

SCHUYLKILL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
929 Lakeshore Drive  
Leesport, PA 19533-8631

MINUTES

August 3, 2021

- 1.0 **The Special Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Board President, G. Dane Miller, held online via Zoom Meeting Room.**
- 1.1 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**
- 1.2 **ROLL CALL**  
Members Present (online): Paul L. Bendigo, Robert M. Dempsey, Nicoleen M. Kleffel, Linda R. Lash, George H. Mertz III, G. Dane Miller, David E. Moll, Kevin Raudenbush, Alfonso F. Rossi  
  
Secretary: Linda R. Lash  
  
Treasurer: Michelle Kauffman (not present)  
  
Recording Secretary: Susan A. Christman  
  
Administrative Staff Present (online): Dr. Cathy Taschner, Dr. Janet Heilman, Michael Billman, Robin Brightbill, Diane Kaag, Candice Kehres, Jenny Rexrode, Lacey Smey, Changming Wang
- 2.0 **PERSONS WHO WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD**  
No one addressed the Board.
- 3.0 **BOARD**
- Policy Waiver
- 3.1 The Board is requested to consider and approve waiving Policy 006.1, Attendance at Meetings Via Electronic Communications.  
  
**Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by David Moll to approve waiving Policy 006.1, Attendance at Meetings Via Electronic Communications.**  
  
**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**  
  
**Motion passed unanimously.**
- Resolution
- 3.2 Resolved by the Board of School Directors that the job description for the position of Superintendent is hereby approved, as attached.  
  
**Board Action: Moved by Kevin Raudenbush and seconded by Linda Lash to approve the resolution that the Board of School Directors that the job description for the position of Superintendent is hereby approved, as attached.**  
  
**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**  
  
**Motion passed unanimously.**

Resolution

- 3.3 Resolved by the Board of School Directors that the job description for the position of Assistant Superintendent is hereby approved, as attached.

**Board Action: Moved by Kevin Raudenbush and seconded by Linda Lash to approve the resolution that the Board of School Directors that the job description for the position of Assistant Superintendent is hereby approved, as attached.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Appointment of Superintendent of Schools

- 3.4 WHEREAS, there is presently a vacancy in the position of the Office of Superintendent of Schools of the Schuylkill Valley School District; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Cathy L. Valotta-Taschner ("Dr. Taschner"), has fully demonstrated that she possesses all of the qualifications necessary and appropriate for the office of Superintendent of Schools; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors of the Schuylkill Valley School District desires to fill the vacancy in the office of Superintendent of Schools by electing and approving Dr. Taschner to serve as Superintendent of Schools commencing on or before November 5, 2021 through June 30, 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors, pursuant to 24 P.S. §10-1073, hereby elects and approves Dr. Taschner to serve as Superintendent of Schools for a term commencing on or before November 5, 2021 through June 30, 2026 pursuant to the terms of the Employment Agreement attached hereto as Exhibit "A", which Exhibit "A" is made a part of the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of School Directors at its meeting of August 3, 2021.

DULY RESOLVED this 3rd day of August, 2021 by the Board of School Directors of the Schuylkill Valley School District, Berks County, Pennsylvania, in lawful session duly assembled.

**Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Kevin Raudenbush to approve the resolution that the Board of School Directors, pursuant to 24 P.S. §10-1073, hereby elects and approves Dr. Taschner to serve as Superintendent of Schools for a term commencing on or before November 5, 2021 through June 30, 2026 pursuant to the terms of the Employment Agreement attached hereto as Exhibit "A", which Exhibit "A" is made a part of the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of School Directors at its meeting of August 3, 2021.**

Roll Call Vote

**Yeas: Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi, Bendigo, Dempsey**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Appointment of Assistant Superintendent of Schools

- 3.5 WHEREAS, there is presently a vacancy in the position of the Office of Assistant Superintendent of Schools of the Schuylkill Valley School District; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Janet Heilman ("Dr. Heilman"), has fully demonstrated that she possesses all of the qualifications necessary and appropriate for the office of Assistant Superintendent of Schools; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors of the Schuylkill Valley School District desires to fill the vacancy in the office of Assistant Superintendent of Schools by electing and approving Dr. Heilman to serve as Assistant Superintendent of Schools, commencing on or before November 5, 2021 through June 30, 2026.

WHEREAS, the Superintendent of Schools has nominated Dr. Janet Heilman to serve as Assistant Superintendent.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors, pursuant to 24 P.S. §10-1076, hereby elects and approves Dr. Heilman to serve as Assistant Superintendent of Schools for a term commencing on or before November 5, 2021 through June 30, 2026 pursuant to the terms of the Employment Agreement attached hereto as Exhibit "A", which Exhibit "A" is made a part of the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of School Directors at its meeting of August 3, 2021.

DULY RESOLVED this 3rd day of August, 2021 by the Board of School Directors of the Schuylkill Valley School District, Berks County, Pennsylvania, in lawful session duly assembled.

**Board Action: Moved by Kevin Raudenbush and seconded by Linda Lash to approve the resolution that the Board of School Directors, pursuant to 24 P.S. §10-1076, hereby elects and approves Dr. Heilman to serve as Assistant Superintendent of Schools for a term commencing on or before November 5, 2021 through June 30, 2026 pursuant to the terms of the Employment Agreement attached hereto as Exhibit "A", which Exhibit "A" is made a part of the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of School Directors at its meeting of August 3, 2021.**

Roll Call Vote

**Yeas: Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi, Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Amendment to Resolution

3.6 Resolved by the Board of School Directors of the Schuylkill Valley School District that the positions necessitated under Policy 103 and Policy 104 for Title IX enforcement are as follows: (Amendment to motion 4.3, approved at the July 26, 2021 Board meeting)

- 1) Title IX Coordinator-Staff: Robin Brightbill, Director of Human Resources;
- 2) Title IX Coordinator-Students: Stephanie Deibler, Athletic Director;
- 3) Title IX Investigator: Robin Brightbill, Director of Human Resources;
- 4) Alternate Title IX Investigators: **Building Principal from a building other than where the matter is being investigated;**
- 5) Independent Decision Maker: **Dr. Janet Heilman, Assistant Superintendent;**
- 6) Independent person to handle appeals: Kate Costenbader, Supervisor of Special Education;
- 7) Compliance Officer: **Dr. Cathy Taschner, Superintendent of Schools.**

Be it further Resolved that the standard to be employed by the School District in investigating and evaluating any claims under Policy 103 and Policy 104 shall be a Preponderance of the Evidence standard (more likely than not that the incident occurred as alleged). This standard shall govern all Title IX investigations.

**Board Action: Moved by David Moll and seconded by Alfonso Rossi to approve the resolution in Item 3.6, as presented, that the positions necessitated under Policy 103 and Policy 104 for Title IX enforcement are as listed above (Amendment to motion 4.3, approved at the July 26, 2021 Board meeting). Be it further Resolved that the standard to be employed by the School District in investigating and evaluating any claims under**

Policy 103 and Policy 104 shall be a Preponderance of the Evidence standard (more likely than not that the incident occurred as alleged). This standard shall govern all Title IX investigations.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

#### 4.0 POLICY, PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

##### Employment

The Board is requested to consider and approve the employment of the following (all elections are contingent upon receipt and district approval of all necessary pre-employment forms, certification, state-mandated physical examinations, clearances, etc.):

- 4.1 Mr. Zane Bachert, Special Education (Emotional Support) Teacher at the High School, MS+36, Step 2, \$57,549, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr. Philip Klahold, effective pending release from current assignment.

**Board Action: Moved by Robert Dempsey and seconded by Kevin Raudenbush to approve the employment in Item 4.1, as presented.**

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

#### 5.0 CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY

- 5.1 The Board is requested to consider and approve ratification of the one-year agreement for contracting of services with the BCIU, for providing basic and special education to juveniles incarcerated in the Berks County Jail System, not to exceed \$285,000, effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

**Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Robert Dempsey to approve ratification of the one-year agreement for contracting of services with the BCIU, for providing basic and special education to juveniles incarcerated in the Berks County Jail System, not to exceed \$285,000, effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.**

Mrs. Lash thanked Mr. Miller for facilitating the meeting with Commissioner Rivera and Deputy Warden Smith on July 16, 2021. They explained the program in detail and the information was much appreciated. Mr. Bendigo stated that the contract has been cut down to one year. He asked if he understands correctly the section stating that if we do not renew the contract, we're obligated to hire the teachers that the BCIU is currently using. Mr. Brian Boland, District Solicitor, stated this was a good question. There's an act called the Transfer of Entities Act where if you terminate a program in the IU, the sending district would pull back those employees. It's not perfectly clear that it applies in this case, although the IU thinks that it may, so it's a possibility that we could have these employees on our rolls under the Transfer of Entities Act. It's something that we will look at this coming year to determine if that applies here in this particular case, but this is a real issue. Mr. Bendigo commented that with that issue in there, he would have to vote 'no' on this contract. He asked why are we not continuing what we did previously for the past fifteen years if we're only going to do it for one more year. Mr. Miller stated that he would take Commissioner Rivera at his word that he is going to work over the next year to find a better resolution to this system. Also, our Administration has looked at the people involved and feel there are a lot of options that we could use moving forward. He wants to let the people who do the job get together for a year and brainstorm this issue and see if we can come up

with a better system moving forward. Mrs. Kleffel asked to review where we stand with this topic in six to eight months. Dr. Heilman noted that a meeting is already scheduled for November and she and Mrs. Costenbader will meet periodically to discuss this topic. Mr. Bendigo stated that the break-even point of the contract was fifteen to sixteen students enrolled. When the BCIU did their presentation to the Board they stated that the number kept going down. Just so everyone is fully aware that this contract could obligate the school district for more than what we're going to get reimbursed from PDE for the number of students that would be in that program in the forthcoming year. Mr. Miller stated that they did address this with Commissioner Rivera.

**Yeas: Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**  
**Nays: Bendigo, Mertz**

**Motion carried.**

**6.0 OTHER BUSINESS/GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Mr. Raudenbush stated that we would be remiss if something wasn't said about what just happened tonight, and what just happened tonight is a changing of the guard. He looks forward to very competent and excellent leadership in this district. He looks forward to healing some wounds for this district, and looks forward to care and compassion for each other. He really looks forward to this district getting back on its feet and doing the right things.

**7.0 ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by David Moll and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel that, there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.



Linda R. Lash, Secretary  
Board of School Directors