

**WYOMING VALLEY WEST SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR SEPTEMBER BOARD MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 13, 2023
In Person and Zoom**

The Regular September Meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Wyoming Valley West School District was held at the Middle School and on Zoom on the above date. Meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm by President Kamus. The following Board Members answered present to roll call: Pieczynski, Dubaskas, Hardwick, Perfetto, Mazur, Cussatt, and Kamus. Mr. Keating and Mr. Usavage were absent. Superintendent Tosh, Attorney Messinger, Finance Manager Witiak, and Board Secretary Bullock were present. Student representatives Lilian Mahoney and Simona Debru were also present.

Moment of Silence was followed by a salute to the flag.

President Kamus announced that an executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss contract and personnel items.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD - Lilian Mahoney and Simona Debru

Zubeen Saeed, Building Blocks Learning Center, gave a brief summary explaining the before and after school program provided at Dana Elementary Center.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Tosh thanked all our parents and guardians that came out the last two nights for Meet the Teacher Night at the High School and the Middle School. Educational research is very clear, the more parents are involved in their child's education, the better the chances of academic success. Tomorrow night is Meet the Teacher Night at our elementary buildings from 6:00 to 8:00. As mentioned on the Robo call last Sunday, Friday, September 22nd is our first Act 80 Day with early dismissals. I am excited to report that we have had initial discussions with Educational Support Services or ESS to help the district with our sub shortage, which is nationwide. We have had two meetings thus far and they will be presenting information to our School Board about their program at the Work Session on October 4th. Finally, we are very excited to announce that we are partnering with King's College to begin an Aspiring Teachers Program. I will have more information regarding the program at the October Board meeting after we meet with King's College representatives at the High School on October 3rd. We are also going to be looking to expand these opportunities for juniors and seniors with other area institutions of high learning in the very near future with this program. The goal of the program is to get more students interested in the teaching profession, whereas we all know there is a severe shortage, and to make those opportunities financially possible through grants and through college credits. I will have more information at the October Board meeting. I would like to thank our High School Principal, Mrs. Carey and our Curriculum Director, Mr. Novrocki for their help in spearheading this effort and especially King's College. In addition, I have reached out to the United Way, Mr. Bill Jones, who has always been a great partner to school districts in the area at the United Way. He is very interested in assisting the district in any way possible. We are very excited about this program and I will have more information at the October Board meeting.

Amended Items to Agenda:

Motion made by Hardwick, seconded by Pieczynski to add #24 under General Recommended Action to approve Agreement pursuant to File ODR 27447-22-23 AS.

24. Approve **Agreement** pursuant to File ODR 27447-22-23 AS.

Roll Call: Pieczynski, Dubaskas, Hardwick, Perfetto, Mazur, Cussatt, and Kamus voting yes.

Motion Carried. Mr. Keating and Mr. Usavage were absent. (7-yes; 2-absent)

Motion made by Hardwick, seconded by Pieczynski to add #25, #26 and #27 under General Recommended Action to approve change orders.

25. Approve **Change Order from Brennan Electric (003)**, \$441.00 for the High School HVAC Improvements Project, as presented.
26. Approve **Change Order from A+E (002)**, \$7,943.75 for the High School HVAC Improvements Project, as presented.
27. Approve **Change Order from Panzitta Enterprises (003)**, \$1087.68 for the High School HVAC Improvements Project, as presented.

Roll Call: Pieczynski, Dubaskas, Hardwick, Perfetto, Mazur, Cussatt, and Kamus voting yes.

Motion Carried. Mr. Keating and Mr. Usavage were absent. (7-yes; 2-absent)

STATEMENTS FROM INTERESTED CITIZENS

Citizens addressing the Board are asked to state their name and town of residence in accordance with Board Policy #903 (copy available). Statements are limited to three minutes.

Beth Mrochko, Kingston, said she is looking at the meeting notes and trying to go over the new policies. She noticed they are listed as first readings and questioned having two readings. She had questions and said she could answer her own questions if she had time to research them. She questioned if the order of the meeting where the citizens are called up could be moved; items six and seven reversed. If she spoke last month and the minutes were misinterpreted or mistyped, could she object in the citizens comment?

President Kamus said the Board feels this is the proper order and if she has an objection, she could do it now. Minutes are approved before they are posted.

Last Saturday she went to a football game (J.V. her grandson played) and she was very disheartened by the way a football player behaved on the field. There was a player that had a fight with his own player in the middle of the game on the field. The coach rebuked him and the student told the coach to shut up. This is unacceptable behavior in public. It is unacceptable, the coach just turned around and did not address it. She said in her day if you talked to a coach like that; give me your helmet, you are out. Why are we not disciplining these kids?

Mr. Dubaskas replied that the discipline is handled in private.

She does not want our coaches disrespected. We need to make sure we are protecting our staff from students' disrespect. If they are willing to do that in a public square, what are they doing in these buildings? We need to protect our teachers from this misbehavior.

Amy Brzoska, Swoyersville, said initially she came tonight to voice her support for the schools PTOs. Her children are now at the middle school, but she was a member of the PTO at Dana Street when they were there. She knows the challenges PTOs face. She is hoping that the PTO does not face any type of recourse. They are doing their best to provide some of the extras for the students. She knows the challenges and how hard it is to get volunteers because of working parents and what not. She hopes they are still allowed to continue with their fundraisers to the best of their abilities. She also addressed the lunch situation at the Middle School. It happened at the elementary school, she talked to the principals, it gets taken care of and then it happens multiple times throughout the year. It is the amount of time that students are given to eat their lunch. Her daughter is in 6th grade this year and came home the other day and said she had five minutes to eat her slice of pizza and apple. She does not think it is adequate for an adult or a child to only have 5 minutes to eat their lunch.

She is not someone that comes to the School Board for things, this is her first time. She usually deals with the principals, but it happens so many times. If her children do not get to eat, they go home and have food to eat. We cannot say that for a lot of other students in our district. It is disheartening, we are a district that gets free lunch. Does the state know that kids do not sometimes even have time to eat? She feels this is a big issue. The other thing she addressed is that her daughter is in 6th grade and has study hall four times a week. Homework is not a big thing now, there are tons of research stating why sending kids home with copious amounts of homework is not best practice. They do not have homework to do in study hall. Read a book? Her daughter and son are avid readers. Her daughter reads two to three books a week. She is a product of public-school education and is in favor of public-school education. Can't she do something else? Learn a language, learn how to type so they are not chicken pecking on their Chromebooks. When she was in middle school, they had home ec, sewing and wood shop in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Can't she have a sewing class to learn how to sew a button on? Her daughter sits in study hall four days out of five or six following the schedule. She thinks there are better uses of student's time than sitting in study hall. Her daughter does not love study hall and is bored out of her skull. This is not the case for a lot of other children in the school district. She expressed her profound disappointment that the Board hired the assistant principal at the high school. Mr. Tosh's very first Robo call ended with the safety of our students and staff is the utmost concern. Hiring this individual did not demonstrate that. A Wilkes University individual had inappropriate contact, he was fired the next day. They did not wait for an investigation, they did not wait innocent until proven guilty. This individual had contact with a minor and should never have a student's personal cell phone and contact them. It is disappointing that you are responsible for my children's safety and the safety in the whole district and this individual is employed in our district.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Dubaskas said they had an Education Committee meeting and talked about how they are going to address some issues. We met with the Middle School and High School principals, and we are looking for direction to improve on our loss learning. A lot of children coming up have missed time in school. He saw a couple mentions on Facebook about kids having multiple math classes and that is a direct result of some actions from Mr. Bond and Mr. Novrocki and about understanding where these children were at taking a standardized test or classes, looking at past results from previous years, comparing them and identifying students who have either been at a low level or were at a higher level but went backwards a little bit. Having that second math class, we are trying to reinforce some of those math skills that are so important as they move up. Thank you to Mr. Bond, Mr. Novrocki and Mr. Tosh for doing that and implementing. I'm sorry to some of the parents that your kids have two math classes, but there is some reason for doing that.

Mr. Hardwick, Special Education spoke for itself with the due process cases put forward for Board approval. As discussed recently with Marya Baratta, Director of Special Education, we are going to put together for the Board, an educational session within the next month or two and bring Attorney Chris Bambach in to present to the Board, a review of the Special Education system from a legal perspective and to bring us up to speed on any changes and items that may have come forward since the last time he addressed the group.

Mr. Hardwick, ESSERS, said he would provide an update and thanked Mr. Tosh, Kim Walck and Tom Witiak for helping put it together. ESSERS I is complete. Those dollars are spent and gone. These are the dollars we received through PDE that came to PDE through the federal government. ESSERS II was a total of \$7,393,577. The items that we put forth to utilize that money included the purchase

and upgrade of instructional technology, hardware and software, including Chromebooks and Google Licenses for teachers and students. That project is 90% completed. The non-instructional purchases included providing personal protective equipment for all buildings including cleaning equipment for teachers and students, upgrading and installing security cameras in buildings with no cameras to increase the safety of teachers and students, and upgrading 10 of 14 air handlers throughout district buildings. Those are 90% completed and that resolves ESSERS II. ESSERS II received to date of the roughly \$7,400,000 we have received \$5,172,725 in reimbursement dollars.

ESSERS III, which is the larger segment of the program, we were awarded \$14,955,068. To date we have used \$2,991,013. Within ESSERS III the instructional purchases total \$2,991,000 and that is to address loss learning to include summer school, before and after school tutoring programs and to continue to upgrade online instructional technology support with hardware and software to include Google Licenses for teachers and students and Chromebooks. Those projects are 50% complete. In non-instructional purchases which total \$11,964,054 those projects include the Middle School for new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. That project is still in early stages with the general contractor, awarded to Sitelog. The Middle School design services include the schematic and design development, construction documents and bidding services. That project is started.

Mr. Tosh thanked Mr. Hardwick for the summary and all the time he has put in between the ESSERS Committee and all the interviews. We are concluding ESSERS II and we will really try to button down ESSERS III, particularly the 20% loss learning. We have to have that spent by next September and our goal is to have our plan in place. It is already in place but to really finalize the entire 20% loss learning from the January to March time period. We will be moving forward with that next.

GENERAL RECOMMENDED ACTION

Moved by Pieczynski, seconded by Dubaskas that the Board of School Directors act on the following General Recommended Items:

1. Approved **Real Estate Property Tax Exemption** through the Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission to the following, as presented:
 - ❖ Phillip Weaver
2. Approved **Agreement** pursuant to File ODR 27055-22-23 KE.
3. Approved **Agreement** pursuant to File 2749514.
4. Approved **Agreement** pursuant to File ODR 28165-22-23 AS.
5. Approved **Agreement** pursuant to File ODR 27664-22-23 KE.
6. Approved **Agreement** between Wyoming Valley West School District and **Graham Academy** for the 2023/2024 school year, as presented.
7. Approved the **Agreement** between The Luzerne Intermediate Unit and Wyoming Valley West School District for **Partial Hospitalization Therapeutic Services** for the 2023-2024 school year, as resented.
8. Approved implementing a Wyoming Valley West High School **E-Sports Program**.
9. Approved Agreement with Luzerne Intermediate Unit #18 for the **2023/2024 Idea Allocation** based on December 1, 2022 Idea Count of 1276, as presented.
10. Adopt **Policy 000**, Board Policy/Procedure/Administrative Regulations, as presented. (First Reading)
11. Adopt **Policy 001**, Name and Classification, as presented. (First Reading)
12. Adopt **Policy 002**, Authority and Powers, as presented. (First Reading)
13. Adopt **Policy 003**, Functions, as presented. (First Reading)
14. Adopt **Policy 004**, Membership, as presented. (First Reading)

- 15. Adopt **Policy 005**, Organization, as presented. (First Reading)
- 16. Adopt **Policy 006**, Meetings, as presented. (First Reading)
- 17. Adopt **Policy 006.1**, Attendance at Meeting Via Electronic Communications. (First Reading)
- 18. Adopt **Policy 007**, Policy Manual Access, as presented. (First Reading)
- 19. Approved recommendation to retire **Policy 008**, Organizational Chart.
- 20. Approved recommendation to retire **Policy 010**, Board Hiring Procedures.
- 21. Adopt **Policy 011**, Principles for Governance and Leadership, as presented. (First Reading)
- 22. Adopt **Policy 828**, Fraud, as presented. (First Reading)
- 23. Approved Stipulation and proposed Settlement Order with CHCT Pennsylvania, LLC, for the assessment appeal of Parcel Number **34-H9NE2-04C-02E-000**, subject to solicitor review.
- 24. Approved **Agreement** pursuant to File ODR 27447-22-23 AS.
- 25. Approved **Change Order from Brennan Electric (003)**, \$441.00 for the High School HVAC Improvements Project, as presented.
- 26. Approved **Change Order from A+E (002)**, \$7,943.75 for the High School HVAC Improvements Project, as presented.
- 27. Approved **Change Order from Panzitta Enterprises (003)**, \$1087.68 for the High School HVAC Improvements Project, as presented.

Roll Call: Pieczynski, Dubaskas, Hardwick, Perfetto, Mazur, Cussatt, and Kamus voting yes.

Motion Carried. Mr. Keating and Mr. Usavage were absent.

STAFF RECOMMENDED ACTION

Moved by Pieczynski, seconded by Cussatt, that the Board of School Directors act on the following Staff Recommended Items:

- 1. Approved additions to **Substitute Teacher** list: Sharon Mazzeo; Frank Britt
- 2. Approved **excused absences** August 1, 2023 - August 31, 2023.
- 3. Accept declination of appointment, **Carissa Cohen**, Elementary Teacher, effective immediately.
- 4. Appointed **Shannon Danko**, Elementary Teacher, Chester St. 2nd Grade, \$46,500. effective August 31, 2023.
- 5. Appointed the following **State St. Elementary Teacher Mentors** for 2023-2024:

<u>New Teacher</u>	<u>Mentor</u>
Caroline Novrocki	Laura Thomas
Ryleigh White	Christine Wine
Gabrielle Shemanski	Cassie Tsevdos
Amber Scalzo	Larry Little
Colby Michaels	Samantha Bovolick
Francesca Mazzeo	Katie Gaylord
- 6. Appointed the following **High School Teacher Mentors** for 2023-2024:

<u>New Teacher</u>	<u>Mentor</u>
Juan Martinez	Suzanne Aboutanos-Fellerman
Jacob Weston	Michelle Kepping (continue ½ yr. from Spring 2023)
Corinne Boyd	Andrea Styczen
Elizabeth Kravitz	Maria Ratchford

7. Appointed the following **Middle School Teacher Mentors** for 2023-2024:
- | <u>New Teacher</u> | <u>Mentor</u> |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Kaitlyn Takacs | Christopher Uter |
| Aaron Littzi | Andrew Barilla |
| Mark Senchak | Tyler Freas |
8. Accepted the following **resignations**:
- ❖ **Fatikha Tikhtova** - Cleaner/Dana St., last day August 23, 2023.
 - ❖ **Michelle Matusick** - Cleaner/Chester St., last day August 11, 2023.
 - ❖ **Jacob Davies** - Custodian/High School 2nd shift., last day August 14, 2023.
 - ❖ **Valerie Johnson** - Emotional Support Aide/State St., last day June 9, 2023.
 - ❖ **Sarah Zambito** - Autistic Support Aide/Chester St., last day June 9, 2023.
 - ❖ **Paula Laffette** - Cleaner/High School, last day August 24, 2023.
 - ❖ **Susan Bell** – Life Skills-PCA/Middle School, last day June 9, 2023.
 - ❖ **Cierra Meeker** - Computer Aide/Chester St. And Third Ave., last day June 9, 2023.
 - ❖ **Margaret Sitler** - Autistic Support Aide/State St., last day June 9, 2023.
 - ❖ **John Kobusky** – Head Custodian/High School, last day September 15, 2023.
9. Approved the following **transfer of position**:
- ❖ **Jean Evans** – General Duty Aide/Middle School Attendance to General Duty Aide/High School Attendance, effective September 5, 2023.
10. Appointed the following **new hires**:
- ❖ **Michelle Matusick** - Cleaner/Chester St., \$12.00/hr. effective August 10, 2023.
 - ❖ **Paula Laffette** - Cleaner/High School, \$12.00/hr. effective August 15, 2023.
 - ❖ **Elena Rivera** - PCA/State St., \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Kathryn Benn** – Nurse Assistant/High School, \$100.00/day effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Kimberly Chainey** - PCA/State St., \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Tiffany Powell** - Cleaner/Dana St., \$12.00/hr. effective August 24, 2023.
 - ❖ **Tyisha Nimmons** - PCA/State St., \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Jayson Farris** – Cleaner/State St., \$12.00/hr. effective August 21, 2023.
 - ❖ **Shajada Johnson** - PCA/State St., \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Simone Blackwell** - PCA/State St., \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Marlene Guminsky** - Cleaner/High School, \$12.00/hr. effective August 14, 2023. (from summer cleaner)
 - ❖ **Jossiy Gutierrez** – Emotional Support Aide/High School, \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Pamela Wood** – Cleaner/Chester St., \$12.00/hr. effective August 28, 2023.
 - ❖ **Lauren Konopke** – substitute classroom aide, \$10.50/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Malorie Giza** – General Duty Aide/Middle School, \$10.50/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
 - ❖ **Kimberly Miller** – Cleaner/Middle School, \$12.00/hr. effective August 31, 2023.
 - ❖ **Margaret Kane** – Life Skills Aide/Middle School, \$12.00/hr. effective September 5, 2023.
11. Child Rearing Leave, **Emp. #596478**, effective September 5, 2023; returning October 10, 2023.

- 12. Medical Leave, FMLA, **Emp. #463568**, effective October 16, 2023; returning TBD.
- 13. Medical Leave, Intermittent FMLA, **Emp. #569981**, effective September 2023.
- 14. Medical Leave, **Emp. #483962**, effective August 23, 2023; returning TBD.
- 15. Medical Leave, **Emp. #416488**, effective October 17, 2023; returning January 2, 2024.
- 16. Child Bearing Leave, FMLA, **Emp. #688416**, effective October 25, 2023; returning approx. January 17, 2024.
- 17. Unpaid Medical Leave, **Emp. #412956**, effective August 23, 2023; returning TBD.
- 18. Approved stipend of \$1,258. for implementing **GIEP requirements** for the following *Middle School Teachers*:

Welki, Jodi	Wagner, Tracy
Moses, Lisa	White, Rebecca
Shymanski, Lynn	Romanowski, Christopher
Labashosky, Sandy	Palladino, Brian
Tkaczyk, Brian	Stull, Sara
- 19. Appointed the following **Middle School Building Level Department Chairs**:
 - Math Department – Pamela Oliveira
 - Science Department – Christopher Uter
 - English Language Arts – Holly Pick
- 20. Appointed the following **Student Representatives** to the School Board:
 - ❖ **Senior Liaison** - Lilian Mahoney
 - ❖ **Junior Liaison** - Simona Debru
- 21. Approved **Professional Contract Status (Tenure)** for the following teachers:

Michael Brown	Anna Toupin
Meghan Davis	Tracy Vitali
Lisa Elgonitis	Stephen Zapoticky
Mallory Myers	Brandon Zlotek
Laura Thomas	
- 22. Approved the recommendation for the **Fall Coaching Position**:
CROSS COUNTRY (BOYS & GIRLS)
 ASSISTANT 7-9 – **Laura Thompson** \$1970
- 23. Appointed recommended candidate, **Ryan Murphy**, Middle School Math Teacher 7th Grade, \$46,500. effective September 14, 2023.

Roll Call: Pieczynski, Dubaskas, Hardwick, Perfetto, Mazur, Cussatt, and Kamus voting yes.

Motion Carried. Mr. Keating and Mr. Usavage were absent.

FINANCE RECOMMENDED ACTION

Moved by Pieczynski, seconded by Cussatt, that the Board of School Directors approve the following:

- 1. Accepted and approved the following as presented: **Bills for Payment, Finance Manager’s Reports and Treasurer’s Report.**

Roll Call: Pieczynski, Dubaskas, Hardwick, Perfetto, Mazur, Cussatt, and Kamus voting yes.

Motion Carried. Mr. Keating and Mr. Usavage were absent.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Hardwick said congratulations to all the new hires, teachers, subs and aides. There are a lot of folks that came on board. Welcome.

Mr. Tosh acknowledged and congratulated Mr. DeRocco, Dana St. and Chester St. Principal and Mr. Gegaris, our new Assistant Principal at the Middle School. They are both doing a great job and we want to thank them and welcome them.

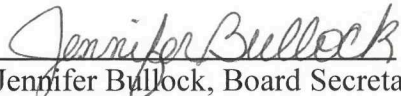
President Kamus announced the next scheduled meeting, October Work Session, Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 7:00 pm. and the Regular October meeting, Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Pieczynski, seconded by Dubaskas, that the Board of School Directors adjourn this meeting.

Motion Carried.

Adjourned: 7:53 pm


Jennifer Bullock, Board Secretary

A tape of this meeting will be maintained at the District Office until the minutes are accepted at the next scheduled Board Meeting.