HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

REGULAR WORK MEETING

JUNE 8, 2020

The Board of Directors of the Hopewell Area School District conduced a virtual Board meeting on Monday, June 8, 2020 due to the closure of school during the Covid-19 pandemic.

An Executive Session was held prior to the start of the meeting to discuss personnel issues. 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 7:21 p.m. by Lesia Dobo, Board President.

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

Lesia Dobo

Matthew Erickson

Lori McKittrick

Darren Newberry

Kathryn Oblak

Daniel Santia

Jeffrey Winkle

Lindsay Zupsic

Members Absent:

Daniel Caton

Also in attendance were: Dr. Michelle Miller, Superintendent, Dr. Jacie Maslyk, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. John Salopek, Solicitor; Jennifer Conrad, Business Administrator; and Nancy Barber, Secretary. Visitors participated virtually through Zoom Meeting.

Dr. Miller and Mrs. Conrad reviewed the agenda in its entirety before returning to those items that would be voted on this evening.

**Personnel**: Dr. Erickson, Chair and Mrs. Oblak, Co-Chair

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Eliminate the following positions, effective June 9, 2020 for the 2020-2021 School Year Term:
   1. High School Physical Education/Health teacher.
   2. Physical Education teacher at Margaret Ross and Hopewell Elementary

And realign the Physical Education Department for 2020-2021 School Year Term as follows:

* 1. 3 High School Physical Education/Health teachers;
  2. 1 High School Physical Education/Health and Elementary Physical Education/Health teacher;
  3. 3 Junior High School Physical Education/Health teachers; and
  4. 1 Physical Education/Health teacher at Margaret Ross and Independence Elementary.

1. The Board of School Directors concurs in the recommendation of the Superintendent for the alteration of the Program of Courses and Classes of Science by the elimination of one high school science position, effective June 9, 2020, for the 2020-2021 School Term Year, to conform to standards of organization and due to a substantial decline in pupil enrollments in the High School and the Junior High School.
2. The Board of School Directors approves the non-renewal of the temporary professional employee contract of Brittany Covalt, Science teacher at the High School, on the grounds of substantial decrease in pupil enrollments within the High School and the Junior High School and to conform to standards of organization, effective June 9, 2020, and to give notice of the right to a hearing.
3. Resignation of Bill Pfiefer, Head Girls’ Soccer Coach, effective May 22, 2020.
4. Transfer of Dr. Rob Kartychak to Assistant High School Principal position, effective July 1, 2020.

The following items will be voted on June 22, 2020.

**Education/Curriculum/Instruction**

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Renew agreement with Cumberland Therapy Services, LLC to provide supplemental school psychologist for the 2020-2021 school year at a rate of $75.85 per hour.
2. Membership renewal with Pennsylvania School Boards Association for the 2020-2021 school year in the amount of $11,657.04.

At this time, Mrs. Conrad reviewed the proposed 2020-2021 budget. A copy of this presentation is on the District website: www. hopewellarea.org.

**Finance and Budget**

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Resolution #5-2020 a Resolution providing for adoption of the Final General Fund budget for the 2020-2021 General Fund budget, which projects revenues of $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and appropriations of $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The difference of $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will come from the Fund Balance.
2. Resolution #6-2020, a Resolution levying a tax during the 2020-2021 School Fiscal Year upon real estate within the territorial limits of the School District and fixing the rate thereof at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ mills.
3. Resolution #7-2020, a Resolution requesting the Chief County Assessor to direct the inspection and reassessment of all taxable property within the territorial limits of the School District to which major improvements were made after September 1, 2019, and not included in the tax duplicate certified to the Treasurer of the School District for the School Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021.
4. Resolution #8-2020, a Resolution authorizing rates of discounts and penalties on real estate taxes for the 2020-2021 School Fiscal Year.
5. Resolution #9-2020, a Resolution providing for the installment payment of real estate taxes during the School Fiscal Year 2020-2021.
6. Resolution #10-2020, a Resolution reenacting for the 2020-2021 School Fiscal Year the tax upon transfers of real estate situated within the territorial limits of the School District, the same heretofore imposed pursuant to the authority contained in the Local Tax Enabling Act.
7. Resolution #11-2020, a Resolution reenacting for the 2021 Calendar Year the tax upon salaries, wages, commissions, compensations, net profits, and other earned income of residents, the same heretofore imposed pursuant to the authority contained in the Local Tax Enabling Act.
8. Resolution #12-2020, a Resolution reenacting for the 2020-2021 School Fiscal Year the tax upon natural persons engaging in an occupation within the territorial limits of the School District, the same heretofore imposed pursuant to the authority contained in the Local Tax Enabling Act.
9. Resolution #13-2020, a Resolution reenacting for the 2020-2021 School Fiscal Year the mercantile tax upon the gross receipts of wholesale and retail business activity performed or rendered within the territorial limits of the School District, the same heretofore imposed pursuant to the authority contained in the Local Tax Enabling Act.
10. Resolution #14-2020, a Resolution authorizing the Homestead and Farmstead Exclusion real estate assessment reductions for the Hopewell Area School District’s Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2020, under the provisions of the Taxpayer Relief Act (Act 1 of 2006).
11. E-Rate Category 1 services for Lit Fiber WAN through Crowncastle for the 2020-2021 school year in the amount of $4,496.64.  This cost represents Hopewell’s 50% E-Rate discount of this service.
12. Renew the following insurance coverage through                  and                  (for worker’s compensation) for the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.  This coverage will be provided through the                              Agency.

Privacy and Network Liability $

General Liability/Excess Liability $

Automobile $

Workers Compensation $

VISITOR’S COMMENTS

Since this meeting is being conducted virtually, visitors were asked to emails questions prior to the meeting.

**Christina Davies** - I was told by Allison and Michelle Miller there are intentions of a Graduation Ceremony that will take place for our 2020 seniors on July 18th. Surely being in the yellow we are quite capable of that field ceremony taking place. Especially more since we will be in the green by the end of June, if not before.  What steps have been taken for planning the ceremony, if any? And when will the parents and kids find out what is taking place? If you are not standing behind your word of having a ceremony, when will we know that? We just want definite answers to a situation that should be in the makings.

***Response from Dr. Miller*** *- The District is committed to conduct a graduation ceremony in the stadium at 10 AM on July 18, 2020 if the county is identified as green by July 1.  This has been consistently communicated from the time we decided to hold the virtual ceremony.*

*Dr. Miller and Mr. Allison collaborated and agreed that since July 1 is a Wednesday and most announcements by the Governor are made on Fridays we will wait until July 3 to make any decisions.  We do expect, however, that Beaver County will be identified as green on Friday, June 12.*

*We recognize that families have vacation plans, some students will be at college, and our military students will not be available to attend. They can still be recognized. That is why we shared a date and time well in advance of July 18.*

*If the ceremony is a go for July 18, the planning is complete and will be communicated as soon as Beaver County has officially been identified as green. We will have a brief practice for graduates prior to the ceremony and we will provide students and parents all necessary information.*

**Janet Szarejko-Miller** - The elimination of an assistant principal at the elementary level is a huge concern. The other eliminations are not in the best interest of students either. I have a daughter who is entering kindergarten and these are serious concerns that will impact her and my family directly.

Is there then going to be a principal in each elementary school?

How can one principal possibly float through three elementary schools and have the best interest of faculty and students?

Building a positive school culture is vital for the success of the schools and a principal sets that foundation and makes sure that it is being implemented.

One, gym teacher between three schools! How often are they getting physical activity a week?

Kids are supposed to have PE for 150 minutes per week. That is 30mins per day. How can one gym teacher satisfy this requirement?

Gym is more than physical exercise but in elementary students it is proven that PE helps to reduce anxiety, depression, and is beneficial for overall mental health.

***Response from Dr. Miller*** *- The District shares your concerns about having an administrator present in each of the buildings and supporting Mrs. Kane, our teachers, students and families.  To do this, Dr. Maslyk will be a presence at Margaret Ross and Dr. Miller will be a presence at Independence Elementary School.  This presence will be on a consistent and regular basis.  Dr. Maslyk and I will work with Mrs. Kane to address student, parent, and staff needs.  We will also hire an administrator on a contractual basis to support Mrs. Kane 1-2 days per week.  We are currently looking for a retired principal to possibly fill this role.*

*The District also agrees about the importance of physical activity with our students and the benefits of physical activity through formal physical education classes and recess.  The realignment of the physical education program will not eliminate any physical education classes.  With the current staff, we will have one elementary physical education teacher teach all classes at Independence and Margaret Ross.  We will also have one teacher teach all of the classes at Hopewell Elementary and assist with additional classes at the Junior High. No PE classes will be cut.*

**Vivian Lumbard** - What unexpected savings have we seen in the budget since COVID-19 shut down the schools for a full quarter of the school year? How much is it that can be used to offset the proposed changes in staff and curriculum? Can the district expect any additional monies from the CARES Act in the upcoming year? Utilities - gas/electric/water/sewer - all must all be lower since the vast majority of our staff and students have not been utilizing the buildings. Transportation, as buses have not been running. Cleaning and bathroom supplies haven't been needed at its normal rate of consumption. Paper/copy paper hasn't been needed at its normal rate. Sports and associated costs since, again, a full quarter of the school year's activities were not conducted.

If the pandemic has proven anything, it is the importance of our staff. The incoming 5th grade class to the Junior High is expected to be the fourth of the last five classes to have an extra homeroom required over years prior, yet the School Board is considering eliminating long-standing beneficial items from the curriculum and teacher positions.  Eliminating a science teacher and physical education teacher appears to be short-sighted, as does eliminating Latin and Spanish from the curriculum.  Our children are growing up in a global community, not just our local one. U.S. scores on the annual PISA exams have shown that, while their overall ranking on the exam has improved, U.S. students have not seen an actual increase in their scores in science since 2015 - the higher ranking is due to other countries doing worse. The more children we can engage and keep engaged in physical activity at younger ages benefits them long-term as well as the health care system in our country. Spanish is the fourth most-spoken language in the world and Latin is a wonderful base for most languages - including English, but also for those students who may continue on in science and medical career-related paths.

Several months ago, the School Board was so concerned about the increased number of students at the elementary level that they proposed moving 4th grade to the Junior High, yet now is contemplating eliminating the assistant principal position at that level with the same or more elementary students. This would leave two of our elementary schools without a senior administrator in them at any given time. Why do you feel this is safe and appropriate for our youngest students? At the elementary level, we have five grades spread between three schools, while the Junior High and High School have four grades each in one school; both of those with assistant principals. Even when the Board does make a decision on either upgrading our elementary schools or constructing a new building, we will still have a need for an assistant principal at that level.

I understand that there is also intent on the part of the School Board to renegotiate the full-time secretaries and paraprofessionals to part-time status. If the Board's reasoning is because of COVID-19 and the resultant temporarily reduced workload, it is morally wrong to penalize these positions just to save some money.

Having spent as much time as I have on PTA/PTSA Boards and in our schools, I am well aware of how much our secretaries handle regularly not only for the staff and students, but for the families.  And as a mom to a child receiving special education support, I am also aware of how important our paraprofessionals are, as well as how many caring ones we have in our district. They are the immediate in-class support for our special education students as well as the eyes and ears of our special education teachers who cannot be everywhere needed at any given time.

If any of those positions were to go to part-time status, we may very well lose people who just simply can't afford to work for our district and with our children, and end up with lower quality of service and care for our children.

***Response from Dr. Miller -*** *As stated before, the District shares your concerns about having an administrator present in each of the buildings.*

*Although there is approximately $1M in savings by our schools being closed in March/April, our overall expenditures for the year (as anticipated due to contractual obligations and non-discretionary expenditures) are approximately $1M more than 2018-2019 budget.*

*The District is slated to receive approximately $200,000 in PA CARES funding.  This money is slated for the expenses associated with re-opening the schools with additional disinfectant supplies, hand sanitizers stations, and PPE supplies.*

*As previously stated, the district is not eliminating any PE classes, but utilizing current staff to teach these classes.*

*Also, there will not be any changes to the Spanish offerings next school year.*

*At this time, there are a total of 21 students wanting to take Latin, over all four levels.  There are requests of:*

*8 students wanting Latin 1*

*7 students wanting Latin 2*

*2 students wanton Latin 3*

*And Four students wanting Latin 4.*

*The board is planning to offer Latin 2-4 for those students already in the program.  The 8 students wishing to take Latin I will be asked to choose one of the other four languages offered at the high school.*

***Response from John Salopek, Solicitor -*** *The District is in negotiations with the Secretaries and Paraprofessionals.  The Paraprofessionals work 7.5 hours each day for 186 days a year. The District’s Counterproposal in the negotiations does not propose any changes to the number of hours each day or the number of days each year that the Paraprofessionals work.*

**Stacy Ritchart -** With Bill Pfiefer resigning and no coach for Girls Soccer, where does this leave Tina Cooper and the Jr High team?  Will she still coach 7/8 grade?  Will these girls be able to continue with summer trainings?  (in February-March, they were working out with Jason and Tina and the HS team).

***Response from Dr. Miller*** *- We are waiting for Beaver County to officially be “green” and for PIAA to provide guidance regarding school sports in the fall and in regards to summer training.  We are also surveying students to make sure that we have enough students to field a Varsity soccer team this fall.  Regardless, the Junior High soccer team will remain and as soon as we have more information about the summer, we will reach out to student athletes and families*

**Larry and Stacy McCune** - If the schools reopen for face to face instruction, what will happen if parents, who don't feel it's safe for their children to go back to the buildings, how will the school district handle that? Right now we don't feel it'll be safe to let our daughter to go back and would rather her stay with online learning.

***Response from Dr. Miller*** *- We appreciate that parents have concerns about next school year and we are looking to provide information and options as soon as possible so that parents can plan appropriately.  The District is awaiting further guidance from the state, but we continue to work on plans.  In the coming weeks, the District will provide stakeholders this information.*

**Deanna Hiltz** - 1. When will it be determined what the beginning of the 20-21 school year will look like in regards to in person, hybrid, or virtual instruction? Who is part of the pandemic response team? Was it a voluntary response or mandated response for those individuals? How was it determined who would be part of it? Will there be a consistent curriculum followed through grade levels with consistent delivery? Obviously we want what’s best and safest for our kids to return to school, but we also need time to make plans and arrangements if the year does not start as a typical year. As of July 1 the Department of Education has released that in person instruction can resume with several guidelines and precautions. Is that a date you are looking at to determine how and when to start the next academic year?

2. Then there is the paraprofessional contract that is being negotiated. I have spoken to individuals on both sides and the stories are conflicting. Before I wrongly question and make accusations, can you please publicly clear this up? This would include cutting hours to part time, cutting paraprofessional positions, cutting their health insurance and anything else that you can add to clear this up.

***Response from Dr. Miller*** *- Mr. Salopek already responded to the concerns regarding the paraprofessionals.*

*In regards to next year, the District has sent out a parent survey as well as educator survey.  This week, the administration will be meeting to further our plans for re-opening schools for the 20-21 school year and awaiting further guidance from the state.  As soon as we have these plans, we will share with our stakeholders so families can plan accordingly.*

**Bethany Pistoriu**s - I am quite concerned about one person as the only administrator for three elementary buildings. I have a great relationship with Mrs. Kane and think very highly of her, but am concerned that this is too much for her, or any person! How will she be supported?  Was the decision to not fill Dr. Kartychak's position made months ago when the decision to move him was made?

Big thank you to all the teachers, this has been quite an interesting year and they went out of their way to ensure they kept special relationships with their students. Especially Ms. Beitler, Mr. Sunday, Mrs. Wallace, Mrs. Yurcina, Mrs. Battisti and Mr. Toporski!!! The Pistorius' send special thanks to all of you!

While I understand the realities of the budget, and have seen the budget presentations, the elimination of enrichment programs (the language department at the junior high level and reducing it at the high school level) is extremely disappointing to me. We chose to move to an area because of the school district. We were excited about the enrichment Hopewell had to offer. In fact, the district and board were touting the junior high language program not that long ago as a plus for parents to become comfortable with their 9 year olds becoming junior high students! Does the district and board plan to eliminate more and more of the enrichment you all presented as pluses just a short time ago????

We the parents and residents of Hopewell Township would like to offer a word of support as the district proceeds with contract negotiations without teachers and staff. We stand with our elementary secretaries and paraprofessionals.  Devaluing these people will hurt the teachers and children in the long run.

***Response from Dr. Miller*** *- The formal discussion to move Dr. Kartychak to the HS assistant principal position was made during the week of May 18. The Board and administration began conversations about how to proceed with filling the administrative position in April during personnel meetings but nothing was decided until May. We appreciate your comments about supporting all buildings.  This information was shared in previous responses to other visitor’s comments.*

*Gifted programming, or enrichment programming is not directly connected to foreign language exploratory classes. Foreign language at the JH has been available to all students. A gifted program is based on the individual needs of a student, and we will continue to provide programs or experiences that address each Gifted student’s needs.*

*In regards to the secretaries and paraprofessionals, Mr. Salopek has addressed that the rumor of the District cutting these positions to part-time is false.*

**MOTION #1**

By Dr. Erickson, seconded by Ms. McKittrick, to table the following recommendation. **MOTION** carried by a unanimous vote of all Directors in attendance.

1. Eliminate the following positions, effective June 9, 2020 for the 2020-2021 School Year Term:
   1. High School Physical Education/Health teacher.
   2. Physical Education teacher at Margaret Ross and Hopewell Elementary

And realign the Physical Education Department for 2020-2021 School Year Term as follows:

* 1. 3 High School Physical Education/Health teachers;
  2. 1 High School Physical Education/Health and Elementary Physical Education/Health teacher;
  3. 3 Junior High School Physical Education/Health teachers; and
  4. 1 Physical Education/Health teacher at Margaret Ross and Independence Elementary.

**MOTION #2**

By Dr. Erickson, seconded by Mr. Winkle, to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent for the alteration of the Program of Courses and Classes of Science by the elimination of one high school science position, effective June 9, 2020, for the 2020-2021 School Term Year, to conform to standards of organization and due to a substantial decline in pupil enrollments in the High School and the Junior High School. **MOTION** carried by a roll call vote of 6 to 2, with Mrs. Zupsic and Mr. Newberry voting no.

**MOTION #3**

By Dr. Erickson, seconded by Ms. McKittrick, to approve the non-renewal of the temporary professional employee contract of Brittany Covalt, Science teacher at the High School, on the grounds of substantial decrease in pupil enrollments within the High School and the Junior High School and to conform to standards of organization, effective June 9, 2020, and to give notice of the right to a hearing. **MOTION** was voted down by a vote of 4 to 4 roll call vote, with Mrs. Zupsic, Dr. Erickson, Mr. Newberry and Mrs. Oblak voting no.

**MOTION #4**

By Dr. Erickson, seconded by Ms. McKittrick, to accept the resignation of Bill Pfiefer, Head Girls’ soccer Coach, effective May 22, 2020. **MOTION** carried by a unanimous vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #5**

By Dr. Erickson, seconded by Mr. Newberry, to approve the transfer of Dr. Kartychak to Assistant High School Principal, effective July 1, 2020. **MOTION** carried by a unanimous roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

Unfinished Business

None

MOTION by Dr. Erickson, seconded by Mr. Newberry that the meeting be adjourned. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mrs. Dobo adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

Lesia Dobo, Board President

Nancy Barber, Secretary