Minutes  April 20, 2020

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Board of School Directors convened at 4:46 p.m. in a virtual meeting via Zoom with Mrs. Ziolkowski, Board Vice President, presiding.

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Ziolkowski asked if anyone would be recording the meeting. No one indicated their intent to record.

Board Members Present via Zoom:

Mrs. Harenza, Mrs. McAvoy, Mr. McCaffrey, Mrs. Phillips, Mr. Pottieger, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Waxler, and Mrs. Ziolkowski.

Board Member Absent:

Mr. Redner

Administrative Staff Present via Zoom:

Mr. Scoboria, Dr. Woodard, Mr. Boyer, Mr. Cafoncelli, and Mr. Arnst.

Attendees:

James Comerford, English Department Chairperson; and Shelley Filer, recording secretary.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- School Board Business Meeting – April 27, 2020, 6:00 p.m., via Zoom
- Committee of the Whole – May 11, 2020, 4:45 p.m.

All listed meetings are held in the Community Board Room of the Jr./Sr. High School unless otherwise noted.

Mrs. Ziolkowski announced an Executive Session was held on April 7, 2020 via Zoom to discuss personnel and legal matters.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ROUTINE APPROVALS

MEETING MINUTES

Upon a motion by Mr. McCaffrey, second by Mrs. Taylor, the Board approved the following minutes:

- March 9, 2020 Committee of the Whole Minutes


Absent: Redner

Nays: None. Motion carried.

COMMITTEES

A. CURRICULUM/TECHNOLOGY

1. ELA Book Overview/Approval for 2020-21 Year – Dr. Woodard and Mr. Comerford reviewed the books requested as
additions or replacements to the JSHS curriculum and summer reading program. The following selections were chosen to balance classical literature and contemporary texts.

Summer Reading -

- *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth; 12th grade Honors. The idea of grit, of passion and perseverance rather than inherent genius, is the theme of all grade 12 English classes. All grade 12 classes will read either excerpts of this book or read the book in its entirety.

- *The Playbook: 52 Rules to Aim, Shoot, and Score in This Game Called Life* by Kwame Alexander; 12th grade Comprehensive. Each “rule”—its own motivational memoir from writers including Nelson Mandela, LeBron James, and Michelle Obama—tackles how to confront and overcome obstacles to get what we want out of life.

- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson; all 11th grade. The accolades and awards abound for this nonfiction piece. Dubbed the twenty-first century’s nonfiction *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the book reconciles the idealism and realism of a first-year lawyer confronting politics and law in the name of discovering justice.

- *For Every One* by Jason Reynolds; 11th grade Comprehensive. Think nonfiction narrative poetry. Using his own story of expectation and reality, realization and disappointment as its anchor, the book treats the idea of a person’s dreams as the starting point for getting anywhere.

- *1919: The Year That Changed America* by Martin W. Sandler; 8th grade Accelerated. A 2019 National Book Award winner, Sandler’s book explores racism, gender equity, the labor movement, and nationalism as they were in 1919 and as they still are in our era of the twenty-first century.

Regular Curriculum

- *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina; High School Reading. The 2014 Pura Belpre award-winning novel, Medina’s book tells the story of Piddy Sanchez, an intelligent, down-to-earth high school sophomore unfairly targeted by a school bully. Realistic, sympathetic, and compassionate, Piddy’s story rejects the perfect happy ending for an ending that requires Piddy to confront her true self.
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Dr. Woodard said a form was developed this year to be completed by the teachers to address a proposed book’s relevance to the standards, age appropriateness of language, its use in various classes and its popularity of a theme to interest students. Members of the department discussed all submissions and narrowed the list to the above titles. The titles will be on the April 27, agenda for approval.

2. Continuity of Education Update – Dr. Woodard said the District is in the fourth week of planned instruction and engagement activities. Resources for students are continuing to be refined. Dr. Woodard reviewed the online platforms being used. She said in grades 5-12 Schoology is the primary platform; however, Google Classroom has been introduced for certain special education students and grade four as a delivery mechanism for instruction. Related services are also ongoing using WebEx. Some parent trainings have also occurred so parents can support those students at home. Concrete manipulatives have also been provided by the Special Education Department for use at home. Other resources like white boards and fidget tools have also been provided. WebEx meetings began last week to mixed reviews. Administration continues explore safer more secure methods using the tool. These meetings offer opportunities for teacher to connect with students and answer questions regarding instruction. At the JSHS, teachers have a schedule of which departments hold the meetings each day of the week. The Class Dojo method at the K-4 level was being overwhelmed with messages so administration is working with specialists to work toward establishing their own suites to post their messages. Classroom teachers are sharing the information weekly with parents to check those suites. The SAP teams have been working with Caron Foundation for student supports and staff trainings.

Mrs. Taylor asked if students had access to a virtual resource room. Dr. Woodard said she knows Mrs. Lengle is closely monitoring adaptations, but couldn’t specifically speak to a dedicated resource room during office hours.

3. Technology Support and Student Information System (SIS) Update – The new SIS is PowerSchool. Staff and student data has been migrated from eSchool and staged in PowerSchool. Courses in grades K-4 and 7-12 have also migrated. Courses at WREC are being validated in preparation for the migration. The next phase is kindergarten registration. The system is live and will be promoted by district communications. Nine
families who have contacted the District will serve as test cases. Special programs and related services will be the next phase implemented. The last phase will be the analytics which will replace Performance Tracker measuring student progress and supporting intervention.

Mr. Arnst reported that 1,280 WebEx meetings have been conducted. Additional tutorials and software enhancements have been rolled out along with classroom management materials. Items included how to restrict participants using a sign-in feature, how to eject an unruly student from the meeting, and tutorials on using videos.

Mr. Arnst reported that 531 devices were deployed in grades K-6, with only one report of damage. At the JSHS level, 907 are deployed. Starting this week, onsite service and deployment will only be handled Monday-Wednesday. Five hotspots have been deployed to families without internet. Staff and families have been using the Web Help Desk and 1:1 special email address for questions thereby streamlining support services.

B. FINANCE

1. Financial Impact of COVID-19 – Mr. Boyer reported that Act 13 provided guidance for school districts as of March 13, 2020. Under the Act, all district employees are being paid including health and retirement benefits. Other expenses being paid are charter schools, out-of-district placements, special education costs, utilities, and debt service and lease payments.

2. Cash Flow – The majority of cash has been collected and the District is still ahead of projections due to the increase in interim taxes collected in February. Through June 30, the District will receive all the State funding to which it was entitled. Business Privilege Tax and Earned Income Tax collections are on pace; however, with the delayed filing date to July 15, there could be some lag in collections in June. Expenses are higher in March than expected, but will be lower next month. Mr. Boyer has major concerns for cash flow in the 2020-21 year. There will be less cash available in the beginning of the fiscal year caused by delays in real estate tax, delays and lower EIT, delays and lower BPT, less transfer tax, and delays in State and Federal funding.

3. 2019-20 Budget Projections – Mr. Boyer reiterated that the majority of revenue has been collected and State and Federal subsidies will still be received. He expects savings on transportation, personnel due to lack of overtime and work
outside contract, supplies, and a reduction in contracted services. Based on projections, Mr. Boyer expects a surplus of approximately $368,000 at the end of the fiscal year.

4. 2020-21 Estimated Budget – Mr. Boyer said normally at this time of year budgeted revenues are pretty well established. However, due to COVID-19, many questions remain. The District needs to determine whether to raise taxes and/or roll back the assumed collection percentage. Berks EIT estimates a 12.33% reduction; transfer tax is estimated at a 29.53% reduction; BPT reduction is estimated at a 10% reduction; and interest income will be reduced. In State funding, Mr. Boyer assumed a reduced transportation subsidy of $106,000. He used the 2019-20 Basic Education and Special Education subsidies without proposed increases. Retirement and Social Security subsidies are based on personnel reductions. A preliminary report of $220,000 could be received in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds based on Title I allocations; however, Mr. Boyer is unsure in which fiscal year the funds will be received. The overall loss of revenue is greater than what can be covered by a tax increase. Reductions in expenditures include: removal of the proposed math coach position; reducing positions through attrition, freezing the technology lease at WREC for one year, and reducing expenditures in the 600/700/800 object codes. The PSERS rate will not increase and the expected percentage increase in health insurance decreased from 5.5% to 2%. Overall, the projected deficit in the revised revenues and expenditures is $1.3 million. Applying the expected 2019-20 surplus would reduce the anticipated deficit, with no tax increase, to $1 million. The previously assigned fund balance to cover the projected budget deficit in 2019-20 would further reduce the projected deficit for 2020-21.

Mr. Scoboria said administration was preparing the budget with a recommended 2.5-3% tax increase; however due to the uncertain fiscal climate surrounding COVID-19, they are working diligently to create the budget with no tax increase.

Mrs. Taylor had previously suggested an additional full-time counseling position at WHEC. Without increasing taxes, she asked about the status of that position. Mr. Boyer said that position is not included in the budget. He also explained the lasting impact of a 0% tax increase throughout the years.

Mr. Boyer explained, when asked about the proposed construction project from the Feasibility Study, that with
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interest rates so low, it is a good time to borrow funds and as the economy reopens, contractors will be hungry for work which may lead to lower construction costs. He also outlined other negative factors that could impact the 2021-22 budget such as an increased PSERS contribution rate, roll back of the Act 1 Index, and a decline in assessed value.

Mr. Boyer reported that school districts are considering revised real estate tax dates for 2020-21 due to economic times. The discount period would remain July 1-August 31; however, the flat period is proposed to be September 1-December 31, with the penalty assessed after December 31, and four installments rather than the usual three. While it could affect the District’s cash flow, he feels it is better to have the taxes paid than submitted to delinquent collection. That proposal is still open for discussion.

Mr. Boyer explained the next steps in the budget process. He expects to approve the preliminary budget on May 26. As the budget must be available to the public for 30 days, a meeting will be added on June 29, to adopt the final budget.

Mrs. Harenza said that when schools reopen in the fall, things may be different due to continued mitigation efforts against COVID-19. Additional supplies and services may be needed as well as possible physical modifications to facilities. She suggested it might be wise to being planning as this may also involve increased costs. Mr. Scoboria said administration will continue to monitor the situation.

5. Technology – Switch Replacement and Phone System
Upgrades – Mr. Arnst said upgrades to the phone system have been progressing the last couple of years. Last summer 12-year old handsets were replaced at the JSHS. Server infrastructure and software should now be upgraded. New features will be introduced to faculty and office personnel such as visual voicemail and collaboration tools. In the first year an additional expense of $29,600 would be required that is already covered in the 2019-20 technology budget. In years 2-5, the cloud-based system would cost approximately $200 per year over the regular annual fee. This item will appear on the agenda for approval.

Replacement switches, the unseen backbone of the District’s wireless network, are needed. The new switches will provide for increased bandwidth, functionality, and improved network performance. Category 2 funds through E-rate pricing were
obtained through a mini-grant. After the reimbursement funding, the total cost to the District would be $57,000 which would be paid through the technology fund in Capital Reserve. This will be on the April 27, agenda for approval.

C. FACILITIES

1. Feasibility Study Contract Discussion – Mr. Cafoncelli said the Feasibility Study agreement with Crabtree, Rohrbaugh for Option #4 will be on the April 27, agenda for approval. Architectural fees, engineering fees, and design fees will be determined based on the scope of the project which has yet to be determined. The approval of this agreement will authorize him to meet with district stakeholders to develop the scope.

2. Outdoor Classroom Bids – Three bids for the project were opened on March 11, and ranged from $149,000 to $217,000. The next step is to contact the fundraisers to see if they are still interested in moving forward with the project as the bids are still higher than expected. Due to COVID-19, the period for bids to remain active has been extended.

3. Paving Project – Due to the school closure, the project may be able to begin earlier than anticipated. Mr. Cafoncelli will provide additional updates as they become available.

D. POLICY

1. Policies Recommended for Review for COVID-19 Compliance – Mr. Scoboria said two policies will be on the April 27, agenda for a first reading/adoption due to recent legislation surrounding COVID-19. The second reading can be waived under circumstances such as these.

2. Policies Recommended for Review by PSBA – There are five policies for review with recommended changes which will be on the agenda for a first reading on April 27, following the standard procedures.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Pottieger, seconded by Mr. McCaffrey to adjourn at 6:49p.m.

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Board Secretary