

# Seneca Valley School District



## SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION

Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Auditorium - 7 p.m.

### Minutes

October 7, 2024

1. **CALL TO ORDER** by Mr. Eric DiTullio, President, called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.
  - A. **Moment of Silence** - The meeting was called to order with a moment of silence.
  - B. **Pledge of Allegiance** - Chase Salka, second grader at Connoquenessing Valley Elementary School, continued the board initiative, "I Led the Pledge" by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
  - C. **Roll Call** - by Ms. Julia Benson, School Board Secretary, showed the following members in attendance: Ms. Leslie Bredl, Mr. Nick Brower, Mr. Eric DiTullio, Ms. Susan Harrison, Mr. Mike Jacobs, Mr. Jeff Widdowson and Ms. Kari Zimmer. Mr. Tim Hester and Mr. Fred Peterson were absent.
  
2. **INFORMATION REPORTS**
  - A. **Student/Staff Recognition**
    1. Mr. Chris Eden, a Health and Physical Education teacher at Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) and a Seneca Valley Football coach, was recently honored with the 2024 Good Neighbor Award by NextTier Bank. This award recognizes educators who go above and beyond both in their professional and personal lives. Mr. Eden, a dedicated teacher and coach, played a key role in starting Seneca Valley's first Girl's Flag Football team. With nearly 70 girls attending the introductory meeting, Mr. Eden has shown exceptional commitment to supporting the team and helping them succeed. Thanks to his efforts, many girls are now participating in a sport for the first time, boosting their self-esteem and recognizing themselves as integral members of the community. In addition to the award itself, Mr. Eden received a Go Pro Hero10 Camera and accessories that he intends to use for a classroom project.
    2. Congratulations to seniors Eric Chen and Ophelia Crano for being named semifinalists in the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual National Merit Scholarship Program. As semifinalists, Mr. Chen and Miss Crano will have an opportunity to continue in the competition for scholarships and the ultimate title of Merit Scholar. In addition, seniors Sydney Brower, Gavin Helmsen, Rohin Jayaraman and Patrick Monahan have been named Commended Students in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program. Miss Brower, Mr. Helmsen, Mr. Jayaraman and Mr. Monahan were recognized by the NMSC for their outstanding performance on the qualifying test used for program entry. Over 1.3 million juniors in more than

21,000 high schools entered the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state.

Dr. Vitale and several Board Members recognized and congratulated Mr. Chen, Miss Crano, Miss Brower, Mr. Jayaraman and Mr. Monahan on their outstanding performance. The students took time answering questions from the Board and sharing their experiences and how they were able accomplish this recognition.

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

October	National Principals Month and Breast Cancer Awareness Month
October 10	World Mental Health Day
October 11	Yom Kippur Begins
October 14	Columbus Day
October 14	Indigenous Peoples' Day
October 14	Regular School Board Meeting – 7 p.m.
October 16	Sukkot Begins
October 23	Winter Sport Drug Testing and Concussion Testing – SHS Athletic Offices - 2:45 p.m.
October 24	SVAOC End of First Nine Weeks, Grades 7-12
October 26	ACT Testing – SHS
October 26	PSAT Testing – SHS
October 28	SV End of First Nine Weeks, Grades 7-12
October 31	Halloween
November 1	Diwali
November 3	Daylight Savings Time Ends
November 3	Seneca Valley Foundation's Second Annual Ryan Gloyer Memorial Run/Walk presented by Westinghouse – Secondary Campus – 9 a.m. More information at <a href="http://svsd.net">SFC Ryan Gloyer Memorial Run (svsd.net)</a>
November 4	School Board Work Session – 7 p.m. – SHSHS Auditorium

Mr. DiTullio encouraged everyone to attend and sign up for the SFC Ryan Gloyer Memorial Run on November 3.

C. **Agency Reports**

1. Vo-Tech - Mr. Nick Brower reported that there are about 170 SVSD students are attending the Vo-Tech this year.
2. I.U. IV - Mr. Eric DiTullio reported that they have renewed Dr. Killmeyer's contract as the Executive Director.

D. **Legislative** - Mr. Eric DiTullio reported that the newest members of the State House of Representatives were recently sworn in. He also shared that mandatory training on seizure recognition has been approved by the Senate Education Committee and that House Bill 2536, Extension of Property Tax Relief for Longtime Homeowners, has been amended on the House Floor and sent to the

appropriations committee. The House of Education Committee has approved Senate Bill 801 that requires school entities to adopt an evidenced-based reading instruction curriculum beginning in the 2025-26 school year. Lastly, Mr. DiTullio reported that the House Commerce Committee approved House Resolution 443 that will require separate playoff systems for public, private and charter schools.

E. **Financial Reports**

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

- F. **Presentation of Outdoor Learning** – Dr. McCarty and the Haine Middle School Team presented an Outdoor Education program for Haine Elementary and Middle Schools (HES/HMS). Dr. McCarty shared that they have been able to start this project with a \$15,000 Tugboat Grant provided by the Grable Foundation and that the team has also requested a Moonshot Grant in the amount of \$50,000 from the Grable Foundation to help with funding the project.

Mr. Ken (KC) Cahall, HMS teacher, shared that the idea to start this program came from “Nature-Deficit Disorder” and the disconnect between individuals and nature, and the challenges because of the disconnect.

Mr. Cahall presented short-term and long-term goals around an Outdoor Education program that would benefit students in grades K-6. Short-term goals include construction of outdoor learning spaces at Haine, working with teachers to increase student engagement and to foster connections between the school and community partnerships through on and offsite programming. Mr. Cahall pointed out that he is currently working with a few teachers specifically in kindergarten and fifth grade to encourage them to take their classes outside and to become more comfortable utilizing these outdoor spaces and how to incorporate outdoor education into their teaching not just science, but all subjects.

Mr. Cahall shared that spending time outdoors has benefits for children with ADHD, that children are naturally inquisitive and that children tend to obtain more when they have firsthand experiences with their learning.

A few of the long-term goals include focusing on the students in kindergarten and fifth grades. The reason for the fifth grade is because there is a natural flow to the state standards that incorporates itself well into nature. Mr. Cahall would like to work to bring back an experience for fifth grade students similar to McKeever Environmental Center that many students participated in prior to McKeever closing. The reason behind focusing on kindergarten students, especially the students in extended-day kindergarten, is because the first learning environments for children are the outdoors. Incorporating the outdoors into a kindergarten’s learning environment has proven benefits such as exploring, discovering and problem

solving. Additional long-term goals are continued support for kindergarten through sixth grade teachers across the District, securing the funding for a four season outdoor learning structure and increased partnerships with families, community and local experts.

Mr. Cahall believes that with a better understanding of the world around them, children will have a better appreciation and understanding of their place in it and the impact of their decisions. He also shared that learning to appreciate the natural world can help children better appreciate and accept one another.

Mr. Jacobs thanked Mr. Cahall and the Haine Team for all that they have done to pilot this program. He also asked if there are plans to get the students involved in creating the spaces. Mr. Cahall confirmed that there are plans to get the students involved in all aspects of the program.

Ms. Zimmer shared that one of the many things that she loves about SVSD is that things aren't always done the way other districts are doing them. She thanked Mr. Cahall for thinking outside of the box and asked what resources he has to proceed. Mr. Cahall responded that there are a few schools in the East that he has researched, has participated in webinars and does a lot of research online. Additionally, Mr. Cahall has past experience with this setting, the education and has seen the firsthand benefits of its success.

Mr. Widdowson thanked Mr. Cahall and the Haine Team and shared that this will be a great opportunity and addition to the District.

In closing, Dr. McCarty added that all our elementary sites have unique resources already that they can utilize. In addition, there are many opportunities in our surrounding area that we can utilize and from which to learn. He shared that through grant funding, the elementary administrative team was able to visit Moraine State Park this summer to learn about their education programs and new educational spaces. Additionally, through this program, there will be family activities planned throughout the year to bring families to the sites to be able to learn together. Dr. McCarty shared his excitement in this program and looks forward to seeing where it goes from here.

### 3. ACTION AGENDA

- A. **Public Comment** – Public comment was made by Reverend James Bills regarding a proposal for school bus driver incentives and recruitment program.
- B. **Personnel** – Approved the following personnel items that were discussed in executive session held prior to the meeting:
  - 1. **Resignations** – *Classified* – Janean Yeater, *Supplemental* – Andrew Russell, Ronald Lasko
  - 2. **Appointments** – *Professional* – Amanda Kalin, *Professional Substitutes* – Dana Mathews, Kathryn Olson, Linda Starosta, Mackenzie Clark, *Classified* – Sarah Schneider, Becky Frey, Lauren Sowa-Doku, Elliott Pater, Steven Baldinger, Janice Darbee, Jayme Gordon, *Supplementals* – Scott Dibble, Justin McCauley,

Gary Brooks, Rob Naylor, Eric Semega, Tom Magill, Makinley Magill, Karen “Julie” Fornadel, Krystal Epps, Ray Peaco, Megan Meeder, Katie Smolter, Andrea Platt, Lisa Wilson, Nancy Laslavic, Michael Caccamo, Theodore (Jake) Calvin, Kevin Holman, Mike Conlon, Don Howard, Aaron Shafer, Drew Smith, Louis Newell, Eric Semega, Chris Eden, Katie Smolter, Marlesse Hames, Eric Grove, Ray Peaco, Brett Poirier, Samantha Stewart, Jennifer Durst, Karissa Lambert, Michael Manipole, Elizabeth Wimer, Rebecca Rockey, Victoria Hinchee, Sarah White, James Bull, Erin Burkhart, Thomas Donati, Victor Giannotta, Jason Groom, Lisa Kasper, Karissa Lambert, Cortney Lambert, Lara Meyer, Gabriel Miller, Andrew Musacchio, Camden Palmer, William Parenti, Devyn Peskorski, Halley Rooney, Eleanor Sgro, Claire Staudacher, La Varr Stephens-Howling, Ezekial Stroupe, James Sutkowski, Christopher Titus, Nicole Parson, Callie Bruno

3. **Leaves** – *Professional* – Holly Blizman, Leah Vogel, Hillary Mellott, Whitney Corrigan, Kristi Seethaler, Tammie Limmer, *Classified* – Janean Yeater, Ann Raisley, Caitlin Bertucci
4. **Retirement** – *Administration* – DeeAnn Graham, *Classified* – Lynn Henderson
5. **Affiliation Agreements** – Approved Affiliation Agreements with Seneca Valley School District and Geneva College, LaRoche University, Seton Hill University and Slippery Rock University.

- C. **Student Adjudications** – Approved the following student adjudications:
- a. #2024-25-03
  - b. #2024-25-04

Ms. Harrison motioned, seconded by Mr. Widdowson to approve resignations, appointments, leaves, retirement and affiliation agreements. The motion passed on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

#### 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. **Work Session** – September 9, 2024
- B. **Action Meeting** – September 16, 2024

#### 5. TREASURER’S REPORT

6. **GENERAL FUND BILLS**  
Grand Total: \$4,724,341.53

7. **CONSTRUCTION FUND BILLS**  
Grand Total: \$2,356,514.66

#### 8. ADMINISTRATION

- A. **Board Policies** -
  1. Approve board policy 612 – Purchases not Budgeted – new, second and final reading.
  2. Approve board policy 619 – District Audit – new, second and final reading.

3. Approve board policy 812 – Property Insurance – new, second and final reading.
4. Approve board policy 622 – GASB Statement 34 – revised, first reading.

## 9. INSTRUCTION

- A. **Conferences** – Approve conference requests.
- B. **Non-Public Title I Services Agreement** - Approve the Third-Party Letter of Agreement for Nonpublic Title I Services with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV for the 2024-25 school year.
- C. **Grant Disbursements** - Grant permission to apply for and disburse, if approved, the following grants:
  1. The Holocaust Curriculum and LIGHT Center Development Grant in the amount of \$1,000 requested by Ms. Michele Russo. Funds will be used to purchase a set of graphic novels about the Holocaust that is in the tenth-grade curriculum, to provide transportation to and the programming with the Holocaust Center.
  2. The Living Laboratory and School Garden Grant in the amount of \$7,447.07 requested by Ms. Mersing and Dr. Wilcher. Funds will be used to create learning opportunities that serve as hands-on experiences that introduce topics such as aquaponics, garden beds and embryology.
  3. The School Security Personnel Costs Grant in the amount of \$232,668.00 requested by Ms. Annie Mersing and Mr. Jason Young. Funds will be used for personnel cost of school security officers.
  4. The Heros and Helpers 2024 Grant in the amount of \$2,500 requested by Ms. Jen Shipe, Dr. Wilcher and Ms. Annie Mersing. Funds will be used to support Haine Middle School’s “Shop with a Cop” event with Cranberry Township Police Department.
- D. **Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) Title I Services Agreement** - Approve the AIU services agreement for Title I Non-Public services for the 2024-25 school year.
- E. **The Watson Institute (Education Center) Service Agreement** - Approve the agreement with The Watson Institute for the provision of educational services for student enrolled at The Education Center Sewickley for the 2024-25 school year.

Mr. DiTullio thanked Mr. Young for working with Ms. Mersing on applying for the School Security Personnel Costs Grant.

## 10. BUSINESS/FINANCE

- A. **Budget Transfers** – Approve budget transfers.
- B. **Natural Gas Agreement Extensions** - Approve three-year contract extensions with NRG/Direct Energy for Natural Gas on the Columbia Gas System with a Basis Price of (-\$0.267) per dekatherm and with UGI for Natural Gas on the Peoples Gas System with a Basis Price of (-\$0.50) per dekatherm for the term September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2028 as recommended by the Western Pennsylvania Natural Gas Consortium (AIU3 joint purchasing).

- C. **Certificate of Deposit Placement Program** - Approve a program application and investment advisory agreement with the Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust.
- D. **Postage Meter Lease Renewal** - Approve a renewal lease agreement with Quadient for a replacement postage meter machine for a 60-month term with a beginning effective date of August 14, 2025.
- E. **Food Service Equipment** - Approve the sale of any food service equipment that is deemed to have resale value and the disposal of any items that are not suitable for resale in a responsible manner.

11. **PERSONNEL**

12. **LETTERS SENT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD** - The following constituents communicated through the SVSD school board email account after posting the September 16, 2024, public agenda:

- a. Katie Tomo
- b. Fred and Jen Hunter
- c. Candace Kantz & Amanda Brewster
- d. Chad Marlow
- e. James Bills

13. **ADJOURNMENT** - With nothing to come before the board, Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Ms. Harrison to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m. The motion carried on a voice vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – An executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss personnel items.

Mr. Eric DiTullio, President



Ms. Julia Benson, School Board Secretary