

POTTSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Directors Board Meeting January 12, 2022 DHH Lengel Middle School Auditorium 7:00 PM	Present:	Dr. Blankenhorn, Mrs. Buchanan, Dr. Cardamone, Mr. Ciavarella, Mrs. Dewitt, Mr. Shields, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Urban, Ms. Wytovich, Dr. Yoder, Superintendent; Mrs. Stair, Business Manager; Mrs. Lombel, Asst. Business Manager/Board Secretary; Atty. Huerta
	Absent:	Atty. Reid, Solicitor

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Michael Cardamone.

A reminder to the public that the public comment period is not a question and answer period, but rather the opportunity for the public to submit comments to the Board. Public comments will follow our public comment procedures which require members of the public to identify themselves by indicating name and address. If members of the public wish to make public comments, then they must do so in person. The meeting will be available online.

The School Board will strive to answer questions pertaining to the current agenda at the beginning of the school board meeting, in a conscious effort to maintain transparent practices. After the School Board agenda is posted online, questions may be emailed to plombel@pottsville.k12.pa.us by 2:00 PM the day of the meeting. Questions pertaining to the agenda posted online will be answered in the order received for a period not to exceed 30 minutes. If the questions are not able to be answered during the 30-minute period, the School Board will endeavor to answer the questions at the beginning of the next school board meeting. Questions pertaining to confidential personnel matters will not be addressed. Questions that require some research or further inquiry might not be answered at the current school board meeting. **The question and answer period does not replace the public's current right to public comment.**

Public Comments:

Mrs. Lillian Hobbs, Pottsville, taxpayer, former district teacher librarian for 17 years, currently a Reading Interventionist at John S. Clarke Elementary Center:

Mrs. Hobbs explained that she began her career in the Pottsville Area School District's Library and reflects on the hundreds of thousands of dollars of resources which are sitting unused or underused in the District's libraries. Mrs. Hobbs complimented a

student on how well he read and he said it was the only book he had at home. Mrs. Hobbs said he and other students should have access to the library resources at the District. The library serves as a central space where students can develop a love of reading. Mrs. Hobbs is a member of the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association Advocacy Committee and notes that a top factor that impacts students the most is a well-funded school library program staffed with a certified teacher librarian. One of the most frequently seen quotes regarding school libraries was stated by Harold Howe, former federal commissioner of education – “What a school thinks about its library is a measure of what it feels about education.”

Judith DiObilda, former librarian and furloughed staff member:

I had been the librarian at JSC for the past 14 years before the library program was abruptly disbanded.

Of the many employees furloughed in the Pottsville Area School District in June 2020, I am the only person who has not been recalled since our library program was terminated.

I would first like to reiterate the quote to which Lillian referred from Harold Howe, former federal commissioner of education. “What a school thinks about its library is a measure of what it feels about education.”

Now I would like to read a quote from a well-known children’s author named Mo Willems. He has won many, many awards. If you have small children, grandchildren, young nieces and nephews you will be familiar with silly books like *Don’t Let the Pidgeon Drive the Bus!*, *Knuffle Bunny* and the *Elephant and Piggie Books* to name a few. Students love these fun books which introduce them to reading and help them hone their skills, all while making them laugh.

Here is the quote taken from *American Libraries*: “You don’t have to care about books to love school libraries. You don’t have to give a ding-dang about funny stories, true stories, or the world beyond your home to think they matter. You don’t even have to love that school libraries are both a refuge and gateway to discovery. All you need to care about are the kids they serve. School libraries are as important as the children who need them.”

Adrian Portland, President of the Pottsville Area School District Education Association and Lead Teacher in the Biology Department at Pottsville Area High School:

I am here to ask you to delay moving to phase II of the masking policy in the Pottsville Area School District Health and Safety Plan.

- Phase I 12/14/21 - 01/12/22 Face coverings mandatory
- Phase II anticipated as of 1/13/22- Face coverings optional

It is written into the plan that if needed this plan will be revisited at any time. I feel that in order to maintain a safe and healthy learning and work environment we need to continue Phase I of the mask policy until we see a decrease in the numbers.

Why is this necessary?

- The last time the plan was revisited was December 14th at that time Schuylkill County was around 100 new cases a day. Over the last week the County numbers were 198, 255, 323, 299, 247, 392, and 277. These are some of the highest numbers we have had during the entire Pandemic. I was hoping that the Pandemic Team would be able to meet prior to this meeting, but that did not occur.
- The Counties percent positivity rate is considered very high (27%)
- Last week boosters for children ages 12-16 were ok'd by the FDA. We need to give parents the opportunity to get their children boosted.
- The Omicron variant is highly transmissible compared to the other variants and is currently surging. It also seems to be infecting children at a greater rate than other variants.
- Studies have proven that mask wearing can prevent the spread of COVID. This is one of the few things we have control of during this pandemic.
- Recently many scientists have been seeing signals that Omicron may be getting close to peaking in the United States. Many also agree that once it peaks the number of cases will fall just as quickly.

In closing I would like to share 2 quotes from a trusted local healthcare provider.

Saint Luke's Chair of Pediatrics, Dr. Jennifer Janco said on January 3, 2022:

"This current surge with Omicron is affecting children in such high numbers. I am pleading with every parent and school to partner with us to protect our children. We need to do everything we can and that includes universal masking in schools."

Jeffrey Jahre, MD Saint Luke's Senior VP of Medical and Academic affairs and former section Chief of infectious disease said "What we are experiencing now is our biggest COVID surge yet. If there was ever a time for area school boards, administrators, and parents to get behind masking, it's now."

I am asking the Board of Directors not to recommend the changes to the Health and Safety Plan at this time and to continue Phase I of the masking policy until our numbers decline.

Dr. Cardamone thanked everyone for their comments.

Mr. Richard Pitcavage, CPA from Jones and Co. presented the Audit for year ending June 30, 2021 via Zoom.

Mr. Pitcavage discussed the reasons for the Federal Single Audit: If there is in excess of \$750,000, there are three areas which have to be reviewed: the regular audit, review internal controls and review federal money. The Financial Statements consist of Fixed Assets/Debt, Balance Sheet which lists all assets and liabilities and Financial Liabilities which includes the PSRS Liability. The Districts share is \$57 million. Statewide the number is in the billions.

Mr. Pitcavage noted there is a positive fund balance of \$5 million. The deficit is completely gone due to the cost cutting policies. There is a profit of \$4.4 million due to these cost saving measures. The majority of the savings comes from salary (decrease of \$1.6 million); benefits (decrease of \$900,000); social security (decrease of \$138,000) and PSERS (decrease of \$644,000). Mr. Pitcavage noted that the Cyber Charter and Brick and Mortar Charter Schools costs are out of hand. The cafeteria had a profit of \$172,000 due to the transfer of \$150,000 from the General Fund.

Mr. Pitcavage explained that the Financial Statements have footnotes. A new Bond was issued in the amount of \$485,000 which paid off the Series 2012 and Series 2016 Bonds. The total PSERS debt is \$70 million. The footnotes explain the pension plan, benefits plan and about COVID 19.

There is also a \$1 million RACP project for the Martz Hall Roof and parking lot renovations. The solar project is complete. There was testing on the federal grants. Testing is done for federal grants exceeding \$750,000. The National Nutrition Program was also tested along with the ESSER funds. There were no issues or problems. Mr. Pitcavage congratulated the District. Mr. Pitcavage asked if anyone had questions. No one had questions.

Dr. Cardamone thanked Mr. Pitcavage for his presentation.

On motion of Mr. Ciavarella, seconded by Dr. Blankenhorn, the Board dispensed with the reading of the minutes of the December 8, 2021 Board Meeting. Since all members received copies, and there being no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved. Motion carried.

On the recommendation of Mrs. Stair, Business Manager, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Mrs. Dewitt, the Board approved the following Financial Reports for the month of December 2021:

1. Treasurer's Report (All Funds) – General Fund Balance as of December 31, 2021- \$12,940,176.05; Cafeteria Checking Balance as of December 31 2021 - \$294,609.29.
2. General Fund Condensed Board Summary Revenue Report - General Fund condensed Board Summary Expenditure Report
3. Cafeteria Condensed Board Summary Report
4. Payment Summary – General Fund, Food Service
5. Budget Transfers – No Budget Transfers

Motion carried.

Under Donations, Dr. Yoder read that the Pottsville Area School District was awarded \$1,250 from Capital Blue Cross for the 2021 Live Healthy School Grant. Mrs. Hummel completed the application to benefit the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program.

On the recommendation of Atty. Huerta (in the absence of Atty. Reid), and on motion of Mr. Urban seconded by Ms. Wytovich, the Board approved the following Discipline Waivers, effective January 12, 2021: #287834 and #264973. Motion carried.

On the recommendation of the Superintendent, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Dr. Blankenhorn, the Board approved the Superintendent's preapproval of credits indicated for the following professional employee(s) be ratified in accordance with the negotiated agreement between the PASD and the PASDEA:

Kimberly Edling – 3 credits

Cara Kelly – 3 credits.

Motion carried.

On the recommendation of the Superintendent, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Mr. Thomas, the Board approved the following professional employee(s) be reimbursed as indicated for the successful completion of preapproved credit courses in accordance with the negotiated agreement between the PASD and the PASDEA:

Jacqueline Butz - \$1,566.00

Lisa Chistakoff - \$1,566.00

Emily Earley - \$1,548.00

Alicia Fehr - \$1,566.00

Kaycee Hess - \$984.00

Neil Johnson - \$1,566.00

Paula Jones - \$1,770.00

Cara Kelly - \$1,548.00

Deborah Lecker - \$300.00

Kelly Lombel - \$3,390.00

Kimberly Martinko - \$300.00

Amanda Purcell - \$1,566.00
Gregory Schuettler - \$1548.00
Ashley Shappell - \$1,548.00
Elizabeth Sophy - \$1,614.00
Anya Wood - \$1,566.00

Motion carried.

On the recommendation of the Superintendent, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Mr. Ciavarella, the Board approved the following Administrative employee(s) be reimbursed as indicated for the successful completion of preapproved credit courses: Caitlin Mohl - \$2,328.00. Motion carried.

On the recommendation of the Superintendent, and on motion of Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Urban, the Board approved the following salary adjustment and made retroactive to the begin of the 2021-2022 school year: Deborah Lecker – Master’s +15. Motion carried.

On the recommendation of the Superintendent, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Dr. Blankenhorn, the Board approved the following clinical experience placement take place in spring 2022: Marissa Rode (Kutztown University K-12 Special Education) be placed in the High School with Cooperating Teacher, Mrs. Casey Horvath. Motion carried.

On the recommendation of the **Athletics and Extracurricular Activities Committee**, and on motion of Mr. Shields, seconded by Mr. Urban, the Board approved the following items:

- The resignation of Pete Kalinich as Assistant Varsity Football Coach, effective January 5, 2022. Mr. Kalinich coached at the Pottsville Area School District (his alma mater) for the past 19 years. We are grateful for his dedication and commitment to the Football Program and the Pottsville Area School District.
- A four year agreement with Riddell Sports for the purchase of helmets and reconditioning of equipment for Football Seasons 2022 through 2025. Total cost for helmets and reconditioning of equipment is \$53,672.50. Riddell Sports is a part of the Co-Stars program (014-091).

Motion carried.

On the recommendation by the **Finance Committee** and on motion of Dr. Blankenhorn, seconded by Mrs. Dewitt, the Board approved the following items:

- The Affiliation Agreement in Nutrition and Dietetics Programs between Cedar Crest College and Pottsville Area School District. The purpose of the Affiliation Agreement is to permit a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the conduct of the Nutrition Department's programs. The term of the agreement shall commence January 1, 2022 and continue for a period of five years.

- A tax abatement of past due taxes for a blighted property located at 25-27 Mamies Avenue, Pottsville (Norwegian Township). Current balance is \$473.89.

- The OPT Out Resolution which states that the School District will not increase the 2022-2023 school taxes at a rate that exceeds the index calculated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education which is 4.9%.

- Since the 2020-2021 audit is complete, assign \$1.5 million, within the General Fund, for the purpose of maintaining Full Day Kindergarten, Cyber and Brick & Mortar Charter Costs, PSERS and Health Care Costs.

- An RFP for an auditor for the Pottsville Area School District for three (3) audit years starting with the 2021-2022 school year.

Motion carried.

On the recommendation by the **Personnel Committee** and on motion of Mrs. Dewitt, seconded by Mr. Urban, the Board approved the following items:

- Approved the following Leave Without Pay as per School Board Policy(s): 339,439,539:

- Employee #1300 - lunch aide - December 16, 2021
- Employee #1349 - lunch aide - December 6, 2021
- Employee #171 - lunch aide - December 6, 2021
- Employee #828 - lunch aide - December 7,8,16, 2021
- Employee #537 - lunch aide - December 13,22, 2021; January 3, 2022
- Employee#1483 - lunch aide - December 9, 10, 2021
- Employee #25 - lunch aide - December 15, 22, 2021, January 6, 2022
- Employee #1228 - lunch aide - December 16, 2021
- Employee #1231 - lunch aide - December 17, 21,22, 2021
- Employee #171 - lunch aide - December 23, 2021

- Accepted the letter of resignation from Jocelyn Oakill, School Psychologist at the Pottsville Area School District, effective date to be determined.

- Approved Mr. Andrew Diehl as the Director of Technology at an annual salary of \$86,000 contingent upon receipt of completed paperwork and pending release from his current employer.
- Approved the MOU between the Pottsville Area School District and Mr. Andrew Diehl for the purpose of payment in lieu of School District-sponsored healthcare benefits.
- Retroactively approved Laurie Reiley as a teacher with the DHH Lengel Middle School Achieve Program, effective December 20, 2021.
- Approved Rachael Damiter as a teacher with the John S. Clarke Elementary Center Achieve Program, January 13, 2022.
- Approved the hiring of the following individuals as School Police Officers at a rate of \$22.00/hour, effective January 13, 2022 contingent upon receipt of completed paperwork:

- Harry Brown
- Daniel Conville
- David Donkochik
- Michael Layton-Herron
- Joseph Murton
- Eric Sterner
- Charles Webber

School Police Officers' salaries and benefits are paid by PCCD (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency) grant funding through June 2023.

- Granted permission to advertise for a Certified School Guidance Counselor.
- Granted permission for the District to seek independent contractors to provide crisis and/or psychological counseling to be paid for by ARP ESSER (ESSER 3) Set Aside funds for social emotional learning.
- Accepted the letter of resignation from Clarence Rich, outside crew member for the Pottsville Area School District. Mr. Rich's last day with the District will be January 29, 2022.

Motion carried.

Under Promotion, Public Relations and Social Meeting, Ms. Wytovich read the following:

1. Congratulations to 9th grader, Anabelly Valdez, the winner of the PAHS Republican Herald Calendar Art Contest for December.
2. Congratulations to PAHS Concert Choir, Concert Band, and Percussion on a fabulous performance on December 16th.
3. Thank you to AID and TKD who assisted with the holiday festivities at Yuengling Park and the Yuengling Mansion.
4. Thank you to Student Council's Annual Penny-a-Week collection for the holiday gift buying and distribution of toys for needy children in our community.
5. Congratulations to seniors, Faith Eckley and Kendra Spevak, for being selected as January Rotary Students of the Month. They were honored at a luncheon on January 5th, at Vito's Coal Fired Pizza, accompanied by Dr. Yoder.
6. Congratulations to Robbie OmahaBoy, our January PAHS "Artist of the Month".
7. Congratulations to 7th grader, Avery Zeroual, who won the 1st Annual DHHL Middle School School Spelling Bee.
8. Congratulations to DHHL Tide Tones, Choir and Symphonic Band on a spectacular performance on December 14th.
9. Congratulations to JSC January Students of the Month: Hunter Marx (Grade K), Madison Morgan (Grade 1), Joshua Castro (Grade 2), Grace Birnesser (Grade 3), and Natalie Dixon (Grade 4).
10. Congratulations to JSC Staff Members Rose Doorly (December) and Kristyn Blum (January) as Staff of the Month.

Upcoming Events:

First Semester Ends (90th Day of School) - January 13, 2022

Teacher In-Service - January 17, 2022

Blood Drive at PAHS (10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) - January 29, 2022

Under **Curriculum**, Mrs. Dewitt, Chairperson, read the following informational item: The Pottsville Area School District received Gillingham Charter School's 5-year charter renewal submission on December 23, 2021. The Pottsville Area School District granted a 30-day extension request by Gillingham Charter School. The initial charter renewal application date of November 23, 2021 was extended to December 23, 2021. The District is in the process of reviewing the application and will request follow-up documents.

Under **Food Services**, Mr. Shields, Chairperson, read the following informational item: Food Services Director Lisa Eckley and her staff did an outstanding job of being prepared for the State Administrative Review. All districts that participate in the

National School Lunch and Breakfast programs are monitored every three (3) years. The Food Services department was compliant in all areas including Meal Counting and Claiming, Meal Component and Quantities, Offer versus Serve, Dietary Specifications and Nutrient Analysis, Resource Management, Food Safety and Record Keeping. The official provided a preliminary assessment report with all commendations and no corrective action.

Under **Legislation**, Mrs. Buchanan, Chairperson, provided the following information:

House Bill 412 provides flexibility to schools regarding the hiring of substitute teachers. This bill was signed into law on December 17th. Specifically, the new law:

1. Allows teachers with inactive certificates to substitute for up to 180 days (up from the current 90 day limit) per school year
2. Allows retired teachers to fill teacher vacancies on an emergency basis
3. Uncaps the number of days a prospective teacher (college student) may substitute and requires institutions of higher education to adopt policies to allow those students to substitute
4. Allows educators with active Pennsylvania certificates and those with comparable out-of-state certificates can serve as day-to-day substitutes for 20 days
5. Allows individuals who are 25 or older, have at least 60 college credits or 3 years of experience as a paraprofessional, and complete training on classroom management, may serve as "classroom monitors"

Senate Bill 324 intends to help students who are in foster care or homeless to stay in school. The bill directs schools to:

1. Identify a point person for each student experiencing "economic instability"
2. Develop policies and procedures to ensure credit is applied for completed coursework from a prior school
3. Waive fees and allow student participation in school sponsored or extracurricular activities

This bill was passed by the General Assembly and is now headed to Governor

Under **Schuylkill County IU 29**, and on motion of Ms. Wytovich, seconded by Mr. Ciavarella, the Board appointed Ms. Linda Wytovich to serve on the Schuylkill Intermediate Unit and Schuylkill Technology Center Boards of Directors to fulfill the unexpired term of Dr. Michael Cardamone (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2022) and for a new three (3) year term (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2025).

Dr. Blankenhorn, **PSBA Representative**, noted that from this evening through February 9, 2022 School Directors Month is celebrated. A thank you to all School Directors for their service and commitment. Dr. Blankenhorn noted that the PSBA Training scheduled for this evening is rescheduled until the February 9, 2022 Board meeting.

Under New Business the following were approved:

On the recommendation of Mrs. Lombel, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Mrs. Dewitt, the Board approved the following Use of Facilities:

HS

1-Library

Quiz Team Interscholastic Match

3:00pm-6:00pm on Following dates:

1/10/2022, 1/18/2022

2-Auditorium

Drama Rehearsal

1/24/2022 2:30pm-7:30pm

1/26/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

1/28/2022 2:30pm-5:30pm

1/31/2022 2:30pm-7:30pm

2/2, 2/4/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

2/7/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

2/9/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

2/11/2022 2:30pm-5:00pm

2/14, 2/16, 2/18, 2:30pm-4:30pm

2/19/2022 9:00am-2:00pm

2/23/2022 2:30pm-7:30pm

2/25/2022 2:30pm-5:00pm

2/28, 3/2/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

3/4/2022 2:30pm-5:00pm

3/7/2022 2:30pm-7:30pm

3/9/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

3/11/2022 2:30pm-5:00pm

3/12/2022 12:30pm-4:30pm

3/14/2022 2:30pm-7:30pm

3/16/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

3/18/2022 2:30pm-5:00pm

3/21/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

3/22/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm

3/23/2022 2:30pm-7:30pm
3/25/2022 2:30pm-4:30pm
3/26/2022 9:00am-2:00pm
3/27/2022 11:00am-5:00pm
3/28, 3/29, 3/30/2022 2:30pm-8:30pm
3/31/2022 2:30pm-7:00pm
4/4/2022 2:30pm-5:00pm

MS

1-Cafeteria

PAHS Swim and Dive Boosters Pasta Dinner
2/10/2022 4:00pm-8:00pm

2- Cafeteria

PTO 8th Grade Dance Meeting
2/7/2022 7:00pm-8:30pm

Motion carried.

On the recommendation of Mrs. Lombel, and on motion of Mr. Urban, seconded by Mrs. Dewitt, the Board rejected the revised Pottsville Area School District Health and Safety Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year. The District notified parents/guardians through Skylert about the opportunity to participate in the Health and Safety Plan meeting. The revised Health and Safety Plan was reviewed by the Pandemic Planning Team and parent representatives on December 14, 2021 and has been posted on the District's website to invite public comment. Motion carried by roll call vote: Mrs. Buchanan, Dr. Cardamone, Mr. Ciavarella and Mr. Urban, Aye. Dr. Blankenhorn, Mrs. Dewitt, Mr. Shields, Mr. Thomas and Ms. Wytovich, Nay. (Vote count - 4 Ayes, 5 Nays). Dr. Blankenhorn noted that she sees the impact on COVID19 every day and feels strongly about wearing masks until there is a reduction in cases. Mrs. Dewitt also noted that she cannot support the policy to have mask wearing as optional citing a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Cardamone announced there would be an Executive Session.

Mrs. Lombel noted that in accordance with Act 84 of 1986, the Sunshine Act, an Executive Session with the Board as a whole at this meeting was hereby announced for the purpose of legal matters.

The meeting commenced after the Executive Session.

Mr. Thomas recommended to add an agenda item for the purpose of continuing with mandatory masking.


Dr. Blankenhorn made the motion to add the recommendation to the formal agenda, seconded by Mr. Thomas. Motion carried.

On a motion of Mr. Thomas, seconded by Dr. Blankenhorn, the Board approved a one month mask mandate. Motion carried by roll call vote: Dr. Blankenhorn, Dr. Cardamone, Mrs. Dewitt, Mr. Shields, Mr. Thomas and Ms. Wytovich, Aye. Mrs. Buchanan, Mr. Ciavarella and Ur. Urban, Nay. (Vote count - 6 Ayes, 3 Nays).

An Executive Session was held at 6:00 pm to discuss personnel matters.

An Executive Session was held before the Board meeting adjourned to discuss legal matters.

There being no further new business, on motion of Mr. Thomas, seconded by Dr. Blankenhorn, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

 2/9/22
Patricia A. Lombel (Date)
Board Secretary