

October 11, 2021

The board meeting of the Berwick Area School Board was held on Monday, October 11, 2021, in the Line Street Administrative Office. 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, Mr. Ronald Robsock, Mrs. Sandra Slavick

ABSENT: None

Also **PRESENT:** Mrs. Wendy Kupsy, Attorney Bull, Mrs. Renee Jilinski, Mrs. Janet Kovach, Mr. Steven Christian, Mr. Robert Croop, Benton Culver, Mrs. Pamela Hegland, Mrs. Jennifer McHale, Ms. Amy Melchiorre, Mr. Gregory Michael, Mr. Joseph Bo Orlando, Mr. Trevor Palmatier, Mr. Randy Peters, Mr. David Robbins, Mr. Patrick Sharkey, Ms. Jill Shipman, Susan Swartz, Dennis Rumsey, tax payers, teachers

Moment of Silence

Flag Salute

Reading of the Minutes:

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Brenda Post, we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting on September 13, 2021, as everyone had received copies prior to the meeting. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - none and no abstentions.

Business Manager's Report:

Financial Report

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell we approve the financial/treasurer's report as presented. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - None and no abstentions.

Budgetary Transfers

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Carol Bodwalk, we approve the budgetary transfers on pages 25-43. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - None and no abstentions.

Presentation of the Bills:

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Brenda Post, we pay the bills as listed.

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

"Nays" – None

"Abstaining" – None

Motion carried.

Business – Renee Jilinski

- Trying to finalize the AFR with the auditors onsite and remotely.
- Several items are listed on the agenda for approval.

Superintendent’s Report: Wendy Kupsky

- Update community on pandemic EBT cards. I have been in touch with various people at the Federal Programs and Program Management. They have spreadsheets that they have merged and they were able to do some quick estimates. It looks like 15-20% of all the cards were activated. They will be sending out replacement cards for around 80% of them. After looking at the ones that came back, it definitely seems that the biggest batch of the missing cards falls in Luzerne County and Berwick is next door in Columbia County. It appears they do not know exactly why the mail has failed in some counties in Northeast PA, but they are going to remedy the situation by sending out replacement cards for any student cards that have not been activated. Another person gave me a two week timeline. I will speak to Senator Gordner and Representative Millard about this if we don’t get them.
- An email was sent out to the staff. McDonalds is doing a teacher appreciation breakfast meal. I contacted our local McDonalds. It’s for all district employee staff not just teachers. You need your school ID and you will get a breakfast meal.
- COVID cases: Today was one of the highest days. We have eleven total active district wide. Five came from the middle school. It goes on a rolling 14 day period.
- We are looking at a variety of ways with our shortage of substitute teachers.
Robert Croop – We have ten exclusive district subs filled but some of them are in for maternity leaves and more will be. We have a position open and posted. We can go up to twelve. We have not had anyone apply for that position. I do tell people who apply for the day to day position that the exclusive district position is open. So far, no one has taken me up on the offer. We have several long term positions.
Wendy Kupsky – We have seven day to day substitute teachers. From the retired amount that we have had last year, we have five. We do think, we potentially lost a few because of the change in rate. I will be requesting a sub budget committee meeting to discuss the substitute shortage. I have other ideas I would like to propose.

Principal Reports:

Jennifer McHale – (Nescopeck) We will be holding our first virtual assembly on Thursday. It is called Ned’s Mindset Mission. It stands for Never Give Up, encourage others and do your best. It allows cyber students to attend.

Patrick Sharkey – (Salem) Teachers have been trained on how to check books in and out in the library. It will work well with our elementary reading program. We currently now house all of the self-included special education classes within the district for elementary. We thought it would be helpful to add adaptive physical education classes to the regular schedule under the direction of Mrs. Tobey. We purchased adaptive equipment to meet the needs of the students.

Jill Shipman – (WBE) Celebrating Red Ribbon Week. The overall theme is “Be The One”, each day will have a different theme to promote kind and healthy choices.

Trevor Palmatier – (Middle School) Decorations in the board room are from the middle school students. PBIS program- Since the start of the program, teachers gave out 811 paw passes for “pawsitive” behavior.

David Robbins – (Middle School) The library is open and the book fair is taking place in the library. Each grade has a day that they have an opportunity to go to the library and have the option to purchase them. This week is Spirit Week. Each day the students are dressing up in a different theme. Tomorrow at 1:30 p.m., we are going to be conducting our safety plan at the middle school.

Amy Melchiorre – (High School) This week is also Spirit Week at the high school. We are having financial aid events at the high school during the month of October hosted by our guidance department.

Pamela Hegland – Community Giving Foundation has announced the creation of a new designated fund in memory of Lisa Canouse. “Lisa’s Kids Fund” was created to brighten the lives of students with special needs. Students in K-12 with special needs will be able to get funds for the needed necessities to help them thrive as individuals. Donations can be done online or with the Foundation.

Public Comment on Agenda Items:

None

Agenda

General:

Approve Items G-1 through G-3 With One Motion

G-1 Approval of the Radiological Emergency Response Plan. (Copy available for review.)

**G-2 Approval of the first reading of the following policies:
(enc.)**

Policy #006 Meetings

Policy #006.1 Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications

Policy #150 Title I Comparability of Services

Policy #800 Records Management

**G-3 Approval of the review of the following policies:
(enc.)**

Policy #103 Discrimination/Title IX Sexual Harassment Affecting Students

Policy #104 Discrimination/Title IX Sexual Harassment Affecting Staff

Policy #216 Student Records

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Maryann Kovalewski we approve Items G-1 through G-3 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Buildings and Grounds:

BG-1 Approval to move forward with Trane Technologies HVAC Renovation at the Berwick Middle School and Senior High School. (ROLL CALL VOTE)

On motion of Ronald Robsock, seconded by Maryann Kovalewski we approve to move forward with Trane Technologies HVAC Renovation at the Berwick Middle School and Senior High School.

Keith Hess – We haven't seen the contract yet. We have policies and procedures we need to follow.

Attorney Bull – I reviewed it. Mrs. Kupsky sent it to me. I don't see anything out of the ordinary in the contract. Section 1.14 talks about the tax deduction under Section 1.79b under IRS code. I don't know if that would apply.

Dennis Rumsey – It will apply for you. That is after the project is completed. We will be doing a lighting assessment. You will be receiving refund dollars back.

Attorney Bull – So, that's a benefit to the district?

Dennis Rumsey – Yes. There will be other energy benefits also.

Keith Hess – I don't feel comfortable spending \$20 million of tax payer money without seeing the contract myself.

Carol Bodwalk – We don't have the contract to review ourselves. Last Monday, we stated that we were having this meeting tonight because it needed to be finalized by the 13th and we haven't seen it.

Keith Hess – We have a policy. The agenda and supporting documents that we would need should be in our hands three days prior to our meeting. I am willing to bend. I don't feel comfortable approving something if I haven't seen it in writing.

Susy Wiegand – We have our solicitor going over the contract. We trust his judgment. We need to move forward with this project. We have had presentations.

Keith Hess – We have policies and procedures in place that we need to follow.

Attorney Bull – I have reviewed it at length. I don't see anything that is out of the ordinary. The obligations under the contract are standard. I think TRANE did a good job with the contract. I have no problems in saying its fine in my opinion from a legal standpoint. You have to decide if the project is needed and whether that is the proper dollar amount. That's not for me to decide.

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

"Nays" – Keith Hess – I never got a chance to read the contract.

"Abstaining" – None

Motion carried.

Budget and Finance:

Approve Items BF-1 through BF-3 With One Motion

BF-1 Approval to accept a donation from Wayne Martin, in the amount of \$400.00, for the Rifle Club.

BF-2 Approval to accept a donation from BAMSA, in the amount of \$7,500.00, for the Class of 2025.

BF-3 Approval of the BerkOne change order for the Homestead/Farmstead application translated into Spanish for the Spanish-speaking property owners in Luzerne County. Amount is not to exceed \$343.80. (enc.)

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Ronald Robsock we approve Items BF-1 through BF-3 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

BF-4 Approval to transfer \$15,903.00 from the budgetary reserve for the sound system upgrade to the high school auditorium. (enc.) (ROLL CALL VOTE)

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Sandra Slavick we transfer \$15,903.00 from the budgetary reserve for the sound system upgrade to the high school auditorium.

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

“Nays” – None

“Abstaining” – None

Motion carried.

BF-5 Approval of the Hiring Resolution for financial and legal advice for the HVAC project. (enc.) (ROLL CALL VOTE)

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Brenda Post we approve the Hiring Resolution for financial and legal advice for the HVAC project.

Jon Morell – Please explain what that is.

Renee Jilinski – It is allowing Financial Solutions to begin the process of sending out a RFP to then solicit the banks and other vendors for bonds and to bring back a proposal of the best financing options that we have for the \$20 million HVAC project. They need that step to move forward.

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

“Nays” – None

“Abstaining” – None

Motion carried.

Extra Curricular:

EC-1 Approval to enter into a Cooperative Athletic Agreement with Columbia-Montour Vo-Tech for Rifle. Berwick will be the host school for the co-op.

On motion of Maryann Kovalewski, seconded by Ronald Robsock we enter into a Cooperative Athletic Agreement with Columbia-Montour Vo-Tech for Rifle. Berwick will be the host school for the co-op. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Transportation:

T-1 Approval of Dawn Carr as van driver for FishingCreek Transportation for the 2021-2022 school term.

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Brenda Post we approve Dawn Carr as van driver for FishingCreek Transportation for the 2021-2022 school term. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Personnel:

Approve Items P-1 through P-12 With One Motion

P-1 Approval to accept the resignation of Nicole Willets as a part-time Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant (COTA), effective October 1, 2021. (enc.)

P-2 Approval to accept with regret the resignation for the purpose of retirement of Jane Gensel as full-time cafeteria worker, effective at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. (enc.)

P-3 Approval of Abigail Manser as long term substitute teacher from September 21, 2021 through December 23, 2021. Compensation will be at the Bachelor’s Step 1, \$42,837.00 prorated.

P-4 Approval to accept the resignation of Kim Groshek as receptionist at the middle school, effective September 29, 2021. (enc.)

P-5 Approval of the denial of employee #843 to take Family Medical Leave (FMLA) due to eligibility requirements. (enc.)

P-6 Approval to hire Jeanne Bozich as a part-time school counselor, for the 2021-2022 school year. Her effective date will be retroactive to the first day of school. Compensation will be at the rate of \$27.00 per hour, not to exceed \$35,607.00.

P-7 Approval of Tiffanie Joline as a crossing guard, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$12.00 per hour.

- P-8 Approval to accept the resignation of Darci McCoy as part-time paraeducator, effective immediately. (enc.)**
- P-9 Approval to hire Carolina Lopez as a part-time paraeducator, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$13.36 per hour.**
- P-10 Approval for employee #2431 to take Family Medical Leave (FMLA) from January 3, 2022 through March 25, 2022. (enc.)**
- P-11 Approval to accept with regret the retirement of Janet Kovach as Secretary to the Superintendent and School Board Secretary, effective May 19, 2022. (enc.)**
- P-12 Approval to hire Morgan Wheeler as a part-time Occupational Therapist, pending receipt of appropriate paperwork. Compensation will be at the rate of \$28.50 per hour.**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell we approve Items P-1 through P-12 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Election of PSBA Slate of Candidates- Susy Wiegand

Board members will fill out the enclosed paperwork and will give them to Mrs. Wiegand.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Maryann Kovalewski – Could we explore a Grant to expand our ESL opportunities for grades 4-8? Our students would be more likely to be exploring college opportunities including STEM opportunities as they get into the high school.

Wendy Kupsy – Yes. Mr. Robsock and I already spoke to Mrs. Morrison. Mr. Peters is researching the grants.

Maryann Kovalewski – Use of Facility forms. Moving forward, we need to make sure we have all the appropriate paperwork before the event takes place.

Wendy Kupsy – I am currently working on the flow process within the district. We have been having team meetings. We are also addressing the district and building websites.

Susy Wiegand – Rapid COVID testing in our schools. Some schools have taken it. The vast majority of the schools are hesitant of doing it. We are in the business of education not the business of health. I think we have enough health systems in the area that testing can be done at. I think the responsible should lay on the family. We can do the contract tracing. I don’t feel that that should be our job. Our job is education. We are concerned about the health. That is why we have health centers and doctors’ offices.

Wendy Kupsy – One of our requirements for our Health and Safety Plan is that we have to address testing. Mrs. Hegland has been meeting with the nurses. There are two different ways they are proposing. One is a pool testing were they test everyone, a different group every day. Then you have to contract trace from that data. We said no to that. What we did say we would entertain and we didn’t fully commit is part of your health and safety plan, you have to address

testing and vaccines. We thought we would do symptomatic testing. In the interim, the Berwick Hospital and Dr. Alley's office agreed to take on our learning community, just the Berwick Area School District. Anyone can go there who is a Berwick Area School District employee and say I have been exposed. They won't test you unless you are symptomatic. It is working well for us. I was worried at first because we didn't have anything formal. You can get the results within the same day. I want to make sure that meets the criteria for the Health and Safety Plan and they are ok with that moving forward, or do we have to have a backup plan?

Susy Wiegand – I think we have enough facilities in our area.

Wendy Kupsky – They accepted our plan.

Public Comment:

Parent – If your plan changes, will we as parents be notified if it changes?

Wendy Kupsky – Yes. We would have to have you sign a release form.

Summarization of Executive Session: Susy Wiegand

None

Next Meetings:

Committee of the Whole – Monday, November 1, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Board Meeting – Monday, November 8, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Susy Wiegand – I would like to ask the Board to stay for a small executive session.

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Ronald Robsock we adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye." "Nay"- none and no abstentions.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Janet K. Kovach, Secretary to the Board