

April 13, 2020

The school board meeting of the Berwick Area School Board was held on Monday, April 13, 2020, via virtual zoom meeting. 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:** Mr. Wayne Brookhart, Ms. Renee Gomez, Attorney Bull, Mr. Robert Croop, Mr. Benton Culver, Mrs. Janet Kovach, Mrs. Wendy Kupsky, Ms. Amy Melchiorre, Ms. Susan Swartz, Christine Hetkowski

Moment of Silence

Flag Salute

Reading of the Minutes:

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Maryann Kovalewski, we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting on March 9, 2020 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; Treasurer's Report:

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

Budgetary Transfers: Approval

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Brenda Post and Jon Morell, we approve the budgetary transfers as presented, pages 23-25. Motion carried. All members voting "Aye". "Nay" - None and no abstentions.

Presentation of the Bills:

On motion of Ronald Robsock, seconded by Keith Hess, we pay the bills as listed.

ROLL CALL VOTE: "Ayes" – Brenda Post, Keith Hess, Jon Morell, Carol Bodwalk, Sandra Slavick, Maryann Kovalewski, Joseph DeMelfi, Ronald Robsock, Susy Wiegand
"Nays" – None
"Abstaining" – None

Motion carried.

Business: Renee Gomez

There is a lot of uncertainty this year and next. We do not feel that this present year's budget will be impacted with State and Federal reductions. From a local level we may experience revenue reductions in regards to EIT, Interim Real Estate, Delinquent Taxes and Realty Transfer Taxes. For the 2020-21 school year, there is even more uncertainty for Local, State and Federal levels of funding all of which will need to be reviewed as information is provided.

Jon Morell – Any word on the healthcare and premiums?

Renee Gomez – They have not sent them yet. There is a meeting April 24th.

Superintendent's Report: Wayne Brookhart

We have worked from three (3) basic premises from the day the Governor closed schools on March 13th.

1. All students dependent upon the school district for meals would continue to receive them. We've currently distributed more than 20,000 meals to our students over four weeks. Thanks to Nutrition Inc., food service employees, police, administrators and the Board.
2. All students on track to graduate, move forward in grade level or onto another class at the end of the third marking period will automatically still do so. Students not on track will still be given the opportunity to proceed through our Continuity of Education plan, enrichment efforts and through traditional or non-traditional summer opportunities offered on a year-to-year basis. This was a position we took immediately after the closure, which has since been reinforced by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Questions about this should be directed to the building principals or teachers themselves. No one will suffer a loss of grade promotion or graduation because of the state-mandated shutdown.
3. We will take all reasonable precautions necessary in prioritizing safety and health for all. We are following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control.

With the mandate of closure came an expectation that we continue to educate nearly 3,000 students and provide meals for all students who request them, while being respectful of the safety initiatives so important at this time.

Our administrative staff, instructional staff and support staff, in conjunction with our Board have embraced the challenge and done a fabulous job meeting our mandates and then some. The community and students have been understanding, patient and cooperative throughout the nearly month-long shutdown. We are all out of our comfort zone, but have functioned as well as possible under the circumstances. Thanks to Mrs. Wendy Kupsy for her long hours and coordination.

1. Schools have been closed until the end of the academic year by order of the Governor. The close of our academic year would be June 5.
2. We have not cancelled anything at this point. The decision to close schools was made by the Governor. Graduation ceremonies and the Prom have not been cancelled. They are still under consideration.

3. The closure of schools does mean that there will be no spring sports and no culmination of winter sports. The PIAA had suspended the remainder of swimming and basketball tournament competition on March 13th. Both have now been cancelled.
4. A graduation ceremony would tentatively be held on June 12th. If a graduation ceremony is held, we would hope to hold it at Crispin Field. The Stadium seats about 7,000 and has held nearly 10,000 utilizing standing room. With a limited attendance procedure and creative seating and diploma distribution for seniors, we feel we could comply with current social distancing expectations at Crispin. We're working with a local cable company with the hope that we can televise the event live for those unable to attend. We know this may not be possible. We know there are other options. We'll have backup plans in the event this isn't possible.
 Amy Melchiorre – Goals are graduation and prom. They are a priority. We will make it as great as we possibly can. Crispin Field would be perfect. Maybe even a parade.
 Wayne Brookhart – I am giving Ms. Melchiorre the autonomy to move forward.
5. Marina Davenport, our Instructional Technology Specialist is conducting multiple training sessions on enhanced instructional techniques in an online platform.
 Robert Croop – Thanks to Mrs. Davenport for scheduling training for teachers with Google Classroom. It has been a great tool for us. A great asset to move forward with our plan. We are using a hybrid approach. Students have been studying online and from packets that are sent home. The courses have included a mix of new material, review and supplemental education. All of our teachers are actively teaching.
6. We've been utilizing our 3D Printers to develop materials for healthcare facilities since receiving information for this service from our IU through Geisinger.
 Steve Christian – Our guys have made a couple of face shields.
7. Our Continuity of Education Plan has been submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
 Robert Croop – The State accepted the State enrichment hybrid plan review and material. It meet the needs of our students. Not all of them have computer access. We are handing out hard copies if there is no access.
8. We've applied for a \$10,000+ equity grant through the state, which would be utilized to enhance technological capabilities.
 Robert Croop – The Grant was submitted last Thursday. The Grant is statewide. The base amount is \$10,000. We could possibly get \$50 more per student.
 Benton Culver – We have disinfected all buildings and are continuing to. Everyday maintenance workers also clean bathrooms and cafeterias. They are cleaning high-touch areas.
9. We anticipate significant budgetary challenges ahead, as will be the case in all districts.
 Renee Gomez – We should meet soon with the budget committee. Next year is going to be a serious challenge.

Public Comment on Agenda Items: None

Transportation:

T-1 Approval of the renegotiated Transportation contracts in accordance with State and Federal Guidelines. (enc.)

On motion of Ronald Robsock, seconded by Keith Hess, we approve the renegotiated Transportation contracts in accordance with State and Federal Guidelines. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Personnel:

Approve Items P-1 through P-2 With One Motion

P-1 Approval to accept the resignation of Keith Seely as Odyssey of the Mind Coordinator. (enc.)

P-2 Approval to accept the resignation of John Obringer as Music Teacher effective June 11, 2020. (enc.)

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell, we approve P-1 through P-2 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Academic Affairs:

A-1 Approval to establish the end of the academic year as June 5, 2020.

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Brenda Post, we establish the end of the academic year as June 5, 2020. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

Reports:

Committee Reports:

Vo-Tech – Keith Hess

Benton issue rejected by 6 of the 7 districts. Ongoing negotiations.

Joseph DeMelfi – What about the students in the hands-on classes?

Keith Hess – They are doing enrichment. They are unable to do hands-on.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Ronald Robsock for Mr. Brookhart

Are we going to hire 10 teachers?

Wayne Brookhart – We put the ad out as anticipated. We now have 11. I would say proceed slowly and cautiously.

Maryann Kovalewski – We have made significant cuts already. The Class of 2020 has lost a good chunk of their senior year. How about 20 minutes every Friday in May. Graduation, if not at Crispin Field, how about the parking lots outside of Crispin Field?

Amy Melchiorre – We have a date set up with the class officers.

Maryann Kovalewski- If they have suggestions, we should listen to them.

Susy Wiegand – Has anyone talked to Atlantic Broadband?

Steven Christian – I spoke to them. There is fine print. It also depends on where their wires run. \$10 per month for internet service. I can't make the families connect the internet to their house. They do have Hot Spots the students can connect to.

Wendy Kupsky – We have connectivity in our parking lots. We are trying to get equipment to the kids. We are looking into and working with Mrs. Davenport about downloading the work on the computers for the students who don't have internet access. Parent and students should be checking with the buildings and looking at the district website. We are sending home hard copy letters.

Public Comment:

Maryann Kovalewski - Parade for graduates.

Amy Melchiorre – Yes.

Wayne Brookhart – Call if you don't get the information. Call Mr. Brookhart.

Susan Schwartz – Are the computers and hot spots for this year?

Wendy Kupsky – Yes.

Steven Christian – MiFi maybe April or beginning of May.

Christine Hetkowski – Are the parents and students responsible for educating?

Wayne Brookhart – Parents and other siblings can help. Use what you can. Things are going to change.

Susan Swartz – What was negotiated from the transportation contracts?

Renee Gomez – To renegotiate transportation contracts with bus companies that furloughed drivers. However, those who kept all drivers on the payroll will keep their current contract. The idea is to keep drivers employed. Recent legislation is allowing the district to renegotiate the contracts, if they continue to keep the employees and continue to pay them. If they furlough, then we can look at it.

Susan Swartz – Are you keeping the drivers on payroll?

Renee Gomez – They are not our employees. Each company is responsible of their drivers. Each company will be looked at individually.

Wayne Brookhart – Students are not as far behind as parents might fear. We completed 75% of our school year. I don't think we are behind compared to every other year. We are usually now preparing for Keystone Testing. In order to get students ready for state testing, most of the educational heavy lifting takes place earlier in the year. The district has had fewer weather related delays than usual.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Janet K. Kovach, Secretary to the Board