

Dr. Rasmus called the Millville Area School District Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting to order at 6:12 pm.

Those present in the High School Library were Joseph Rasmus, Superintendent; Whitney Holloway, Business Manager; Alex Cavallini, Board/Committee member; Jonathan Richards, Board/Committee Member; Heather Mausteller, Board/Committee Member; Matt McWilliams, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds; Matt Mills, Secondary Principal; Donna Benowitz, Matt Wardecker, and Paul Cimaglia of Schneider Electric; Betsy Riera-Gomez; and Chelsea Rosenberger, Board Recording Secretary.

### **Schneider Electric Geothermal / HVAC Presentation**

- ❖ Dr. Joseph Rasmus opened discussion regarding ongoing operational concerns related to the Schneider Electric geothermal HVAC project at the high school. He stated that the district continues to experience alarms and operational issues. Additionally, he explained, the district wants assurance regarding the long-term fidelity and reliability of the system. To that end, the administration requested Schneider Electric provide a corrective action response and future plan.
  - Mr. Wardecker explained that Schneider Electric wanted to address the committee's concerns directly and noted that it is common to work through issues during initial heating and cooling cycles following major HVAC replacements.
- ❖ **Geothermal System Explanation**
  - Mr. Paul Cimaglia provided an overview of the geothermal system and explained how the system uses the ground as a "thermal battery." He described the Multistack system functioning as a heat pump with heat being extracted from the ground and transferred into the building during winter. The heat would then be returned to the ground during summer cooling operations. Mr. Cimaglia explained that after reviewing historical operational data, Schneider identified an imbalance in the system. The geothermal field was extracting significantly more heat than it was returning, and the system was not adequately recharging the geothermal field during the cooling season. This imbalance contributed to declining well field temperatures over time.
    - Dr. Rasmus noted that the district currently has two non-operational compressors that were impacted by lower-than-expected incoming water temperatures from the geothermal well field.
- ❖ **Compressor Failure Discussion**
  - Mrs. Mausteller questioned why the issues were not identified sooner and whether the system review performed during the original project planning should have identified these concerns.
    - Mr. Cimaglia explained that the system contains eight total compressors, but two compressors are currently down while six compressors remain operational. He added that the system is designed to operate under varying compressor demand levels.
  - Mr. Richards questioned whether the remaining six compressors may also have experienced damage due to similar operating conditions.

- Mr. Cimaglia acknowledged the concern but stated that the control system rotates compressor usage and that available data indicates the remaining compressors were not subjected to excessive peak loading conditions.
- Dr. Rasmus requested written documentation from the manufacturer confirming that the remaining compressors have not sustained damage and remain operationally sound.
  - Mr. Cimaglia stated Schneider would request that information in writing.
- Mr. Cavallini asked whether safeguards could be implemented to prevent similar issues from occurring again.
  - Mr. Cimaglia explained that Schneider proposes resequencing the Multistack operations; implementing additional controls and lockouts; and preventing the system from operating under damaging low-temperature conditions. He also explained that current water temperatures are entering the system at approximately 58 degrees, and the pumps are not adequately performing dehumidification under current conditions. Additionally, the Multistack was not operating during many cooling days when it should have been running.
  - Dr. Rasmus stated that dehumidification concerns are especially significant due to indoor air quality considerations within the school environment.
  - Mr. Cimaglia further explained that the proposed changes would primarily involve control and sequencing adjustments rather than major mechanical reconstruction.
- ❖ Warranty and Long-Term Support Discussion
  - Mrs. Mausteller expressed concern regarding the long-term financial implications of these issues and whether taxpayers received the promised performance.
    - Mrs. Benowitz explained that Schneider Electric is providing a five-year extended warranty for parts. She added that the district's one-year labor warranty runs through August 2026, but the parts warranty would continue for an additional four years beyond that.
  - The Committee members requested clarification regarding the exact warranty start dates; whether replacement compressors restart the warranty period; and what long-term support obligations Schneider will maintain moving forward.
    - Dr. Rasmus asked what Schneider's "good faith effort" would look like if future operational issues arise after modifications are implemented.
    - Mrs. Benowitz stated that Schneider remains committed to supporting the district and that their staff would continue assisting the district beyond initial project closeout with the same primary point of contact. Also, she added, the district would have access to a 24-hour client services support center.
    - Mr. Cimaglia explained that Schneider plans to monitor trend data regularly; graph and analyze well field temperatures; continue reviewing

system performance daily; and adjust system controls as needed moving forward.

- Mrs. Benowitz indicated that she would check if an extension could be given to the district for the one year warranty in light of the issues.
- Dr. Rasmus requested that Schneider revise its written documentation to include more detailed monitoring expectations, the future operational commitments, and clear next steps for Board review. He also requested updated documentation by the Wednesday prior to the Board meeting to allow time for full Board and legal review.
- Mrs. Mausteller asked whether the district has realized any actual savings to date from the geothermal project, noting that projected savings had been estimated at approximately \$5,000 annually.
  - Dr. Rasmus acknowledged that the district does not yet have complete operational data demonstrating realized savings.

#### **Potential Access Road to Softball Field**

- ❖ Dr. Rasmus reviewed the preliminary cost estimates garnered and planning information related to a possible access road to the softball field.
  - The Committee discussion included the preliminary scope information from Marotta/Main with an estimated cost for engineering the project. The estimated project costs were below formal public bidding thresholds, and the district was required to garner three quotes due to pricing levels.
  - Mr. McWilliams explained that all quotes would need identical specifications. He explained that the proposed road would extend beyond the elementary dumpster area toward the field.
  - Mrs. Mausteller expressed concern about vehicle traffic damaging the fields.
  - Mr. Mills noted that vehicles are already accessing those areas informally.
- ❖ The committee agreed administration should pursue three formal quotes to further evaluate the project.

#### **Potential Extension of Applegate Road / Wintersteen Access Proposal**

- ❖ The committee discussed a proposal involving possible extension of Applegate Road to create access to adjacent property owned by the Wintersteen family.
  - The discussion included the existing property limitations, potential access easement considerations, district liability concerns, and future development concerns.
  - Dr. Rasmus noted reservations regarding the proposal.
  - Mrs. Mausteller stated that she did not feel that the Committee should move forward with this proposal.
  - The committee agreed additional review and discussion would be necessary before any future action.

#### **Potential Sidewalk Along Stadium for Student Drop-Off Safety**

- ❖ Dr. Rasmus reviewed ongoing parent drop-off safety concerns at the elementary school. He explained the current traffic patterns as safer than in prior years. However,

he explained, parents continue dropping students in unsafe areas, with students crossing in between moving vehicles. Dr. Rasmus stated that this proposal would extend the sidewalk approximately 50–75 feet to allow multiple vehicles to unload students safely onto a protected walking area.

- The Committee discussion included concerns regarding parent compliance, whether a sidewalk would meaningfully change behavior, and the possibility of painted walkways as a lower-cost alternative.
  - Mr. Richards suggested that painted traffic patterns or designated walking areas may be more effective initially.
  - Mrs. Mausteller expressed concern that concrete would simply be driven over and ignored.
- ❖ The committee did not support immediate installation at this time and preferred exploring painted or temporary solutions first.

### **Senior Parking Spot Initiative**

- ❖ Mr. Mills discussed a proposal allowing seniors to personalize and paint parking spaces.
- The Committee discussion included potential fundraising opportunities, student responsibility for materials, lottery systems for parking spot assignments, and design approval requirements.
  - Mr. Mills explained that seniors would submit designs for approval and that the painting would occur during summer months. He added that the parking assignments would be organized before the school year.
  - Mrs. Mausteller noted that the initiative would not create district expense.
- ❖ The committee generally supported moving forward with the concept.

### **High School Auditorium & Elementary Gymnasium Concrete Repairs**

- ❖ Whitney Holloway reviewed recommendations from the district Safety Committee regarding deteriorating concrete and stair conditions.
- The Committee discussed safety concerns at the high school auditorium entrance steps, deteriorating elementary gymnasium concrete, prior patching attempts, and potential liability exposure.
  - Mr. McWilliams noted that some areas have already been patched multiple times.
  - Mr. Cavallini agreed that the conditions present a significant liability concern.
- ❖ The committee agreed to move forward with both projects and discussed the potential phasing over two fiscal years and the use of Capital Reserve funds.
- Administration was directed to continue evaluating timelines and pricing options.

### **Potential Property Transfer of Ponds**

- ❖ The committee discussed the possible future transfer or ownership arrangements involving district pond property.

- The members discussed the insurance recommendations, potential Millville Borough involvement, possible deed restrictions preventing resale without district discussion, and the assurance for use for future educational use access.
- Mrs. Holloway noted that the updated engineering or inspection report had not yet been received.
- ❖ The committee expressed general interest in continuing discussions with the Borough.

### **Irrigating Soccer Fields**

- ❖ Mr. McWilliams discussed past irrigation efforts for the soccer fields using pond water, noting that the water caused orange or rust-colored staining issues.
  - The Committee discussed the issue, noting prior conversations with the fire company. Some felt that the fire company would donate water and assistance if the fire department was able to complete training opportunities on district property.
    - Mr. Richards asked how frequently the fire company would be willing to assist.
    - Mr. Mills suggested that several irrigation sessions during dry summer periods may be sufficient.
    - Ms. Rosenberger recommended obtaining the proposal or willingness in writing for full Board consideration.
    - Mr. Richards also suggested exploring rental tanker options through Bowman.

### **Summer Painting and Facilities Rotation Planning**

- ❖ Mr. Mills discussed the possibility of implementing a long-term summer painting and facilities improvement rotation plan.
  - The Committee discussed repainting classrooms and hallways, establishing a multi-year facilities refresh plan, potential flooring improvements, the use of student workers, teacher painting requests and room color consistency.
  - Mrs. Mausteller stated she supports the concept but emphasized that higher-priority maintenance needs would still take precedence.
- ❖ Mrs. Holloway asked whether staff should continue being permitted to paint classrooms independently.
  - Mr. Matt Mills noted that this has occurred previously, typically with staff purchasing their own paint.
- ❖ The committee generally supported exploring a more structured facilities refresh plan moving forward.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Committee adjourned the meeting at 7:44 pm.