

**POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
May 19, 2016 - 7:00 P.M.**

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Pottstown School District was held on Thursday, March 19, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Cafeteria of the Pottstown High School with President Mrs. Kimberly Stilwell presiding. Upon roll call, the following members were present: Mrs. Amy Bathurst Francis, Mr. Kurt Heidel, Mr. Thomas Hylton Mrs. Polly Weand, Mr. Emanuel Wilkerson and Mr. Ron Williams. Absent were: Ms. Katina Bearden and Mr. Andrew Kefer. Also present were Superintendent, Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana; Board Secretary, Mrs. Linda S. Adams; Director of Human Resources, Mr. Stephen Rodriguez; Solicitor, Mr. Stephen Kalis; Student Board Representative, Mr. Jaylen Chestnut, Ms. Pamela Bateson, Mr. Joseph Schroder, Mrs. Dulcie Rothermel, Mr. Leroy Merkel, Mr. Kevin Downes, Mr. Michael DiDonato, Mr. John Armato, a member of the press, and interested citizens and representatives of the Federation of Pottstown Teachers.

AWARDS

State Representatives Thomas Quigley and Tim Hennessey presented a State House Citation to Dr. Sparagana in recognition for his 43 years of service in education and his accomplishments in Pottstown.

PRESENTATIONS

Trojan Heroes: Mr. Bachman introduced Trojan Heroes by name and recognized each of them for their participation in co-curricular activities and academic achievements.

Special Education/Pupil Services Update: Ms. Bateson gave a Power Point presentation on the key concepts of special education (regulations, mandates and compliance) including evaluations and eligibility, staffing and resources. All members received a packet consisting of performance data reports, LRE (Least Restricted Environment) placement, current caseloads by building, state and federal regulations, evaluation data and instructional costs. The current number of special education students is 637 or 20.9% of student enrollment. The number of students placed outside of the district is 93 or 14.6%. She explained how this number has risen significantly and continues to climb as a result of the change in the needs of learning support and emotional support students. In addition, teachers are being pulled to cover other building duties. Ms. Bateson asked the Board to consider the needs (more space and increased staff) to meet the challenges to provide more in-district placement and meet the educational needs of all students.

Food Service Update: Mr. Merkel provided the Board with an update on the Community Eligibility program. The most impressive data about the program shows that more eligible students are now receiving breakfast and lunch. It is clear that this program is a great benefit to the community. Mr. Merkel reported that he had submitted a proposal to the state with different options to introduce other items at the elementary level. The state disagreed with his proposal. He continues to try different things to encourage consumption and less waste.

MINUTES

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the combined Committee of the Whole meeting and Regular Board meeting held on April 25, 2016 to be placed on the May 23, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

LIST OF BILLS

Mrs. Adams presented the list of bills from the various funds for the period of April 2016 to be placed on the May 23, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mrs. Adams presented the Treasurer's Report for April 2016 to be placed on the May 23, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

POLICY COMMITTEE

No report.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Mr. Williams gave a report of items discussed at the May 5 Co-Curricular Activities Committee meeting. Mr. Anspach spoke to the committee about the Trojan Heroes group. The mission of the Trojan Heroes is to promote participation in co-curricular activities by visiting the elementary schools. The members share their experiences with the elementary students. The committee recommended Policy 122.1: Co-Curricular Awards to the Policy Committee with updates to coincide with the new Pioneer Athletic Conference division changes. The committee reviewed information regarding a Junior Fire Fighter Program presented by Mr. Weand and Mr. Feather. The committee requested a more detailed outline of the program in order for the district administrators to determine what insurance requirements would be needed along with other applicable expenses. The committee discussed the deteriorating conditions of the Franklin Street fields. It was determined that this item be moved to the Facilities Committee for discussion.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr. Wilkerson gave a summary report from the Community Relations Committee meeting held on May 5th. The committee approved a community outreach letter that will be sent out to various organizations and businesses along with a district calendar of events. A list of organizations and contact information is still being worked on. The Annual Awards Program is anticipated to be in place for next school year. The committee is awaiting consent from the graduates before proceeding with the Scholarship Acknowledgements. Mr. Wilkerson had inquired about posting in advance next year's graduation date of the school calendar. More discussion will take place at the next committee meeting.

STUDENT BOARD REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

No report.

CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Mrs. Weand gave a report on the items discussed at the Curriculum and Technology Committee meeting held on May 5th. Highlights from the technology department included staff development on Google Chromebooks and an investigation into Lite Video Conferencing software that enables teachers the flexibility to participate in meetings without having to travel. The committee reviewed and discussed proposed hours of operation options for 2016-2017 including start and dismissal changes for grades 5 through 8. All present were in agreement to send a survey to parents prior to recommending any changes to the district's operating hours.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Mr. Heidel gave a report of the items discussed at the Facilities Committee held on May 12th. The committee reviewed two remaining change orders for the elementary projects. The change orders

can be found on tonight's agenda under Consent for Board approval on May 23rd. Quotes were received to repair the Edgewood parking lot with an overlay. The lowest quote was \$16,590 from Maloney Paving. This is significantly cheaper than replacing the asphalt. The committee is recommending this item to be placed on the May 23rd Board agenda for approval. Other items presented and discussed were: 1) update on the Reynolds M & V report (savings continue to exceed anticipated savings); 2) update on the progress of the Administration roof replacement (delays due to rain, but work is very satisfactory); 3) update to 7 year building envelope repair plan (now includes Barth and Edgewood and allows for strategic planning to maintain the integrity of all buildings). Future use of the Annex Building was discussed and it was determined that the committee recommends the Board approve a new appraisal so that options could be considered.

Mrs. Weand added that scheduling installation for the new stadium lights will not take place until all the pledges are received. The \$150,000 pledge is outstanding at this time. She continues to look for other large donations.

JOINT FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mrs. Adams gave a report on the Joint Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on May 12th. **Finance items** discussed and presented on tonight's agenda for approval on May 23rd include various contracts for Special Education and MCIU for technology, MCIU Joint Purchasing bid awards, two change orders for the elementary project, and two annual items 1) the Designation of Depositories and the Student Accident Insurance offering. The Proposed 2016-2017 Budget was presented in the amount of \$59,553,150 with no increase in real estate millage. The proposed budget along with the Homestead Tax Relief resolution can be found on tonight's agenda for approval at the May 23rd Board meeting. The committee reviewed the recommendations for the LERTA Resolution and asked the solicitor that the agreement provide a list of all properties categorized by use (commercial, residential, etc). **Personnel items:** Mr. Rodriguez explained the need for a full day PreK classroom assistant at Barth due to requirements of PreK Count. The committee was in agreement to move forward with filling the position. The committee discussed the appointment of an Acting Superintendent. The committee was in agreement to recommend Mr. Rodriguez as Acting Superintendent, approve the new position of Assistant to the Superintendent to be filled by Mr. Rodriguez upon completion of Acting Superintendent and to move forward with filling the position of HR Director. These items are presented on tonight's agenda for Board approval at the May 23rd meeting.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE , PSBA REPRESENTATIVE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT

Mr. Williams reported the HB1574, amending the Anti-Hazing Law to be applicable to public and private secondary schools, was passed by the house and senate and is awaiting the governor's signature. The House State Governing Committee is working on a proposed pension relief plan. More updates to follow. Mr. Williams sent copies of the IU Board Election ballot to each Board Member for their participate in the election process. The old IU building is being utilized as an early learning center for PreK Counts and HEAD Start. There are also additional conference spaces available for rent.

BOROUGH LIAISON

No report.

CONSENT ITEMS

PERSONNEL

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the personnel items as presented to be placed on the May 23, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

Mrs. Weand stated that she supports the election of Mr. Rodriguez as Acting Superintendent but does support the motion to assume the role of Assistant to the Superintendent with compensation tbd. She asked that the motion be split and moved to non-consent.

PROFESSIONAL LEAVES

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the professional leaves as presented to be placed on the May 23, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

FIELD TRIPS

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the field trips as presented to be placed on the May 23, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

TEMPORARY SCHOOL BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Dr. Sparagana reviewed the motion to approve temporary appointments of school board members to president for the sole purpose of signing diplomas.

CONTRACTS

Mrs. Adams reviewed the contracts as presented to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

BID AWARDS

Mrs. Adams reviewed the MCIU Joint Purchasing awards to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

DESIGNATION OF DEPOSITORIES

Mrs. Adams reviewed the list of financial institutions as the depositories for the school district funds for the 2016-2017 school year to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Adams reviewed the student accident insurance coverage rates for the 2016-2017 school year to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

EDGEWOOD PARKING OVERLAY

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Facilities Committee recommendation to Edgewood Parking Overlay to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS PROJECT CHANGE ORDERS

Mrs. Adams reviewed the elementary schools project change orders as presented to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

ANNEX BUILDING APPRAISAL

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Facilities Committee recommendation to authorize the administration to obtain a current appraisal of 940 Franklin Street property to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

NON-CONSENT

PERSONNEL

Dr. Sparagana reviewed the Non-Consent Personnel item to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

PLANCON H: FRANKLIN/LINCOLN/RUPERT ELEMENTARY

Mrs. Adams reviewed the PlanCon H submittal for the Franklin, Lincoln and Rupert Elementary Schools Project to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

ADOPTION OF 2016-2017 PROPOSED BUDGET

Mrs. Adams reviewed the proposed 2016-2017 budget resolution to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

HOMESTEAD/FARMSTEAD EXCLUSION RESOLUTION

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion Resolution to be placed on the May 23 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

LERTA RESOLUTION

Mr. Kalis presented a copy of a marked-up draft LERTA Resolution incorporating the recommendations of the Ad Hoc committee for all Board members to review. He explained the timeline to meet the LERTA requirements in correlation to a June voting meeting. Board action on Monday could be a straw vote to move forward in concept with the terms of the preliminary draft resolution. His plan would be to continue to work with the borough solicitor for preparation of a final resolution to submit to the county solicitor for review. This step helps to avoid any future issues that may stem from the county.

Mrs. Weand thanked Mr. Garner and Mr. Kalis for their work. The committee spent a considerable amount of time looking for any problematic issues. She is confident that the resolution is now ready for final review.

NEW BUSINESS

ELECTION OF TREASURER

Mrs. Adams reminded the Board that the Board Treasurer serves for a one year term , July 1 to June 30. Election of a Treasurer needs to take place prior to the end of term. Mrs. Stilwell stated that Ms. Bacallao expressed interest in continuing as the Board Treasurer. The motion for Board Treasurer will be placed for action on the May 23 Board agenda.

RESIDENCY POLICY

Mr. Hylton asked the Board to place a Residency Policy on the May 23rd Board Agenda for approval. He gave a brief summary of the policy that would enable Administrative and Professional staff to obtain a \$10,000 forgivable loan (over a 5 year period) towards purchasing a home in Pottstown. Requirements for this loan include being a 1st time homebuyer of a Pottstown residence. He stated that there are two positions currently to be filled that could benefit from this policy.

Board Members discussed implementing a program/policy. It was determined a draft policy would be placed on the June Policy Committee agenda for review and for recommendation to the Board.

INFORMATION

Pottstown Pride Winter 2015-2016

Pottstown HS Wrestling 2015-2016

HEARINGS FROM PATRONS OF THE SCHOOLS

Andrew Bachman, PSD teacher, spoke about teaching the students what is important about Pottstown. His mission is to build strong programs that will benefit all students and hopes this is a common mission for all. He asked the school board to help the teachers reach out to the parents. He suggested global connects be sent to parents from board members.

Lindi Vollmouth, PSD teacher, spoke about her decisions to retire after 30 years of service. She stated her decision to go was not only a financial decision but also family responsibilities and her dissatisfaction with decisions made by the state, administration and school board.

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mr. DiDonato congratulated Dr. Sparagana and thanked him for his dedication to the district. He congratulated the Trojan Heroes. He spoke about the difficulties the teachers experience in the classroom, and their commitment to their students. He asked the Board to support the financial and educational needs of the students and teachers. Mr. DiDonato promised the teachers that the Federation leadership will work hard to get them what they deserve.

ROUND TABLE

Mrs. Stilwell read a letter she prepared. She thanked the administration for another year of a zero tax increase. Mrs. Stilwell voiced her concern about recent comments made that the teachers have not received a pay increase for 10 years. A report of teacher salaries over the past 7 years indicates various increases at the top and lower end of the teacher pay scale. The top level of increases ranged from 3.3% per year (\$16,522 over 7 years) to 8.5% per year (\$24,848 over 7 years). The lower end of the pay scale ranged from .92% per year (\$2,909 over 7 years) to 1.7% per year (\$5,034 over 7 years). The increases do not include additional cost in benefits paid by the taxpayers. Mrs. Stilwell stated she believes the teachers are worth the salary increases. She does not believe the step increases are fair and stated they are not controlled by the school board. She asked the teachers to help fix the broken funding system and work together with the Board to fix some of the issues.

Mr. Wilkerson is proud of the Trojan Heroes. He stated the teachers had a significant impact preparing them.

Mr. Hylton was glad to see the teachers and welcomes their comments. He looks forward to receiving a comprehensive budget from the administration that will define the salaries and benefits and help with future discussions.

Mrs. Francis – no comment.

Mr. Heidel – no comment.

Mrs. Weand – no comment.


Mr. Williams expressed his gratitude to the teachers and for sharing their comments. He stressed the focus must be on all students. He hopes the teachers will continue to attend the meetings after negotiations are reached. He asked that the Board and teachers work together.

Dr. Sparagana congratulated Lincoln and Franklin for their wins in the Math Olympiad. Next year the plans are to invite neighboring schools to participate. He thanked Mrs. Adams for her expertise and creative innovation to bring another zero tax increase for the 2016-2017 budget. Dr. Sparagana thanked Mr. Williams for attending the Family Advisory Council meeting held at Emmanuel Lutheran Church. The council shared positive information about the system, the teachers and the opportunities to collaborate with the schools and teachers. He believes everyone has the same goals in mind, to educate the children, and prepare them to compete in this world, no one should be overlooked. It is important to have the appropriate programs in place.

Mrs. Stilwell reiterated that the teachers are welcomed to attend any and all the meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Hylton and seconded by Mr. Heidel that the Board adjourns. All members present were in favor. None opposed. The meeting adjourned at 9:28 pm.


Linda S. Adams
Board Secretary