

Lehigh Area School District
1000 Union Street
Lehigh, PA 18235
Monday, September 12, 2022 6:00 PM
WORKSHOP MEETING - MINUTES



1. Opening Exercises

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Opening exercises included the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

B. Call to Order

Board President, J. Beers called the September 12, 2022 Workshop Meeting to order at 6:11 PM. Meeting was delayed due to technical difficulties.

C. Roll Call

PR/AB

PR**	Ms. Joy Beers	PR	Mr. Nathan Foeller	PR	Mr. Brian Shaner
AB	Mr. Richard R. Beltz	PR	Mr. Jeremy Glaush	PR	Mrs. Kerry Sittler
PR	Ms. Barbara Bowes	PR	Ms. Heather Neff	AB***	Ms. April Walker

***J. Beers present via Zoom*

****A. Walker arrived at 7:22 PM*

Also Present:

Dr. Christina Fish, Superintendent

Mrs. Mary Figura, Assistant to the Superintendent

Mr. Edward Rarick, Business Administrator

Ms. Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary

Kevin Burbank, Lauren Cortright, Fred Kemmerer, Jarrad Hedes, Carrie Vale, David Krause, Aaron Sebelin, Stephen Ebbert, Suzanne Howland, Floyd Brown, Samantha Kistler

D. Public Comment

D. Krause questioned what the policy was on running the meeting. C. Fish said she checked with the solicitor and he said if the President and Vice-President were unable to run the meeting, then the Secretary can. She said the Board can appoint someone in the position in the future, and it does not invalidate the meeting.

C. Vale mentioned that it was very difficult to find information with kids in different grades and sports. She said she gets information randomly through email, voicemail and in different areas on the website. She said she had offered to help with communications. S. Howland and S. Ebbert discussed messages they had sent from the Powerschool Alert System. C. Vale said she did not receive the email with attachments. J. Glaush recommended using the pop-ups on each building site. C. Fish recommended having a test parent for each building and would check to see how the Powerschool Alert System sends out the emails.

2. Finance

A. Portnoff Law Presentation

E. Rarick introduced Kevin Burbank from Portnoff Law to give the Board a Presentation. K. Burbank explained how Portnoff gives incentives to pay taxes. He said there was a 40% reduction in delinquent accounts and over 55% have not been charged attorney fees. He said the total cost was very minimal at 0.4% as opposed to \$7.8 million collected. He mentioned how the District pays for the first letter to go out and Portnoff offers flexible payment plans and hardship programs for taxpayers. He explained the process and timeline. He stated that the change in the law in November 2021 created a new step in the process with the validation process of the debt. He explained how this allows taxpayers to object to a debt. He said there was a new fee schedule and a new notice would be coming but would need approval by the Board with a resolution. He said most fees at the end are charged under extenuating circumstances. He believed it created more predictability. He mentioned that it was a 2-3 year process in the past to recuperate taxes because there was no incentive.

B. Shaner asked how he was being paid. K. Burbank said through the fees charged. He said they treat everyone fairly. He felt that Portnoff would not be in as many places as they are if they did not do a good job. B. Shaner and K. Burbank discussed the sale process. B. Shaner asked how many homes were sold in the last year. K. Burbank said he would find out and let E. Rarick know.

B. Grant Update

M. Figura reviewed the District's PCCD Grant. She explained how the PCCD grant is for mental health, security and safety. She mentioned the District has other consolidated grants such as Title I for reading and math, Title II for professional development, Title III through the IU consortium for English language learners and Title IV for safe supportive schools and technology. She also mentioned the Reducing Underage Drinking Grant which was overseen by the Police, the Ready to Learn Grant which opens at the end of September and may supplement some salaries, and the ESSER ARP Grant which helps to reduce gaps during COVID. She also mentioned the Homeless Grant which allows for supplies and transportation for homeless students.

M. Figura discussed the Food Service Assistance Grant and how the District would be able to submit for two schools. She said the funds could be used to purchase new equipment, replace old equipment or renovate an existing piece of equipment. She recommended the District apply for this grant since we are currently looking to replace convection steamers at the Middle and High Schools for a cost of approximately \$50,000. She said with the possibility of getting an addition of a grill at the High School it could be up to \$100,000. She stated this was a competitive grant and was not guaranteed.

M. Figura stated the PCCD grant was non-competitive and could be used over a two-year period. She said the District was awarded \$271,608 in grant money. She reviewed the physical security and mental health needs for the buildings written in the grant and reviewed each line item dollar amount. B/ Shaner questioned if the bus drivers and crossing guards had received training in the past. M. Figura and C. Fish said they would look into it. K. Sittler questioned what a vape detection machine was. S. Howland explained how it detects the vapor from the vape and sends a silent alarm to administration. J. Glaush asked if it was a large problem. S. Howland said yes. J. Glaush thanked M. Figura for the information. He said he had been waiting for it since December.

C. Giant Donation

E. Rarick said collection boxes were placed at Giant for school supplies and would be donated to the schools. He said the items would be held to distribute them after the donation is accepted. B. Shaner asked how it would be distributed. C. Fish said some were developmental and some would be need-based by priority.

D. Attorney for Special Education

C. Fish showed an informational video by Sweet, Stevens, Katz and Williams. She explained how she had worked with them prior and that they cover numerous areas. She recommended them for Special Education Services. She explained that there is a pool counsel available through the IU. She explained that the District is currently utilizing King Spry. She said she had invited them to send a proposal but had not received one yet.

B. Bowes asked what would happen with the open cases. C. Fish said it would depend on where we were in each case. B. Bowes wanted to know how much time King Spry was allowed to respond. C. Fish said it was sent three and a half weeks ago. B. Bowes asked if they would be taking the new cases. C. Fish said yes. N. Foeller asked how it would work with insurance. C. Fish said the insurance is covered through CM Regent. N. Foeller asked to check the costs with the insurance and handing off the cases. C. Fish said she would check. S. Kistler stated she would gladly work with the attorney to assist in any of the cases. B. Bowes asked if they knew how many Special Education issues go to litigation. C. Fish stated there were currently four settlements. B. Bowes asked to see how it had progressed or reduced over the last three to four years. C. Fish explained how they must try to mediate first and not admit fault or identify the complaint as accurate. She said only when it goes in front of a hearing officer and find for the parent.

J. Glaush asked if they receive a roster of legal activity monthly. S. Kistler said yes. J. Glaush asked if it could be shared. S. Kistler said it would need a lot of redaction. J. Glaush did not want to add any additional work.

E. NEF Update

C. Fish said they were moving forward and accepted the offer that was made because of legal advice. She said they were waiting for a response from them. She said it was a unanimous poll that everyone was comfortable with accepting the offer.

A. Walker arrived at this time.

J. Beers asked if the Board felt that the local District Attorney should look into this. B. Bowes read a lengthy excerpt from the Auditor General's report regarding the STEM Program and the QZAb program. She said they were approved for \$8 million and \$6.8 million bonds to finance. She said there is no way the Board could figure it out and that the report was not 100% correct. She said there was additional information found regarding a contract with the for-profit side of the organization. She said the contracts need to be approved by the Board and she would like to bring the District Attorney in to make a determination on whether or not it was criminal. J. Beers wanted to hear from the rest of the Board to see if they would like to move forward. The Board agreed to move forward with it if it would put this situation to rest. J. Beers asked to bring this to the Board Meeting for a vote. The Board agreed.

3. Academic Affairs

None at the time

4. Policy

A. Second Reading and Final Approval of Policies

103 - Discrimination/Title IX Sexual Harassment Affecting Students (and update contact information on attachment)

104 - Discrimination/Title IX Sexual Harassment Affecting Staff (and update contact information on attachment)

122 - Extracurricular Activities

123 - Interscholastic Athletics

240.1 - Contests/Academic/Performance Competitions

707 - Use of School Facilities

808 - Food Services

B. Bowes said she would like to have the community's input on the policies. J. Partenio recommended changing Mrs. Christina Fish to Dr. Christina Fish. B. Shaner asked if they needed to update the Food Service Policy for the new program. C. Fish recommended not changing it for a temporary change.

5. Athletics

None at the time

6. Buildings & Grounds

None at the time

7. Personnel

A. Candidates for Employment

Tiffany Strausberger - Supervisor of Alternative Education/Assistant Supervisor of Special Services/District Assessment Coordinator at an annual salary of \$70,000, prorated for the 2022-2023 school year with an effective date of October 10, 2022.

Lauren Marks - Long Term Substitute Learning Support Teacher at the Elementary Center, at a Bachelor's Step I with an annual salary of \$43,000, effective date of September 1, 2022, pending any necessary documentation.

Natalie White - Full Time Paraprofessional at a Step I with an annual salary of \$16,736.00, prorated for the 2022-2023 school year with an effective date of September 12, 2022, pending any necessary documentation.

Donald Steigerwalt - Full-Time Day Shift High School Lead Custodian with a stipend as the lead per the contract for the 22-23 school year and thereafter at \$1,900.00 per school year and an effective date of August 25, 2022.

John Partenio - Lunch Aide at the Elementary Center, at \$10.02 per hour, effective date of September 1, 2022, pending any necessary documentation.

Frances Weible - Lunch Aide at the Elementary Center, at \$10.02 per hour, effective date of October 3, 2022, pending any necessary documentation.

Laurel Zimmerman - Elementary Science Department Chair

B. Candidates for the Substitute List

James Blakeslee - Substitute Teacher for PSSA Testing

Timothy Tkach - Substitute Teacher

Angela Keck - Substitute/Guest Teacher

Sheral Anderson-Bamford - Substitute Nurse

Melissa Wagner - Substitute Secretary

Darlene Mebs - Substitute Lunch Aide

C. Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager or Extracurricular Activities

Spring Head Coaches - pending any necessary documentation

Baseball – **Joseph Dietz**

Tennis – **Cody Schuler**

Track and Field – **Erica Pagotto**

Head Softball Coach – **John Zavec**

D. Resignation for Retirement

Todd Weaver - District Utility Custodian effective January 9, 2023 after 28.42 years of service.

Floyd Koehler - Elementary Center Utility Lead Custodian effective January 31, 2023 after 15.27 years of service.

Monah Lorah - Elementary Center Head Cook effective January 31, 2023 after 18.56 years of service.

E. Tenure

Christina Brong - Elementary Teacher hired August 26, 2019

Nicholas Costantino - High School Health and Physical Education Teacher hired August 26, 2019

Melissa Haydt - Elementary School Nurse hired September 23, 2019

F. Professional Development

PREPaRE Training professional development for October 3, October 11 and October 12 in the amount of \$1,045.00. The cost will come out of our new PCCD School Safety Grant.

B. Bowes asked who this was for. S. Kistler said it was for Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, High School Nurse and herself. She said it was a 3-day workshop. B. Shaner questioned the cost of the workshop versus what was listed in the grant presentation. M. Figura said some items would get an adjustment and would still allot funds throughout the year.

8. Miscellaneous

A. LVHN Contract Update

C. Fish said they met as a group and went over the contract with LVHN for services with athletic trainers, etc. She said she would be working with LVHN next week to review the contract. She said one of the services received was onsite mental health counseling. She mentioned there was a therapist available two days per week; however the contract says five days per week. She explained how she reviewed the space today and they tried to justify the caseload. She said they also discussed other resources not being addressed. S. Howland and S. Ebbert mentioned the need for it in the High School and Middle School

B. Open Records Request

J. Partenio gave an update on Open Record Requests which included duplicate requests. C. Fish said there was a final determination made for an appeal with Mr. Bradley. She said she met with Mr. Bradley about finding a solution and determined they would utilize BoardDocs to load all redacted invoices on the public section of the agendas. She mentioned that the information was currently being supplied for the Board and would now be available for the public. She said he agreed and said he would submit a sampling for review of 3-6 documents for each year requested.

N. Foeller asked what the purpose of a duplicate request was. C. Fish said to get additional information that may not have been received previously.

E. Rarick mentioned that we could add the Open Records Request log to the District Website. The Board agreed. B. Shaner asked if the log could also include if the information was granted or denied.

9. Communications

A. Public Comment

B. Shaner asked if the District could accommodate a Meet the Teacher Night prior to school starting next year. C. Fish explained that it was a contractual issue for this year and hoped it would change in the future. S. Ebbert, A. Sebelin and S. Howland all gave updates on their building's Meet the Teacher or Orientation evenings. They also mentioned how Bullying/Cyberbullying was reviewed in the Middle School and High School.

B. Adjournment

MOTION by K. Sittler, SECONDED by A. Walker, to adjourn the Meeting.

VOTE: YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

The September 12, 2022 Workshop Meeting was adjourned at 8:08 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Edward Rarick, Board Secretary
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary