

**West Valley Central School Board of Education
Official Minutes**

Special Meeting April 6, 2020 Zoom meeting due to COVID restrictions

Members Present: Niesyty, Ploetz, Kent, Cizdziel, Kowalski
Members Absent: Samborski, Harmony
Others Present: Lawton, Amodeo, O'Brien, Boberg

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by Timothy Ploetz, Board of Education President presiding.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE to the UNITED STATES FLAG

III. Moved by Niesyty, seconded by Kowalski to **ADOPT** the **AGENDA** as follows:

Additions: none
Deletions: none
Changes: none

5 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

IV. Correspondence/BOE information

none

V. BOARD COMMENTS

Steve Kowalski wanted to thank the Administration for working together on the budget and that we have a fund balance. He also thanked Ann very much for putting us in a place where we're able to get through all of this.

So, thank you very much.

Gary Niesyty stated that he said the following to Eric earlier, but wanted to state it again, what a great job the administration and staff have done getting our students materials together and ready for the families to pick up. I have talked to a lot of friends and people in other districts and they do not have it together as well as we do, and their kids are not doing anything school related yet. I mean our district had to throw things together because of the unscheduled situation, but we have done a better job than so many other schools.

Eric – thank you

VI. PRESENTATIONS

none

VII. REPORTS

A. **Superintendent, Eric Lawton** reported that the following just came out this afternoon – regents' exams for this school year have been cancelled. They've previously cancelled New York State testing and the governor has extended the closure of school through March 29th. But in my discussion with Scott Payne, District Superintendent and other area Superintendent's this afternoon through a ZOOM meeting – they feel it is a comeback to school on the 29th not a closure through the 29th - but this could change. There's a feeling right now that we might not be back until June, or maybe not at all for the rest of the school year. There is a lot of pessimism that way, I guess you'd call it, I'm really hoping that we will be back.

When we looked at the budget that we had, the governor came out with his proposal and then when he came back again, the proposal wasn't exactly what it should have been. They did pull some money out, but they put more money back in from the federal government. So, it's probably going to come in a little bit lower than what he originally said, and we'll talk more to that later. But they're also talking about some potential take backs in the middle of next year. So, we must play our cards pretty close to the vest. But I think Ann has put us in a situation where we should still be able to continue with the plan we had for this year and that is provided nothing else changes, even have maybe a 1% decrease in our budget for the 2020/2021.

They did push the budget vote back to the beginning of June. I received a question on how this would affect the deadline for a potential candidate to turn in their petition to run for a board seat? Currently, I have no guidance on this? That is still up in the air. I believe what's going to happen, just my best guess, is that they will do the school board elections with the budget vote, probably around the ninth of June. As of today, we have two petitions out and one already returned in for one of the positions. So, we have people in the district interested in running for the board, beating the pavement to be on the board which is a good thing. There are three things that I was required to do and file with the state. Number 1 - to provide an educational plan that we follow. Number 2 - to provide a food plan that we follow. Number 3 – that we provide childcare for first responders and medical personnel. I got all three of those plans filed with the state and approved, there really hasn't been a need right now for childcare. However, I did reach out to Early Bird and they have over 100 spots. If we have that need, I can direct them to Early Bird for preschool age and school age childcare and they have two locations.

The governor made a critical decision that schools will continue education throughout spring break and Good Friday, there will be no time off. He expects all districts to do this in order to get the waiver and qualify for it, education must continue through these breaks. Our food plan is set up for three days a week. We're doing double breakfast and lunch on Mondays and Wednesdays and

single lunch and breakfast on Fridays. This Friday is Good Friday and we're going to come in and provide that meal. We will continue with our educational plan through next week (spring break). If we don't the governor will make an example of us and say you didn't meet the criteria that he expected. And by not following his guidance, he would take away the waiver, cut state aid and that would be a huge hit for us. So, I am just going to take away the whole time that we have been out of school which would be good. We are going to have to work something out with our teachers because you know they are scheduled to work 185 days. If we look just at the schedule, we count every single one of those days they might be over that number by the end of the year, however when I look at that, I think we are not going to be the only district in that shape. And I really want to see how other districts respond to that. I don't think it's going to come into play until the end of June. Right now, as long as they're doing what they're supposed to be doing and I have a pretty good feeling about that. I am going to be getting out to the board the collective bargaining agreement proposal for Dan and Shawna, it will be coming to you in the form of an email in my board report next week. So, you have a chance to look that over and then we can discuss it either at our next meeting or meeting after, we still have time. Our next meeting is still going to be scheduled for that Tuesday for the BOCES budget and election. We do not have a lot on the agenda tonight. We do have a substitute cleaner, which seems kind of silly to be doing that right now but, Lisa actually came in and did some work for us when we were doing all the disinfecting so we'd have enough people here to get that done in the early weeks. So, it's kind of a retro approval and that was back on March 16. She is not coming in right now; we are working with extremely limited staff. One of the things that Scott has sent out to me is some certificates on Wednesdays. It will be a little card that you carry that says you're an essential employee, just in case it comes to the point where the police are stopping people and saying that you should not be on the road. They're going to print these cards up for us. So, I can hand them out to our essential employees.

The COVID 19 newsletter that Scott put together is going to be mailed out I think tomorrow. So, it is a four-page flyer that they put together, put it on our letterhead with addresses and paid for it. It has guidance and some rules to follow throughout this pandemic. It is a well-done piece. I would like to thank Scott for doing that. He has really been on top of this situation.

The other personnel issue was Megan George Baker as National Honor Society advisor. Antonette had her baby today so she is not really in shape to be the NHS advisor and we still have scholarships out there; senior students write essays to qualify to receive this scholarship. There is still a need for that position and Megan has done it in the past. She's the perfect person to get that information. Motion for Bryan Hansen of course, as a data privacy officer, this guy has been in here daily getting computers and technology out to our families. He is doing an amazing job. This is a little reward for all his hard work.

Under New Business. We do have a motion for board resolution for remote work for confidential managerial employees. This was put together by Pam Kirkwood mostly for us to have on hand, it kind of allows us to justify that way we are paying these people right now, and as of right now, everybody is still on the payroll. And they're on an on-call basis so that I can justify paying them because if I need to call them to do something, I can do that. And we have had to do that. We did have a heating system go down – Bill came in and they recharged one of the circulating pumps sprung a leak and they put in I believe the last count was (7) 55-gallon drums to reboot the system plus water to reboot the system. And I think it is close right now, but it is not all the way back, but it is up and running again. The heat was out for two days when all that took place and we did get the pump repaired and replaced during that time.

Then we have the cooperative purchasing annual resolution on the board agenda. It is something we do every year and I think you are all familiar with it. I do not really have a reason for Executive session. Unless you have any other questions for me. I am all set.

Gary Niesyty asked about the leak. Eric said it was in to slop room and that is where the circulating pumps are located, and it didn't cause any other damage.

Principal, Daniel Amodeo reported that the majority of what he is going to share is a little bit about what I had in my report, but I just kind of want to give everyone a brief overview of how we are providing instruction right now. During this school closure we didn't have tons of time to plan or prep about how we are going to go about doing this, but we actually had started planning and preparing the last week that we were in school with the move towards distance learning as much as possible. We had hoped to get a little bit more time the following week, but that didn't happen. So, we started off by really contacting every family in the district to determine their ability to access the internet and we determined that for the most part, with the exception, of a handful of families, everyone was able to access the internet in some way, shape, or form. We have talked to some families and they are looking at increasing their data plans, which a lot of service providers were doing with no charge. The majority of all of our grades 5 through 12 students are participating in some way, shape or form through digital learning pretty much keeping the same schedule that we had in place while we were in school, but just move that to the digital space we adjusted it a little bit. So, kids follow their normal schedule as much as possible. They have 30-minute meetings and then they rotate through those periods. Now considering the internet connectivity issues with families and the fact that a lot of the students are on their own and really require a lot of independence. Some of the teachers are providing flexibility so they might not be meeting five days a week they are meeting 3 days a week and then have days to work on individual assignments. So that is really what it looks like in grades 5 through 12 before we can recognize the difference in the ability of the students to work independently. And how much more support they might need at home from their family and recognizing that in

some cases, a family may not be able to support them because of their other responsibilities. With that in mind we really set up a much looser schedule. We had some set times in the morning and in the afternoon where we were utilizing our IXL software which is computer adaptive software for reading and math. Teachers can assign students lessons that are based on standards and the students can work on and complete the lessons. The teacher receives feedback from that software. We have set up some independent reading and math time for students, now with that being said, I will say that in most of the grade levels, even down in pre K teachers are holding virtual meetings with their students to provide an opportunity for the kids to kind of come together and just have opportunity to interact. Teachers in that same grade level are working individually with students troubleshooting any technology. Through the shared screen option that you have here at zoom and that we also have in teams' features can have the kids share their screen so the teacher can log in as a student and share that screen with the student and work through various problems. So that is really where we are right now with our instructional plan and how it is being provided, it is not perfect, ideal and definitely not what the kids are used to. I met last week with faculty and will be continuing to meet with all of them once a week, just to check in. One of the two things we talked about is if we are working over spring break and what was our grading policy and how to move forward. We have been waiting for some guy in the state on what their expectation is for grading and how we are closing out grades and are we awarding credit. What is the state's plan for this, and without having anything from them, what we are doing in grades 5 through 12th is moving to a one through five scale. I just want to say that when I talk about successfully completing the course, what we are talking about now is, are the students participating in the activities and doing the assignments that we are doing now. We will also combine with that what they did for the first half of the school year. We do understand that not everyone has great internet connection but what we do know is that kids are getting on the internet. They are participating in meetings. So, I have a list of students that I need to reach out to them and Mr. LaBrake is going to reach out to some because we do have situations where some students are just, you know, they might come to every meeting that the teacher is holding but they are not doing any of the assigned work. And it's just like when they were at school. You know that they have trouble, or they are struggling, you know, the teachers are available and able to reach out to them. But a lot of staff are not getting any responses from some of the students. Then you have other situations where students are not participating at all. They're not participating in meetings and they're not completing assignments and doing work. So, that is kind of where we are at with the grading in the five through 12th grades. Then grades K through four is such a drastic difference for the students, with working independently, providing new content and the way the schedule is setup. We are really all thinking of going back to a letter grade. We really haven't determined the specific letter or the term that we are going to use. To be able to realistically judge at that level of proficiency of students in those standard

areas without being able to give them the same assignments, having the same contact time and having the same instructional opportunities that we setup for grades 5-12. And it is not that we can't provide those opportunities or set that up. It is just that the age of those students and their abilities to work independently and manage your own time is just drastically different from what the students are used to be able to do. So, I really wanted to share this evening is what we've been doing instructionally and what we are looking at for grading.

Gary Niesyty asked if the work that the students are given is it for grading or just busy work? How is this going to affect them as far as where they are going to be put next year? Dan Amodeo states that with the two grade bands K through 4 and 5 through 12. For grades K-4 it is not that they're doing busy work but the work that is being assigned through the IXL software program is standard-based work and can be tailored to the individual student. They can continually practice on those standards. You cannot teach new content. But what I have said is that the expectation from the state was that whatever instruction that we were providing that it is equitable and accessible to everyone. It is much less accessible because of the ability and the age of the students to attend a virtual online meeting for 4 or 5 hours a day in 30-minute increments. However, there are some elementary teachers that are communicating with families and ensuring that everyone is on board to move forward and teach new content. And we are okay with that. But again, it goes back to being equitable and accessible for everybody in grades 5 – 12. I have talked to the teachers and sat in on some lessons at the younger grade levels, but teachers are teaching new content if everyone is ready for it. From the feedback that I'm getting from teachers and from what I'm observing, there are some concerns with student participation. I would just say in grades 5 through 12 it is not busy work. For the students it is possibly new content or review.

Darla asks for the kids that do not have internet access or maybe limited internet access. Are you guys sending paper copies to their home? Dan answers that as of right now there were a few families that did not have internet but as of this point, I am now not aware of families in grades five through 12 that do not have internet. And quite honestly, I'm not aware of any families in K through 4 grades that are not able to somehow get on the internet and do some type of work. As far as doing paper copies and packets, I think that can kind of go to Gary's point. I think there is two issues with that, Number one is having to bring staff in or requiring staff to come in during the shutdown when you know that debate would be, are they essential, are they not essential preparing material copying materials sending materials home. How would the work get back to the teachers? Are the teachers going to grade the work and that then how would they get it back to students? So, in that scenario, we did look at that being busy work. Darla states in her opinion that especially with the younger kids maybe they would learn better with hands on learning and it might not be something that they would have to turn back into the teachers. It could be used to replace the students being on a device. Dan understands where you're coming from, but I think just with our

families we look back at the equitability and accessibility issue because where some families may be able to do that because both their work and home schedules align some may not. You are looking at an equitability issue there. If that is the route that we want, it is not that we can't, or would not because we have looked into this for people that do not have internet. But right now, we are not aware of any families with that issue in our district. Eric interjects that the other thing is the guidance from the state and health department is they do not want the teachers coming into the building, definitely not to make copies or distribute materials. They can come in if they absolutely have to get something out of their room that is necessary for them to continue teaching. Other than that, they do not want them here at school. Darla states correct, she just seen other plans that with the office 365 that files can be shared with people who are working, and they can print and send home to a handful of kids that might not. I just didn't know. Dan states good point in a couple of cases, we haven't printed packets, but I have had teachers make requests, example: with handwriting and practicing cursive we collected the materials that were here at school and delivered to each home. When teachers contact us at school with something, they need we go into their classrooms and deliver materials to the homes. We are getting information to the students just not sharing files to employees that are working so they can print, correlate and staple packets. All of our students have access to the internet, and we can tell if students are having trouble logging in and if they are logging in at the time they are supposed to be. Darla asks about our special education students and providing them with educational instruction? The State has put out the instruction that we need to provide for general education students, and we have to provide the same education to special education students. As far as related services go, such as speech, OT and PT we cannot have our service providers going to the home, but they are checking in with our teachers providing some for lack of a better word, care plans for those students and they're making those contacts on a regular basis. Secondary we have our consultant teachers working the same time that the classes are going on so they are available. If a student had resource room at a certain time they are still meeting with that teacher in elementary and secondary. So, this is where we are at with special education services. When it comes to special education meetings at this time it is on hold. Until we get further guidance on how they would like to do that. I think there was initial conversation of doing virtual meetings, but I'm not sure where that is. Darla asked if our school has explored doing any kind of Tella therapy services for at least speech. Says he doesn't know exactly know how it works. What I can tell you is that our servers are related service providers and they are contacting those students. They are working with those students, either through a platform like zoom or teams or over the phone. Ann states that Tele therapy can still be billed to Medicaid. Dan says that I don't know that any of us have a perfect solution or scenario for what we are having to go through and work through, but we are. We are trying to do as much as possible to move forward and communicate the expectation that

learning is to occur, and opportunities are to be provided. But as I said earlier, I know that we need to contact some students and families to make sure that they know that this is just not an extended break for lack of better words. Steve Kowalski says thank you very much. Dan states that grading is a big question out there and hopefully we will have more guidance. How do we move students forward, regents' exams that are not being taken but lead up to next year's exam, doubling up students, and if passing a regent's course is dependent on sitting for that regents at a later date? Kim asked about advanced regents' diploma. Dan states that we did not have any seniors slated to take any regents exams in June.

Lost signal with Tim Ploetz. Kim Cizdziel will take over leading the board meeting. Kim thanked Dan for his report.

Business Official, Ann O'Brien reported that she was going to discuss revenues. So, as Eric mentioned earlier, they did inactive budget and there were some things that changed in that particular one. So, the first thing I want to tell you about is they did reinstitute the categorical aids on. So as of now all those aids are flowing. What happened in this whole transition is we lost some additional foundation aid in the amount of \$43,279. What the state did was basically took away aid and then they gave it back to us. So how they did this was called the pandemic adjustment and they have reduced our state aid by \$91,792 but then they instituted it with what's called a federal cares restoration. So, this would be money from the federal government and that amount is the exact same as the pandemic adjustment. It is basically a wash. So, in the end we lost already \$3,279 from the governor's budget to the inactive budget. Going forward with the budget, the New York State Budget Director is going to do quarterly reviews of the revenues, the state's revenues and based on that, we could see mid-year cuts. I am hearing a couple different things and it is not clear yet what those numbers could be. Heard that it would not be any more than the pandemic adjustment of \$91,792. Also heard that the federal government is basically saying to the state, you know, we are going to give you this money, but if you are caught with too much state aid, we are going to get it away from you. There are a couple things out there, but nobody really knows for sure right now what is going to happen. I was talking to another business official about how important it is to stay on top of what is going on with the budget vote and election process and state budget. There are talks about everything being postponed until the beginning of June. As far as timelines, if we don't have a budget vote day then we don't know how to do the budget calendar. When and how to meet all those deadlines, so that is the tricky part. So hopefully they come out with some direction for us because if they don't, we will have to do the best that we can. What I ended up doing to maintain our existing budget and a tax levy decrease of 1%, I have increased our appropriated fund balance by \$43,279 to cover the less in aid. With that being said, you know, if we get wind that they're going to cut additional aid or in

planning this whole thing out, not knowing for sure that we are going to get additional or we're going to get a mid-year cut it might be a good idea to appropriate more fund balance and if we don't need it we won't use it. But it basically sets us up to be protected in the event that they do cut, you know, say \$100,000. That is kind of an idea I have in my head, I know I said in my board notes, that it would be nice if we could just adopt a budget at the next meeting but in thinking about it a little bit more, I don't know that I want to say that for sure right now. More information would be good before we do that. We might want to be a little flexible on that if we decide to possibly appropriate more fund balance and go from there. So, there is a little bit of decision making to be made and I think you know the best we can do is kind of keep you up to date on which way we decide to go. Are there any questions about that? Anyone? You all understand? Okay, did you guys all get a chance to look at the spreadsheets I send? Yeah. Okay good. Would you guys be okay with adopting the budget on the 26th. If we can do that. Darla Kent yeah that is fine. Another thing, they are going to make available additional Title 1 funds. We do not know what that number will be year. They are giving us flexibility on the use of that. I do not think it is going to be a large amount, though I don't think it is going to be anything that is going to save us from any state aid cuts and this is sort of up in the air. Are you guys willing to decide on purchasing the caravan, the bus radio upgrade and the transportation software? Steve Kowalski states that he has no problem with it. If you know it is needed. The caravan goes into the revolving cycle of vehicles. It makes sense to me. We would be using this year's money to do that. The upgrade will improve safety, that is a good thing to do in the software, it will improve communication with parents, and it could help us to create time efficiencies as well. If we could save a few miles, it would not be a bad thing. So, if you guys are okay with that? Steve Kowalski – I am: Gary Niesyty – is it needed? But I thought everyone was alright with it. Ann said with the aid it will cost 6600. Darla Kent – yeah. Tim lost signal. Kim Cizdziel will continue leading the meeting to consent agenda.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

none

IX. PERSONNEL

A. Moved by Niesyty, seconded by Kent to approve Lisa Slisz as a substitute cleaner, effective March 16, 2020 through the remainder of the school year. Fingerprint clearance is on file. 4 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

B. Moved by Kowalski, seconded by Niesyty to approve Meghan George-Baker as the NHS advisor effective April 1, 2020 through the remainder of the school year. 4 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

C. Moved by Niesyty, seconded by Kent to approve Bryan Hansen as the Data Privacy Officer for the of this school year, stipend will be paid at the end of the school year. 4 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

X. OLD BUSINESS:

none

XI: NEW BUSINESS:

A. Moved by Kowalski, seconded by Darla to approve for following Board Resolution for **Remote work for the Confidential/Managerial employees:**

Due to the unique and unprecedented circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Declaration of States of Emergency and Mandatory closing of school buildings, the Board of Education hereby approves that the District's staff designated as confidential/managerial employees may deliver services and perform work from a remote location, that is approved by the Superintendent or his designee, during their regular work hours. In this regard such employees will remain "on call" for immediate direction during their work hours, and such staff will provide contact information (including phone number and email address if internet access if available).
4 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

B. Moved by Niesyty, seconded by Kowalski to approve the following:

COOPERATIVE PURCHASING ANNUAL RESOLUTION
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

WHEREAS, It is the plan of a number of public school districts in Cattaraugus County and Allegany County, New York, to bid jointly for **various supplies, commodities, and/or services in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, and**

WHEREAS, The West Valley Central School District is desirous of participating with other school districts in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties in the joint bidding of all or some of the supplies, commodities, and/or services as mentioned above, as authorized by General Municipal Law, Section 119-0, and as determined by district need, and

WHEREAS, The Board of Cooperative Educational Services and Boards of Education wish to appoint a committee to assume the responsibility for drafting of specifications, advertising for bids, accepting and opening bids, tabulating bids, reporting of the results to the Board of Cooperative Educational Services and Boards of Education and making recommendations thereon; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That the West Valley Central School Board of Education hereby appoints the Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming Board of Cooperative Educational Services to represent it in all matters related above, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the West Valley Central School Board of Education authorizes the above-mentioned committee to represent it in all matters leading up to the entering into a contract for the purchase of the above-mentioned supplies, commodities, and/or services, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the West Valley Central School Board of Education agrees to assume its equitable share of the costs of the cooperative bidding, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the West Valley Central School Board of Education agrees (1) to abide by the majority decisions of the participating districts on quality standards; (2) that unless all bids are rejected, it will award contracts according to the recommendations of the committee; (3) that after award of contract(s) it will conduct all negotiations with the successful bidder(s).

4 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

XII: Moved by Kent, seconded by Niesyty to **ADJOURN** at 7:59pm.
4 ayes, 0 nays, motion accepted

District Clerk
Meeting minutes from transcribed dictation and
audio