

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD  
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING  
JANUARY 25, 2021

The Board of Directors of the Hopewell Area School District conducted a virtual Board meeting on Monday, January 25, 2021. This meeting was recorded.

An Executive Session was held prior to the start of the meeting to discuss personnel matters. This announcement is being made to be in compliance with Act 84 of 1986, Pennsylvania's Sunshine Law, as amended.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Jeff Winkle, Board President.

Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mrs. Dobo. Roll call by the secretary followed. Those Directors in attendance were:

Daniel Caton  
Lesia Dobo  
Matthew Erickson  
Lori McKittrick  
Darren Newberry  
Kathryn Oblak  
Daniel Santia  
Jeffrey Winkle  
Lindsay Zupsic

Also, in attendance were: Dr. Michelle Miller, Superintendent, Dr. Jacie Maslyk, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. John Salopek, Solicitor; Jennifer Conrad, Business Administrator; Nancy Barber, Secretary; Robert Kartychak, Kylee Babish and Gary Hutsler, Principals; and visitors.

"Good News" reports were presented by Dr. Maslyk, Dr. Kartychak, Mrs. Babish and Mr. Hutsler. Copies of each report are attached to these minutes.

Stephen Niedenberger from Hosack, Specht, Muetzel & Wood, LLP, presented the District's audit report for the period ending June 30, 2020.

Mr. Winkle asked for approval of minutes.

MOTION #1

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Lesia Dobo, to approve the December 14, 2020 and January 11, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

APPROVAL OF GROUPED ITEMSMOTION #2

By Dan Caton, seconded by Darren Newberry, to approve items (1) through (3) as presented in accordance with School Board's agreement for grouping items in a single motion. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Tax Collectors' Report

1. Recommendation to accept report for taxes collected for the month of December, 2020, as presented, and make said report a part of these minutes.

Treasurer's Report

2. Recommendation to accept report of the Treasurer for the month of December, 2020, as presented, and make said report a part of these minutes.

Financial Statements

3. Recommendation to accept Financial Statements for the month of December, as presented, and make said statements a part of these minutes.

VISITOR'S COMMENTS

Effective January 1, 2021, community members have the ability to sign up to be recognized during the Visitor's Section of a live Zoom meeting. The individual must also have a device that specifically states his/her name in order to be recognized. Written questions will no longer be accepted. When recognized, the individual will need to state his/her name and address and will have 3 minutes to make a statement and/or ask a question to the Board. The time will begin when the individual begins speaking. This time limit will include a possible response by the Board.

A response may be given during the meeting, however, it is also possible that no response be provided during the virtual meeting. The Board will instruct the Superintendent, the Business Administrator and/or the Solicitor to either respond to the inquiry or do further research and report back to the Board and/or the resident. For any question that requires a response, the District will contact the individual directly to respond or will share responses at the following Board meeting.

Additionally, if a community member wishes to speak during this additional time, the community member must request to speak in the chat box. The Board President will ask for comments in the order in which the community member requested to speak. The individual must have a device that specifically states his/her name in order to be recognized. When recognized, the individual will have 3 minutes to make a statement and/or ask a question to the Board. The time will begin when the individual begins

speaking. This time limit will include a possible response by the Board. A maximum of thirty minutes total will be reserved during the meeting for community members who request to speak in the chat room.

Time was allotted for requests to speak from the “chat room” at the end of the meeting.

**Bethany Pistorius, 2008 S. Trillium Drive, Aliquippa, PA**

Mrs. Pistorius had the following questions and comments:

1. She complimented our amazing varsity soccer coaches for helping to support the youth Hopewell Soccer Club with coaching and conditioning prior to the start of their season.

*District Response: Dr. Miller thanked her for her kind words of support.*

2. Update on the HVAC system, which, during the feasibility study, was at “end of life”.

*District Response: Mr. Newberry reported that the District had completed an air quality study at the end of August. There were no areas of concern in the report. Currently, all air filters have been replaced. A second air quality study has been scheduled.*

3. Will the District post the June 30, 2020 Audit Report?

*District Response: The District will post the Audit Report on the website.*

4. Substitute pool and backup plan. She wanted to know what plans this District had so we don't have to cancel school for lack of teachers, as we did on November 20, 2020.

*District Response: The cancellation of school at the Junior High on November 20, 2020 was an unfortunate issue due to timing. Students were already transitioning to homeroom, when 4-5 teachers had to be sent home due to Covid. Once Covid is identified in a student or employee, contact tracing must begin, which takes time.*

*This District uses Kelly Educational Services for their pool of substitute teachers. To entice subs to come to Hopewell, the District increased their substitute rate of pay. However, with Kelly losing half of their staff pool, it is still extremely difficult to get subs. As for the District back-up plan, each school has a building sub and current staff are used as fill-ins during the day.*

**Kendra Gill, 369 Longs Run Road, Aliquippa, PA**

Ms. Gill stated that she believes that it is time for students to return to school for full-time instruction. She questioned why other districts are able to accomplish this, but Hopewell is not. Students in grades 7-12 should return to hybrid sooner, rather than later.

Mr. Winkle continued with committee recommendations and discussion.

**Educational/Curriculum/Instruction by Matthew Erickson, Chair**

**MOTION #3**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Lesia Dobo, to approve the cancellation of Senior High School Mid-Terms for 2020-21 school year. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Winkle stated that the Board depended on guidance from the administrative team and this decision was based on that information.

**MOTION #4**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Lesia Dobo, for Samantha Lash, a student at Slippery Rock University, to complete her student teaching from January 19, 2021 through March 12, 2021, under the guidance of Christopher Keiper. MOTION carried by an affirmative vote of 8-0. Dr. Erickson abstained, due to the fact that he works for Slippery Rock University.

**MOTION #5**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Lesia Dobo, to approve the revision to the instructional model for students in grade 7-12 to begin hybrid learning, beginning February 2, 2021. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #6**

Matt Erickson, seconded by Darren Newberry, to approve *Godspell*, 2021 Senior High School musical, with financial support from the District in the amount of \$10,000.00. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Winkle stated that the Board felt it was important to provide this opportunity for students and continue support for the Arts in Hopewell.

**Athletics by Dan Caton, Chair**

**MOTION #7**

By Dan Caton, seconded by Darren Newberry, to approve Michael Sabat parent/coach for representation at WPIAL Rifle Championships for his daughter Rachel Sabat. Mr. Sabat will incur all costs and transportation. MOTION carried unanimously by a vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Caton asked if Rachel would be representing Hopewell and wanted to know if there was any financial assistance the District could offer. Dr. Miller said that Rachel would be

representing the District and she would check to see what financial obligations Mr. Sabat would incur and report back to the Board.

**Buildings and Grounds by Darren Newberry, Chair**

**MOTION #8**

By Darren Newberry, seconded by Kathryn Oblak, to accept the proposal of Intertech dated November 19, 2020 for the HASD Building PA System Replacement Project in the amount of \$75,654. This will be paid through the PCCD grant. There is no cost to the District. MOTION carried by a unanimous roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #9**

By Darren Newberry, seconded by Kathryn Oblak, to accept proposal from Horizon Information Services for building wireless network expansion in the amount of \$32,870. This will be paid through the PCCD grant. There is no cost to the District. MOTION carried by a unanimous roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #10**

By Darren Newberry, seconded by Lesia Dobo, to accept proposal from Questeq/Extreme dated December 7, 2020 for wireless access point hardware in the amount of \$146,504. This will be paid through the PCCD grant. There is no cost to the District. MOTION carried by a unanimous roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**Finance and Budget by Lori McKittrick, Chair**

**APPROVAL OF GROUPED ITEMS**

**MOTION #11**

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve items (1) through (3) and to ratify item (4) as presented, in accordance with School Board's agreement for grouping items in a single motion. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

1. General Fund payments in the amount of \$264,757.43
2. Cafeteria Fund payments in the amount of \$102,895.72
3. Capital Reserve Fund payments in the amount of \$9,195.00
4. General Fund payments in the amount of \$4,528,463.58

MOTION #12

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Kathryn Oblak, to approve the Audit Report of the Hopewell Area School District for the year ended June 30, 2020 issued by Hosack, Specht, Muetzel & Wood, LLP, Certified Public Accountants. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Winkle stated that for as long as he could remember, Hosack, Specht, Muetzel & Wood had prepared the District's Audit Report. He believed that they always did an excellent job.

MOTION #13

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Darren Newberry, to approve Resolution #1-2021, a Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Hopewell Area School District, certifying that the District will not raise the rate of any tax for the support of the public schools for the following fiscal year by more than its index, which for the 2021-2022 school year is 3.9%. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #14

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Kathryn Oblak, to approve the Agreement with Questeq for E-Rate Category 1 and 2 Strategy and Application Processes for the 2021-2022 school year at an approximate cost of \$7,500.00. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**Personnel by Matthew Erickson**MOTION #15

By Matthew Erickson, seconded by Darren Newberry, to accept the resignation of Alex Nicholson, assistant boys basketball coach, effective January 1, 2021. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #16

By Matthew Erickson, seconded by Lori McKittrick, to approve the change of status of Rob Hall to 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant Boys Basketball Coach, at a stipend of \$5,000.00, effective immediately for the 20-21 winter season, subject to completion of the season and proration of the salary in the event that the winter sports season is shortened. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #17

By Matthew Erickson, seconded by Kathryn Oblak, to approve the unpaid leave of absence for Brittany Story, junior high teacher, while the Junior High School is in-person, hybrid learning during the 2020-2021 school year. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #18

By Matthew Erickson, seconded by Lori McKittrick, to approve the change of retirement date for James Spokart from January 13, 2021 to January 15, 2021. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #19

By Matthew Erickson, seconded by Darren Newberry, to accept the resignation of Richard Cropper, bus driver, effective January 26, 2021. Mr. Cropper would like to be placed on the substitute transportation roster. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**Policy and Planning by Lindsay Zupsic, Chair**

MOTION #20

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Darren Newberry, to approve paid leave for staff due to COVID exposure by a student in a school setting during the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, as presented. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Dr. Miller read the policy:

*It shall be the policy (the "Policy") of the Hopewell Area School District (the "District") that if a District employee (the "Employee") is required by the District Superintendent to quarantine or isolate because of a close contact with a student (who has tested positive for COVID or has been identified as a probable COVID case) during the course of the Employee's employment with the District, the Employee shall not be required to use sick days, personal days or vacation days in order to have a continuation of the payment of the Employee's wages or salary.*

*Provided however, if the Employee is able to work remotely but chooses not to do so, this Policy shall not apply.*

*Further, this Policy shall only apply to any work days lost during the period of required quarantine or isolation.*

*The terms and words used in this Policy shall have the meaning given by and shall be interpreted under the rules, regulations, directives and orders of the Governor and the Pennsylvania Department of Health.*

*This Policy shall expire and terminate on June 30, 2021.*

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Miller thanked the School Board for their continued guidance and support of our students and staff.

Solicitor's Report

Nothing to report.

Unfinished Business**Vivian Lumbard, 2867 Brodhead Road, Aliquippa, PA**

Ms. Lumbard asked why the District was not following CDC and Department of Health guidelines at this time, as they were doing at the beginning of the school year. She believes that the District sent students back to hybrid learning prematurely and asked what guidelines had changed since the beginning of the year. She asked Mr. Salopek what the District's liability would be if a student or staff member contracted Covid since the District was not compliant with CDC guidelines.

*District's Response: Mr. Winkle stated that the Board takes CDC and Department of Health guidelines very seriously, but that it is only guidance and it is left to School District's to make decisions that are in the best interest of students and staff based on the information that they have.*

**Amy Kelly, 1203 Connecticut Avenue, Aliquippa, PA**

What is the required ratio of students to teachers? Are we pulling cyber teachers for hybrid instruction? She believes that cyber teachers have their own responsibility to students and should not be pulled.

*District's Response: Dr. Miller stated that there are no required ratios for student/teachers, except for special education. Student/teacher ratios as required in Pre-K programs don't apply to public education. Cyber teachers would only be pulled to cover a class for hybrid learning as a last resort. Administrators, principals and counselors would be utilized prior to pulling a cyber teacher. Dr. Miller reiterates that November 20, 2020 was a unique situation for not enough staff, and that we usually have adequate time to find substitutes or fill-ins.*

**Bethany Pistorius, 2008 S. Trillium Drive, Aliquippa, PA**

Mrs. Pistorius had a follow-up question. She stated that during past Board meetings Motions were confusing. She said that the Board asked for clarification of the current Motion. She asked if Motions could be typed live during the meeting.

**Stacy Richart, 1042 Sweet Brier Drive, Aliquippa, PA**

Dr. Miller had already answered her question.

**Michelle Read, 345 Service Creek Road, Aliquippa, PA**

I want to start out by saying thank you for everything you are doing during this hard time. I did speak up at the board meeting and I do hope that it wasn't taken in a negative manner. My first concern is the website. It is very hard to find important information, even just contact information. A lot of the contact info is out of date. Unfortunately, I have had to reach out to administration to help guide me, when if the information was available, I could have saved their time. My second concern is virtual days. Let me start out by saying that the second grade team at Indy is WONDERFUL (Sittig, Collins, Boranko, and Enders for special area). They kick butt!!! On virtual days, he follows his normal day. My concern is my kindergarten. She gets on one time and loves it, however, could there be more??? The only special area teacher that has offered lives is Mr. Enders. I am grateful for the school and everything everyone is doing and I appreciate all of your time and effort in everything you do!

*District's Response: Mr. Correa, the new Technology Director, will be reviewing the District website. Dr. Miller will reach out to Mrs. Kane and Mr. Hutsler to review consistency with the hybrid learning model.*

**Nicklous Gaughan, 1204 Ridgeway Avenue, Aliquippa, PA**

Mr. Gaughan asked when the District planned on returning to in person learning full time.

*District Response: Mr. Newberry stated that the Board is always looking at and considering a return to full instruction. He said that they hoped that would happen this school year. Social distancing remains a problem when all students are in each building.*

Ms. McKittrick asked for an update on the Covid vaccine.

Dr. Miller reported that the BVIU was working with all Beaver County school districts to register school employees who wanted the vaccine. She stated that Beaver Health Mart requested the vaccine on our behalf. Due to a new PA Secretary of Health, approval has been delayed. Moving forward, once the vaccine has been obtained, there is a plan in place for administering the vaccine to all of those who requested it.

Upcoming School Board Meetings

February 8, 2021 Reorganization Meeting, via Zoom  
February 22, 2021, Regular Business Meeting, via Zoom

MOTION by Matt Erickson, seconded by Kathryn Oblak, that the meeting be adjourned.  
MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Winkle adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

Jeff Winkle, Board President

Nancy Barber, Secretary