

Port Allegany School District
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting
March 30, 2020

MINUTES

Call to Order

President Carlson brought the meeting to order at 7 o'clock p.m. in the high school library with a moment of silence and the flag salute. Mr. Moate called the roll.

Roll Call

Board Present: Dr. Mark Carlson, Mr. Justin Fillhart, Mr. Kerry Hawver, Mrs. Bonna Johns, Mr. Sean Lathrop, Mrs. Erica Petruzzi, Mr. Jason Stake, Mr. Jonathan Stehle, Mr. Donald Tanner, Mr. Adam Moate, and Mr. Gary Buchsen.

Others Present: Lisa VanGorden.

Suspended Board Policy 006.1 requiring a physical quorum of the Board to be present to allow other board members to phone into a meeting. Motion: D. Tanner; Second: E. Petruzzi. Mr. Buchsen reported suspension is recommended in light of the COVID-19 mitigation to allow all Board members and others to attend via telephone/internet. Mr. Tanner asked if the meeting is being held within the Sunshine Law and Mr. Buchsen said it is. Roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

There were no comments relating to agenda items or federal programs.

Mrs. VanGorden expressed thanks to the Board for quick and decisive action regarding continued payment for school district employees. She also thanked Mr. Buchsen and the Board for the way everything has been handled. Going into this, and changing day-by-day, has been done well and to the best of everybody concerned.

Committee Reports

Mrs. Johns reported the Intermediate Unit Nine Board is currently holding their meeting tonight on a conference bridge as well.

Mr. Fillhart announced that Senate Bill 751 suspending professional evaluations through June 30, 2021 has been approved and signed into law. Brief discussion was held with Mr. Buchsen noting there will be no state testing data this year for that portion of the evaluation. Mr. Fillhart said the state will be taking the previous two years average for this year and next year's evaluations.

Communications

None.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Buchsen provided an overview of the past 11 days the district has been closed by Governor Wolf's order for COVID-19 mitigation since March 13. This afternoon the Governor issued another order closing schools until further notice. Administration's stance with the closure has always been that students will not be returning to the buildings this school year.

The Department of Education (PDE) has provided additional guidance with 3 options: 1) do nothing, 2) provide enrichment activities which would not be graded and have no impact on student grades, or 3) provide planned instruction that can be graded and assessed. This option came with a warning that should we choose option 3 districts were still responsible for all students and IEP accommodations which affects about 16% of our students. In a distance setting, these services are difficult or impossible to provide. However, within the last week the Department of Education has nudged schools in the direction of planned instruction since the state has relaxed a bit saying the district must make a good faith effort for these students. He reported, in detail, what has been done so far for students and with staff stating administration's intent is to move toward a more planned instruction approach at the high school.

Mr. Buchsen said that the state has required districts to file a "Continuity of Education Plan" which PDE has indicated they will approve. With the Governor's announcement today, administration will be reassessing activities for inclusion as planned instruction. He announced that Brigham Young University in Utah is opening up all their online courses (over 100) that can be completed online or traditionally to any school districts that want to use them at no cost as they consider this a national emergency. This was reviewed with department chairs and well received by staff as an option to supplement our courses. Planned instruction places requirements on students to complete assignments for course credit and potentially, graduation. Mr. Buchsen did indicate that there will still be issues with the good faith effort portion. Lengthy discussion was held concerning student participation, parental cooperation, internet access, student responsibility, teacher coverage, if necessary and safeguards for exchanging of materials.

Mrs. VanGorden stated that her student participation was about 20% overall, but noted after Mr. Buchsen's letter and email to parents went out, Mr. VanGorden indicated one of his classes increased to 40% today. Administration believes participation will be largely increased when participation will impact course credit and graduation requirements.

Mrs. Petruzzi asked if these will become pass/fail courses, and Mr. Buchsen responded that the administration is looking at this as a fluid situation and guidelines will be established over the next few weeks. Mrs. Johns agrees that moving toward this structured plan is a very positive step. Mrs. Petruzzi suggested sending assignments weekly.

Mr. Buchsen reported support staff have been coming into the building on a staggered basis with maintenance and food services in Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays while the secretarial staff is in Tuesdays, Thursdays, and when necessary. Mr. Buchsen said the average number of people served through the meal program is 247. Each get 4 meals, for a total of 1,740 meals served over seven days. There is a concern across schools as to what point do you stop serving meals relating to spreading the virus. Mr. Hawver wondered about making clean areas in the buildings and keeping them off limits. Mr. Buchsen said this had been discussed, but the district has determined that all school district staff is essential in the instruction of our children and teachers need to access classrooms, etc. so at this point we have not done this.

Mr. Buchsen also reported that the state has waived the 180 day instruction and the 990/900 instructional hours for secondary and elementary schools' requirements which has impacted the 2019-2020 school calendar. It has not been determined if these 11 days will need to be made up.

Personnel

Transferred Robert Tarbox to an 8-hour custodian position (from 5.5 hours) effective March 31, 2020 with compensation and benefits in accordance with the Support Staff Agreement and district policy. Motion: J. Fillhart; Second: B. Johns. Brief discussion was held with Mr. Buchsen recommending to wait until school resumes the regular schedule to fill the 5.5-hour position. Roll call vote. The motion was carried unanimously.

Finance

Approved the repository sale of Roulette Township parcel 210-004-052-L3, Trailer at 30 Horseshoe Court to Mr. Michael Fessenden for a bid of \$500.00. Motion: S. Lathrop; Second: E. Petruzzi. Roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Authorized the administration to prepare and pay the April 6, 2020 bill list with Board approval at the May 11 board meeting. Motion: D. Tanner; Second: J. Stake. Roll call vote. The motion was unanimously carried.

Authorized the Business Manager to approve and make payments on any necessary and outstanding bills which impact the day to day operations of the district during the temporary closure of the school district as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Motion: E. Petruzzi; Second: J. Stake. Roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Authorized payment assuring “no employee of the district who was employed as of March 13, 2020, shall receive no more or less compensation than the employee would otherwise have been entitled to receive from the district had the pandemic of 2020 not occurred or had the minimum instructional day requirement not been waived.” Motion: D. Tanner; Second: B. Johns. Brief discussion was held. Roll call vote. The motion was unanimously carried.

Authorized the Business Manager to solicit quotes to complete work to replace the water line to the high school. Motion: J. Stake; Second: J. Fillhart. Some discussion was held with Doctor Carlson suggesting that we should contact the Port Allegany Borough about doing this work. Roll call vote. The motion was unanimously carried.

Board

Cancelled the regularly scheduled April 6 board meeting. Motion: S. Lathrop; Second: J. Stake. Roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board convened to executive session for personnel matters at 7:59 p.m.

The regular meeting reconvened at 8:21 p.m. for adjournment.

Adjournment

Motion: S. Lathrop; Second: J. Stake. The motion carried unanimously. Doctor Carlson adjourned the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ADAM C. MOATE
Secretary to the Board of School Directors