

2/8/2022 WORK SESSION

02/08/2022 [05:30 PM-06:30 PM]



Roll Call

Present: Tracy Doughtie, Albert Bieber, Rebecca Charles, Chris Gastrock, John Hoover, Maegan McConnell, Lee Stocks, Linda West

Absent: Wayne Hackett

1. Call to Order

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by President Gastrock.

2. Roll Call of Members

Minutes

Administration present included Dr. Brenda Freeman, Superintendent; Mrs. Laura Perry, Business Manager; Mr. Steve Adams, Elementary Principal; Mr. Ben Miller, Middle School Assistant Principal; Mr. Jeremy Byrd, High School Principal; Mr. Todd Outman, High School Assistant Principal; Ms. Karen Farrer, Director of Special Education; Mr. Mike Wolff, Director of Technology, and Mrs. Amy Coots, Principal of Academic Affairs.

3. Kristi Beach, EFPR, Financial Statement/Audit

Minutes

Mrs. Kristie Beach, Director, EFPR Group, LLC provided the Directors with a verbal summary of the June 30, 2021 audit and financial reports. Mrs. Beach reported that the Independent's Auditors' Report has been classified as Unmodified "clean" opinion. A recap of each fund's revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance, along with balance sheet totals were included within the verbal summary. SAS 115 Management Letter included comments regarding the auditor involvement with the financial statements and multiple adjustments, claiming of federal funds, capital asset inventory and GASB 87 for the Accounting for Leases.

4. Tri-con Building Services - Sam Wolf III regarding High School Roof

Minutes

This item was removed to the March, 2022, meeting due to a schedule conflict.

5. Wellsboro Parks & Recreation Authority - Articles of Incorporation

Minutes

Mrs. Perry reiterated that the Wellsboro Parks and Recreation Authority creation requires a joint meeting between the Directors of the School District and the Wellsboro Counsel to adopt the Articles of Incorporation. Wellsboro Borough has agreed to host the joint meeting at a future date and time.

6. Discussion - Proposed 2022-2023 General Operations Budget of IU #17

Minutes

Mrs. Perry provided the Directors with a recap of the 2022/23 General Operations Budget of BLaST IU#17, as follows:

- Balanced budget;
- No district assessment;
- Budgeted expenses have increased \$ 84,806 (2.8%) from the 2021/22 adopted budget
- Includes a capital transfer of \$ 200,000 for future heating unit upgrades.
- June 30, 2023, projected reserve totals \$ 2,000,000

7. Health and Safety Plan

Minutes

Dr. Freeman discussed the contact tracing efforts and the availability of COVID tests. An example would be 17 possible contacts this past week, students can stay in school if they opt into "Test to Stay" to make sure that you don't have any symptoms. It allows students who are contacts, and still healthy, to remain in school

The amount of time that is spent to contact trace is significant because the district takes the process very seriously. As of today, there are four students who are out (tested positive). Dr. Freeman publicly thanked the parents for keeping students home when they are ill. The district has not reported a positive case within our building because of a contact tracing process. Parents continue to work very closely with the district. Again, the district does have test kits available and only with parent permission are student tested and required parent signature. The district is not able to accept the results from a home test, only a doctor's/medical test, as there's no way to verify the validity of a home test.

John Hover asked about Staff numbers. Dr. Brenda Freeman stated that all staff are back in the building

Dr. Brenda Freeman discussed that it's cold and flu season as well. Two years ago, we had very high absenteeism due to cold and flu. It's hard to tell if absences are related to COVID or other illnesses.

Dr. Brenda Freeman informed us that we did use all the planned snow days. We did apply for Flexible Instructional Days (F.I.D.) and moving forward for snow emergencies, we will utilize the approved 5 days. In order to utilize a FID day, the district must have a plan for technology and resources availability. Packets will be going home this week (5 days of instruction). It would be like we're operating on a 2-hour delay and there are two sets of instruction to parents (technology access or no technology access). Depending upon age level, a parent signature may be required. One packet has enough materials for the entire 5 days. Dr. Freeman cautioned families to not throw the packet away after the first FID, as the materials would be utilized for days 2 - 5, if needed. If the district were to have more than 5 add'l snow days, additional discussions will be needed. A district can institute an FID Day on Monday and then pivot to remote learning days, as needed. All 5 FID days do not need to be used in one week.

A calendar change has been made to include 1/2 day on June 8th as our last day of school, changed from the original last day being 1/2 day on June 7th.

8. Board Committees

Minutes

Board Committees

Budget & Finance Committee: First meeting will be held on Wednesday, 2/23, at 5 PM, Old Music Room.

Public Relations - Incorporate in a Work Session meeting on 3/1/22.

Dr. Freeman discussed the district's ongoing efforts to continue to advertise for the vacancy of Director of Buildings and Grounds, without success. She recommended that the district include an advertisement for Director of Building and Grounds/Technology. At the inquiry of Mrs. Doughtie, Dr. Freeman provided an overview of the current personnel within both departments. She shared her belief that the WOLA/Online program would fit within the Curriculum Department. She provided an example of scheduling needs (i.e.: installation of a new projector) and stated there are efficiencies to be made by having one Director for both departments such as purchases, work orders, and personnel supervision. Dr. Freeman continued sharing by stated that the district really added technology with the 1:1 initiative without additional staff. Over 2,000 devices are within the district (not to mention smart boards, projectors, sound systems, etc.). Putting the management of the two departments is a good way to manage it for efficiency. At times, issues remain unresolved through lack of efficiency and communication. This combination would provide for better customer service and better support for end-users. We must support on campus and off campus technology. The reason the district operates is for our students and the district must have the mindset that it must do what is best for students.

Mrs. Doughtie inquired as to the model used within other districts if the model being proposed is being successful. Dr. Freeman provided an overview of her experience as Director of Curriculum/Technology and stated she was able to see it firsthand and what it takes to run a curriculum department and I was constantly working with the maintenance department on scheduling and it created efficiencies between the departments.

Mr. Hoover stated he appreciates the WOLA being a component of the Curriculum Department and understands the marrying of the IT and the Maintenance, and I think it'll take the right person to do it.

Dr. Brenda Freeman confirmed that he would recommend Mr. Wolff would remain the network administrator. The scheduling could be coordinated to free up additional work time.

Mrs. West asked if the district could possibly save money by not having two separate Directors and stated she supports Dr. Freeman's request to amend the advertisement to see who may be interested in that type of position.

Mrs. Doughtie concurred with the amended advertisement while it remains a topic for discussion.

Board Minutes:

Mrs. Doughtie inquired as to the minute protocol for ALL meetings, including committees. She asked if the new software (Agenda Manager) could be utilized as a tool to do a better job at taking the minutes.

Mr. Hoover stated that the chair of each committee should be responsible for taking notes and distributing them to the full board. If there is a question about the meeting or if clarification is needed, a board member should reach out to the committee chair.

The discussion concluded with Mrs. Perry being asked to send out dates/times for training relating to Agenda Manager.

9. Public Comment

Minutes

Two students from Wellsboro Area High School, Madeline Gage and Shannon Clark, addressed their concern racist remarks made at last board meeting by Mr. Bieber. They stated that Director Al Bieber used the term "China Flu" and an expletive at the January 25, 2022, meeting. The students stated the comments were unacceptable and deplorable. The students feel as though this board member has disrespected them and our families. Their comments concluded with a request that all Directors be held to their oath of engaging in open, honest, and respectful dialogue.

Jeremy Nisley, Board of Supervisors of Pine Township, Lycoming County addressed the directors during public comments and reminded the Directors that correspondence between Pine Township and the WASD are on-going and to make the Directors aware that there's pending litigation against the district regarding the real estate tax levy in 2020 from 2019 and believes that the Act 1 Index was exceeded. He stated that he has been in contact with Mrs. Perry and the district's attorneys through legal and personal inquisition and that the issue remains unresolved. Mr. Nisley stated that there is legal precedence for this situation and there is a class action lawsuit with school districts across the Commonwealth. The disagreement is whether the district is responsible to fix it. This will be my lifelong interest to get this done. We are going to vote to secede from the school district. The Pine Township supervisors we provide time to the district's Directors to resolve the issue but the situation is continuing to make financial impact on the taxpayers of Pine Township. Mr. Gastrock requested Mr. Nisley's contact information.

10. Adjournment

Minutes

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 PM into the regularly scheduled board meeting.

*Linda K. Gaubler
Acting Board Secretary
Approval: 3/8/2022*