

Port Allegany School District

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting  
May 4, 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: High School Principal Marc Budd, Elementary Principal Tracy Kio, Assistant Principal Erika Emerick, Mandy Boorum, Becky Boorum, Joyce Stehle, Amanda Rudolph, Heath Rudolph, Lisa VanGorden; and Erin Eckerd of PSBA and Larry Myers and Kirby Slear of Schneider Electric joined virtually.

Public Comment

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

Mrs. Becky Boorum expressed thanks to the Board and Administration for providing a way for the seniors to commemorate graduation. She asked the Board to consider a way to include parents being in the auditorium to watch their children receive their diplomas. She urged the Board to be understanding and empathetic with the parents and children in these unprecedented times making suggestions on ways to make this happen, including volunteering her assistance. She believes it is very important for parents and children to share this milestone together.

Mrs. Amanda Rudolph concurred with Mrs. Boorum's comments adding that many students have indicated they would rather not walk if their parents cannot watch which breaks her heart. As a parent, she indicated that she would take any precautions necessary to be able to see her daughter walk, and thanked the Board for their consideration.

Mrs. Joyce Stehle as a support staff member and mother of five expressed her belief that this is well worth any extra effort to make it happen. Mrs. Stehle thanked the Board for the assurance that support staff would continue to receive normal paychecks. She commented about the meal service that is continuing noting that staff is constantly adapting to provide these services. Mrs. Stehle said staff is anxious to get back to working with the children and are committed to the success of the school district while seeking a contract with the district.

Committee Reports

Mrs. Johns referred the Board to the draft meeting minutes of the Intermediate Unit Nine Board of Directors for review. Doctor Carlson asked for clarification relating to the MOU with Don Wismer. Mrs. Johns said she will check into it and get back to him.

Mr. Tanner reported that students continue to work toward certification programs and doing the enrichment activities put forward at the Career and Technical Center. They are also working to complete industry standards certification as time allows.

Mr. Fillhart reported that there is still open debate in the Pennsylvania house regarding property tax freezes in the coming year which we may want to consider in the budgeting process.

### Superintendent's Report

Mr. Buchsen introduced Erin Eckerd, Members Manager of Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) who presented an overview of member services and resources provided by the organization specifically during the COVID-19 crisis. Some of these are a coronavirus resource page, tools including a complimentary Zoom license, creating and hosting new online content, and weekly Zoom meetings for Board members and administration. Ms. Eckerd announced various upcoming virtual meetings including Virtual Advocacy Day and the annual PSBA School Leadership Conference. She also reviewed Act 55 and Act 18 requirements for school board member training. Mr. Buchsen thanked her and PSBA for all the support noting that the Zoom license has been an invaluable tool.

Mr. Buchsen said that Mr. Larry Myers and Mr. Kirby Slear from Schneider Electric are joining to discuss an energy audit. Mr. Myers spoke about the Guaranteed Energy Savings Act. He noted that Kirby spent a couple of days in our buildings and the presentation is based on this review. Mr. Myers reviewed detailed information highlighting the following: utilities spend shows electric is about 3 times the cost of natural gas; did not look at any non-utility expenditures; some HVAC units run continuously; and spoke with administration about some of the issues which include HVAC upgrades (HS), replacement of pneumatic controls (HS); lighting conversion to LED technologies (both buildings); cooling for auditorium; miscellaneous kitchen items; and checking into roofing. Brief discussion was held about the history of auditorium cooling. He stated that there are some items of minimal cost that generate big savings such as LED lighting upgrades and building automation. Schneider takes quick payback items and combines them with more capital intensive items to build a comprehensive project. The audit results show a 24% cost savings; a 25-26% energy savings - \$32,000 at the high school and \$13,000 at the elementary school per year which is a \$45,000 annual utilities savings. Additional savings would include replacement parts costs; re-negotiating better data rates for computer, network, telephone; maintenance contracts for less maintenance and modified; and reduction in annual accruals for deferred maintenance items. This all adds up to about \$70,000 of energy savings per year which results in savings of \$600,000-\$1,200,000 for 10 to 20 years to fund a project. If the District does nothing and continues as we are at a \$5 million spend on utilities; with the project it would cut the spend to under \$3.5 million. He reviewed options for projects. Opportunities for a project are in three categories 1) reinvestment needs (more capital intensive), 2) operations/efficiency sides (quick payback, funding source), and 3) sustainability items which have educational aspects as well. He showed photos of various items that need attention. Lengthy discussion was held with Mr. Myers responding to various questions and concerns. Mr. Myers said that Schneider offers significant value, has a large presence in Pennsylvania, client references and scores, transparency, demonstrated guarantee, design thinking and parallel development (unique to Schneider), a trusted partner, and long-term support. He explained what the next few steps would be if the district decides to move forward.

Mr. Buchsen reported that the Borough will be discussing possible replacement of the water line at the high school during their meeting this evening.

Mr. Buchsen addressed the Board relating to the graduation ceremony and COVID-19 mitigation. He reminded them that plans have been discussed with the idea of being in the red phase. Mr. Budd said planning has been in process for several weeks recognizing this is a difficult time for students, parents and the school system trying to meet everybody's needs. The plan is to bring in seniors in groups of eight dressed in caps and gowns, appropriate dress and shoes. The students will be taped coming into the auditorium, walking up on the stage, and receiving their diplomas. The Class President and four graduation speakers will be taped separately as well. Mrs. Pam Fischer will be present to take pictures which will be posted on the district's Facebook page. All the film will be edited and music dubbed in for a complete

ceremony that will be posted on the district's Facebook page on May 29 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Buchsen said legal advice has been sought and it is agreed that schools need to be extremely cautious, and he reiterated these plans were made for compliance while in the red phase. Mrs. Petruzzi, who has a senior this year, said she appreciates everything that has been done. However, parents truly want to see their children walk across the stage and receive their diplomas. She believes it would mean more than anything to parents. Mr. Buchsen suggested setting something up for parents and students to come to the auditorium for pictures. Lengthy discussion was held. Mr. Buchsen said the administration will continue to look for a solution and Mrs. Petruzzi said she, and others, are willing to provide any assistance to make something happen for the families.

#### Transportation

Mr. Buchsen said that the district's daily transportation runs are reimbursed by the state by about 65% which is paid the following school year. Guidance from the state requires that if school districts continue to pay the contractors, then they must continue paying their employees during the school closure period. Guidance also includes an opportunity to re-negotiate contracts. Neighboring districts are paying providers with the following caveats and the administration is recommending the following: the district would pay for daily runs, Port Allegany School District would receive a fuel credit (since buses are not running), and contractor would donate the van run to Roulette Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for food distribution. The district would not pay for any extra-curricular runs through the closure period. Mr. Buchsen indicated that Muccio Transportation has agreed to these terms. Board consensus was to place this item on next week's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Buchsen reported that during discussion with Muccio, they have offered the district an option to extend the current contract for a year with these caveats: all of the 2019-20 rates would freeze for next year then push all others forward a year; they would donate all bocce runs; and would reduce the mileage rate from \$1.95 to 95¢ for extra-curricular runs. Consensus was to have the item placed on next week's agenda.

#### Personnel

The following personnel items were discussed and will be considered for approval next week. 1) Resignation of Mrs. Shannon Gelnett. Mr. Buchsen commended Mrs. Gelnett and extended her best wishes. Mr. Lathrop asked if this is a current position, and Mr. Buchsen said it is. Mr. Kio said Shannon is an outstanding teacher, a leader by all definition of the word – she will be greatly missed. 2) Payment of supplemental salary for spring sports. Administration is recommending pro-rating salary for the two weeks worked prior to the corona virus closing and is seeking direction from the Board. Brief discussion was held and the Board was in support of prorating salaries. 3) 2020-2021 supplemental positions. Mr. Buchsen indicated several more letters have been received, and some positions have multiple applicants. 4) School District Solicitor. Mr. Christian Mattie has agreed to continue at a cost of \$4,500 (no increase). 5) Mr. Stewart, Band Directors has requested approval of Mr. John T. Madison to continue as a volunteer director.

#### Finance

The following items were discussed and will be on Monday's agenda. 1) School website. Mr. Buchsen provided a handout of proposals to review since the current site will no longer be supported. Administration is recommending School Webmasters because they do the work as opposed to the other vendors where the district would have to train personnel to do it. 2) Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit 9 2020-2021 General Operating Budget in the amount of \$1,065,042 with the district's share being \$29,900. Brief discussion was held. 3) 2020-2021 Seneca Highlands Career and Technical Center budget of \$2,267,654 was reviewed. 4) Renewal of special education support services provided through the Intermediate Unit Nine. Discussion was held with Mr. Buchsen explaining that budget costs can fluctuate based on student needs. 6) Election of District Treasurer. Mr. Lane is retiring this year. Mr. Buchsen said options will be discussed in executive session. 7) Renewal of the Technology Pool Contract with the

Intermediate Unit and area school districts. This service has more than paid for itself during this closure period. 8) Renewal of the annual agreement with Pediatric Services of America for nursing services. Mr. Buchsen indicated this makes the service available should the district need emergency nursing services. He noted this is the third year of the agreement and we have not needed to use it. 9) The annual appointment of depositories. Administration is recommending appointment of Juniata Valley Bank for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. 10) Auditor appointment. Administration recommends appointing Buffamante Whipple Buttafaro, PC as auditors for the 2019-2020 fiscal year to complete the independent audit, federal programs audit, and provide consultation on the Annual Financial Report. Cost not to exceed \$19,200. Brief discussion was held.

Proposed 2020-2021 general fund budget. Mr. Buchsen presented a slideshow stating revenue is about \$14.8 million and expenditures are \$16.5 million reflecting a projected deficit of \$1.7 million which he noted is similar to what area districts are looking at. He stated that revenue is unsure because of the corona virus and awaiting state guidance. Assumptions on the revenue side include no local tax increase, Federal CARES money is not included (this afternoon he was notified that Port Allegany's CARES funding will be \$282,500), 85% tax collection rate, decrease of 10% in earned income tax, decrease in realty transfer tax of 40%, decrease in delinquent tax collection of 30%, and interest revenue reduced by 80%. Mr. Moate explained how these were determined. Mr. Buchsen said revenue assumes an average of the past three years for basic education funding and special education funding, and federal funds are assumed at level funding. Expenditures maintain the current workforce with regular education taking up 2/5 of total spending. The special education program is about 13.5% of the budget (population is about 16%). 2300's is about 8.5% which includes all principals, administrative secretaries, tax collectors, board services, In-Shore and I.T. services. He reported that there is a concern if schools do not open on time relating to exodus to cyber charter schools and we must be cautious as this would have a major negative impact on the deficit. Mr. Buchsen reviewed a list of items that could be considered for reducing the deficit.

Additional items were discussed for consideration next week: 1) 2020-2021 Career and Technical Center general operating budget in the amount of \$2,267,654. Brief discussion was held. The administration recommends adopting the budget. 2) Renewal of the service agreement with MCIU23 for level data validation suite. The service provides validation of state data in PowerSchool for state reporting. Annual cost is \$888 for the 2020-2021 school year. 3) Proposal to resurface high school gymnasium floor. The district received a proposal from All-American Athletics to resurface the floor at a cost of \$3,400. Administration recommends approval.

Food Service Request for Proposal. Two companies attended the walk-through, but a single bid was received from The Nutrition Group. Mr. Buchsen reviewed the current situation that The Nutrition Group provides management services. The Board and association are in negotiations for a support staff contract. He reviewed the Management piece of the quote which provides a guaranteed loss of \$72,614.92 for next year. The RFP for running the entire operation including labor shows a guaranteed loss of \$12,116.31. Lengthy discussion was held with the Board consensus to move forward with the public hearing.

### Curriculum

Approval of the 2020 Graduation List of 78 seniors will be on next week's agenda. Graduation is contingent upon completion of graduate requirements.

### Board

Policy Update - first reading as follows: 1) 006.1 Attendance at Meetings Via Electronic Communications (optional policy). 2) 335 Family and Medical Leaves (no policy change - attachment included with updated language on the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.). 3) 626 Federal Fiscal Compliance (recommended for legal liability and funding purposes).

The board had indicated previously that it may want to review substitute pay. In November, 2019 the board approved a per diem rate of \$228 per day for substitutes working sixty consecutive days in one assignment. The board may amend the rate and time length requirements at its discretion. The Board agreed to drop this discussion at this time.

Meal program update. The district is currently serving about 1,000 meals per week. Everyone 18 years of age and younger are eligible to receive a meal. Mr. Buchsen reported the number of meals served has grown since last week. He provided a handout for guidance in consideration of continuing the lunch program through the summer. Mr. Buchsen said families who received free or reduced price meals during the school year will receive \$5.70 per day, per student for each day school was closed by the state. Administration is asking for Board direction. Doctor Carlson asked for additional information next week before making a decision.

The Board convened to executive session for personnel matters at 11:35 p.m.

The regular meeting reconvened at 11:54 p.m. for adjournment.

Adjournment

Motion: S. Lathrop; Second: J. Stake. The motion carried unanimously. Doctor Carlson adjourned the meeting at 11:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ADAM C. MOATE  
Secretary to the Board of School Directors