

**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; Jason Corte; Kathy Hough; John Jubina; Tina Latoche; Christian Smith; Dennis Squillario; Erik Thrower; Eric A. Zelanko, Superintendent of Schools; Ralph J. Cecere, Jr., Junior Senior High School Principal; Jeff Vasilko, Business Manager; Dennis M. McGlynn, Esquire, Solicitor and Denise Moschgat, Recording Secretary. Absent were Matthew Decort and Pete Noel.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Tammy Rodgers, elementary school art teacher, updated the board on student activities in art class. She noted that 21 pieces of student art will be displayed at SAMA at St. Francis. She will provide more information as to viewing times, if available at the next meeting. She also reported that the students were once again participating in the Square Art project where their works can be made into various products such as stickers, mugs and other items. The students are given the stickers for free and they may purchase additional items. Mrs. Rodgers concluded that she has been contacted by the branch manager at S&T Bank requesting that student art be placed in the bank lobby as part of a community outreach. She will provide student art which will be rotated on a regular basis.

Erin Eckerd, Member Services Manager at PSBA, participated by telephone to recognize Christian Smith for his more than eight years of board service.

Tonilyn Kargo, Portage township resident and boys' basketball booster member, addressed the board asking them to reconsider their previous decision in not allowing the district teams to play other teams who refuse to wear masks. She noted that our students have adapted and would continue to wear masks at all games. She noted that because of two teams who refuse to wear masks during games, the WestPAC conference playoff rounds could be in question for our teams in that without playing these two teams, they may not be able to get to the playoffs.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Continuity of Education. Mr. Zelanko discussed with the board the timeline to have all students return to school for face to face instruction. He added that he hopes to have all students in K through 12 back in the classrooms in the next few weeks. He feels that if the administration continues to be diligent in contact tracing and the custodial staff continues sanitizing efforts, the district can avoid long-term closures. Mr. Zelanko did note that the district will anticipate a very similar scenario in the fall.
2. Update on Covid-19. Mr. Zelanko began by stating that Cambria County has moved out of the substantial level of transmission to moderate, which is very good news. He further discussed quarantine periods and how they relate to the variant strains of the virus and how it impacts the district when determining if remote learning is necessary. Vaccinations for teachers may be several months in the future.
3. Winter Sports. Mr. Zelanko touched upon the topic of face masks and other district's lack of adherence to CDC guidelines by stating that he is disappointed in these other districts and their programs and just simply wear a mask. Attorney McGlynn also addressed the board concern

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4. Delay/Flexible Instruction Days. Mr. Zelanko advised the board that as the high school is fully remote for 10 school days, the elementary school bus runs are essentially operating on a two-hour delay just as a regular schedule. When the high school resumes hybrid learning, he would consider a one hour delay on weather inclement days with staff reporting one half hour before.
5. Staffing for the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Zelanko reviewed with the board his considerations for staffing for the 2021-2022 school year. He asked the board to consider continuing the suspension of the K4 program due to what a K4 program would require to meet education standards as well as giving the district more flexibility in meeting health and safety needs. He also asked that the board consider not filling the half-day music position which was vacated last year citing the uncertainty of the next school year to operate on a normal or near to normal basis. He also discussed possible teacher retirements in the elementary school and possible hires. Lastly, he asked the board to considering hiring a 'break/fix' person to work with Ryan Clouse in technology. This person would deal with the day to day needs of having nearly 1,000 devices in the district what will need serviced, repaired, etc.

ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Student observation agreement with Penn Highlands Community College. This is a routine matter that the board will considering during the regular agenda.

PERSONNEL MATTERS (Executive Session if Necessary)

1. Staff matters. The board reviewed the items listed under personnel matters in the regular agenda.

BOARD AGENDA REQUEST/USE OF FACILITIES

1. Use of Facility request for baseball field. The board asked Mr. Burkett to discuss with the requestor if he is willing to pay a rental fee. Mr. Burkett said he would do that and that Coach McCabe and Coach Burkett are willing to help with field maintenance.

POINTS OF DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD

Time: 7:22 p.m.