

January 11, 2021

The work session/board meeting of the Berwick Area School Board was held on Monday, January 11, 2021, via virtual zoom meeting. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 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 Kupsky, Mrs. Renee Jilinski, Mrs. Janet Kovach, Mr. Steven Christian, Mr. Robert Croop, Mr. Benton Culver, Mrs. Wendy Daily, Mrs. Pamela Hegland, Mrs. Jennifer McHale, Ms. Amy Melchiorre, Mr. Gregory Michael, Mr. Trevor Palmatier, Mr. Randy Peters, Mr. David Robbins, Mr. Patrick Sharkey, Ms. Jill Shipman, tax payers, teachers

**Moment of Silence**

**Flag Salute**

**Presentations:**

- **Melissa Driscole** – Amy Melchiorre  
Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) held an awards ceremony on December 17, 2020. Mrs. Driscole received a citation of excellence from the State. She is one of only twelve educators to receive the award in the entire state of PA. PMEA received a statement from Ronald Wasser. The statement that was submitted was read aloud.  
Wendy Kupsky - She has commitment and dedication for our students.  
Maryann Kovalewski – Thank you Mrs. Driscole.

- **Bike Donation** – Patrick Sharkey

We received a large amount of funds from an anonymous donor. This donor wanted to provide some type of holiday gift to students, particularly this year, due to the pandemic and the difficulties that some parents were going through. We worked with the counselors to help members For the Cause to find families who would be in need. For the Cause was in contact with Dunham's Sport to have a large amount of bikes assembled, along with delivery. We also got bicycle helmets. Over 110 bikes were donated to all three of our elementary schools. I would like to thank the anonymous donor, For the Cause and the Teen Center for hosting the distribution event for the families. We are told that this will be a yearly initiative in hopes it will grow.

**Mrs. Kupsky – Recognition Berwick Area School Board Members.**

**Reading of the Minutes:**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Jon Morell, we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the previous meetings on December 7, 2020 as everyone had received copies prior to the meeting. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - none and no abstentions.

**Financial Report:**

On motion of Jon Morell, seconded by Joseph DeMelfi, 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 Jon Morell, we approve the budgetary transfers on pages 20-24. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

**Presentation of the Bills:**

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

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

Motion carried.

**Business: Renee Jilinski**

- Harrisburg has finally begun to review our Plan Con Part J documents which were submitted in May of 2018. Additional information that was needed was supplied last week. Hopefully, it will not be too long before we can begin to submit our PDE 2071s which is the request for reimbursement for the West Berwick Elementary project. We estimate it will be over \$2M to be received for this project as reimbursement.
- The District will be changing its present Third Party Administrator for 403b’s & 457’s from DeHey McAndrew to TSA Consulting Group. TSACG has extensive experience with public school employers. As the Districts TPA, they will provide compliance documents in accordance with IRS regulations. Their online platform will aid our present and retired employees when requesting funds from their accounts. The District has not replaced its present tax sheltered annuity vendors/advisors (Kades-Margolis, 1847 Financial (Invesco), Lincoln Investment & AIG (formerly Valic). TSACG works between the District and the vendor. We anticipate this change to be fully completed no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Pupil Transportation – The State has released additional information regarding the definition of the variable costs and necessary forms to be completed for our Transportation Subsidy to remain the same. This information will be reviewed and most likely a discussion point for the next meeting.
- USPS Mail is significantly behind. After any Board meeting, we send the approved checks in the mail the following morning. The last meeting was 12/7 and our checks were sent on 12/8. Unfortunately, these 120 checks have not been delivered to our

vendors. I spoke with the Post Office upon our return from the holiday. I opened a claim and I was advised they were most likely sitting in Lehigh Valley waiting to be distributed. At the present time, it is in our best interest not to issue a stop payment on 120 checks. As vendors contact us, we will then contact our bank and issue the stop payment at that time and reissue the check. This way we can assure ourselves that we have spoken with an individual and they would know not to cash the check. We are hopeful that the mail system will get caught up and our vendors checks be delivered here shortly.

- The District has implemented an online Use of Facilities request by partnering with FMX. We have eliminated the paper version. Organizations and clubs now may request the Use of our Facilities online by visiting our website [berwicksd.org](http://berwicksd.org). On the homepage, you will find a Community Events Calendar and a hyperlink to Schedule an Event. When you click the link, requesters will be taken to a landing page in which requesters would register for an account by selecting “Need an Account” (Current users – District employees) may use their FMX logon credentials. To register for an account is easy, you will just enter your name, email address and create a password. Once you have been registered, you will be able to complete a new schedule request. The same information is requested that we requested in the paper format. Our Use of Facilities are governed under Board Policy 707 and all requesters should review the policy when requesting use of one of our facilities. The Community Events, once scheduled, will be reflected in the calendar. On the District home page you will find all events, however, those specific to a building can be found solely on their page. Lastly, you will also find Athletics reflecting in the calendar as the calendar is integrated with Schedule Star.
- The Booster Audits have been completed. They were included in your Board packet. They were distributed to each club audited and are available on the District’s website in the Business Office section. The auditor recommends we add to our policy that two officers’ signatures are included on each receipt for all purchases with the club’s debit card, no matter if it is online or in the store. The use of a debit card is an expenditure and the funds are being expended right away, therefore, it would be a good practice to have both signatures for approval of the expense. If the Board agrees, then we can have that ready for the February meeting.

Jon Morell – We had some significant findings on some of those clubs. What are we doing with those clubs?

Renee Jilinski – I have reached out to the booster clubs about the double signatures. They must make this change immediately.

Jon Morell – I think we need documentation when it comes to deposits, especially if it is not tied to a fund raiser.

Renee Jilinski – All clubs have been audited one time since this went into effect except the Berwick Football Club which just started last year.

Keith Hess – Once we get through all the clubs to correct the deficiencies, do we still need to do these audits every year? That’s \$2500 a year. Do we need to do it every year or can we stretch this out?

Renee Jilinski – I can reach out and give them best practices. There is no manual. It’s a business with volunteers. I’m willing to assist the groups to be more compliant.

Keith Hess – I think we may need to revisit Policy 707 to make things cost neutral.

- Lastly, after several attempts October through January with Columbia County Courthouse, the District is expecting to receive the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter delinquent taxes receivable this week, which is a little over \$246,000. We are unsure of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter at this time. We are unsure of how much will be received.

Keith Hess – It's troubling that the County is holding the money this long.

Renee Jilinski – They were receiving no funding from a large amount of their funding sources. I was told that they were barely making payroll. With Luzerne County, we are supplied every month our delinquent tax money. Columbia County is quarterly. We should have received it in October. It is disturbing that our funding was utilized somewhere else.

Keith Hess – It is disturbing that they are balancing their budget on our people's money.

Keith Hess – Thanks for all of your hard work and for getting the forms online. As a board, with our budget as tight as it is, I think we need to revisit Policy 707 to make things cost neutral. If we have to staff it and clean up after it, we shouldn't have our tax payer's pay for it.

Maryann Kovalewski – We would have to modify the policy.

Keith Hess – That is my suggestion.

Wendy Kupsky – I would ask for more clarity of what exactly you mean by certain organizations. We can discuss this as part of the policy committee. There are certain organizations that we charge.

Keith Hess – We need to make it cost neutral.

Maryann Kovalewski – Could you draft a recommended revision that we could take a look at and then the policy committee can take it from there?

Wendy Kupsky – Renee, based on when he draft's, look at those types of organizations that he determines. What expenses have we been incurring as a result?

Keith Hess – It's only fair and it's only proper.

Susy Wiegand – Go ahead and line it up. We are going to have a Committee of the Whole meeting in February.

Renee Jilinski – We do not have any of our facilities open for outside groups because of the pandemic.

Keith Hess – This is for after the pandemic.

### **Superintendent's Report: Wendy Kupsky**

Today, we welcomed our students back into the buildings. We did a virtual week last week based on the numbers that we have been tracking. It was a good decision. We missed the kids in the buildings.

Governor Wolf's administration announced updates to help schools navigate on COVID 19 for the second semester. Offering in person instruction during COVID 19 continues to emerge. Dr. Levine said while it is impossible to eliminate the risk of the disease transmission entirely within the school setting where community spread is present, recent studies have shown when mitigation efforts such as universal masks wearing, physical distancing and good hygiene are followed, it may be safer for younger children, particular elementary students, to return to in person instruction. It's important to note that a safe return to in person instruction will look different across every school district and county depending on a variety of factors, one of which is the spread of COVID 19. School entities' decisions on instructional models require a great

deal of consideration of local factors including size of the school entity, classroom size, school resources, proportion of staff-to-students, special education needs and underlying health conditions and the ability to accommodate remote learning with equal access to all students.

We came back with our elementary instructional model. Our elementary students are in every day. We are maintaining the secondary model to continue to be hybrid. Our County still falls in the substantial rate of positivity. They are keeping it as a local decision. I continue to ask, if any parent or child is sick, to please stay home. If they have been exposed to somebody who is positive, keep them home. If you have any questions that you are not sure of, call us. Our nurses and administration are very knowledgeable.

On our district website, there is a link under the COVID Tracker. It is a spreadsheet. We will be filling it out daily, if there are any cases. There will be no names mentioned. Instead of doing robo calls to everyone, I will notify the staff in each building via an email and anyone in the district who has been in close contact (six feet for 15 minutes) will be notified. All of the cases from the data, have come from outside of the school.

Vaccines for educators. Per DOH, the vaccine is not mandated. Pennsylvania DOH has announced that educators will be in Phase 1B of the vaccine distribution process, however the schedule and details have not been announced yet. The details have been announced for school nurses and they have been notified. They have been provided the information if they choose to get the vaccine.

**Public Comment on Agenda Items:** None

## **Agenda**

### **General:**

**G-1 January is School Director Recognition Month. In Pennsylvania the cornerstone of local school governance is the 4,500 school directors who serve the commonwealth's 500 public schools. These unpaid local volunteers work many hours each week on school business so that students in Pennsylvania receive a quality education.**

**We thank the Berwick Area School Board Members for their time and dedication to our school district.**

**G-2 Acknowledgment of the final Booster Club Audit Reports for the 2019-2020 school year. (enc.)**

### **Approve Items G-3 through G-5 With One Motion**

**G-3 Approval of the resolution indicating that the Berwick Area School District will not raise the rate of any tax for the support of its public schools for the 2020-2021 fiscal year by more than the index established by the Department of Education for the district of 4.1%. (enc.)**

**G-4 Approval to adopt the Principles for Governance and Leadership resolution. (enc.)**

**G-5 Approval for the tax collector compensation rate to remain at \$3.50 per tax bill.**

On motion of Sandra Slavick, seconded by Keith Hess, we approve Items G-3 through G-5 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

**Academic Affairs:**

**AA-1 Approval of the Chapter 339 K-12 Guidance Plan. (enc.)**

On motion of Maryann Kovalewski, seconded by Brenda Post, we approve the Chapter 339 K-12 Guidance Plan. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

**Transportation:**

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

**T-1 Approval of the following as a van or school bus driver for Gallagher Student Transportation for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school term.**

**Heidi Hunter – van and school bus  
Douglas Freyberger – van and school bus  
Faith Templeton – van driver**

**T-2 Approval of Kevin Davis as a school bus driver for Fishing Creek Transportation for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school term.**

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

**Personnel:**

**Approve Items P-1 through P-6 With One Motion**

**P-1 Approval for employee #2870 to take Emergency Paid Sick Leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act from December 7, 2020 through December 17, 2020. (enc.)**

**P-2 Approval for employee #2643 to take Emergency Paid Sick Leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act from December 15, 2020 through December 23, 2020. (enc.)**

**P-3 Approval of the status change of HeeJung Kang from part-time paraeducator to substitute paraeducator, effective December 23, 2020. Compensation will be at the rate of \$8.72 per hour.**

- P-4 Approval of the resignation of Clinton Staniorski as maintenance worker, effective December 28, 2020. (enc.)**
- P-5 Approval of the status change of Shannon Witchey from day to day substitute teacher to exclusive district substitute teacher, effective January 12, 2021. Compensation will be at the rate of \$20.00 per hour.**
- P-6 Approval of Pamela Hegland to serve as the Section 504 Coordinator for the district.**

On motion of Keith Hess, seconded by Ronald Robsock, we approve Items P-1 through P-6 With One Motion. Motion carried. All members voting “Aye”. “Nay” - None and no abstentions.

### **Reports:**

#### **Committee Reports:**

Susy Wiegand – We will meet as a Committee as a Whole in February.

**CSIU** – Susy Wiegand

They had a virtual LPN graduation. There were also management things.

**Vo-Tech** – Keith Hess

We had the re-organization meeting. Vo-Tech is doing 100% virtually until this past Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup>. We do seem to have enough support for around a \$16.8-\$17 million project. If that number is going to stick, our share will be a little over \$3.5 million. We will get a hold of the architect to see what needs to be done and what can be done with that amount of money. This will only cover updating the building, no expansion programs or the footprint of the building. We got a clarification from the State, the million dollars we got can only be used for equipment or educational supplies. We can't use it for the project.

Carol Bodwalk – Concern on the two expenses for girls softball and baseball and why we are still using two facilities.

Benton Culver – The maintenance that we will be doing is grading the infield. This is annual seasonal maintenance that will be done. It measures the pressure when someone hits the ground on the turf fields and we always do the mound. We do this at the beginning of every year.

Carol Bodwalk – My question is why are we still using two fields when I thought everything was going to be moved to the North Berwick Field? Why are we having that extra expense and why isn't the one main field being used?

Benton Culver – It was just a situation that the project last year just didn't follow through but we still need to maintain and update the softball field.

Carol Bodwalk – Why do we still have a softball field and a baseball field? Why are they not using just one field?

Joseph DeMelfi – Is that a coaching preference?

Jon Morell – It was a Board decision that we buy the mounds and mobile fence so they can play all the games on the turf field.

Wendy Kupsky – We still have to maintain both fields. You still have to practice at both places.

Benton Culver – Not all the games will be played on the turf. Some will be played on the softball field. The biggest benefit to the baseball field being part of softball was for inclement weather. Sometimes we can't maintain the softball field towards the end of March because of the snow and things like that. Not all the games were going to be played on the baseball field.

Jon Morell – That's not the way I remember. The expenditure of the mound and the fence was that all the games were going to be played at that field. There were practices that were going to be played at the softball field.

Joseph DeMelfi – So, what we are saying is we will still maintain two fields?

Jon Morell – Yes, but less on the softball field because it wouldn't be played on as much.

Joseph DeMelfi – What are you going to save by not doing anything down there? You are going to practice there. You still have to maintain it.

Jon Morell – The cost should be far less.

Keith Hess – At that time, the softball field was not Title IX compliance. We didn't have a bathroom.

Jon Morell – And handicap parking there.

Keith Hess – That is why we moved games out to North Berwick.

Susy Wiegand – So the schedule for this coming season girls' softball will be played at Berwick North? Is that what we are doing?

Benton Culver – The only issue with that is we still have work to do there. The mound would have to come out and the portable mound would have to go in there. The work was not completed there to do that.

Susy Wiegand – So there is work in progress then?

Benton Culver – Yes.

Maryann Kovalewski – What I remember of that conversation is there were still a lot of logistics that needed to be worked out. I don't know if we are going to have all those logistics completed for this season.

Keith Hess – We should still work on it for next season.

Jon Morell – A lot of the reason why the logistics weren't done is because there were some coaches that were against it and weren't going to work on allowing the logistics to be taken care of. They were against the idea. It needs to be relooked at by the committee before we spend any more money.

Joseph DeMelfi – I think the athletic committee along with the Board needs to take another look at it to see where we are heading with that.

Keith Hess – I think it was like \$75,000 for the mound and the fence.

Wendy Kupsy – We would be happy to put it on the agenda. Mr. Orlando is not here. There is a game tonight.

### **Old Business:**

Keith Hess – Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative – a letter of support. It's due by Thursday if we are going to do it. Email was sent to the board members. It throws our support as a Board. It benefits clean air. Nuclear is clean energy. It helps keep our nuclear plant up there and it benefits our community and our tax base tremendously. We can't afford that place to shut down. We would never fill the whole in our budget if that was done. I will post it on the DEP's website. I can say it was approved by all nine board members, then it is open to the public. Anything we can do to support the community and support the tax base to keep us a float.

Susy Wiegand – Do we need to do a motion?

Susy Wiegand – So, we are just acknowledging it as a Board, correct?

The Board verbalized agreement as an acknowledgment.

Ronald Robsock – Asking about the special needs students. How many days are they coming into school and what kind of education they are receiving?

Wendy Kupsky – They are coming to Berwick so they are receiving a quality education. Special education students do have the right to come in every day because they have a Federal documentation that supersedes the State. In order to meet their IEP needs and to meet their goals, some not all, are coming in. Some we can meet their needs virtually; some we cannot. Some are medically fragile and cannot. We are providing an education based on what the parents agree to as to what they feel is necessary for their child.

Ronald Robsock – Do most parents agree to the way they are being educated?

Wendy Kupsky – They have to. We can't do it without the parent's agreement.

Ronald Robsock – I just want to make sure they are getting their education.

### **New Business:**

Keith Hess – Bus shelters. We are responsible for their upkeep and maintenance. Some of them have billboards on them. Who is getting the rental/advertisement proceeds?

Renee Jilinski – I spoke to Mrs. Lanning when Mr. Hess asked me about that. I guess we are responsible. Mr. Hess said years ago Vo-Tech use to build them. In regards to advertisements being placed on the bus shelters, I don't know who gave the approval to do so. We are not receiving any advertisement money for that.

Maryann Kovalewski – I recommend we make a list of the people advertising on the remaining shelters and send a letter to them asking them who they are sending the advertising revenue to? It should now be coming to us. We should start charging them.

Keith Hess – As tight as our budget is, any source of revenue or any cut in expenses would definitely need to be looked at or let the ad agency take over the maintenance of the bus shelter.

Wendy Kupsky – Mr. Hess, would you send me the names of who are on the sides of the bus shelters. We will look into them. We will reach out to those companies and find out what is happening.

**Public Comment:** None.

### **Summarization of Executive Session:** Susy Wiegand

Two personnel items. One was Union.

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 7:59 p.m.

Janet K. Kovach, Secretary to the Board