the moderate range, that recommends either full remote or hybrid learning, we have been trending toward that bottom of that range. In addition, I based my recommendation on factors such as successful experiences from our summer/fall activities, positive examples from other local districts, staffing feasibility, feedback from teachers, parents, students, and staff and most importantly feedback and input from the school board.

The full remote start allowed our faculty and staff to establish a solid foundation for on-line learning. Our teachers and support staff have been working very hard to make this a successful learning experience. Having this solid foundation will benefit students who choose to (1) enroll in the cyber learning academy, (2) begin the hybrid in person learning, and in those instances where we may need to (3) transition between in person and remote learning. Transitions in and out of in person instruction may occur as local cases are identified or as conditions warrant. We will follow the guidelines established by the DOH following the identification of COVID cases.

The District has a strong and comprehensive Health & Safety Plan that addresses the methods and means we will use to return to in person instruction and is available for review on the District's website.

Return to in person instruction remains contingent upon maintaining this positive trend, our ability to adequately staff, and local COVID-19 incidents.

Should the Board vote to go forward tonight, our students and families will be hearing directly from their principal regarding schedules and timelines.

BOARD REPORTS

Policy Committee – Dr. Diamond reported that the Policy Committee met on September 14, to review revisions to the following policies: GBAA, Discrimination/Unlawful Harassment/Sexual Harassment of Students; GBBA, Discrimination/Unlawful Harassment/Sexual Harassment of Employees; JIC, Student Code of Conduct; JICD, Bullying; and JICFA, Hazing. All five policies are on the agenda this evening for approval.

Board Development – Dr. Strotmeyer reported that the annual PSBA School Leadership Conference will be a free virtual conference held on October 14 and 15. Board members were encouraged to register to attend. PSBA recently sent a memo to all members of the General Assembly a new Closer Look publication that fully explains public schools' need for temporary safe harbor protections from opportunistic lawsuits that seek to take advantage of the COVID-19 emergency. Board members and the public can go to the PSBA website and send a message to state legislators supporting this action.

Environmental Sustainability Board – Mr. Beal was unable to attend the last meeting, but spoke with the president of the Environmental Sustainability Board. The ESB is working on an Action Climate Plan that will be embedded into the Municipality's strategic plan. One suggestion they made related to the school district is to use sustainable products for the grab and go lunches but understand the limitations the district may be under.

Municipal Liaison – Dr. Hackett reported that the Municipality is moving into budget season, and tax collections are going well. Work is being done on a parking ordinance and a sump pump ordinance after many icing incidents the past winter. The Municipality is also developing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative.

Pathfinder – Ms. Fleisher reported that the Pathfinder Board met last week where the principal gave an overview of the AIU Health & Safety Plan specific to Pathfinder. School is currently open with educational options for 5-day, hybrid and virtual instruction. Current enrollment is 82 students.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force – Dr. Hackett reported that the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force met before this evening's meeting. The District received 250 applications to be a part to the task force and members have been identified. They are currently working on identifying a co-facilitator for the task force who has experience with this process.

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING ACTION ITEMS

Thirty-two (32) residents spoke before the Board about the following:

- Supports reopening school in hybrid learning on October 5, 2020
- On the "what's best for kids' side
- School so much more than academics
- Asked Board to vote yes for hybrid learning
- Consider anxiety children have with these changes
- Supports hybrid learning in a safe environment
- Failure in leadership
- Too much confusion
- Questioned if the District will be ready October 5, 2020
- No transparency
- Cyber Academy should be a high quality, synchronous education
- Need strict protocol on cleaning and masking
- Tentative support for recommendation to move to hybrid
- Staffing concerns
- No issues with the quality of education at this time
- Needs to be an educational sound learning experience for hybrid and cyber learning
- Technology needs to be in place for teachers by October 5, 2020
- More effective, transparent communication with the community
- Support for teachers
- Should return to in-person learning and cyber academy
- Unsure why learning plan had changed-shortened timeline

Decision swayed by one group of parents
Questioned if the teachers union was onboard
Asked Board to decline October 5 reopening
Lack of details available about cyber learning
Lack of answers shows administration not prepared
Questions concerning Cyber Academy versus hybrid
Enthusiastic about hybrid learning but has concerns about Cyber Academy
Not enough information about consistent learning-need more communication
Concerns that hybrid model will not be equal for all students
Student access to teachers
Questioned how the hybrid process will work
This is about keeping the community safe
Blind sighted by recommendation
Lack of communication from administration
Questioned why pivot from remote to hybrid
Does not support hybrid learning
Not all options work for all-should be equal
Accept less synchronous learning
Accept videotaped specials
No justification for reversal in learning plan
Asked Board to vote against hybrid learning
School is rushing into a disruptive change
Hearing impaired students at a disadvantaged
Concerned how screening will be done
Foster doing a wonderful job with remote learning
Lack of transparency from administration in selecting hybrid learning
Too many unanswered questions
Commented on assumption that platforms are unequal
Allow the school district to respond to claims
District never made firm commitment to go to hybrid learning in November
No reason the Board should say no to hybrid learning
School should be in-person
Parents should have a choice
Nothing should stop Mt. Lebanon from going hybrid
Having a choice is important
In-person learning invaluable and necessary
Mt. Lebanon teachers can do the work
Need more communications from the District
The way residents are treating each other in the community and social media is disappointing
Supports Dr. Steinhauer's recommendation
Appreciates the ability to adapt to change
Asked for results of who wanted what type of learning
It would be a failure of the Board if they vote no to hybrid learning
Commends staff and administration for robust on-learning program
Concerns about details to work out for hybrid learning
Give professional staff time to learn
Delay start of hybrid education
Encouraged administration to stick with remote learning
No compelling reason to switch
Zero transparency from Board and administration
Wants students to return to normal
Everyone has a different opinion
Dishearten by comments in the community

NEW BUSINESS

It was moved by Fleisher and seconded by Strotmeyer that the Board approves, ratifies, and accepts the following financial reports: (Copy in official minutes)

- a. Treasurer’s Report dated August 31, 2020,
- b. List of Bills dated September 1, 2020 and September 16, 2020,
- c. List of Tax Refunds dated August 31, 2020, and
- d. List of Unusable Equipment dated September 1, 2020.

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Fleisher and seconded by Cappucci that the Board of School Directors of the Mt. Lebanon School District authorizes the School District’s Financial Advisor and Bond Counsel to take all the steps necessary to and desirable to prepare, advertise and market and issue of the School District’s General Obligation Bonds, Series of 2020 in aggregate principal amount of approximately \$35,000,000 to advance refund \$32,855,000 in principal amount of the School District’s General Obligation Bonds, Series of 2013 to achieve a debt service savings over the life of the issue and to obtain a current rating with respect to the School District’s bonds.

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Beal and seconded by Wyland that the Board appoints Tim Frenz of Janney Montgomery Scott as Financial Adviser for the refinancing of the 2013 General Obligation Bonds at a fee of \$32,500 as per the attached agreement.

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Beal and seconded by Cappucci that the Board appoints James Webster of Clark Hill PC as Bond Counsel for the refinancing of the 2013 General Obligation Bonds at a fee of \$15,000 plus legal fees as per the attached agreement.

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Beal and seconded by Strotmeyer that the Board appoints Tom Peterson as Solicitor for the refinancing of the 2013 General Obligation Bonds at a fee of \$10,000.

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Hackett and seconded by Diamond that the Board approves the September 10, 2020, list of personnel changes, as revised September 17, 2020. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Hackett and seconded by Cappucci that the Board approves the list of additional bus drivers for 2020-2021 as listed. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Hackett and seconded by Strotmeyer that that Mt. Lebanon School District Board of Directors hereby publicly censures Director Michael J. Riemer for his conduct in publicly making profane, offensive and denigrating remarks immediately prior to the September 14, 2020 Board Discussion Meeting, failing to model respectful discourse around issues of public interest, and failing to follow the Board's policies and the generally recognized standards of behavior for Board Members.

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Cappucci and seconded by Strotmeyer that the Board accepts the resignation of Michael J. Riemer. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Diamond and seconded by Wyland that Policy GBAAA/JICK, Unlawful Harassment, is hereby rescinded and replaced by new Policy GBAA, Discrimination, Unlawful Harassment/Sexual Harassment of Students. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Diamond and seconded by Hackett that the Board approves revisions to Policy GBAA, Discrimination/Unlawful Harassment/Sexual Harassment of Students, in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer, Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Diamond and seconded by Strotmeyer that the Board approves revisions to Policy GBBA, Discrimination/Unlawful Harassment/Sexual Harassment of Employees, in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Wyland and seconded by Cappucci that the Board approves revisions to Policy JIC, Student Code of Conduct, in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Wyland and seconded by Diamond that the Board approves revisions to Policy JICD, Bully, in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by JICFA and seconded by Diamond that the Board approves revisions to Policy JICFA, Hazing, in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Wyland and seconded by Cappucci that the Board approves the agreement with the Mt. Lebanon Aqua Club in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Wyland,
Olbrich
Against: None
Abstain: Strotmeyer
MOTION APPROVED

It was moved by Strotmeyer and seconded by Fleisher that the Board approves the Mt. Lebanon Extended Day Program Agreement in the form presented. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Strotmeyer and seconded by Fleisher that the Board authorizes the Board Secretary to vote for the following PSBA officers:

President Elect: David Hein
Vice President: Daniel O'Keefe
Treasurer: Michael Gossert
Western at Large: Marsha Pleta
PSBA Insurance Trust Michael Faccinetto
Marianne Neel

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Cappucci and seconded by Fleisher that the Board: (1) finds as fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency that prevents the District from being able to provide for the attendance of all pupils and/or the usual hours of classes; (2) approves the attached Reopening Education Plan for its secondary schools, for the 2020-2021 school year employing the Hybrid/Cyber Academy Instruction mode of learning as necessary Temporary Provisions pursuant to Section 520.1 of the Public School Code, in substantially the form presented, subject to adjustments deemed necessary by the Superintendent; and (3) authorizes the Superintendent to move the District's secondary schools to the Hybrid/Cyber Academy Instruction mode of learning as described in the attached Reopening Education Plan on or after October 5, 2020, if and when the Superintendent determines that doing so is consistent with all relevant conditions and factors which include, but are not limited to, community spread of the illness in classrooms, schools, and/or across the District, and teacher and staff availability and any other relevant factors. The Board directs the Administration to take the necessary steps to implement and receive approval for the attached Reopening Education Plan. This resolution and the attached Reopening Education Plan shall be recorded in the official minutes. Prior findings by and approvals from the Board are only rescinded to the extent they are inconsistent with this Resolution. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

It was moved by Cappucci and seconded by Wyland that the Board: (1) finds as fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency that prevents the District from being able to provide for the attendance of all pupils and/or the usual hours of classes; (2) approves the attached Reopening Education Plan for its elementary schools, for the 2020-2021 school year, employing the Hybrid/Cyber Academy Instruction mode of learning as necessary Temporary Provisions pursuant to Section 520.1 of the Public School Code, in substantially the form presented, subject to adjustments deemed necessary by the Superintendent; and (3) authorizes the Superintendent to move the District's elementary schools to the Hybrid/Cyber Academy Instruction mode of learning as described in the attached Reopening Education Plan on or after October 5, 2020, if and when the Superintendent determines that doing so is consistent with all relevant conditions and factors which include, but are not limited to, community spread of the illness in classrooms, schools, and/or across the District, and teacher and staff availability and any other relevant factors. The Board directs the Administration to take the necessary steps to implement and receive approval for the attached Reopening Education Plan. This resolution and the attached Reopening Education Plan shall be recorded in the official minutes. Prior findings by and approvals from the Board are only rescinded to the extent they are inconsistent with this Resolution. (Copy in official minutes)

ROLL CALL: For: Beal, Cappucci, Diamond, Fleisher, Hackett, Strotmeyer,
Wyland, Olbrich
Against: None
MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS

Six (6) residents spoke before the Board about the following:

- Hire a director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Racial bullying is different than other bullying
- Questions about hybrid schedule for kindergarten
- Need diversity lessons in the curriculum
- Need more communication from the District
- Thanked the Board for the vote to move to hybrid
- Our needs are more than our wants

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, it was moved by Wyland and seconded by Beal to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Cecile D. Bowman, Secretary
Board of School Director

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