

September 13, 2021

The board meeting of the Berwick Area School Board was held on Monday, September 13, 2021, in the High School Auditorium. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President, Mrs. Susy Wiegand.

**PRESENT:** Mrs. Susy Wiegand, Mr. Keith Hess, Ms. Carol Bodwalk, Mr. Joseph DeMelfi, Mrs. Maryann Kovalewski, Mr. Jon Morell, Mrs. Brenda Post, Mrs. Sandra Slavick

**ABSENT:** Mr. Ronald Robsock

Also **PRESENT:** Mrs. Wendy Kupsky, Attorney Bull, Mrs. Renee Jilinski, Mrs. Janet Kovach, Mr. Steven Christian, Mr. Robert Croop, Mrs. Pamela Hegland, Mrs. Jennifer McHale, Ms. Amy Melchiorre, Mr. Gregory Michael, Mr. Randy Peters, Mr. Patrick Sharkey, Ms. Jill Shipman, Susan Swartz, Alex Eisenlohr, June Thaller Longworth, Stan Zubar, Robert Church, Kenneth Conklin, Brookyn Hess, Crystal Jeffries, William Glenn Wad, Tom Volkert, James Leonard, Lee Benjamin, Valerie Fink, Marki Traugh, tax payers

### **Moment of Silence**

### **Flag Salute**

### **Presentation:**

Pamela Hegland

- School Safety and Security – State Police have started with the risk and vulnerability assessment team to assess all of our buildings.
- United Way Grant – Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning. It will be a five night series for parents, guardians and community members. First series will start September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Transportation will be provided for families that are in need. The last of the series will be in May 2022. The second part the grant will be an after school program for Social Emotional Learning for our students in grades 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. That goes along with our after school tutoring program. Transportation will also be provided for our students.

### **Reading of the Minutes:**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Carol Bodwalk, we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the previous meetings on August 9, 2021 and August 19, 2021, as everyone had received copies prior to the meeting. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - none and no abstentions.

Wendy Kupsky – Since this is a public school setting, I respectfully request that everyone please wear masks to be able to remain in the meeting.

**Business Manager's Report:  
Financial Report**

None

**Budgetary Transfers**

None

**Presentation of the Bills:**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell, we pay the bills as listed.

ROLL CALL VOTE: "Ayes" – Joseph DeMelfi, Brenda Post, Keith Hess, Jon Morell,  
Carol Bodwalk, Sandra Slavick, Maryann  
Kovalewski, Susy Wiegand

"Nays" – None

"Abstaining" – None

Motion carried.

**Business – Renee Jilinski**

- We are in the process of closing out the financials and that is why there are no financial or budgetary transfers. The audit will be ending October 31, 2021.

**Superintendent's Report: Wendy Kupsky**

- Today we completed our 15<sup>th</sup> day of school. This year, I am focusing on communication. Last year, it was on team work. This year teachers have a better understanding of the software platforms and devices. We are going to continue to provide staff development. Our communication skills are essential. Most parents say their children are on their devices way too much time. Most of their time is on social media. I have asked teachers and administrators to work on early communication with families. Verbal communication is essential.
- Our HVAC process is continuing as scheduled. They are wrapping up the final bids and they will be able to have a final number for us this week. We will be able to bring it to our Budget and Finance Committee and go from there. I think it is essential before the board changes to have a vote on this since they are familiar with the process and history.

**Principal reports:**

- Gregory Michael – Criminal Justice CTE program is up and running. Instructor is Stacy Miller. We have students in grades 10-12 and they are partnered up with Lackawanna College for dual enrollment credits.
- Amy Melchiorre – We have a school store that is sponsored by the transition program at the high school. We started Spirit Fridays.
- Trevor Palmatier – Positive behaviors with prizes and hall passes for grades 5-8. Recognize those students on Fridays during lunch.
- Jennifer McHale – Students wore red, white and blue on Friday and placed small flags in front of the Nescopeck School for September 11<sup>th</sup>. Mobile Ag. Lab will be here next week.

- Patrick Sharkey – District-Wide update. Teacher induction program meets regularly throughout the school year.
- Jill Shipman – Ride for Hope came to the WBE parking lot with 35 bikes riding 400 miles between New York and Virginia. Fourth graders cheered them on.

### **Public Comment on Agenda Items:**

None

### **Agenda**

#### **General:**

#### **G-1 Approval to accept a grant in the amount of \$17,246.00 from the United Way to be used for Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning (SEL).**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell, we accept a grant in the amount of \$17,246.00 from the United Way to be used for Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - none and no abstentions.

#### **G-2 Approval to continue allowing the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks at Crispin Field. (ROLL CALL VOTE)**

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Jon Morell, we continue allowing the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks at Crispin Field.

Carol Bodwalk – Read a portion of the letter from Mr. Scoblink. Asking about the safety of the fireworks during the football games mainly the concession stand for the Band Boosters.

Susy Wiegand – These are two events. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the football game. We also had a letter from the Fire Chief about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks. The fire companies are always present at the event. They have given us assurance that they are present in case there are any problems. The vote is on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks.

Sandra Slavick – The vote is on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July not the fireworks.

Susy Wiegand – They are professional people doing the fireworks.

Maryann Kovalewski – Thanked Mr. Scoblink and I read his letter and I appreciate his understanding of our questioning to protect our property. I read the email from Mr. Remphrey. No one on this board wants to cancel those fireworks. We are not the ones who said that. What could we do, as a district, in working with them to make this a little bit safer?

Susy Wiegand – Do you have a suggestion Mrs. Kovalewski for safety?

Maryann Kovalewski – I appreciate the fireworks. I enjoy them. As a board, if we are not going to be more proactive to increase the safety in these, then shame on us.

ROLL CALL VOTE: “Ayes” – Brenda Post, Jon Morell, Sandra Slavick, Joseph DeMelfi, Susy Wiegand

“Nays” – Keith Hess, Carol Bodwalk, Maryann Kovalewski

“Abstaining” – None

Motion carried.

**Academic Affairs:**

**AA-1 Acknowledgement of granting tenure to the following teachers:**

**Bridget Lynn  
Sydney Broyan  
Amy Smith**

**Kathryn Minemyer  
Elizabeth Tanribilir**

**Lauren Lyons  
Mark Belles**

Acknowledgement of granting tenure to the above listed teachers was given.

**AA-2 Approval of the School-Wide Title 1 Plans. (enc.)**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell, we approve the School-Wide Title 1 Plans. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - none and no abstentions.

**Extra Curricular:**

**Approve Items EC-1 through EC-2 With One Motion**

**EC-1 Approval to recognize the Matbackers Wrestling Club as a Booster Club for the 2021-2022 school term. (enc.)**

**EC-2 Approval to recognize the Girls Basketball Club as a Booster Club for the 2021-2022 school term. (enc.)**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Maryann Kovalewski, we approve items EC-1 through EC-2 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - none and no abstentions.

**Transportation:**

**T-1 Approval of Susan Mensinger as a school van driver for Ralph Wintersteen for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school term.**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Sandra Slavick and Brenda Post, we approve Susan Mensinger as a school van driver for Ralph Wintersteen for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school term. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - none and no abstentions.

**Personnel:**

**Approve Items P-1 through P-14 With One Motion**

**P-1 Approval to accept with regret the retirement of Rose Robbins as part-time custodian, effective May 27, 2021. (enc.)**

- P-2 Approval of Williams Phillips as advisor for the Students Together Cancer Club. This is an unpaid position.**
- P-3 Approval of the resignation of Andrea Evensen as paraeducator, effective immediately. (enc.)**
- P-4 Approval to accept the resignation of Amy Quick as cook at Nescopeck, effective August 16, 2021. (enc.)**
- P-5 Approval of the resignation of Joshua Larson as a day to day substitute teacher, effective immediately. (enc.)**
- P-6 Approval to hire Lorrie Davenport as part-time paraeducator, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$12.96 per hour.**
- P-7 Approval to add the following to the day to day substitute teacher list for the 2021-2022 school year, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$15.71 per hour.**
- |                         |                        |                      |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Michael Erickson</b> | <b>Julie Klinger</b>   | <b>David Gronsky</b> |
| <b>Lauren Pavone</b>    | <b>Tanya Witkowski</b> | <b>Trudy McKay</b>   |
- P-8 Approval of Kerri Troiani as an exclusive district substitute teacher, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$20.00 per hour.**
- P-9 Approval of the enclosed list of winter coaches for the 2021-2022 school term, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. (enc.)**
- P-10 Approval of the following mentor teachers for the 2021-2022 school year. Compensation will be at a stipend of \$800.00.**
- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Stephen Swicklik for Matthew Navin</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Stacy Banyas for Elizabeth Rinehimer</b> |  |  |
- P-11 Approval to accept the resignation of Thomas Garrison as custodian, effective August 23, 2021. (enc.)**
- P-12 Approval to hire Darci McCoy as part-time paraeducator, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$12.96 per hour.**
- P-13 Approval to add the following to the day to day substitute teacher list for the 2021-2022 school year. Compensation will be at the rate of \$15.71 per hour.**
- |                      |                                 |                         |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Robert Beiter</b> | <b>Cindee Soback-Carrathers</b> | <b>Theresa Kalanick</b> |
| <b>Cindy McGann</b>  | <b>Jill Trapane</b>             |                         |

**P-14 Approval of the following as Homebound Instructors for the 2021-2022 school year. Compensation for this position will be at the instructional rate of \$27.00 per hour.**

**Mary Sponenberg  
Ashton Duke**

**Sydney Broyan  
April Patton**

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Brenda Post and Jon Morell, we approve items P-1 through P-14 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - none and no abstentions. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - none and no abstentions.

**Election of PSBA Slate of Candidates**

Susy Wiegand – I will review the candidates and look into it and report back or I can vote if you like. We can bring it to the Committee of the Whole meeting with the names of the candidates.

**Old Business:**

None

**New Business:**

None

Wendy Kupsky – Update on data for our school district. We have completed 15 days of school. The best environment is having the kids in school. The first week started August 23<sup>rd</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>, we had seven positive cases with 49 students quarantined. At that time, we were not masked. August 30<sup>th</sup> - September 5<sup>th</sup>, we had eight more positive cases with 32 more students that required to be quarantined. September 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>, we had nine positive cases with 32 students quarantined. Overall, there were 24 cases and 113 students quarantined. In the first two weeks when we were unmasked, we were able to contact trace eight positive cases between students and staff that were unmasked. They were able to bring us back to one case. Since then with the positive nine cases, none of those were unrelated to the school district. Some quarantined are related to sports. Now we are able to social distance in the classrooms with the masking mandate. If everyone is masked, all students are able to remain in the classroom. Some may have to quarantine as a result of being in the cafeteria.

Students are here, elementary and secondary students are in school 6 hours 50 minutes with half hour lunch. Elementary students get half hour recess and half hour lunch. That time is unmasked. Classroom time is a total of 5 hours and 50 minutes, which does not include mask breaks. Secondary students have a 6 hours 50 minute day. They also get a half hour lunch. Their instructional time is 6 hours 20 minutes. That does not include mask breaks. It roughly averages about 25 percent of a 24 hour period. As I have stated in the last meeting, we do have a medical exemption process for children, which can be found on our website for children that you feel need it.

Rules to Policy 903 Public Participation in Board Meeting was read.

**Public Comment:**

Robert Church – Concerns about children wearing masks in school. Read a letter from Dr. Joel Yeager.

Alex Eisenlohr – Concerns about children wearing masks in school. Forcing children to wear masks is child abuse. We want a choice.

Kenneth Conklin – Concerns about children wearing masks in school. Harmful effects of wearing a mask. An experiment. A violation of the Nuremberg Code.

Brooklyn Hess – Bus 62 bus driver.

Crystal Jeffries – Bus 62 bus driver.

Vicki Vreeland – Liberty and justice for all

June Thaller Longworth – Vaccines and school unions.

William Glenn Wad – People need more education on how masks and the vaccines work.

Scott Leonard – He used a meter from work to take a reading of the oxygen levels behind his wife's mask.

Stan Zubar – Registered nurse. Masks prevent people from spreading disease. COVID is serious.

Tom Volkert – COVID-19 is only deadly to people with pre-existing conditions; it's like saying those lives don't matter.

Lee Benjamin – He used a device for carbon dioxide levels under his son's mask.

Toni Knorr – Parents should choose if child wears a mask. Child cries. She hates school. Parents should be able to choose. Mom says she doesn't have to wear it.

Valerie Fink – We are asking for you to stand up for our rights. Read a quote from a documentary from a Hungarian Jew from the film called the Last Days.

Marki Traugh – Talked about exemption form for her child. Parents should be able to choose.

Wendy Kupsky: Masks breaks - Kids ask for them. Contact tracing is a must, six feet for 15 minutes. If both are masked more students are able to attend school.

Meeting was terminated.

On motion of Susy Wiegand, seconded by Sandra Slavick and Maryann Kovalewski we adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye." "Nay"- none and no abstentions.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Janet K. Kovach, Secretary to the Board