



**Barker Central School District  
Board of Education Meeting  
Auditorium  
Monday, December 14, 2020 - 7:00 PM**

**PRESENT** R. Atwater, M. Clemens-Harris, H. Ecker, C. Gancasz, E. Gow, J. Sweeney, V. Voss

**EXCUSED** None

**ALSO**

**PRESENT** J. Reimer, M. Carter, M. Eadie, C. Heiligenthaler, M. Kramer  
Public: 1

**CALL TO  
ORDER**

President Atwater welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge to the Flag was given.

**APPROVE  
AGENDA**

The agenda was reviewed. With no additions or changes, a motion was made by Mr. Sweeney, Mrs. Clemens-Harris to approve the agenda as presented.  
Yes: 7, No: 0  
Motion carried.

**ACCEPT  
MINUTES**

The Board reviewed the Board minutes. A motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mrs. Gancasz, to accept the minutes from the Regular Board Meeting dated of November 16, 2020 were approved as presented.  
Yes: 7, No: 0  
Motion carried.

**PUBLIC  
FORUM**

None.

**PRESENTATIONS**

Principal's Update - M. Carter

Mr. Carter reported that there are a few students and staff that have been quarantined, mostly due to positive contacts, primarily in the home or a private



place vs. school. He also noted that BOCES has had an increased rate of positive COVID cases which resulted in five students being quarantined today. The quarantining is affecting the High School more than the Elementary school.

Mr. Carter discussed the Building Leadership Committee survey recently completed which elicited High School students' feedback with regard to the hybrid instruction model at the end of the first quarter. The results were as expected. Many students indicated they felt they were just doing the work to complete a task; noted feeling more strained along with increased anxiety levels; missing being in school and part of the Barker family; as well as the impact of COVID overall to them and families. The results will be discussed with the staff to develop additional ways help students; how to improve upon the hybrid model; as well as reviewing the purpose of the homework – how does it function, does it assess, reinforce, practice or something else; and how deadlines are assigned to work, etc.

Mr. Carter noted that a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) survey was conducted and noted that there were correlations between the two surveys which are being analyzed to help support the students' needs. He discussed the impact on students of not being in school and having the connection of being in a supportive, structured environment five days a week, with access to staff, resources, extra-curricular activities, friends, and 10<sup>th</sup> period support/activities.

Mr. Carter also discussed activities recently held and planned activities to provide some “normalcy” to the students including a turkey drive; gifts for the holidays to help families in need; a hot cocoa day next week which students will volunteer to help serve other students, as well as a visit from Santa for Pre-K – 4.

Mr. Carter discussed the integral role Ms. McKee has played during the entire pandemic and that she continues to be an asset and resource to the District through her communications with students, families and staff regarding the COVID virus, quarantining, best practices, etc.

Mr. Carter reviewed two program requests for consideration of the Board this evening which will provide valuable coding skills to students which would be taught by Mr. Post. He also noted a request for approval for Jen Reichenberg, Professor at Buffalo State College, to observe for a research project Mrs. Dissek and Mrs. Evans' 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom as learning model after a positive observation of a student teacher that was assigned to their classroom.

Overall, Mr. Carter noted it is difficult but the District continues to run the overall school day to day and strives to do the best it can for the students in the current learning community based on the guidelines and restrictions in place.

#### Curriculum Update - M. Kramer

Dr. Kramer discussed the continued work of the Social/Emotional Group including the recently completed Social & Emotional Learning survey completed and the work coordinated by the group which included visits by Mr. Rogers and Ms. Bannister to students in grades 3-6 to help students having difficulties; a 4-part series for teachers to help deal with the stress they are seeing; working on activities



for high school students after break to help them connect, reduce stress and self-improvement both physically and emotionally; professional learning for staff on relationships in the classroom; and sharing the results of the survey with staff in order to build upon what was voiced in the survey to assist the students in as many ways as possible. She noted that given the nature of some of the comments in the survey, confidentiality of the participants will be maintained when discussed, and the survey will remain confidential.

Dr. Kramer also discussed a possible research project next year with Dr. Blythe Anderson of University at Buffalo regarding the application of literacy in the elementary classroom which will look into the biggest needs for the District and will provide benefits to the school by allowing access to the information and materials available as a result of the project. Dr. Anderson will also provide professional development around literacy.

#### Financial Update - C. Heiligenthaler

Ms. Heiligenthaler noted the completion of the ESSA Transparency Report and submission on the NYSED website which was due on December 31, 2020.

She also noted the Board has a recommendation this month for the appointment of Jordan Renz as a part-time cleaner through Niagara County. This work program provides individuals up to the age of 26 the ability to work 30 hours per week for a twelve week period and be paid through the County.

#### Parameters for 2021-2022 Budget Development and Review of Tax Cap Rules & Regulations - C. Heiligenthaler

Ms. Heiligenthaler distributed and reviewed information on the history of the property tax cap which was signed into law in June of 2011 and implemented with the 2012 – 2013 fiscal year. The handout illustrated the tax levy limit calculation based on current projections for the District. She noted that the CPI that will be used for the actual tax cap calculation will reflect the period of July 1 – June 30 and will be published mid-January. She and Mr. Reimer reviewed the information and responded to questions regarding the tax cap in order to provide the Board a basis for determining what level they would want the cap to be for the upcoming year. The growth in the annual allowable tax levy limit is determined and limited to the lesser of 2% or the Consumer Price Index (CPI)/rate of inflation factor, subject to certain limited exceptions and adjustments. Mr. Reimer noted that the tax levy cannot exceed the calculated tax cap unless 60 percent of voters approve such an increase.

For this review, Ms. Heiligenthaler used the December CPI published which was 1.31%. The allowable tax levy limit for 2020-2021 before adjustments/exclusions was \$6,441,107 but the District only levied \$4,584,581. Based on the current calculation for 2021-2022 the tax levy limit maximum is \$4,775,712 which represents an increase of \$191,131 or 4.17% over the prior year. This includes a carryover from the prior year in the amount of \$96,617. Without the carryover, the levy limit would be \$4,679,095, an increase of \$94,514 or 2.06%. The carryover



is only usable in the subsequent year. The impact of the PILOT and other adjustments as part of the new levy were reviewed with the Board. It was noted that the PILOT figure only represents Mayer Brothers as the Somerset Plant would be reflected on the tax roll.

Mr. Reimer noted the potential impact on budgeting with regard to the Energy Cessation Mitigation Program which would offset a portion of the decreased revenue due to the loss of the Somerset Plant PILOT.

Mr. Reimer stated that Administration needs guidance on the direction of the percentage levy figure to use for budgeting purposes, noting it is only a parameter to develop the baseline starting point. This percentage can be adjusted over the next few months during the development of the budget before it is taken to a vote in May. Mr. Atwater inquired about the percentage from the prior years which were 4.0% two years ago, 2.0% last year and asked everyone's view on a proposed percentage figure. Based on a question posed by Mr. Sweeney, Mr. Reimer noted that the Board could go up to 4% with a simple majority, above that is a super majority is needed. Mr. Atwater noted that the long-term issues facing the District and only a 2% levy last year should be considered. Mr. Reimer noted that the Somerset Plant has been providing a short-term infusion through its reduced payments but that will drop off. If the base levy is not captured, a carry-over will not happen the next year. The carryover is utilized to rebuild the base but if the District does not continue to build a revenue base, it doesn't help decrease the forecasted deficits over the long-term. Mr. Atwater asked the Board their views on the percentage. Mr. Sweeney asked to see figures based on a 2.0%, 2.5%, and 3.0% levy for consideration to see the impact to the overall budget. He noted concern about community members being unable to pay and the impact if it is increased. Mrs. Clemens-Harris agreed with Mr. Sweeney's request for more information. Mrs. Voss noted preference for a 2% range up to 2.9% vs. 3.0% or higher. Mrs. Ecker concurred with the comments. Mrs. Gancasz and Gow agreed in the need to review the scenarios of the percentages. Mr. Reimer noted what the amount a 1%, 2%, and 3% increase per thousand would look like and stated he would provide the information to the Board prior to January's meeting for consideration.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S INFORMATION**

Mr. Reimer provided an update on the progress of the EPCs. He noted that Day Automation completed the data collection which will be analyzed in order to put proposals together based on the findings which he anticipates will take a few weeks.

The District has had to pay some interconnection fees due to timing of NYSED approvals for the solar project, but if project was not approved, the District would be reimbursed. Mr. Reimer noted the ability not to move forward at any point in time if it needed to. The solar project is based on a leased-purchase agreement and will be paid off through the savings incurred. He also noted that no cement is being poured for the foundations of the construction of the panels so it will be easy to remove in years to come if need be. There will also be a large berm around it that



will keep it from view from the road and the neighbors. Materials are on site at the contractors in anticipation of the final approvals after which it is anticipated that construction could commence late March/April of next year.

The Sheriff's tower project continues to move along. Geological studies were done last week with final schematics pending. The SEQR will be handled by the Sheriff's office as it covers more than just the Barker site. The District will be listed as an interested party on the SEQR. NYSED approval is pending, but once received, it is estimated that the project might start in early June.

Mr. Reimer noted that as the Board begins to look at the budget, State Aid will have an impact and he noted his concern with how the aid might be distributed, not as much as with the building aid, but transportation and foundation. He noted that the District, per its contract, did not pay for services not rendered with the transportation company during the shutdown, while other districts did pay and if the State pays on Foundation Aid and not Transportation Aid it will cause a revenue issue. There is concern about where aid may shift to cover expenses. He felt during 2021 – 2022 it may not have as large of an impact as there will ideally be federal funding to support and offset the state aid but for 2022 – 2023 he did not anticipate that to happen and there is still the issue of the lack of funding for the District. He noted that Niagara County is one of the most underfunded counties in the state. Therefore, he stated that the budget process is very conservative even with the energy cessation program offsetting much of the deficit the next three years, and if the foundation aid does not increase, there will be very difficult issues to address in three years. As such, continued lobbying will be very important, especially on the foundation aid side. He noted that various local, rural-related, county and state lobbying efforts and the need to have a multi-faceted approach for the District. He commented that Erie and Niagara County are reviewing the concept of shares for aid which is how aid is divided in thirds with NYC, state and then Big 5/other areas. As such, the more the District can do to be heard relative to foundation aid, the better, given what the State is currently doing with regard to the distribution of aid is not working and the equation is based on a ten-year old data which results in the under-funding of Niagara County and Barker continues to not be addressed.

Mr. Reimer noted that with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, there continues to be a lot of changes and the interpretation of guidance, such as with the interpretation of the 60 minutes of contact. The differences in interpretation of that subject does potentially cause issues and confusion for schools and quarantining, and for individuals who work in one county and live in another. Regardless, the District must follow the guidance of Niagara County. Mr. Reimer noted that the metrics have changed again, about the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> time since October, for determining the zone an area is in and resulted in a significant portion of Niagara County being designated yellow. He then reviewed the current positive cases in Somerset as of today, surrounding areas as well as the county. Administration continues to work on ways for the District to continue allowing in-person instruction which is what the majority of families in the community support. A concern he has is the number of positive cases which increased after Thanksgiving and given the upcoming break and holiday, if it takes approximately 10 – 20 days after gathering for symptoms to



occur, another surge could happen right around the time everyone is due back. In order to minimize and slow any potential spread of the virus, teaching-related staff have the option to work/teach remotely on Wednesdays up to the time of break. Mr. Reimer noted that consideration to extending this after break is being evaluated to minimize any potential spread as the District continues to work to keep the school open with the safety of students and staff at the forefront of decisions being made.

When asked if there were any additional questions, Mrs. Ecker asked if there would security with regard to the solar project for which Mr. Reimer stated yes which will also include cameras.

**POLICIES** Mr. Atwater then presented the second reading of the policies listed below. There were no comments or changes made from the last reading. Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, seconded by Mrs. Ecker, to approve the following policies:

Policy #	Policy Name
6111	Testing Misconduct and Mandatory Reporting Requirements
6213	Registration and Professional Development
6214	Incidental Teaching
6215	Probation and Tenure
6216	Disciplining of a Tenured Teacher or Certified Personnel
6217	Professional Staff: Separation
6220	Temporary Personnel
6230	Selection of Athletic Coaches
6310	Appointment - Support Staff

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Mr. Atwater presented the following policies for the first review and comment:

Policy #	Policy Name
6320	Supplementary School Personnel
6410	Staff Use of Computerized Information Resources
6411	Use of Email in the School District
6420	Employee Personnel Records and Release of Information
6430	Employee Activities
6440	Negotiations
6450	Theft of Services or Property
6460	Jury Duty

No comments were received. Mr. Reimer noted that next month will mark the completion of the entire policy review cycle.



**EDUCATION**

Upon motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the accepting of E. U. as non-resident student for the 2020 - 2021 school year with fees being determined based upon Board Policy #7132, Non-Resident Students.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the addition of Computer Sciences Discoveries 1 & 2 Courses to the District's programming for the 2021 - 2022 school year.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the research study by Jen Reichenberg, Professor at Buffalo State College, Department of Elementary Education, in conjunction with Elementary Teachers Phyllis Dissek and Sarah Evans and the authorization to observe their classrooms.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

**PERSONNEL**

**ITEMS**

Upon motion by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to accept the resignation with commendation and regret of William Huenemoerder, Cleaner, for the purpose of retirement effective November 29, 2020

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to approve the appointment of Jordan Renz as Part-time Substitute Cleaner effective December 15, 2020 with salary paid through Niagara County

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

**BUSINESS & FINANCIAL**

**ITEMS**

Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to accept the Warrant Report dated December 14, 2020.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to accept the Extraclassroom Report for November 2020.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to accept the Treasurer's Reports for November 2020.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to approve the resolution adopting the Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York Local Government Records (LGS-1) effective December 14, 2020.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.



Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to approve the following be declared excess property and that the Superintendent, or his designee, be authorized to dispose of a 2004 Ford Taurus, Vin #1FAFP52U24A202413.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Upon motion by Mrs. Gancasz, Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to approve the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Barker Teachers' Union and the Barker Central School District pertaining to a retirement incentive effective through and including July 30, 2021.

Mr. Sweeney inquired if there would be a cap on the number of individuals who would be able to participate and was informed no, but there is a minimum of at least five needed.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

**END OF PUBLIC**

**SESSION** Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to end the Public Session and enter into Executive Session at 7:45 p.m. for the purpose of discussing upcoming negotiations and a particular legal matter.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE**

**SESSION** Motion by Mrs. Gancasz, seconded by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to approve the adjournment of the Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. and return to Public Session.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

**PUBLIC SESSION/  
ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Gow, that the Board approve the adjournment of the Public Session and adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary H. Eadie  
District Clerk