

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD  
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING  
FEBRUARY 22, 2022

The Board of Directors of the Hopewell Area School District conducted a virtual and in person Board meeting on Tuesday, February 22, 2022. This meeting was recorded.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by David Bufalini, Board President.

There was a slight delay, as there were technical sound difficulties.

Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ms. McKittrick. Roll call by the secretary followed. Those Directors in attendance were:

David Bufalini  
Daniel Caton  
Matthew Erickson  
Lori McKittrick  
Jeanette Miller  
Bethany Pistorius  
Daniel Santia  
Lindsay Zupsic (Via Zoom)

Members Absent  
Jeffrey Winkle

Also, in attendance were: Dr. Robert Kartychak, Acting Superintendent, John Salopek, Solicitor; Brooke Baker, Business Administrator; Nancy Barber, Secretary; Joel Roth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Nadia Engel, Ed Katkich and Gary Hutsler, principals; and visitors.

Dr. Kartychak presented the Senior High School cheerleaders for recognition for their outstanding performances in both the WPIAL and PIAA championships.

Good New in our Schools reports were presented by Ms. Engel, Mr. Katkich and Mr. Hutsler. Copies of their reports are attached to these minutes.

MOTION #1

By Dan Caton, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the agenda as written.

An Executive Session was held on January 25, 2022 and February 8, 2022, to discuss the superintendent search. This announcement is being made to be in compliance with Act 84 of 1986, Pennsylvania's Sunshine Law, as amended.

Mr. Bufalini asked for approval of minutes.

MOTION #2

By Dan Santia, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the January 25, 2022, Board Meeting Minutes. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #3

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve the February 8, 2022, Board Meeting Minutes. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #4

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Lori McKittrick, to approve the Tax Collection Reports for January 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #5

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the Treasurer's Report for January 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #6

By Dan Santia, seconded by Dan Caton, to approve the Financial Statements for January 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

VISITOR'S COMMENTS

Effective October 12, 2021, a maximum of thirty minutes total will be reserved during the Board meeting for community members who request to speak. At any time, the Board may allow additional time for the visitors portion of the Board meeting.

Whether the community member is participating virtually, or in-person, the community member will:

- State their name
- Have up to three minutes to make a statement and/or ask a question to the Board
- Only be able to speak once during the visitors portion of the board meeting
- Have their time begin when the individual begins to speak

It is recommended that community members wishing to speak during the visitors portion email the Board Secretary prior to the board meeting, however the online chat will be monitored during the visitors portion of the meeting for anyone wishing to speak.

A response may be given during the meeting, however, it is also possible that no response be provided during the Board meeting. The Board will instruct the Superintendent, the Business Administrator and/or the Solicitor to either respond to the inquiry or do further research and report back to the Board and/or the resident. For any question that requires a response, the District will contact the individual directly to respond or will share responses at the following Board meeting.

A statement from Mr. Salopek regarding information that was provided by a visitor at the February 8, 2022 board meeting.

A Statement was made that the CDC is a for profit business corporation. I asked Mr. Paganie and his research fairly easily determined that the CDC is a federal agency. There is a fund raising arm of the CDC that is called CDC Foundation, which is also a non-profit organization. So, neither of those entities are for profit corporation as was indicated at the last meeting.

### **Vivian Lombard**

Mrs. Lombard had several questions for the Board.

- Why is the Board proposing a change to the Health and Safety Plan with an effective date that does not match the beginning of the marking period? Parents have been informed a number of times that it is easier on parents and students for students to transfer to and from cyber then.
- Why does the proposed change to the Health and Safety Plan not have provisions when the transmission rate is rising? Leaving it unstated will require a board vote when mandatory mask wearing is required when reaction time may be critical.
- How does the Board ensure that masks are worn by those individuals who actually test positive for Covid 19?
- Do the school nurses receive information from the Department of Health if a student is positive and the family doesn't self-report it to the District.
- Is the Board aware that the parents that have opposed vaccinations and mask wearing and close contact tracing are the least likely to report it to the District and follow CDC recommendations.
- How does the Board plan on mitigating that risk?
- What is the plan if the high school is virtual during finals. If there isn't one, when can students and parents expect it.
- As it stands now, universal mask wearing during high and substantial transmission periods protect those in our schools, whether or not a parent reports a positive test result. The proposed motion eliminates those protections when the virus is more likely to be spread if there is not another way for the District to receive notification of a student's positive test result. Now is not the time to relax our policies. By

following the science and not loud opinions, the District has been able to keep our students in person this school year while keeping our immunocompromised students and community members as safe as possible until we reach herd immunity. I hope the District continues to do so. I strongly urge the Board not to pass the Health and Safety Plan as written.

### **Peggy McCowin**

Mrs. McCowin has the following issues with the Transportation Department.

- Lack of assignments in Elementary School
- Bus pick up time changed significantly on at least 4 different occasions...NO Communication
- During 2 hour delays, buses are sporadically early or haven't come to pick up our children. No idea what's happened because NO communication.
- In Elementary school, my child was going to be left off at our cross street to walk home – together with other elementary students on the Independence Township “back roads”. I had to drive down the street to let other parents know due to NO communication.
- Roads that frequently flood, have a plan to get ALL of the children in the District to school safely. This will allow HASD Transportation to quickly respond when these known issues occur.
- Unexpected issue occurs (tree down in the road, pavement crumbling, unscheduled road closure, etc.), driver should be able to reach out to someone at HASD Transportation or the District office to have a robocall sent to all families in the District OR since it should be known which children are on said bus – just contact those families.

Mrs. McCowin doesn't believe that she and the families on her street are receiving adequate information nor an adequate solution when issues arise.

Dr. Kartychak said that he would reach out to Mrs. McCowin individually. He said that he knows there are issues in Independence with the flooding.

### **Bella Fischer**

Bella said that she was a student at the Junior High School only for Fifth Grade. She left because of bullying. She reports that she was called names, hit, kicked and physically harassed. She was afraid to come to school. She said the teachers did nothing to help her. She believes that she was hit with a volleyball and whiffle ball bat on purpose. Students made her feel terrible and ashamed. She would like to know what the District plans to do to stop the bullying so that she can return to school and be with her friends.

**Sarah Fischer**

Mrs. Fischer asked last year during the Board elections what the plan was for stopping bullying in the District. She specifically asked if the subject of bullying at Hopewell Junior High School would be addressed. The Junior High School has a reputation for bullying. Enrollment is dropping at Hopewell. She believes one of the reasons is the reputation it has. She also believes that masks should be optional for students.

Mr. Bufalini stated that we don't tolerate bullying. He stated that the District has made some changes over the last couple of months. He said that if there continues to be bullying issues, please contact the administrators immediately.

**Natasha Selinsky**

A couple of weeks ago her mother spoke about the flooding in the Band Room at the Junior High School. She was told that everything is going to be ok. Natasha doesn't believe that to be the case since additional instances have occurred throughout the school. She believes that the Board and administration misrepresented the facts. She stated additional examples such as the cafeteria, leaks in classrooms and raw sewage on the floor in the bathroom. Safety hazards that need resolved immediately.

Mr. Bufalini, asked in what building this happened?

Natasha stated these issues are at the Junior High School and asked if anything would be done or continue to be ignored.

Mr. Bufalini said that he thought that was an unfair statement and stated that all issues will be addressed.

**Shawna Selinsky**

Mrs. Selinsky asked why the District continues to following the direction of the CDC. She doesn't believe that they report accurate information on the rates of transmission. She believes that the mask mandate is against the law and asks the District to make masks optional.

**Jen Parrish**

Since the beginning of the pandemic Mrs. Parrish has asked that parents be given the choice as to whether their child wears a mask. She stated that it is a relief to see optional masking on the agenda. She would like to know why the District is waiting until March 7? She doesn't understand the reasoning and what will be different in two weeks. She urges the Board to vote to make masks optional immediately regardless of vaccination status.

Dr. Kartychak said that the wait is to give parents the opportunity to transition from or to the cyber program.

**Kourtney Berg**

Mrs. Berg does not believe the District is complying with the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act. She believes visitors should have the right to voice their opinions for each voting item.

Mr. Salopek said that he will review the video to understand if there are any issues with the way the Board is conducting business.

**LeeAnn Sardo**

Mrs. Sardo echoed the statements of Mrs. McCowin regarding transportation. She understands that where she lives in Independence Township presents challenges for the Transportation Department, but that communication should play a key role when issues arise.

Mrs. Sardo also said that her son, who is a student at the Senior High School, wears his mask, as required. However, he and his parents got Covid in December. She doesn't believe the masks are effective and asked the District to implement a plan that everyone can live with.

**Marcy Asvestas**

Ms. Asvestas asked Mr. Salopek if he had an opportunity to review 21 US Code 360bbb-3.

Mr. Salopek stated that if you read that section, it does not apply to masks. Ms. Asvestas disagreed with that assessment and continued to say that the law was being broken.

**Tori Aquino-Sims**

Ms. Sims has a daughter that is immune suppressed. Her daughter falls under the Americans with Disabilities Act as a protected child. She believes that the District should keep masks in place until the rate of transition is lower.

**Jamie Sheffield.**

Ms. Sheffield pulled her children from the District at the beginning of the pandemic when school went virtual. She does not feel that her children were receiving an adequate education in addition to being bullied.

**June Wulff**

Ms. Wulff thanked the Board for what is, most likely, a thankless job. She understands that the past two years have been frustrating for everyone. She does feel that masks are needed for everyone and that the District must be accountable to all. She feels that the Americans With Disability Act has very specific guidelines regarding the issue. She thanked Mr. Salopek for explaining the law.

**Nicklous Gaughan**

Mr. Gaughan wanted the Board to know that he appreciated their service and that there are many in the community that understand the difficult decisions they must make under trying circumstances. Thank you for all you do.

Mr. Bufalini continued with committee recommendations and discussion.

**Educational/Curriculum/Instruction by Matt Erickson, Chair****MOTION #7**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve the school calendar for the 2022-2023 school year. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #8**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the request of Mr. Allison for three students and their teacher to attend the 2021-2022 Academic Games in Knoxville, Tennessee, April 21-26, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #9**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Lori McKittrick, to approve Resolution 5-2022 authorizing Dr. Robert Kartychak to sign any and all contracts, agreements, grants and/or licenses with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Further, said consent by Dr. Kartychak shall be given via electronic signature. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #10**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to amend the District's Health and Safety Plan to make masking optional, but highly recommended, when Beaver County is in the substantial or high rate of transmission as designated by the CDC transmission levels regardless of vaccination status for students, staff, and visitors, effective March 7, 2022. MOTION carried by a vote of seven to one, with Mrs. Miller voting no.

**Buildings and Grounds by Dan Santia, Chair****MOTION #11**

By Dan Santia, seconded by Matt Erickson, to approve the request of Hopewell Girls Fast Pitch Softball to use either Gym A or Gym B at the Junior High School two days a week for two hours for the months of March and April, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #12

By Dan Santia, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the request of Hopewell Youth Baseball to use Gym B at the Junior High School Monday through Friday from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. beginning March 7, 2022 through April 30, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #13

By Dan Santia, seconded by Matt Erickson, to approve the request of Lady Viking Basketball Boosters to use the student parking lot at the Senior High School on October 11, 2022 from 3:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Food Truck Frenzy. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #14

By Dan Santia, seconded by Lori McKittrick, to approve the request of the Musical Boosters to use the chorus room at the Senior High School the second Tuesday of each month from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**Finance and Budget by Lori McKittrick, Chair**MOTION #15

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve items (1) and (2) and to ratify items (3) and (4) as presented, in accordance with School Board's agreement for grouping items in a single motion. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

1. General Fund List of Bills in the amount of \$618,274.82
2. Cafeteria Fund List of Bills in the amount of \$110,615.66
3. General Fund Payments in the amount of \$2,072,114.59

MOTION #16

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the renewal agreement with Crown Castle to provide ethernet for the period beginning July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2027 at a cost of \$447.92 per month. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #17

By Lori McKittrick, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve the Articles of Agreement with the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit and the BC RWAN Consortium for a voluntary one (1) year extension for the Regional RWAN Contract with DQE Communications. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**Legislation by Jeanette Miller, Chair****MOTION #18**

By Jeanette Miller, seconded by Dan Caton, to approve the appointment of Matthew Erickson District representative to the Beaver County Career and Technology Center Board of Directors. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

**Personnel by Matt Erickson, Chair****MOTION #19**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve the spring coaches and salaries. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #20**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Dan Santia, to accept the resignation for retirement of Frankie Petro, Transportation secretary, effective March 2, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #21**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Dan Santia, to accept the resignation for retirement of Eugene Stevens, custodian at Margaret Ross Elementary School, effective April 15, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #22**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to accept the resignation of Belinda Pluslusky, transportation aide, effective February 25, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #23**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Lori McKittrick, to approve the employment of Doreen Dragoslovich, transportation aide, effective February 21, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

**MOTION #24**

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, to approve the employment of BobbieRae George, transportation aide, effective March 7, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #25

By Matt Erickson, seconded by Dan Santia, to approve the appointment of Margaret Franzese, substitute secretary, effective February 23, 2022. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Superintendents Report

Dr. Kartychak commended both Mrs. Petro and Mr. Stevens for their many years of service and commitment to the District. Mrs. Petro always had a pleasant and positive attitude. Mr. Stevens truly loved his students at Margaret Ross and they loved him in return. His rendition of *Dominic the Donkey* will be remembered by generations.

February 15, 2022 was SRO Appreciation Day. Dr. Kartychak thanked Officer Rogers as a valuable and essential member of the educational community.

Solicitor's Report

Nothing to report.

Unfinished Business

Mrs. Miller had the following questions with respect to the revised Health and Safety Plan. Dr. Kartychak was able to answer some questions, but would give them a more in-depth review in the coming days.

- Do we have a copy of a Health and Safety Plan that reflects the change we are voting on this evening?

We cannot vote on a document that is not generated in its final version because without seeing the language we do not know if the document includes requirements that will be too onerous on the school population.

- If we are changing to mask optional regardless of county positivity rate, what mitigation steps are we adjusting within the school buildings to compensate for the lack of universal masking to keep the school population protected?
- Knowing that we cannot always adhere to the distance requirement in all classrooms, have we provided HEPA fan/filters to the classrooms most commonly in need of them. We will be switching at a time when windows cannot be opened to increase air flow.
- How are we planning on modifying the current mitigation steps for our students who are immunocompromised and/or cannot be vaccinated to maintain their protection level that we currently have with universal masking? I understand they are allowed to wear highly effective masks, but what review has the District completed to make sure the students are not made to be in an enclosed space with others who may/may not be vaccinated or masked? We should restate clearly that

any student with complex needs can reach out to the teacher/administration to have their needs addressed individually. Are these modification steps reflected in a copy of the Health and Safety Plan that we are voting on this evening?

- How will the buildings will handle an uptick in cases?
- What is the range of positive cases that would result in the building/District going back to masking? Would we have just changes to a building, or District wide? Are all of these responses clearly articulated and easy to find in the plan?
- Have we reviewed our process on receiving past positive staff/students? Is this process clearly stated in a copy of the Health and Safety Plan we are voting on this evening?
- Now that masking will be optional, those who were positive or identified as close-contacts will need to wear masks for a period of time (whatever the current CDC guidance is). Can we generate a graphic, so parents know what information they will need to provide, who to provide the information to, and what the requirements are when coming back into the buildings? How will these requirements be enforced through the day?
- Is the cyber program in line with where the classrooms are academically meaning is the curriculum matched up so any child switching will not experience a loss because cyber already covered something that the classrooms have not so by switching, that topic(s) will not be taught to the children?
- What additional steps will teachers and administration need to take to change students mid-marking period?
- How many days are we giving parents to make the decision to switch to cyber? This switch is an impact to their work schedules and, I am sure, childcare coverage.
- Is the District still providing internet connection support for families that do not have access to cable internet within the District? What is the additional cost to the District to provide these connections?
- Instead of removing universal masking, can we lessen our COVID mitigation steps and allow more field trips, assemblies, family events, parent helpers with in-class parties? I know the greater impact of this change is to the elementary levels.
- With the Easter holiday approaching, if our numbers increase to the point we need to go virtual, this may impact finals. What steps are being planned?

#### Upcoming School Board Meetings

March 8, 2022, Regular Work Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Board Room and Virtual  
March 22, 2022, Regular Business Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Board Room and Virtual.

MOTION by Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Matt Erickson, that the meeting be adjourned.  
MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Bufalini adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

David Bufalini, Board President

Nancy Barber, Secretary