

Wellsboro Area School District
Board of Education
WORK SESSION MINUTES
January 5, 2021

Called to Order by President Susan Judlin at 6:30 PM in the Auditorium, Administration Office, 227 Nichols Street, Wellsboro, PA, via Zoom Meeting.

Roll Call of Members: Mrs. Linda West, Mr. Lee Stocks (via zoom), Mr. John Hoover, Mr. Wayne Hackett, Mrs. Tracy Doughtie (via zoom), Mr. Chris Gastrock, Mr. Matthew Feil (via zoom and joined at 6:44 PM), Mrs. Susan Judlin, and Mr. David Messineo.

Present were the following: Dr. Brenda Freeman, Superintendent; Mrs. Laura Perry, Business Manager/Board Secretary; Administrators: Mr. Steven Adams, Mr. Robert Kreger, Mr. Ben Miller, Mr. Daren Bryant, Mr. Bryant Murphy, Dr. Ben Largey, and Mr. Tim Hanner.

Course Weighing – Mr. David Messineo

Mr. Messineo provided an overview of the request of the teachers, counselors and administrators to present a course weighing recommendation for the High School as it relates to Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses. He clarified that a particular person may have lost out on a particular scholarship and there could be situations where students who have taken classes less than honors and then penalized for not taking honors class. He commented that the issue comes down to what does the AP courses represent? The purpose of this discussion is to update the board, notifying the administration of attention/desires of the board.

Mrs. Doughtie: Stated that Mr. Messineo summarized everything well. It is back to the administration and faculty to develop a recommendation and to present it to the full board for consideration.

No further board member or administrator comments at this time on course weighing.

Mr. Messineo continued his update that the Programs and Policy Committee is recommending several new courses that were suggested. If these course proposals are approved, it is not declaring that particular course will run in a specific year. There are 5 or 6 classes listed and I wish to share the particular points on each class. The important thing is that our course catalog is important to students and I believe that this is a key way for teachers to be innovative. Several of the offerings are a review and compilation of changes or restricting of existing classes, it is not always adding new classes. A handout was available for review.

In proposing these classes from the administrative view, I believe these were well thought out and critical to continue to encourage students to explore other courses. I would add that we have a P & P meeting coming up and one of the topics is how we are connecting the dots to the classes, how they tie to learning paths, and how our financial investment is being utilized. These can be added to the next board meeting for consideration.

No board questions at this time. Some of these courses will be replacing, one or if not multiple, that are already on the guide. Mr. Byrd, it indicates that it will be absorbed into certain teacher's class schedules? Do you have any insight or feedback to implement any of these courses? No, Mr. Byrd responded. The science department was fantastic to be ready to make these changes. Dave: I know that everyone discussed these items in the summer. I thought this was much clearer in tying in our resources and time to the taxpayers. One of the things

that we discussed was tying these into the learning path. It's really a visual way for me to look at specific learning path. I think everyone benefits by this transparency. I believe that the Ag Business course is a wonderful addition and I am happy to see this.

Mrs. Doughtie: These are all "NEW" classes being presented tonight. The teachers have worked very hard with the administration to develop these classes for our students. I feel like for the first time in four years that this has been a serious consideration of working and developing our curriculum. Mrs. Judlin expressed her appreciation for the hard work completed and stated a lot of these changes are a reflection of the summer curriculum work. Mr. Miller stated the work over the summer was very beneficial. The Board made an investment in that process and it demonstrates their dedication to curriculum. Dr. Freeman stated it was a way for our staff and administration to evaluate and realign our curriculum to provide a continuum framework to continue and has been very good process.

Therapy/School Dog Plan: Previous agreement approved, and Mr. Kreger did put a plan and priorities together. Mr. Kreger provided the directors an update and review of the proposed schedule and protocols. The initial goal would be to have her available for all non-instructional times. She will be identified as a therapy animal. We did think through some emergency situations, if needed. Students would not be required to work with Daisy at any time and none of the student interactions would be greater than 20 minutes. She would not enter a classroom unless requested. An example would be some emotional support classroom interactions. Mr. Kreger has completed a lot of reading on it and some anxiety situations could be lessened by having a therapy dog in the room. There are some ideas included on where we may go from here. There is a lot of research available for different scenarios that can occur within the educational setting. In times of any kind of loss, outside of our school building, we could be invited as a visit such as a read-a-thon, etc. It is as much for the students as it is for the animal. A parent communication was provided. I think we are ready to go if the board is comfortable moving forward.

Mr. Hoover asked if Mr. Kreger could you describe the difference between a Facility Dog versus a Therapy Dog? Mr. Kreger responded as that they would be more comfortable for the students. Especially now with all the anxiety with students coming back, COVID, and restrictions, I see this as an incentive for students to return and interact with Daisy. I would like to bring her to school at least two days this week to get her acclimated, if the Board and Dr. Freeman are acceptable to this. Mrs. Doughtie inquired as to whether a video introduction could be completed anytime yet this week prior to students returning on Monday. She felt that some of the expectations and procedures would be very helpful. She believes it's a great idea, especially if the video introduction/tutorial could be completed prior to Monday.

Mrs. Judlin asked what is Mr. Kreger's plan if he were unable due to a work obligation where he can't be there to handle Daisy? Mr. Kreger stated that Daisy would be kenneled her in her designated area and it is recommended to have for her to her own down time. My ultimate goal would be for Mrs. Kreger to go through the handler's course in these events. It is just as good for the staff as it is for our students. I definitely want to make sure that if a community member reaches out to a board member, that they understand that no student is not going to be assigned to work with her. If there is an identified allergy, which I have already spoke to the school nurse about, we can put measures in place if they contact the Middle School office.

The next step should be an official agenda item that would identify Daisy as being an approved therapy dog and that it should be represented and documented within the official board minutes. Dr. Freeman stated she would follow up with Solicitor Lantz to see if there were any other requirements.

Superintendent Update: Dr. Freeman shared the following information:

Agenda Review:

1. Interviews – 2 individuals for recommended to hire – Emotional Support and Life Skills at the High School.
2. Other personnel updates – para-professional resignation, Sharon Vargeson (big shoes to fill and the wealth of knowledge)
3. FMLA – 12/14 – 1/4/21 was pre-approved and will be presented
4. Cross Country Head Coach resignation (Karen Hoose)
5. Resolution to adopt the PSBA Principles and Priorities
6. \$ 1,000 People's Trust Fund donation
7. Asst. Principal position – Recommend leaving Mr. Outman in the position for the remainder of this school year and re-advertise for the Assistant High School Principal.

General District Updates – COVID

The last 3 weeks confirmed cases have declined. We want to see a PCR rate of 5% (goal target); we're as high as 23% at one time. We are coming down in the positivity rate. 127 last week and 124 this week in positivity rates. Holiday times and not as many people are being tested and I believe people recognized the result of not social distancing over Thanksgiving. So that the 5-7 day mark is when we will begin to see symptoms. That is why we wanted this week to apply as an evaluation period for both staff and students. Parents have partnered with the district to notify us when there have been exposures or confirmed cases.

A weekly meeting of superintendents occurs and the data that is shared is identified by zip codes and where the positivity rates are occurring, such as long-term care facilities. The district is being impacted by parents or spouses of school employees. There is a different level of priority for school district contacts and cases to the DoH. There is a 48-hour lookback period and there is a form that is completed and shared with the DoH. Outside activities are also identified that are related to school functions. There is a rapid respond team that responds to these specific incidents and the response time has been between 15 minutes to 2 hours. This is different than the general public. There are currently 3 adults who are in quarantine; one has tested positive and two are quarantined due to others within the household having tested positive. By Monday, two of these individuals will be able to be back to work. We have been notified that there are several students who will not be able to return on Monday due to quarantining requirements. We are in good shape to re-open in person this Monday, 1/11/21. All districts within the IU will be returning to in-person instruction.

The Governor has not determined that a school district should close. There have been guidelines issues for dealing with positive cases. Dr. Redfield, Director of CDC, was asked what is his position on students and in-person learning. His response was that students are safest in school and that is where there are the best mitigation measures. I will continue to say that we've done a great job in our mitigation efforts and have gone above and beyond. I cannot say that we won't see a spike in our numbers, and we know that there is a reason to monitor for the new strain that has been identified. There are many levels of government that have supported and praised the Tioga County school districts and their communities for taking care of the students and the mitigation efforts.

How do we identify the gap in education and how do we close it? Each year we start out teaching our same curriculum that we taught last year and not taking into consider the amount of missed instruction from March – June and we are seeing a lot of learning loss and possible

failures due to the changes. We are thinking about possibly providing an in-person summer school program. We have a lot of work ahead of us and we are looking at these scenarios and looking to bridge the learning gaps. I believe it is still the best option to have students in-person instruction.

Mrs. West: Inquired as to the possibility of allowing the athletes to begin practicing this week instead of waiting until next Monday, 1/11/21. At least if we know they are coming into the school, they would be complying with the district's mitigation efforts.

Dr. Freeman stated the Directors could have this discussion. I am going to stay again how thankful I am that we didn't have school this week for a period of assessment. I think we may have been the only school who made an official vote to suspend athletics/extra-curricular during remote learning days.

Mrs. Doughtie stated that her position has changed because not all parents were calling in and doing the right thing. There are numerous scenarios that I can discuss where parents are positive and not quarantining their kids. I support allowing our kids to complete in E/C activities where there are mitigation efforts in place. I have witnessed different scenarios. We have left it up to the parents and communities to do the right thing, and many have not. I am very concerned about not having activities for students.

Mr. Gastrock agreed with Mrs. Doughtie's train of thought.

Mrs. Judlin confirmed that from her viewpoint it does not make sense to put students into an E/C activity; that is a contradictory to me. She stated she couldn't wrap her mind around why the school is not safe for instruction that there wouldn't be more risk of spread of. If we are in remote - she doesn't agree with E/C activities continuing.

Mrs. Doughtie stated she would probably never vote for Remote Instruction again based on her experience.

Mr. Gastrock agreed with Mrs. West and Mrs. Doughtie. He stated the district has never been through a pandemic and there's a learning experience for everyone. The Directors were anticipating that families would respond differently and follow social distancing protocols. I look at it in today's environment that we can start activities this week. We are very safe at school. The Governor has even put out updated information about gatherings. I think we tried to make a good decision based on information we had at the time. I think we all learned something valuable from this and that we wait closer to the timeline to make remote learning decisions.

Dr. Freeman stated she wouldn't have made a different recommendation on being remote this week to be able to assess staffing availability.

Mr. Gastrock stated he didn't think there was any harm in starting sports back up this week, if possible.

Mrs. Judlin responded that today is the 5th day following any get-togethers for New Years and this is the timeframe for individuals to be showing sickness symptoms. She reiterated she would be standing with her decision to not open up sports to get past the incubation period and start E/C back up on Monday, 1/11/21.

Dr. Freeman confirmed that there was a motion on the floor.

Mr. Hoover recommended an informal vote be ascertained prior to taking a formal vote during a special meeting.

Mrs. Judlin reminded the Directors that while the district had been closed down, families were still required to work and have been forced to make arrangements for childcare. Parents have had to find different settings that may have had little to zero mitigations efforts.

Mr. Gastrock stated that the Directors made this hard decision in the Fall and we knew there was always a risk and decided to move forward as safe as we could. Outside of school, there really isn't people adhering to mitigation efforts.

Mr. Stocks commented that in the fall, we had 200 cases compared to now, so there is a difference.

Mrs. Judlin inquired as to what the actual motion was in December and if there is a need to place another item on next Tuesday's agenda.

Mr. Adams responded to an inquiry made by Dr. Freeman as to the impact on the Northern Tier League. He replied that the league will go on whether Wellsboro is practicing or not. It appears as though other districts have made a compromise by allowing practices to begin Friday and Saturday. PIAA has established 2/27/21 is the last day of the regular season. The one thing that did change is that the Governor made a change that said gatherings and events can occur. Without the coaches being involved, students are getting together on their own.

On an informal vote, the motion to resume E/C activities was defeated.

Further discussion occurred regarding basketball practice and games. Mr. Adams confirmed that PIAA will permit basketball players to play a game on Friday, 1/15, if practices begin on Monday, 1/11. Steve clarified that by starting on Monday, 1/11/21, provides for the availability of playing in a game on Friday, 1/18/21.

PSBA Retreat/Training – PSBA is compiling a self-assessment survey/tool and it will help to identify priorities of the Board and to help establish goals. There will be 2 classes associated with this process: setting you up for the goals and then establishing the goals. I like the self-assessment component and it is a free service. It will cost us approximately \$ 500. With the board's consent, Dr. Freeman will proceed as presented.

Charlotte Lappla – Ongoing Roof Issue. Mr. Bryant provided an updated on the roof at Charlotte Lappla, as follows:

- ✓ The roof is not due to be replaced until 2022, as time has gone on, there are six areas that are leaking around the chimneys and the flashing has deteriorated because the flashing was installed incorrectly.
- ✓ Budget Roofing has provided a proposal to replace all the flashing on all 6 areas and I would like to recommend that this project be paid out of Capital Project at \$ 16,775. This project would not occur until the weather permitted.
- ✓ The contractors see no reason that if these repairs were made as proposed that the roof wouldn't last past 2022 for the entire roof. This will be added as an agenda item.

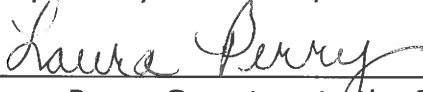
Mrs. Judlin announced that beginning with next week's meeting, changes will be made to the way that public comments are handled. We are going to begin accepting first public comments on agenda items and can "Raise Their Hand" or they can place a comment in the chat box, such as "XXX would like to speak". Then at the end where there is another chance for public comments, again individuals can raise their hand or chat that they would like to speak. Comments will no longer be read aloud during the meeting.

Board Comment – Has there been any discussion/motions at the state level regarding cyber charter costs? Dr. Freeman responded not at this time.

Public Comment - None at this time.

The work session adjourned at 8:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Perry". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Laura Perry, Secretary to the Board
Board Secretary
Wellsboro Area School District