

**PORTAGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
FEBRUARY 10, 2021 - 6:30 P.M.**

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Portage Area Board of School Directors was called to order. Kathy Hough, board vice president, led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. Members and others present were: Susan Berardinelli (6:48 a.m.); Jason Corte; Matthew Decort; Kathy Hough; John Jubina; Tina Latoche; Dennis Squillario; Erik Thrower; Eric A. Zelanko, Superintendent of Schools; Ralph J. Cecere, Jr., Junior Senior High School Principal; Pete Noel, Elementary School Principal; Jeff Vasilko, Business Manager; Dennis M. McGlynn, Esquire, Solicitor and Denise Moschgat, Recording Secretary. Absent were Christian Smith and Matthew Decort.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Janis Chobany, kindergarten teacher, presented to the board the kindergarten teacher's request to allow them to use the current guidelines for social distancing/mitigation as they are now for kindergarten graduation. Ms. Chobany asked the board to choose tonight to follow the current guidelines for occupancy and social distancing so as to allow them to not have to revise the program to either move the students on to the stage or allow for more visitors to attend. She felt that would be hard for the students to adjust to. She also stated that they plan to live stream the program and provide the parents with a DVD. She also thanked the board for giving them as much in person learning as they possibly could and that she and the other kindergarten teachers were grateful to have a program as opposed to last year when they could not. She thanked the board for their consideration.

Jody Rainey, principal at Homer-Center and Cullen Stokes, athletic director at United School District, both members of the Heritage Conference, presented to the board information concerning the Heritage Conference and the benefits that the district could realize if it would decide to move. They provided an overview of the history of the conference mentioning that its more than academics and touching on some of the academic and fine art programs and challenges the Heritage Conference sponsors as well as scholarship for many non-sports programs. Both gentlemen discussed the possibility of Portage Area joining the conference stating that it would be a very good fit for everyone.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Upcoming events/end of school year. Mr. Zelanko discussed upcoming events for the end of the school year. Social distancing practices will remain in place. The administrators are discussing plans for graduation, the awards ceremony and prom.
2. Staffing for the 2021-2022 school year. With resignations and retirements coming up at the end of the school year, there will be openings in 4th grade and secondary ELA. Mr. Zelanko also noted that an elementary secretary will be retiring and the admin team is looking into options for this position. A custodian who was hired for extra cleaning and sanitizing during the pandemic has resigned and this position will not be filled. An aide also will be retiring at the end of the school year and the district will look into replacing this position as necessary. There are also a few extra-curricular open positions that will be advertised internally.
3. Summer hours. Summer hours for 12 month staff members will begin the week after the last day of school and end one week before the beginning of the new school year. The district offices will be closed every Friday in July because of over the contract days.

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4. Student start time for the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Zelanko reported that the administrators are looking at a 8:00 a.m. start time for the high school students and a 8:45 for elementary students. It appears that the later start times have been beneficial.

ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Purchases and repairs. Mr. Zelanko discussed some of the purchases and repairs as itemized on the regular agenda for board approval. He noted that the repairs and upgrades to equipment will last the district a minimum of 15 years. Some items being considered on still in the clarifying the scope of work or project phase and will be discussed further.
2. IU8 Substitute Teacher Program. The district has for many years participated in the IU8 substitute teacher program for substitute teachers. The program is very beneficial and is well-run by the IU. This item is on the agenda for board consideration.
3. GASB 75 valuation.
4. 2021-2022 district calendar
5. Long-term disability renewal
6. Summer learning opportunity for students. Based on survey results, Mr. Zelanko reported that approximately 50 students in grades K through 5 would be interested in participating in a summer time program to hopefully close the learning gap that many students have experienced since school has been interrupted during the pandemic. The program would be six weeks with lunch and transportation provided. Using ESSER grant money for expenses, one teacher would be hired for each grade level.
7. Charter School Resolution

PERSONNEL MATTERS (Executive Session if Necessary)

1. Staff matters

BOARD AGENDA REQUEST/USE OF FACILITIES

Mr. Zelanko reported that The Learning Lamp is requesting the use of two classrooms to conduct a full day pre-school for four and five year old children that will fill the gap left from the discontinuance of the district's program due to budgeting concerns. There will be a minimal cost associated to parents which is income-based. Lunch and transportation will be provided.

POINTS OF DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD

Time: _____