

Seneca Valley School District



SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES

October 4, 2021

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Mr. Eric DiTullio, President, called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.
 - A. **Moment of Silence** - The meeting was opened with a moment of silence in memory of Francis Vincent Barnes, Ph.D. - Dr. Vitale
<https://www.theintell.com/obituaries/p0149042>
 - B. **Pledge of Allegiance** - Andrew Zavolta, a fourth grader from Rowan Elementary School, continued the board meeting initiative, "I Led the Pledge" by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. <https://svtube.svsd.net/play?id=u68k8jxuug>
 - C. **Roll Call** by Lisa Mislán, Board Secretary, showed the following members in attendance: Ms. Leslie Bredl, Mr. Eric DiTullio, Ms. Susan Harrison, Mr. Timothy Hester, Mr. Mike Jacobs, Mr. James Nickel, Mr. Frederick Peterson, Mr. Jeffrey Widdowson, and Ms. Kathy Whittle.

Other present included Others present included Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Matthew McKinley, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary; Dr. Sean McCarty, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary; Ms. Kyra Bobak, Human Resources Director; Ms. Lynn Burtner, Business Manager; Ms. Linda Andreassi, Communications Director; Dr. Jeffrey Roberts, Director of Student Services; Mr. Randy Miller, Buildings and Grounds Director; Mr. Jim Pearson, Transportation Director; Dr. Marie Palano, Supervisor of Analytics and Federal Programs; Ms. Annie Mersing, Director of Advancement; and Mr. David Mongillo, Solicitor.

2. INFORMATION REPORTS

- A. **Dates to Remember** - Ms. Andreassi announced the following dates to remember:

October	National Principals Month and Breast Cancer Awareness Month
October 7	Homecoming Parade and Carnival
October 9	Homecoming Dances, Grades 9-12, 7-10:00 p.m.
October 11	Act 80 Day, No School for Students
October 12	Regular School Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
October 16	SHS PSAT Testing
October 22	SVAOC Cyber - End of First Nine Weeks, Grades 7-12
October 22 & 29	District-Wide Pink Out Days
October 27	SV Grades 7-12 End of First Nine Weeks

- B. **Seneca Valley All-Star Award Winner** – The late Ray Albert, Bus Driver for ABC Transit, Inc. was honored as October's SV All-Star Award Winner.
- C. **Student/Staff Recognition** - Ms. Andreassi announced the following student recognitions:
1. Officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) recently announced Seneca Valley Senior Daniel Spear, as a Semifinalist in the 67th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. As a Semifinalist, Mr. Spear will have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,500 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$30 million that will be offered next spring. About 95 percent of the Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, which will be announced in February 2022, and approximately half of the Finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar® title. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state.
 2. Seneca Valley Seniors Nicholas Foulkrod, Chris Helmsen, Kason Kunkelmann, Nick Nedzesky, Alex Neff, Shanker Pillai, Veronica Pimenova, Xavier Reese, Aidan Uher, Liam Volk-Klos and Merrick Wimer have been named Commended Students in the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program. A Letter of Commendation from the school and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), which conducts the program, was presented by the principal to these scholastically talented seniors. These scholastically talented seniors are 11 of about 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation that are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 scorers of more than 1.5 million students who entered the 2022 competition by taking the 2020 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). Seneca Valley Senior High School Principal Bob Ceh added, “Our student body has a tremendous amount of talent and success within it and through the results of our PSAT test, these 11 students represent the talent and success of our academic programs. We are very proud of all of them and are excited for their current achievement as well as their future potential.”
- D. **Information Technology Professionals Day (September 21)** - The school technology assistants, as listed below, were recognized for their hard work and dedication to students and families during the pandemic.
- Jodi Gianfrancesco - Connoquenessing Valley Elementary School
 - Susan Hilliard - Intermediate High School
 - Jennifer Kaufman - Senior High School
 - Patricia Ristey - Ryan Gloyer Middle School
 - Sandra Suski - Rowan Elementary School
 - Kelly Swain - Haine Elementary/Middle School
 - Pamela Weis - Evans City Elementary/Middle School

E. **COVID-19 Update** - Dr. Vitale provided a COVID-19 update as follows:

Pennsylvania Department of Health Early Warning Monitoring Dashboard for Butler County

- Difference in confirmed cases, most recent seven days vs. previous seven days, up by 84 cases
- Incidence Rate per 100,000 residents is up to 383.8
- PCR Positivity Rate for the most recent seven days is 15.5%
- Difference in the average daily number of COVID-19 hospitalizations is down by .9; however, Butler Hospital is experiencing a surge
- The percent of emergency department visits is up by 2.3% in the most recent seven days

Seneca Valley Zip Codes

- Seven-day rolling average incidence rate per 100,000 residents is 261.82 cases
- 14-day rolling average incidence rate per 100,000 residents is 33.4 cases
 - These rates are categorized as high transmission levels by the CDC

Seneca Valley Dashboard

- 25 active student cases
- 82 students in quarantine
- Two active staff cases with three staff in quarantine
- Total active cases = 27
- Total in quarantine = 85
- There are 10 reported cases at Haine Middle School
 - 6-8 more cases came in today
 - Classrooms will continue to be open and parents have been and will be notified; livestreaming will be permitted

F. **Agency Reports**

1. Vo-Tech - Mr. Peterson noted that there was much activity on the campus during his tour and that a new sports medicine program is being offered this year.
2. I.U. IV - No update at this time.
3. WPIAL Update - Mr. Timothy Hester reported that several games have been canceled due to COVID-19.

G. **Legislative** - Mr. Eric DiTullio provided an update as follows:

Mask Requirement Rulings

- A federal judge has ruled against parents challenging the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District's masking requirements, saying he did not see evidence that wearing masks violated their religious beliefs.
- The opinion issued last week by Judge Mitchell S. Goldberg didn't dismiss the case against the Chester County district. But it was a rejection of the parents' call for an immediate injunction blocking the mask mandate, which Tredyffrin/Easttown says it is carrying out in compliance with the state's order requiring masks in schools.

- Two other cases challenging that order are working their way through Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Court. Those cases both argue, with different claims, that the order from acting Health Secretary Alison Beam wasn't permitted under Pennsylvania's Disease Prevention and Control Law, which Beam cited as her authority for issuing it. The state maintains the law gave it the power to issue the order. While the Tredyffrin/Easttown parents also argued the state lacked authority, they didn't show why a federal court should address that claim.
- On Thursday, U.S. Middle District Judge Matthew W. Brann refused to issue a temporary restraining order that would lift the COVID-19 mask mandate in the Montoursville Area School District. The parents in this suit did not challenge the order by acting Secretary Beam, but in the Superintendent's authority to change a health and safety plan without action by the school board. In his ruling he said "the Constitution does not shield us from all things we dislike" and "The Constitution does not guarantee students a right to attend school without wearing a mask, and being required to do so neither inflicts irreparable harm nor in any way violates students' right to freely associate and assemble with others." He further stated the parents have failed to demonstrate an infringement of their children's entitlement to a public education because the Montoursville mask mandate does not prevent them from attending school.
- The judge concurred with chief deputy Attorney General Karen M. Roman who, at a September 24 hearing on the parents' motion, said Beam's order was a disease control measure that no Superintendent or School Board could go against.

House Bill 554

- Defeated 94-105
- The bill offered to give any student whose school does not offer full-time, in-person instruction a tuition voucher worth the average per-student state subsidy for their district. The bill is not restricted to just COVID-19-related school closings.

House Bill 1332

- Recently introduced and would modify the school code to require "Online Curriculum Availability." It would require that a school entity post all curriculum offered by the school on its publicly accessible Internet website and update the curriculum information each time new or revised curriculum is used. The information required would include an Internet link or title for every textbook used by the school.
- This is something that we at Seneca and many of the affluent districts of the Commonwealth have been doing.

Senate Bill 552

- Right-to-Know Law reforms passed in the Senate and now moves to the House for consideration. This Bill would create a new process by which agencies, which include school boards, may petition the Office of Open Records (OOR) for relief from a vexatious requester. *Vexatious requesters are individuals who use the RTKL with malicious intent to intimidate, harass, or punish an agency, which results in bogging down the agency and wasting taxpayer resources.* This was never anticipated by the General Assembly when the original statute was passed. Relief could include an OOR order that the agency need not comply with a request from the vexatious requester for up to one year.

H. Financial Reports

1. Operations
2. Senior High Activities
3. Intermediate High Activities
4. Middle School Activities
5. Athletics
6. Food Services
7. Tax Collections
8. Capital Projects Funds

3. **ACTION AGENDA**A. Public Comment was heard by the following:

1. Ms. Amie Courtney
2. Ms. Tammy Blazer
3. Ms. Urmi Batavia
4. Ms. Erin Sheaffer
5. Ms. Lindsay Douglas
6. Ms. Serenity Vincent
7. Ms. Colleen Tanner
8. Ms. Kari Zimmer
9. Ms. Nikki Marnik
10. Ms. Sylena Smith

B. Personnel - Personnel items were discussed in an executive session held prior to this meeting.

1. Resignations - *Professional Substitute* - Lauren Simpson; *Classified* - Beryl Augustine; *Supplemental* - Tiffany Smietana
2. Appointments - *Professional Substitutes* - Grant Weaver, Sherry Steed, Elizabeth Babcock, Tammara Gill; *Classified* - Kevin Holman, Natasha Gonzalez, Michael Williams, Roger Reichert, Susan Wise; *Supplementals* - Kevin Trost, Joe Frank, Justin McCauley, Eric Semega, Rob Naylor, Michael Henry, Gary Brooks, Dorothea Epps, Samantha Marak, Krystal Epps, Ray Peaco, Megan Meeder, Brian Blackwell, Jeff Gavin, Lisa Wilson, Nancy Laslavic, Michael Caccamo, Kevin Wildrick, Theodore Calvin, Grant McCabe, Kevin Holman, Joe Montalbano, Mark Gartner, Drew Smith, Aaron Shafer, Chris Titus, Michael Manipole, Heather Perella, Kelly Weston

3. Leaves - Professional - Chelsea Patricca, Rachel Razzano, Malika Christopher, Kayce Monteleone, Sinead Reeb; Classified - Michelle Eppinger, Carla Rearick, Deborah Stocklas, Joan Rinaman, Sadie Powell
4. Sabbaticals - Noele Reynolds, Kayce Monteleone
5. Retirements - Professional - Mark Macedonia, Susanna Wanamaker

Mr. Hester motioned, seconded by Mr. Peterson, to approve the resignations, appointments, leaves, sabbaticals, and retirements as listed above. The motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - Mr. Jim Nickel
 - A. Work Session - September 13, 2021
 - B. Regular Meeting - September 20, 2021
5. **TREASURER'S REPORT** - Ms. Burtner
6. **GENERAL FUND BILLS** - Ms. Burtner
Grand Total: \$1,622,900.91
7. **CONSTRUCTION FUND BILLS** - Ms. Burtner
Grand Total: \$4,473,080.82
8. **ADMINISTRATION ACTION** - Mr. Jim Nickel - Approve the conference requests.
9. **INSTRUCTION** - Ms. Susan Harrison
 - A. Co-Ed Cricket Club - Approve the establishment of the Co-Ed Cricket Club at no cost to the District and under the supervision of volunteer sponsor Mr. David Reichard.
 - B. Slippery Rock University (SRU) Transition Achievement Program - Approve the agreement for the SRU Transition Achievement Program with SRU to provide transition services for the 2021-22 school year. Dr. Roberts
 - C. BC3 College Within High School (CWHS) Partnership Agreement - Approve the CWHS Partnership Agreement between Seneca Valley School District and Butler County Community College from July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022. Dr. Roberts
 - D. Grant Disbursements - Grant permission to apply for and disburse, if approved, the following grants:
 1. First Tech Challenge Grant funded by the Arconic Foundation in the amount of \$1,000 to fund the cost of equipment, fees and supplies related to the 2021-22 First Tech Challenge. Ms. Annie Mersing and Mr. Steve Fortunato
 2. Homeless Children and Youth Grant in the amount of \$62,248 funded by the United States Department of Education to support students who are experiencing homelessness to meet their physical and mental health needs. Dr. Jeff Roberts

Dr. Roberts reported that the Slippery Rock Transition Achievement Program is available for high school students, some over the age of 18, who need transitional

assistance to learn life skills they can use beyond high school. The partnership program also provides students the opportunity to learn and work on campus which offers a rich experience on the college campus.

Mr. Hester thanked the staff, including Dr. Roberts, Ms. Mersing and Mr. Fortunato, for their efforts in the work required to obtain grants on a regular basis. Doing so also saves taxpayers money.

Dr. Roberts reported that about one third of the districts in Pennsylvania are eligible to apply for these grant monies. It is based on the number of homeless students attributed to our School District. This includes students who are in shelters, residing in hotel rooms, or are living with other relatives. These grant monies will help them receive such things as tutoring services and internet connectivity. It also ensures that resources are available to help students decide whether college or trade schooling is appropriate. Dr. Roberts noted this is a three-year grant.

Mr. DiTullio thanked the administrators who do the extra work required to obtain these grant monies.

10. **PERSONNEL ACTION - Mr. Jeff Widdowson (Executive Session)**

11. **LETTERS SENT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD**

The following constituents communicated through the SVSD school board email account after posting the September 20, 2021 public agenda:

- Ms. Sylena Smith
- Mr. John Ciganik
- Ms. Andrea Tucker
- Ms. Stephanie Lane
- Ms. Jennifer Shattahi
- Mr. Philip and Ms. Aubrey Hart
- Ms. Josie Angel
- Ms. Erin McClymonds
- Ms. Bethany TeDesco Parrish
- Ms. Carrie Harold
- Mr. Kevin Strayhorn
- Ms. Meaza Tesfahun
- Ms. Andrea Tucker
- Mr. Parag Batavia
- Ms. Emily Droesch
- Ms. Rebecca Pribble
- Ms. Kelly Riddle
- Ms. Angela Priddy
- Mr. Mark Gartner
- Ms. Shannon Mihalacki
- Mr. Chris Droesch
- Mr. Matt Herrick
- Ms. Beth Lauer

- Ms. Susie Wanamaker
- Ms. Ellen Lippert
- Mr. Paul Fisher
- Ms. Kelly Scott

12. **ADJOURNMENT** - With nothing further to come before the board, Mr. Peterson motioned, seconded by Mr. Hester, to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Mr. Eric DiTullio, Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Mislán". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ms. Lisa Mislán, Board Secretary