Lehighton Area School District

Lehighton, Pennsylvania

Special Meeting of School Board
Monday, September 9, 2013
6:00 PM
High School Auditorium

Minutes

Pledge of Allegiance

Call to Order - A special meeting of the Lehighton Area School Board was held in the High School Auditorium, on the above date and called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call -

	Present	Absent
Mr. John Finnegan, Member	☐	X
Mr. William J. Hill, Jr., Member	X	☐
Mr. Dave Krause, Member	X	☐
Mr. Hal Resh, Vice-President	X	☐
Mr. Larry Stern, Member	X	☐
Mr. Wayne Wentz, Member	☐	X
Mr. Andrew Yenser, Treasurer	X	☐
Mr. Thomas Zimmerman, Member	X	☐
Mr. Rocky Ahner, President	X	☐
Mr. Michael Malay Jr., Business Manager	X	☐
Mr. Jonathan Cleaver, Superintendent	X	☐
Attorney William Schwab, Solicitor	X	☐
Ms. Bonnie Cortese, Recording Board Secretary	X	☐

Communications - None

Approval of Minutes - None

Financial Matters - None

Personnel -

Extension of Parental Leave

MOTION by Mr. Yenser, SECONDED by Mr. Hill to approve an extension of a parental leave for **Employee #930** from September 27, 2013 to November 15, 2013. The Employee will return to work on November 18, 2013.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

Substitutes Hired

MOTION by Mr. Hill, SECONDED by Mr. Stern to approve the attached list of candidates for the **2013-2014 Substitute** list pending clearances.

VOTE:YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

Athletic/ Ex. Curr. Hired

MOTION by Mr. Stern, SECONDED by Mr. Yenser to approve the **Athletic/Extra-Curricular** hires for the **2013-2014** school year (per attachment).

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

Professional Hires

MOTION by Mr. Zimmerman, SECONDED by Mr. Resh to approve the recommendation to hire the following employees in accordance with the respective contracts, pending clearances:

1. **Gregory Kosciolek** – Special Education Teacher - Step 3 / Masters on the professional salary scale, effective date to be determined.
2. **David Hauser** – Language Arts Teacher 7-12 – Step 3 / Bachelors on the professional salary scale, effective date to be determined.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

L. Crum Resigned

MOTION by Mr. Yenser, SECONDED by Mr. Stern to accept the resignation of **Lisa Crum**, cleaner at East Penn Elementary, effective Tuesday, September 3, 2013 .

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

FMLA Leave

MOTION by Mr. Hill, SECONDED by Mr. Krause to acknowledge FMLA leave for the following employee, not to exceed 12 weeks:

1. **Employee #247** – effective August 29, 2013

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

L. Williams Retirement

MOTION by Mr. Yenser, SECONDED by Mr. Stern to accept the retirement of **Llewellyn Williams,** Math Teacher, after 39 years of service to the Lehighton Area School District per the supporting retirement documents.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

Teachers Hired For SAT Prep Class

MOTION by Mr. Stern, SECONDED by Mr. Krause to approve the recommendation to hire **Michelle Rohrbach,** High School Math Teacher, and **Jennifer Shober Steigerwalt,** High School Language Arts Teacher, to teach SAT Prep classes for English and Math, at the High School during the 2013-14 school year. There will be no cost to the District.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

M. Dobrowski Hired

MOTION by Mr. Yenser, SECONDED by Mr. Resh to approve the recommendation to hire **Michele Dobrowski,** as a Paraprofessional assigned to the Middle School, effective Tuesday, September 10, 2013, at a prorated salary of $14,783.00.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

Miscellaneous –

School Journey Requests

MOTION by Mr. Stern, SECONDED by Mr. Yenser to approve the following School Journey request:

1. **Special Education Community-Based Instructional Trips** – related to students' individualized education plans for the 2013-2014 school year.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____
Motion carried.

Programs - None

Old Business for Discussion - None

New Business for Discussion - None

Presentations

1. **EI Associates – District-wide Master Facility Proposal (PowerPoint)**

Courtesy to the Floor – Question / Answer

(Answers provided by Mr. Cleaver unless otherwise noted.)

1. **Bruce Koch –**
   - Q – You mentioned $500,000/year savings….From Where?
   - *A – Positions not replaced.*
   - Q – You mentioned plans for Franklin and a Jr./Sr. High Combo but no proposed floor plans. Why?
   - *A – We do not know what the floor plans would look like yet. Not ready for floor plans. Will not pay for tests until we know exactly what we want.*
   - Q – Will we be able to see those plans prior to approval?
   - *A – Yes.*

2. **David Bradley –**
   - Q – Why would you abandon Shull-David vs. converting it?
   - *A – Shull-David classes would go to the present Middle School building and the Shull-David building would close.*
   - Q – What is the plan long-term?
   - *A – To sell the Shull-David building.*
   - Q – Why? The building has value.
   - *A – No up-keep for that building. Students would be moved.*
   - Q – The East Penn profile floor plan shows an addition for students/ gym / offices / multi-purpose room. Why do an addition?
   - *A – Grade 5 would come back to the elementary buildings.*
   - Q – So you're shuffling students to build a gym.
   - Q – Regarding the EI estimate to the State / PFM slide, EI supplied a flawed plan before, do we have any other basis?
   - *A – Spoke to Jim Vogel (from PDE). The State approved Plan Con A & B. State approved the maximum dollar amount reimbursed.*
   - Q – How did he estimate?

A – (Mark Barnhardt – EI) – State reimbursement is written by the highest enrollment projection. Even if enrollment is declining, it is based into 10 years on that projection. It doesn't matter what you are building.

Q – This will have a significant impact on the community – taxes.

Q – Slide 6 – Shows that the District owes $1.4 M/ $4M currently in debt. You have enough money to pay off that debt and be debt-free.

A. – (Atty. Schwab) – There may be a prepayment penalty.

Q – You are trying to build?

A – No, renovate all.

3. Rick Bjorkman –

Q – We are in debt now of $4M and doubling the taxes… what does that equate to?

A – 2.9 mills over a span of 4-5 years – 6% increase
(Rocky Almer) – More is paid in the front than at the end.
(J. Michael Malay, Jr.) – There are different options.
(Rocky Almer) – $4.5M – What are we cutting? We are putting on a band-aid.

Q – Would you sell Shull-David or rent Shull-David?

A – Hard to say.

Q – How many games are played at the stadium?

A – There are 5 home games. If you just look at facility repairs: bleachers need repair/ redo the bathrooms / field house / keep in mind ADA requirements. Ten years ago the bathroom facility would have cost $500,000. Also keep in mind loss of a season of play and loss of revenue.

4. Matthew Fisher –

Q – The Stadium – why part of Part 1 and not 2 or 3?

A – The current status of that facility would be tied into the reimbursement. Land development would be tied into the JR/SR HS complex.

Q – There would be soft costs for planning stages?

A – Yes, Geothermal tests / schematic design costs. 6% of total costs per building. Costs can change depending on situations that arise.

Q – How many years would it take to pay off a $3M debt?

A – 4 years

Q – Having students move out of Shull-David makes me nervous. You would have elementary students with middle school students?

A – Shull-David students K-5 would be at the MS location.
All Grade 6 would be at the MS location with a team concept.
Grades 7-12 at the JR/SR High School location.

Q – What happens if we do not have a buyer for Shull-David?

A – We will start lining up a buyer when the plan is approved.

5. Sandy Whiteman –

Q – I am representing senior citizens. Taxes are already high. I will probably need to move to FLA. There are 182 properties in Lehighton now on sale. I worried about the taxes.

6. **Gloria Bowman –**
   - Q – I would like to commend the Board for trying to bring the buildings into more energy efficiency.
   - Q – I question the academic reasoning regarding the Grade 6 center. You will be bringing three buildings together for one year and then they would be going onto the JR/SR complex.
   - *A – The STEM concept would be used for Grade 6 focusing on science and technology. Grade 6 is a transition year and would get them ready for the big step to the JR/SR High.*
   - Q – I would have concerns about this.
   - Q – I would want to see a proposal to renovate the old field vs. multi-field proposed.
   - *A – Barry Isett did a proposal that is on-line. It is a close comparison.*

7. **Stacey Durst –**
   - Q – What is the average football attendance? Why build bigger than needed?
   - *A – Do not have the average attendance readily available.*
   - Q – Regarding the STEM concept, why do this for one year. Seems not effective. Any plans for continuing?
   - *A – STEMS helps build thinking skills. Plan to continue into grades 7-12. The State will soon give us no option.*
   - Q – Concerned with safety / security. You will have a span of 12 – 18 year-olds in the same facility.
   - *A – Safety is our #1 priority. We do have bullying programs attempting to deal with this issue.*
   - Q – You have no back-up plan. What is the data on safety in a JR/SR concept?
   - *A – The board has not approved this plan. We are in a planning stage.*

8. **Cathy Plocinik –**
   - Q – There is grant money available for things like this. The district does not have a grant writer.
   - *A – Mr. Tkach is in that capacity. We are also looking at other districts to capitalize on work they've done in this area.*
   - Q – Have you looked at corporate funding?
   - *A – We have not; however, we would be willing to check on that. We do already have four businesses committed to advertise.*

9. **Steve Smith –**
   - Q – What is Wyoming Valley's ranking?
   - *A – 61 out of 691.*
   - Q – How is LASD ranked?
   - *A – I do not have that in front of me.*
   - Q – Regarding the Fund Balance & offsetting costs: I don't want to see us run thin on fund balance.
   - *A – The numbers on the right on that slide is the amount reimbursed.*
   - Q – Senators and Representatives are looking at shifting the tax base from property to revenue based.
   - *A – I'm not sure without looking into that.*

Questions yelled from audience regarding tax funding vs. existing debts from property taxes ....

A – Prevailing wage changes could play a role on what needs to be borrowed.

10. Bill Hill (Board Member) –

Comment: I am not happy with everything that has been proposed. I'm not happy with the JR/SR High School Concept or the Athletic Field. I thought we would work on the elementary centers first. Proposals will go out to the public. Nine people were elected to make sound decisions and Mr. Cleaver is the CEO.

A – We will offer another meeting with more plans and we are open to meet with ideas.

11. Elaine S_____ -

Q – Property taxes are high enough and you want to increase them. My taxes have gone from $6,000 a year to $8,000 a year.

12. Diane Heiney –

Q – I just moved into the District. Moved here loving it. I didn't elect any of you. I want to be able to have confidence that you are making wise decisions for my daughter. I need you to convince me that you will do the right thing. I'm a single parent. People are selling their homes because of tax increases. Sports is not the first priority. The bleachers look fine. The only place that needs repair is the bathrooms.

A – Many times the stadium was looked at. Until we get the go ahead there will be 3-4 plans.

(Atty. Schwab) - When the HS was built in 1990 a new stadium was intended.

A – We would use the existing track area and redo the field/bleachers and field house.

Mr. Cleaver – The $5M for the Stadium could be done without a tax impact. The reason for providing this massive Facility Plan is to plan repairs / needs and to budget. There are six buildings with serious issues that were left go for a long time.

13. David Bradley –

Q – How many students are enrolled each year?

A – Approximately 200 per year.

Q – For $52M you could give each student money toward college.

A – That does not answer the questions regarding our building needs.

14. Bruce Koch –

Q – I am concerned regarding the JR/SR High Complex announcement. I am concerned about the common areas. As a past MS stage manager, I know of a number of times this area is used. Has there been any conversation with those who will work in these areas.

A – This the first time this plan has been presented, including the school board members.

Board Members given time to present their thoughts:

Rocky Ahner –

… Everyone here has the best interest of the students.
… Our District is unique.
… I didn't come on the Board to raise taxes and get rid of people.
… Sports involves approximately 500 students. Gives them something to do and keeps them off the street.
… I don't like the presentation either… but we will need to work on it.
… We could save $1M by furloughing like other districts, but we don't want to do that.
… We have not raised taxes in the past two years.
… We have tried to make improvements that would save energy and things like roofs that will last.

Hal Resh –

… I drive my child to the MS every day. The elementary buildings are pathetic.
… The bathrooms smell.
… We always go backwards… Building a big HS but the elementary schools were built in the 1950's.
… We don't have to jump into this whole heartedly.

David Krause –

… When you decide to just patch up buildings, we pay for 100% of costs.
… When you have a Master Plan, you get reimbursement from the state.
… Unless you come to every board meeting and visit the schools, you do not have all the information.
… We are not perfect. In 8 years I have looked at all stakeholders… safety & education #1 priority.
… Everyone here has looked at the right thing to do.

Hal Resh –

… I have been a teacher for 20 years.
… I've seen how nicely they have cleaned up and renovated the CCTI.
… I would like to see the elementary buildings cleaned up once and for all. Get rid of all the asbestos. EP is nearly done and we will be getting FR on-line. Keep moving forward.

David Bradley – Interrupted

Q – These are just band-aids. Once the District is out of debt you can do effective spending.

A – (Rocky Ahner) – Our original plan was to wait. The State forced our hands. There were deadlines to apply for reimbursement. There are many issues to take into consideration.

Interruptions from the audience – no names given – all comments were not audible.

A - (Mark Barnhardt - EI Assoc) - The comprehensive massive plan was necessary to be reimbursed.

David Bradley shouts out interrupting.

Larry Stern –

… State Reimbursement would give us 1/3 more money for our students vs. paying the total amount.
… If we don't use the state reimbursement money, someone else will.
… $50M Bond - $360,000 funding each year.
… There is never a good time to take on a project like this, but we need to get the money and do something.
… We have been trying to do things for years and then it stops.
… The stadium is not just for sports/it's for the community.

David Bradley continually interrupted during Mr. Stern's comment time. Mr. Stern asked Mr. Bradley to be respectful of Mr. Stern's comment time since Mr. Bradley had his time to speak.

Rocky Ahner –

… People in this community said they wanted the elementary buildings fixed.
… Money won't drop from the sky.
… If we do not go for the reimbursement, the money is on the tax payer.

David Bradley interrupts again.

Hal Resh –

… I want to hear from more employees.
… They spend 40 years here (in the District)
… Since the renovations, CCTI is a more efficient building.
… We need to know what we need fixed.

David Bradley interrupts again.

Thomas Zimmerman –

… Declines to speak.

Andrew Yenser –

… There has been a lot considered over the past few years.
… Financially, we have looked at different angles, but the State limits what we can do.
… My decisions come from a broad background, family members who are educators, being a land owner who pays taxes, and a parent.

David Krause –

… Guarantee that at $1.4M x 20 years = $28M. Over the next 20 years with only fixing up to code it will cost more than $28M and we'll pay it ourselves vs. reimbursement.

David Bradley interrupts again.

William Hill –

… Extends thanks to public.

Gloria Bowman –

Q – Respectfully asks the Board to consider what happened in 1993 when the last building project took place. K-5 elementary was considered and denied. Before you organize your grade levels, consider what is in the student's best interest. I cannot help but reflect that this was not done before. Please talk to staff and get their input. We are a unique District. We are a wonderful District, but we need to know that this will work for our district.

Rick Bjorkman –

Q – Has there been any thought to a grade 7-9 configuration?
A – *Right now the Plan Con is status quo.*

David Bradley interrupts again.

Mr. Ripkey (an audience member) stands up to leave and berates Mr. Bradley for his constant interruptions and shouting out.

Rocky Ahner –

... We hired Mr. Barnhardt from EI Associates. Do not personally attack him. He has done a very good job.
... This presentation could change five times before decided.
... We have heard about all we can right now. Let's call for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment -

Next regular scheduled meeting is Monday, September 30, 2013 at the Administration Building.

MOTION by Mr. Resh, SECONDED by Mr. Zimmerman to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

VOTE: YES - 7 NO - ____ ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - ____

Respectfully submitted

J. Michael Malay, Jr.
Board Secretary

(Minutes of September 9, 2013 include Pages 1 through 11)