

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Meeting
Board Minutes

Slatington, PA
June 22, 2020

PURPOSE The special meeting of the Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors was called to order virtually, via Google Meet, by the President, Mr. Gary S. Fedorcha, at 7:12 p.m. on Monday, June 22, 2020.

Mr. Fedorcha announced that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on the NLSDDmedia YouTube Channel. All votes this evening will be roll call votes and board members were reminded to state their name before making first and second motions.

ROLL CALL Members present: Mr. Robin T. Distler, Mr. Mathias J. Green, Jr., Mrs. Michelle M. Heckman, Mrs. Gale N. Husack, Mr. Robert J. Kern, Jr., Mrs. Donna M. Kulp, Mrs. Michele L. Martineau, and Mr. Gary S. Fedorcha (8)

Members absent: Mr. Robert J. Keegan, Jr.,(1)

Non-members present: Mrs. Susan Bahnick, Mrs. Jill Chamberlain, Mrs. Rhonda Frantz, Mr. Bryan Geist, Mr. Eric Hill, Mr. Matthew Link, Mr. Eugene Marks, Mrs. Sherri Molitoris, Mr. Scott Pyne, Dr. Tania Stoker..

VISITORS Approximately twenty (20) visitors viewed the meeting.

SPECIAL BOARD REPORTS Superintendent's Report - Mr. Link turned over the meeting to Mr. Bryan Geist who presented a summary of the NLSDD Sports Resocialization Plan. This is a plan that is required by PDE that must be approved by the school board and posted on our website to allow our sports activities to begin in the district. Mr. Geist explained that all athletes will be restricted to utilizing Bulldog Stadium. Restrictions in place will include bathrooms open for one athlete at a time, and social distancing. The trainers will be evaluating athletes at the north gate main entrance. All athletes and coaches will self evaluate using the QR code displayed at the stadium and results will be tracked by the trainers. Athletes will be thermo-scanned for temperature checks. The weight room will not be available for use. All workouts are voluntary and only one team will be allowed in the stadium to practice at a time. Each athlete is encouraged to bring 2 gallons of water. Any athlete with a temperature and no other symptoms will have an oral temperature taken. Those with high temperatures will be isolated until a parent can pick them up and the communication chain will be activated. If we learn of a positive COVID-19 case, that team will have practices canceled for three working days and the communication chain will be activated. The communication chain will not identify the athlete and will follow all HIPAA guidelines. Mrs. Martineau asked what happens if an athlete does not have a smart device. Mr. Geist answered that an ipad, that will be cleaned after each use, will be available. Mrs. Husack thanked Mr. Geist for putting the plan together and asked how we are handling cross country athletes. Mr. Geist explained that they will check in at the stadium, but they naturally social distance when they go on their runs. They will not be confined to the stadium like other teams. Mrs. Husack questioned the different phases, who is controlling those phases and the parameters surrounding them. Mr. Geist answered PDE and the Department of Health designate the color phases. This plan is being implemented now during voluntary workouts to see how it is handled by our athletes before the mandatory practices begin in August. Starting July 1, we are going to be in Phase 1 and all practices will be outside with six foot social distancing. The trainers will be educating our athletes on personal health/hygiene best practices. Mrs. Husack asked about contact sports like soccer and football in the fall. Mr. Geist stated that at this time, under the green phase, all contact sports will be allowed but are being labeled as high, medium and low risk. Mrs. Husack stated that we are approving this plan before our education plan and based on recent news, there have been spikes in COVID in sports that have resumed, so how are we going to keep our athletes safe? Mr. Geist stated that is why we are going slow, and we are continuously monitoring the athletes. By taking it slowly, we are helping our athletes so they are heat acclimated and conditioned for the start of practices in August. Mr. Kern questioned whether equipment is going to be sanitized. Mr. Geist answered that we have a great tradition of cleaning our equipment after practices, and that will continue along with educating our athletes on prevention of all communicable diseases. In addition, each athlete will be encouraged to wash their hands after practice. Mr. Kern asked at what point will the weight room be reopened. Mr. Geist answered that the hope is to have it open in August after evaluating the practices in July. Mr. Kern thanked Mr. Geist for the quick turnaround on the plan. Mr. Geist acknowledged our partner, St. Luke's University Health Network, who

**SPECIAL
BOARD
REPORTS
(cont.)**

put the plan through the paces, as well as our administration. Mr. Kern asked what happens if the basketball or wrestling teams would go off campus and hold a practice. Mr. Geist said he feels confident that our coaches have not met and will not meet until he gets authorization from Mr. Link. Mrs. Martineau asked for clarification if the disinfectant and PPE is being supplied by the district. Mr. Link stated that the PCCD COVID grant will cover the cost of the PPE. Mrs. Husack questioned whether the bathrooms would be cleaned after each practice before the next team arrives. Mr. Link stated that we will have to schedule our custodians to do that much like we plan to do for school buses. Mr. Distler stated that Mr. Geist did a great job. Mr. Geist said it was a team effort.

Mr. Fedorcha reported that an executive session was held virtually prior to tonight's meeting to discuss personnel issues.

PERSONNEL

Mrs. Martineau made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Green, that the Board of Education approves the following personnel item:

Unpaid Leave
of Absence

Approve the request of employee #7147 to extend her unpaid leave of absence, in accordance with Appendix D of the 2017-2021 NLEA Collective Bargaining Agreement, from August 25, 2020 until the beginning of the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year, on or about January 26, 2021.

Roll call.

YEA: Mr. Distler, Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (8)

NAY: None (0)

Motion carried.

**NEW
BUSINESS**

Mrs. Kulp Made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Kern, that the Board of Education approves the following New Business Item:

Athletics Health
& Safety Plan
2020-2021

Approve the Athletics Health and Safety Plan, which is aligned to the PDE Preliminary Guidance for Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools, to allow our student athletes to resume sports-related activities as of July 1, 2020.

Roll call.

YEA: Mr. Distler, Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (8)

NAY: None (0)

Motion carried.

FINANCIAL

Mr. Green made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Distler, that the Board of Education approves the following financial items:

List of
Bills

Approve the Following List of Bills:
General Fund month of June, 2020

Fuel Bids
2020-2021

Approve the awarding of fuel bids to the following companies with a contract period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021:

UNLEADED GASOLINE TANK WAGON DELIVERY – Awarded to PAPCO, Inc. at
o a fixed price of \$1.6739 per gallon (item #16 on bid summary)

#2 GRADE FUEL OIL TANK TRANSPORT DELIVERY – PAPCO, Inc. at
o a fixed price of \$1.3407 per gallon (item #3 on bid summary)

#2 GRADE FUEL OIL TANK WAGON DELIVERY – Awarded to PAPCO, Inc. at
o a fixed price of \$1.8949 per gallon (item #4 on bid summary)

BIO DIESEL FUEL TANK WAGON DELIVERY – Awarded to PAPCO, Inc. at
o a fixed price of \$1.7458 per gallon and an additional \$.0425 (winterization additive) per gallon (item #8 and 18 on bid summary)

FINANCIAL**(cont)**

- Bond Re-structuring of 2012 and 2015 Bonds Recommend that the Board of Education adopt a parameters bond resolution as presented by Bond Counsel, Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC, authorizing a 2020 general obligation bond issue of up to \$8,000,000 to restructure the district's 2012 and 2015 bonds to achieve short-term debt service reductions.
- Worker's Compensation School District Insurance Consortium Appoint School District's Insurance Consortium as the district's Workers' Compensation carrier for the 2020-2021 school year at an estimated premium of \$65,488.00, approximately an increase of \$2,789.00. This amount is an estimated total, final cost is based on actual payroll figures
- California First Leasing Corporation Computer Leasing Upon final approval of the General Fund 2020-2021 budget, approve the lease from California First National Bank, 28 Executive Park, Suite 200, Irvine, CA 92612 for \$50,000 per year with a lease term of 36 months and a one (\$1) dollar buyout option at the end of the lease agreement. The lease will be used to purchase chromebooks, chromebook cases, and projectors.
- PCG Medical Access Administrator Approve to authorize proper officials to enter into an agreement with Public Consulting Group (PCG), an approved contractor for the Department of Human Services, to administer the school-based ACCESS Program claims. There is no increase over last year's rates.
- School Dentist Approve to appoint Dr. Harry Shleifer of Broadway Family Dentistry as the school dentist for the 2020-2021 school year at the quoted fee of \$1.00 per dental exam needed.
- Brandywine Transportation Addendum 2019-2020 SY Approve the addendum to the Brandywine Transportation Contract for the 2019-2020 school year due to the mandatory closure of schools due to COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with Act 13 of 2020.
- Preferred EAP Approve Preferred EAP as the district's employee assistance plan administrator at an estimated cost of \$1,500.00 This amount is an estimated total; final cost is based on total number of eligible employees. There is no increase over last year's rate.
- CLIU PAIUnet Agreement 2020-2026 Allow administration to sign the CLIU PAIUnet Telecommunication and Internet Consortium Agreement for the procurement of E-rate eligible services such as data transmission, internet access, fiber or copper services. This agreement covers the e-rate funding years 2020-2026.
- Roll call.
 YEA: Mr. Distler, Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (8)
 NAY: None (0)
 Motion carried.
- Budget Discussion Budget Discussion: Mr. Fedorcha opened up the discussion on the budget and asked the board members for input based on the information presented at the June 8, 2020, school board meeting. Mr. Link shared the board consideration slides that were presented at the last meeting. The board had agreed to the first three items at the last meeting (refinancing bonds, renegotiated transportation contract, and eliminating two positions due to attrition) which left the percentage of tax increase to be determined at today's meeting. Mr. Link shared that with those considerations, the budget is still short \$417,564 and he shared a slide with the tax revenue generated from various percentages of tax increase. Mr. Fedorcha asked for a motion for a percentage increase. Mr. Green stated that he has spent a lot of time reviewing the budget. With the \$2 million dollars in savings by refinancing the bond, the fact that we are taking very little out of the fund balance, and he feels confident that the 19-20 budget will have under a \$1 million dollar shortfall, he proposed a 0% increase. Mrs. Heckman stated, that with the first version of the budget in May, she felt a tax increase was necessary, but since the three changes were made to the budget, she agrees with Mr. Green that a 0% tax increase makes sense and is fiscally responsible to the community.

FINANCIAL**(cont)**

- Zero Mill Budget Increase Mr. Green made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Heckman, that the Northern Lehigh School District Board of Directors accept a zero mill tax increase for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Discussion Mr. Kern asked that due to the state tax equalization for Northampton and Lehigh County, how much would Lehigh County's taxes be raised in a zero mill budget increase. Mrs. Molitoris replied that taxes in Lehigh County would still be increased \$43 per person based on a median assessed value of \$149,000 and Northampton County residents would see a \$62 reduction in taxes compared to last year. Mr. Fedorcha asked Mrs. Molitoris what the impact on future budgets is when you have a zero mill increase. Mrs. Molitoris explained that if you do not raise taxes to the index, that is money that you never get back or can build in your budget for subsequent years. Mr. Fedorcha questioned the bond savings in the next few years. Mrs. Molitoris explained that yes we will not have to pay \$2 million dollars in bond payments in the 2021 or 2022 school year, but it will be back on in 2023. Mr. Green stated that he does understand what Mrs. Molitoris is saying, but if this year's budget comes in under \$1 million dollars, that is \$1 million dollars going back into fund balance and if there is a similar situation next year, that gives us \$2 million dollars going back into the fund balance. He feels confident that we will be okay for the short term and he thinks it is something we can do and should do for our taxpayers. Mrs. Husack asked Mrs. Molitoris if 3.5% was the most taxes could be raised this year and to explain how is that number arrived at? Mrs. Molitoris explained that Act 1 has a limit each year which is a percentage of the millage rate from the previous year. Due to the equalization of mills, one county will always max out at the rate before the other county. Mr. Fedorcha asked what the millage rate would be next year. Mrs. Molitoris said that would be determined after the anticipated expenditures are built into next year's budget. Mrs. Husack stated that while this year it seems like a good idea to have a 0% increase, her concern is is that some of our residents will still get an increase and even if we put money back in the budget, we are still starting behind for next year's budget with a lot of "what ifs" still in play in the near future. If we do not think ahead, we may be hurting our community and have to pass an even higher, or more devastating increase than we are looking at today. Mrs. Husack stated she does not want a 3.5% increase but is not comfortable with a 0% increased based on the numbers she heard today. Mr. Green stated that the 3.5% is set by the state and is no indication of how we are doing as a district. Next year it may be 2% or 4%, but it is not a number that we as a district have much control over regardless of what is done. Mr. Fedorcha stated that as a member of the LCTI Board of Directors as well, every one of the nine school districts has said that this year is bad, but each district agrees that next year is going to be worse.
- Motion to accept 0% tax increase for the 2020-2021 school year.
Roll call.
YEA: Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman (2)
NAY: Mr. Distler, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (6)
Motion defeated.
- 2.5% Budget Increase Mr. Distler made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Kulp, that the Northern Lehigh School District increase the budget by 2.5% for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Motion to accept 2.5% tax increase for the 2020-2021 school year.
Roll call.
YEA: Mr. Distler, Mrs. Kulp, Mr. Fedorcha (3)
NAY: Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Martineau (5)
Motion defeated.
- 2% Budget Increase Mr. Kern made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Kulp, that the Northern Lehigh School District increase the budget by 2% for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Motion to accept 2% tax increase for the 2020-2021 school year.
Roll call.
YEA: Mr. Kern, Mrs. Martineau, Mr. Distler, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Fedorcha (6)
NAY: Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman (2)
Motion carried.

**FINANCIAL
(cont)**

Mr. Fedorcha thanked the board and commented he knows how difficult a task it was to make this decision and how everyone agonized over this vote. The board votes for the betterment of the district, students and the community. Mr. Fedorcha stated that the board members do not get paid to serve and their personal taxes increase just like everyone else.

**ADOPTION
OF FINAL
BUDGET
FOR
2020-2021**

Mr. Distler made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Kulp, that the Board of Education approves the proposed final budget with a 2% increase and:

It is recommended that the Board of Education adopts the proposed general fund final budget of the Northern Lehigh School District for the 2019-2020 school year in the amount of \$33,763,390.00

1. A 23.0944 millage rate for Lehigh County(\$2.309 per \$100 Assessed Valuation (100% MV) and a 65.4917 millage rate for Northampton County (6.549 per \$100 Assessed Valuation (50% MV)..
2. A \$5.00 Re Resident Per Capita Tax, taxable on 18 year olds and over based on Section 679 of the School Code of 1949. No change from 2019-2020.
3. Taxes under Act 511 with no changes from 2018-2020:
 - a. A 1% Earned Income Tax shared equally with coterminous municipalities.
 - b. A Realty Transfer Tax shared equally with the coterminous municipalities.
 - c. A \$5.00 Resident Per Capita Tax taxable on residents age 18 and over.
 - d. A \$5.00 Local Service Tax (formerly Emergency and Municipal Services Tax)

RECOMMENDATION That the Board of Education adopts the 2020-2021 Northern Lehigh School District Budget.

Roll call.

YEA: Mr. Kern, Mrs. Martineau, Mr. Distler, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Fedorcha (6)

NAY: Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman (2)

Motion carried.

Homestead/
Farmstead
Resolution
2020

Mr. Kern made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Green to approve the following Homestead/
Farmstead Resolution, as presented.

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**2020 Homestead and Farmstead Exclusion Resolution**

RESOLVED, by the Board of School Directors of the Northern Lehigh School District, that homestead and farmstead exclusion real estate tax assessment reductions are authorized for the school year beginning July 1, 2020, under the provisions of the Homestead Property Exclusion Program Act (part of Act 50 of 1998) and the Taxpayer Relief Act (Act 1 of 2006), as follows:

1. **Aggregate amount available for homestead and farmstead real estate tax reduction.** The following amounts are available for homestead and farmstead real estate tax reduction for the school year beginning July 1, 2020:
 - a. **Gambling tax funds.** The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has notified the School District that PDE will pay to the School District during the school year pursuant to Act 1, 53 P.S. § 6926.505(b), as a property tax reduction allocation funded by gambling tax funds, the amount of \$946,095.07 plus an additional \$0, which was undistributed school year beginning July 1, 2019, for a total amount of \$946,095.07.
 - b. **Philadelphia tax credit reimbursement funds.** PDE has notified the School District that PDE will pay to the School District during the school year pursuant to Act 1, 53 P.S. § 6926.324(3), as reimbursement for Philadelphia tax credits claimed against the School

District earned income tax by School District resident taxpayers, the amount of \$6,305.97.

c. **Aggregate amount available.** Adding these amounts, the aggregate amount available during the school year for real estate tax reduction is \$952,401.04.

2. **Homestead/farmstead numbers.** Pursuant to Act 50, 54 Pa. C.S. § 8584(i), and Act 1, 53 P.S. § 6926.341(g)(3), the County has provided the School District with a certified report listing approved homesteads and approved farmsteads as follows:

a. **Homestead property number.** The number of approved homesteads within the School District is 3,557.

b. **Farmstead property number.** The number of approved farmsteads within the School District is 20.

c. **Homestead/farmstead combined number.** Adding these numbers, the aggregate number of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads is 3,577.

3. **Real estate tax reduction calculation.** The school board has decided that the homestead exclusion amount and the farmstead exclusion amount shall be equal. Dividing the paragraph 1(c) aggregate amount available during the school year for real estate tax reduction of \$952,401.04 by the paragraph 2(c) aggregate number of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads of 3,577 (before considering the assessed value of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads having an assessed value below the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate assessed value reduction amount to be established as the homestead and farmstead exclusion amount), the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate tax reduction amount applicable to each approved homestead and to each approved farmstead is \$266.26.

Based on calculations provided by the School District Business Office from the best available information and carefully evaluated by the School Board, considering the assessed value of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads having an assessed value below the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate assessed value reduction amount to be established as the homestead exclusion and the farmstead exclusion amount, an additional aggregate amount of \$17,004.78 will be available during the school year for real estate tax reduction applicable to approximately 3,405 homesteads and farmsteads, resulting in an additional real estate tax reduction amount available for each homestead and farmstead of \$5.01. Adding this additional amount to the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate tax reduction amount of \$266.26, the final maximum real estate tax reduction amount applicable to each approved homestead and to each approved farmstead is \$ 271.27.

4. **Homestead exclusion calculation.** Dividing the paragraph 3 maximum real estate tax reduction amount of \$271.27 by the School District real estate tax rate of 23.0944 mills (.0230944) for Lehigh County and 65.4917 mills (.0654917) for Northampton County, the maximum real estate assessed value reduction to be reflected on tax notices as a homestead exclusion for each approved homestead is \$11,745.00 for Lehigh County or \$4,142.00 for Northampton County, and the maximum real estate assessed value reduction to be reflected on tax notices as a farmstead exclusion for each approved farmstead is \$271.24 for Lehigh County or \$271.27 for Northampton County.

5. **Homestead/farmstead exclusion authorization – July 1 tax bills.** 5. The tax notice issued to the owner of each approved homestead within the School District shall reflect a homestead exclusion real estate assessed value reduction equal to the lesser of: (a) the County-established assessed value of the homestead, or (b) the paragraph 4 maximum real estate assessed value reduction of \$11,745 for Lehigh County or \$4,142 for Northampton County. The tax notice issued to the owner of each approved farmstead within the School District shall reflect an additional farmstead exclusion real estate

assessed value reduction equal to the lesser of: (a) the County-established assessed value of the farmstead, or (b) the paragraph 4 maximum real estate assessed value reduction of \$11,745 for Lehigh County or \$4,142 for Northampton County. For purposes of this Resolution, "approved homestead" and "approved farmstead" shall mean homesteads and farmsteads listed in the report referred to in paragraph 2 above and received by the School District from the County Assessment Office on or before May 1 pursuant to Act 1, 53 P.S. § 6926.341(g)(3), based on homestead/farmstead applications filed with the County Assessment Office on or before March 1. This paragraph 5 will apply to tax notices issued based on the initial tax duplicate used in issuing initial real estate tax notices for the school year, which will be issued on or promptly after July 1, and will not apply to interim real estate tax bills.

Roll call.

YEA: Mr. Distler, Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (8)

NAY: None (0)

Motion carried.

Mr. Fedorcha thanked the board for their time. Due to the need to have a reopening of school plan approved before August, Mr. Fedorcha informed the board that a July board meeting will be necessary. Date and time for the meeting will be set after discussion with Mr. Link.

**ADJOURN-
MENT**

Mrs. Husack made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Martineau, that the special meeting of the Northern Lehigh School District Board of School Directors is adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Roll call.

YEA: Mr. Distler, Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (8)

NAY: None (0)

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Gale N. Husack
Secretary

ATTEST: _____ President
Gary S. Fedorcha