

**POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
February 18, 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, February 18, 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: Ms. Katina Bearden, Mr. Kurt Heidel, Mr. Thomas Hylton, Mr. Andrew Kefer and Mrs. Polly Weand . Absent were: Mrs. Amy Bathurst Francis, Mr. Emanuel Wilkerson and Mr. Ron Williams. Also present were Superintendent, Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana; Board Secretary, Mrs. Linda S. Adams; Director of Human Resources, Mr. Stephen Rodriguez; Solicitor, Mr. Stephen Kalis; School Board Treasurer, Ms. Mary-Beth Bacallao; Mrs. Danielle McCoy, Mr. David Todd, Mr. Ryan Oxenford, Mrs. Calista Boyer, Mrs. Elisabeth Yoder, Mrs. Lindi Vollmuth, Mr. Michael DiDonato, Mr. John Armato, a member of the press, and interested citizens.

Mr. Williams entered the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Mrs. Francis entered the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Mr. Wilkerson entered the meeting at 7: 09 pm.

MINUTES

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the combined Committee of the Whole and Regular Board meeting held on January 28, 2016 to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

LIST OF BILLS

Ms. Bacallao presented the list of bills from the various funds for the period of January 2016 to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Bacallao presented the Treasurer's Report for January 2016 to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

HEARINGS FROM PATRONS OF THE SCHOOLS

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

POLICY COMMITTEE

Mrs. Francis gave a report on the policies discussed at the February 11 Policy Committee meeting. The policy committee reviewed Policy 011: Board Governance and Policy 216: Student Records and is recommending these policies for consideration and approval by the Board. Policy 004: Board Membership was reviewed by the committee and all members present agreed to table this policy for further discussion. The committee also agreed to add uniform policy discussion to the next meeting's agenda.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

No report. This committee meets every other month.

CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Mrs. Weand reviewed the minutes from the February 11th Curriculum and Technology Committee. The committee reviewed Mrs. Wolfe's Technology report which included updates on the student assessment test site and adding a goggle database to assist with the strategic link. The two test sites created by the state's contractor (DCR) cannot run simultaneously which slows down the testing process. Mrs. Wolfe's goal is to change the way the testing is set up for next year along with implementing a goggle database that will save time with the manual entries for student accounts. Curriculum updates from Mrs. Schiavone focused on a the events set up for the first STEAM family night scheduled to take place on April 26. Mrs. Schiavone is offering "Focus Conversations" sessions to teachers on the MTSS (Multi-Tier System for Support) and how it works.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Mr. Heidel gave a report of the items discussed at the February 4th Facilities Committee meeting. The Mowing and Grounds Maintenance bid results were presented and the committee is recommending the bid be awarded to Freedom Gro, the lowest qualifying bidder, as presented on tonight's agenda. The bid opening for the flat roof replacement at administration building is scheduled for February 29th. A quote was received for the stadium lights replacement from MUSCO in the amount of \$298,000. An \$8,000 contingency is included for potential rock removal if needed and any unused contingency funds will be returned to the district. The Mosaic Garden Committee made a presentation to the committee with plans to place a garden in the southwest corner at Barth Elementary School for educational purpose as well as a community garden. They will provide a comprehensive, detailed plan that we are excited to support.

JOINT FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Kefer gave a report on the February 4th Finance and Personnel Committee meeting. The committee reviewed the Tax Collection Delegate Appointment resolution presented by Mrs. Adams. This item can be found on tonight's agenda under Consent. The LERTA resolution was discussed and will be a topic for discussion at the Joint Borough and School District workshop on Tuesday, February 23rd. An executive session was held for the purpose of discussing tax assessment appeal settlements and the committee discussed options to consider such as asking for payments in lieu of taxes from tax exempt properties. Mr. Rodriguez reviewed with the committee's consent items for personnel found on tonight's agenda. It was recommended and the committee agreed the newly grant funded position of Media Communications Specialist be renamed "Social Media Communications Specialist". An executive session was called for the purpose of discussing specific personnel changes resulting from the Executive Team's restructuring recommendations. It was the consensus of the committee to accept the recommended personnel changes as found on this evenings agenda under Non-Consent.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Ms. Bearden gave a report on the February 11th Community Relations Committee meeting. The committee is looking into doing more to recognize students, teachers, and community members on an annual basis. She asked Mr. Williams to provide an update on the Borough's time capsule. Mr. Williams reported there is still time to submit items for the capsule. Letters from teachers, students and community members are good items for the time capsule. The time capsule has not yet been order due to determining what size will be needed to contain all the items. The Pottstown Police Association is donating the capsule.

STUDENT BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

No report.

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

Mr. Williams reported the county legislative committee met last night to give an update on the status of the 2015-2016 state budget. The budget is going nowhere and the message is for community members to put together an organized format to present to their legislators stating the urgency to pass the budget. Senator Hayward has made his services available to various organizations to assist with an advocacy format for community members to use.

Board Members discussed various actions to get including creating a better communication system to get the word out to the community. Other concerns focused on the difficulties putting together a 2016-2017 district budget without having a state budget for 2015-2016.

BOROUGH LIAISON REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. Heidel gave a report on the Borough's February 3rd Committee of Whole meeting. He gave an overview of the agenda items presented to council for discussion. A Community Fire Committee has been formed with hopes to have student volunteers participate in the committee. Other items reviewed by the Borough Council included a request by the North End Fire Company for financial assistance to replace a boiler, a request by Wedgewood Properties for relief from taxes and other fees, a bid for street sweeping, filling two board vacancies, approving the Carousel lease agreement and a resolution accepting the deputization of the appointed Tax Collector. Council members discussed two ordinances and other related zoning issues.

CONSENT ITEMS

PERSONNEL

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the personnel items as presented to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

PROFESSIONAL LEAVES

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the professional leaves as presented to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

POLICIES

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the policies as presented to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

MOWING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE BID AWARD

Mrs. Adams reviewed the mowing and grounds maintenance bid award to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

EIT-TCC DELEGATE APPOINTMENT RESOLUTION

Mrs. Adams reviewed the the Tax Collection Committee Delegate Appointment resolution to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval.

SCHOOL DISTRICT FINANCIAL AUDIT (CONSENT)

Mrs. Adams explained the June 30, 2015 Financial Audit prepared by Herbein + Company, will be presented at the February 22, 2016 Regular Board meeting and placed on the agenda as a consent item.

NON-CONSENT

PERSONNEL

Dr. Sparagana reviewed the following non-consent personnel items to be placed on the February 22, 2016 Board Agenda for approval. He stated the items below are a result of the restructuring plans discussed with the Board beginning last year and continuing up to the recent Finance and Personnel committee meeting on February 4th. He explained that the items below are the most reasonable and cost effective recommendations to move the district forward in a cohesive and efficient manner.

- 1) Assistant to the Superintendent for Education, effective July 1, 2016, Stephen Rodriguez, annual salary \$135,000
- 2) Part-time Supervisor of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development to Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, Laurie Kolka, effective July 1, 2016, annual salary \$95,000
- 3) Supervisor of Virtual and Alternative learning to Director of Student Services, effective July 1, 2016, La Tanya White, annual salary \$95,000
- 4) Director of Student Services and Special Education to be filled with a Director of Special Education position.
- 5) New Position: Technology Integration Specialist
- 6) Part-time Clerical Support not to exceed 4 positions as needed, 4 hrs/day, 260 days.

Mr. Hylton stated he will make a motion at Monday's Regular Board meeting to table the above non-consent personnel items. He is not in favor of moving forward with the recommended changes as presented. He would like to give the new superintendent flexibility to select his/her team. Mr. Hylton believes the community's future is with the new superintendent.

Dr. Sparagana noted that his successor would not arrive by July 1. It is important to have a team in place to prepare for the next school year. He explained that in previous administrations there were four key positions, which was then reduced to three and is currently at two executive administrators. His goal is to set the district up for success. The above recommendations were well thought out, are cost effective and allow the new superintendent to have a knowledgeable team with which to work.

Mr. Kefer reminded the Board of the upcoming retirements that result in over 100 years of experience and institutional knowledge that the district will be losing. The Personnel committee agreed to recommend these changes for approval. Mr. Kefer believes they are in the best interest of the district and he supports the changes.

Ms. Bearden agreed that some positions need to be filled prior to Dr. Sparagana's retirement date but does not want to make quick decisions. She suggested the Board consider interim positions initially to then be made permanent by the new superintendent if he/she is in agreement.

Mr. Heidel supports the changes. Not having a team in place prior to the start of the new superintendent is a deficit for the district. He believes it is the responsibility of the Board to determine the terms of employment. He noted that if the new superintendent did not like the team he/she would be working with, he/she should not be the superintendent of choice. The re-structuring plan as presented is the prudent thing to do.

Mrs. Weand understands the loss of knowledge as a result of the upcoming retirements but voiced her concern about forcing a new team upon the new superintendent. She questions whether the proposed changes are the right thing to do.

Mr. Williams supports tabling the recommended changes. He believes there is always re-structuring when new management comes in. He was pleased with the discussions and understands both viewpoints. This is not an easy decision.

Dr. Sparagana thanked everyone for their ideas and respects their thoughts. His responsibility is to make the best recommendations and to advise the Board based on his 23 years of experience. The recommended changes will ease the stress for the new superintendent as he learns the district, along with opening a new school year versus the additional stress of hiring key staff members not knowing the needs of district and community. He does not recommend continuing with two contracted employees and doing businesses as is currently being done. This district is known to work people into the ground with multiple job responsibilities.

Mrs. Adams asked the Board who they expect to manage district operations (year-end close out and preparation of the new school year) in the absence of the superintendent and retirees as they make use of their vacation time during the month of June. She understood from the Board's conversations that they are willing to have the new superintendent start with vacancies and they are willing to let him fill positions, finish up an old school year, start a new school year, and create positions that are not in the re-organization chart but that takes time and leaves a lot of vacancies when there is a lot of work needing to be done in a timely manner.

Board Members engaged in discussion on the ramifications of filling vacant positions due to retirements and the re-structuring plan.

Mr. Kalis reminded the Board the motion by Mr. Hylton is to table the proposed re-structuring recommendation. The item on the agenda is not about filling the current positions that will be vacant as a result of retirements.

Mrs. Francis believes interim positions go along the line of re-structuring or direction for re-organization. She believes the re-structuring recommendations are prudent but she is also open to other suggestions.

Mrs. Stilwell suggested the Board look for direction from the IU concerning the impact re-structuring or not re-structuring would have on the superintendent candidates.

TAX ASSESSMENT APPEAL SETTLEMENTS

Mrs. Adams explained the to approve the tax assessment appeal settlements is a placeholder for the proposed settlement agreements to be discussed in the executive session at the close of tonight's meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

LERTA RESOLUTION

Dr. Sparagana provided a handout from Mr. Bamford regarding LERTA and some other communities across the commonwealth. He asked the Board Members to review the information for discussion at the Tuesday, February 23rd Joint Borough and School District Workshop.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

INFORMATION

MCIU Superintendent Search Schedule

Mrs. Stilwell asked Board Member to review the changes in dates.

Joint Borough and School District Meeting: February 23, 2016 - HS Cafeteria – 7:00 pm

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mrs. Vollmuth confirmed the Federation is active in working on getting a state budget passed. She stated the Federation opposes the administrative salary increases and changes in position as presented. The teachers agreed to no salary increases in the past contracts in light of the budget crisis. Without a current state budget it is difficult to understand how the items presented fall into any cost savings ideas. Teachers feel unappreciated and unrewarded. She asked the Board to consider all these things when voting on the proposed changes.

ROUND TABLE

Mr. Heidel thanked the crossing guards for their services during the inclement weather. He expressed his frustration with local landlords seeking relief from the borough for fees, etc. Mr. Heidel asked if there is a way the school district could issue a school tax stamp to indicate school district taxes are paid.

Mrs. Weand – no comment.

Mr. Williams expressed his appreciation to all the teachers for the incredible work they do. Their contribution to the community and dedication to the children is admirable. The Board will make every effort to look at the budget. He is frustrated with the lack of community participation and how to communicate the need to hear from them. He recognized several outstanding women who were all public school graduates along with a Trojan Alumni, Robert Davidheiser. Mr. Williams spoke of an upcoming film festival hosted by the borough and extended an invitation to all present to submit short film videos on a subject related to Pottstown.

Mr. Kefer thanked the teachers for attending tonight's meeting. He extended to the teachers an invitation to attend the board committee meetings. Mr. Kefer thanked the Board for engaging in an excellent discussion. He invited Board Members to attend a community revitalization kick-off at the Rickett's Center on February 22nd sponsored by the Hill School under the direction of their new director of community and economic development.

Ms. Chestnut and Mr. Rome gave a report of the achievements of the boys and girls basketball teams and the wrestling team's taking 2nd place at the Governor Mifflin tournament. Mr. Rome was pleased to have the opportunity to exchange ideas and contact information with the Pottsgrove Student Board representative and looks forward to future joint events.

Mrs. Francis thanked the teachers and considers them to be an amazing group of educators. She is disappointed with community attendance at the board meetings. She suggested people be invited by name, that this may be a means of getting more people to attend the meetings.

Mr. Hylton – no comment.

Ms. Bearden is appreciative of the teaching and volunteer staff. She expressed concern about the safety and well being of the children when walking to school during inclement weather. Ms. Bearden asked that this topic be put on the agenda to find a way to come up with funds for busing.

Mr. Wilkerson expressed his appreciation of the teachers and that of his fellow students. He congratulated two high school wrestlers, Coach Benfield and the basketball team for their achievements. Mr. Wilkerson is looking forward to the opportunity to speak out about fair funding at a conference in Lansdale this weekend. He is looking forward to his part in the Wiz.

Dr. Sparagana congratulated the wrestlers for their accomplishments. He was pleased to announce that Franklin Elementary was recently recognized as one of the top 30 national schools for the most viewed fresh start exercise videos. Dr. Sparagana congratulated Mrs. Vollmuth on her upcoming retirement.

Mrs. Stilwell reminded the Board of the executive session to follow for the purpose of discussing negotiations with the Federation of Pottstown teachers involving a new professional agreement.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Hylton and seconded by Mr. Williams that the Board adjourns. All members present were in favor. None opposed. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.



Linda S. Adams
Board Secretary