

School Board President's Report

Jacob Wyland

May 24, 2021

As we near the end of the school year, I am pleased that we have four Extra Mile Award recipients to honor tonight. Their extra effort made a significant difference for our students and staff this year.

Lawrence Pajack

Lawrence Pajack, a District custodian for over 30 years, was nominated for an Extra Mile Award by Mrs. Kathy Taback who stated: I have seen Larry countless times over the years collecting tickets and helping around the stadium. He seems to be the kind of gentleman that is steadfast and invaluable to MTLSD. He has been there in the pouring rain, freezing snow and any other weather that western Pennsylvania brings our way. I just think the past year has shown us how invaluable the "helpers" have been to our community, even the silent ones."

Athletic Director John Grogan also felt that Larry was a worthy recipient of this award saying,

"Larry has worked at sporting events for years and has been invaluable to our department for a long time. I am so pleased he was nominated for the Extra Mile Award."

I'd like to invite Mr. Pajack to the stage to receive the award.

Our next recipients all hail from Hoover Elementary School and were nominated by Principal Dr. Nicole Giehl. Mary Ehland, Rae Ann Macosko, and Kimberly Gamble have all gone the 'extra mile' this past year. Here are excerpts from Dr. Giehl's nominations:

“Mary Ehland has been the Classroom Aide in our Learning Support classroom for many years. Her ability to build genuine connections with students, allows them to feel seen, supported, and develop a true sense of belonging in our school--which we all know is foundational for learning to occur. Mary has been a valuable member of many HES committees and takes on additional roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm. And while Mary’s daily contributions to the HES Community are pretty remarkable; this year, she simply outdid herself. Our world is a better place because of people like Mary Ehland and the Hoover Community is so grateful that she is ours.”

“Rae Ann Macosko is the Library/Media Specialist at Hoover Elementary School. In October, when the District shifted to the hybrid model, a teacher was needed to cover a temporary leave of absence in our newly developed Cyber Learning Academy. Given Rae Ann’s experience teaching the 4th Grade curriculum and excellent technology skills, she was an exceptional fit for the position. Although it meant temporarily leaving her typical role and her students and colleagues at HES, when approached about helping to fill this need, Rae Ann agreed to do what was best for the students of the Mt. Lebanon School District without hesitation. Rae Ann's patience, adaptability, and resourcefulness have been vital to ensuring our day to day operations during this highly unusual year, and we are so very grateful.”

Kimberly Gamble

“Kimberly serves as the Counselor at Hoover Elementary School. She arrives every day with a smile and spreads kindness everywhere she goes. Over the years, Mrs. Gamble has worked tirelessly to help our HES students learn important lessons including understanding feelings/emotions and identifying effective coping strategies, as well as developing important character traits such as kindness, courage, resilience, diversity, empathy, respect, patience, and inclusion. These incredible efforts help to create a school environment that is safe, welcoming, and where everyone belongs! The HES Community is so fortunate to have a wonderful counselor like Mrs. Kimberly Gamble--she truly brings out the best in us all!”

I'd like to invite all three recipients to the stage to receive their Extra Mile Awards.

Tonight, the Board will vote to approve the 2021-2022 final budget in the amount of \$108,211,756 setting the millage rate at 25.59 mills. The budget includes a .80 mill increase with the use of \$1.5 million from the Fund Balance. We are presenting a balanced budget while maintaining our academic, fine arts, and athletic programs.

It is with regret that I share that this past Friday our colleague Mr. Hugh Beal tendered his resignation as a School Board Director. The Board would like to thank Mr. Beal for his years of service and dedication to the District and the Community. He served with passion and an unwavering commitment to the students and the District. Personally, I would like to thank Mr. Beal for his friendship and counsel during our run for office together and in my time on the Board. Mr. Beal believed his differences in opinion regarding District finances and policies made further service unproductive.

Mr Beal's resignation was submitted on Friday evening. I discussed the matter with Vice President Fleisher and Mr. Peterson, our solicitor over the weekend. The Board is required to appoint a replacement. However, because of the timing of Mr. Beal's resignation relative to the next municipal election, the appointment will only be for the next several months - through the next reorganization meeting. The two year balance of Mr. Beal's term will be on the ballot in November.

Regarding the appointment until that time, Board policy BBE provides that this is generally done through an application and interview process as we did when Mr. Freeman was appointed. However, the policy also provides that where the vacancy is for less than one year the Board may deviate from that policy.

The vacancy to be filled is abbreviated and there is important work to be done in that time. The sooner we fill the spot and return the Board to capacity the better. I also

believe that a former Board member, who served recently and would require next to no time getting up to speed is preferred.

This circumstance is exactly what Section 5 of Policy BBE was intended for. And, it is not without precedent. Prior Boards have done exactly this under very similar circumstances.

Accordingly, I am recommending to the Board that Mr. William Cooper be appointed to return and serve until the winner of November's special election is seated. Bill only recently left the Board and would be able to quickly engage and meaningfully participate. I believe it is in the best interest of the District to appoint someone with Mr. Cooper's experience and ability. I spoke with Mr. Cooper this weekend to inquire whether he would be interested in filling this short term. I can advise that he is willing to serve until December, although he does not plan on running for the balance of the term.

Consistent with my recommendations to the Board, resolutions were included on tonight's agenda for the full Board to consider regarding how to fill this short vacancy.

As you are well aware, this has been an historically challenging year. From the first day of school there was a relentless need to respond and adjust to the constantly changing pandemic environment. While there were times when we did not agree with the path forward each step of the way, our focus as a school community has always been on the education, health, and well-being of our students.

As we bring this school year to a close, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. This past weekend the community came together to enjoy the outdoor evening concerts staged by our high school percussion ensemble and choir. This coming week we will hold the prom at the high school and look forward to the Class of 2021 commencement on June 3rd and last day clap outs at our elementary schools.

We are a resilient community with so much to be grateful for -- from our talented teachers and dedicated staff who kept our schools on track no matter what instructional mode we were in, to our principals and administrators whose leadership was critical in this moment, and our parents who persevered through so much. I want to especially thank Dr. Steinhauer for all of his hard work as he navigated this year filled with so many unknowns.

On behalf of the School Board, I wish everyone a relaxing and refreshing summer. It is well deserved.