

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD
REGULAR WORK MEETING
MAY 14, 2024

The Board of Directors of the Hopewell Area School District met in regular session on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, in the Senior High School Auditorium as well as virtually, via Zoom. This meeting was recorded.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Daniel Santia, Board President.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Santia. Roll call by the secretary followed. Those Directors in attendance were:

Anitre' Bell (participated via Zoom)
Carla Buxton
Dan Caton
Victoria Gill
Anissa Klessner
Jeanette Miller
Bethany Pistorius
Daniel Santia
Lindsay Zupsic

Also present were: Dr. Jeffrey Beltz, Superintendent; John Salopek, Solicitor, Deborah Engelman, Business Administrator; Nancy Barber, Secretary; Edward Katkich, Korri Kane, Donna Steff, and James Cassell principals; Dr. Joel Roth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; and visitors.

An Executive Session was held prior to the start of the meeting to discuss personnel. This announcement is being made to be in compliance with Act 84 of 1986, Pennsylvania's Sunshine Law, as amended.

MOTION #1

By Jeanette Miller, seconded by Anissa Klessner, to approve the agenda as written. MOTION carried by a unanimous vote of all Directors in attendance.

Dan Engen and Jackie Cowan from DRAW Collective gave an update on facility master planning. They presented viable options and costs and the pros and cons associated with each plan. Dan announced that the District would conduct a second community round table to refine options this Saturday, May 18, 2024.

In association with the potential renovation or building project, Alicia Henry from PNC Bank spoke of the District's current outstanding debt and their borrowing capacity and debt limit. She explained that the Local Government Unit Debt Act sets the limits for municipal borrowing.

In the case of a school district, non-electoral debt may not exceed 225% of its borrowing base. She stated that the District's borrowing capacity would be approximately \$97.5 million.

Deborah Engelman presented the proposed 2024-2025 General Fund budget setting revenues and expenditures at \$47,821,729.00. Mrs. Engelman explained that there are a few items that she needs to review and the final budget will be adopted by the June 30, 2024 deadline.

At this time, Dr. Beltz reviewed items that would be voted on later in the meeting.

Buildings and Grounds: Mr. Caton, Chair; Mrs. Miller, Co-Chair

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Request of David Bufalini and the Robert W. Young VFW Post 8805 to use the Junior High School Memorial on May 27, 2024 for the Memorial Day ceremony.

Finance and Budget: Mrs. Zupsic, Chair; Mrs. Miller, Co-Chair

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Audit report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023 prepared by Hosack Specht Muetzel & Wood.
2. Adoption of the Hopewell Area School District proposed final 2024-2025 General Fund budget, which projects revenues of \$47,821,729.00 and appropriations of \$47,821,729.00.
3. EHD as the Broker of Record for Workman's Comp, Liability and Automobile insurance.
4. Request of Chris Pritt to purchase parcel 65-002-0110-000-01-1 located in Hopewell Township out of the Beaver County Repository. All delinquent taxes from 2020-2021 tax year and prior years are exonerated.
5. Resolution to approve Dr. Jeffrey Beltz, Superintendent, to apply for the Public School Facility Improvement Grant for roof replacement at the Senior High School building in an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000.00 The District agrees to adhere to all program guidelines and requirements.

Mrs. Miller asked what the timeline is for awarding this grant. Dr. Beltz stated that the grant has been made possible through the Department of Community and Economic Development and that the District should hear something by mid to late summer. He stated that the State made \$100,000,000 available to all Districts across the state and that, he believed, most Districts would apply. The maximum amount of the award is \$5,000,000 with an obligation that the District would commit 25% of total eligible project costs. Dr. Beltz stated that if the District

received the grant, the money would be used to replace the roof at the Senior High School.

Mrs. Zupsic asked if the District has the 25% obligation set aside to meet our obligations. Dr. Beltz stated that the money would come from the Capital Reserve account.

Mrs. Miller asked if the project would proceed if the District was not awarded the grant. Dr. Beltz stated, no, not at this time.

6. Agreement with Dr. Daniel Zorn and Skyline Chiropractic & Sports Medicine to provide employee physicals at a cost of \$70.00 per physical.

Personnel: Mrs. Pistorius, Chair; Mrs. Buxton, Co-Chair

1. Resignation for retirement of Donald Short, Athletic Director and Trainer, effective July 5, 2024.
2. Resignation for retirement of Lynn Short, paraprofessional at Hopewell Elementary School, effective June 1, 2024.
3. Change of employment status for Kimberlee Halfhill, bus driver, to substitute driver, effective April 29, 2024.
4. Resignation of Shanna Hawthorne, transportation aide, effective April 28, 2024.
5. Request of Beth Butter, Junior High School cafeteria, for an unpaid leave of absence through May 31, 2024.
6. Employment of Colleen Tormey, substitute custodian, effective May 15, 2024.
7. Employment of Hunter Quel, substitute custodian, pending receipt of all clearances.
8. Employment of Bobbie Jo Chauvenne, substitute custodian, pending receipt of all clearances.

At this time, Dr. Beltz began his review of those items that would be voted on at the May 28, 2024 Business meeting.

Education/Curriculum/Instruction: Mrs. Zupsic, Chair; Mrs. Klessner, Co-Chair

1. The Board of School Directors concurs in the recommendation of the Superintendent for the alteration of the Program of Courses and Classes of Music by the elimination of one elementary music position, effective June 1, 2024, for the 2024-2025 School Term Year, to conform to standards of organization and due to

a substantial decline in pupil enrollment; and the realignment of the Music Department for the 2024-2025 school year as follows:

- a. 1 music teacher at the Senior High School;
- b. 2 music teachers at the Junior High School; and
- c. 1 music teacher for the three elementary schools.

Dr. Beltz explained that this realignment would not change the number of music classes or instruction time students received. There will be no changes to classes or teachers at the High School or Junior High School. At the K-4 elementary level, all of the music sections currently taking place in 2023-24 will continue to take place in 2024-25, with the change being that one elementary teacher will teach all of the sections, similar to that already taking place in elementary art, library, and computer/technology. He stated that the District had been planning for this realignment through natural attrition, when the senior music instructor at the elementary level retired. Due to her unfortunate passing, by contractual obligation, the District was required to hire a full-time replacement during the 2023-24 school year. However, the expectation remained that the position would be eliminated at the end of the school year. Dr. Beltz explained that the two current staff members each teach half of the needed elementary music sections, with the other half of their instructional time primarily used for supporting MTSS/RTI programs. Dr. Beltz reiterated that the Board and administration are committed to music education and that instruction and performances will continue as they have in the past. Dr. Beltz also emphasized that the District can't ignore financial challenges and declining enrollment, that when attrition occurs, the District must evaluate each position for curricular and program impacts.

Mrs. Miller asked for clarification of current music instruction at the elementary level and what that looked like for teacher schedules.

Dr. Beltz explained that there are 36 sections of elementary music on a six-day rotation. Next year, there will be 35 sections. He said that currently the sections are split between the two teachers, creating roughly a half-time music schedule for each teacher. He said that the recommendation is to create one position that would teach music 100% of the time and eliminate the second position. There would be no reduction for students, as this teacher will teach 35 sections, similar to other specials classes. Dr. Beltz stated that administration will continue to offer academic support and assistance to the MTSS/RTI program next year.

2. Awarding 160 high school diplomas to Hopewell High School Senior Class of 2024. Further, awarding of said diplomas is contingent upon student completion of all graduation requirements. (Copy in Superintendent's Office).
3. Continuation of the Memorandum of Understanding by and between the Hopewell Area School District and the Hopewell Education Association with respect to Online Education for the 2024-2025 School Year.

Buildings and Grounds: Mr. Caton, Chair; Mrs. Miller, Co-Chair

1. Disposal by abandonment and placement in the Building Refuse Dumpster the following equipment from Hopewell High School:

Asset Tag 05039 Upright Bike (cardio room)
Asset Tag 05023 Upright Bike (locker room shower)
Asset Tag 05022 Upright Bike (locker room shower)

2 Treadmills (cardio room) (No asset tag found)
Recumbent bike (cardio room) (No asset tag found)
Ping Pong Table (hallway) (No asset tag found)
2. Request from Hopewell Township to use the parking lots at Hopewell and Margaret Ross Elementary Schools for parking during Park Fest, July 13, 2024.

Finance and Budget: Mrs. Zupsic, Chair; Mrs. Miller, Co-Chair

1. Agreement with Medic Rescue to provide emergency medical transport for the 2024-2025 school year, at a cost of \$3,600.
2. Agreement for Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc. to conduct one Head Start Classroom at Hopewell Elementary School for the 2024-2025 school year, subject to PIC receiving appropriate funding.

Legislative: Mrs. Miller, Chair; Mrs. Buxton, Co-Chair

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Appointment of Carla Buxton as Hopewell Area SD School Board voting delegates to represent HASD at the PSBA 2024 Delegate Assembly event being held on Saturday, November 2, 2024 at PSBA Headquarters in Mechanicsburg, PA. Voting delegates may attend the meeting either in person or virtually.

Personnel: Mrs. Pistorius, Chair; Mrs. Buxton, Co-Chair

1. Removal of the following individuals from employment from the Transportation Department. These individuals have not worked for the District in over one year.
 - a. Dan Boni
 - b. Dan Bubien
 - c. Guy Celeste
 - d. Tammy Celeste
 - e. Rick Cropper
 - f. John Mazzie
2. Resignation of Carol Morse, Vikette Sponsor, effective May 31, 2024.

3. Resignation of Jennifer Sutton, Assistant Marching Band Director, May 31, 2024.
4. Employment of the following individuals for the Senior High School Marching Band:
 - a. Carly Belich – 1st Assistant Director
 - b. Samantha Lash – 2nd Assistant Director
 - c. Fayte Wilson – 3rd Assistant and Vikette Instructor
(pending receipt of all clearances)
9. Employment of Maegan Johnson, individual paraprofessional, effective June 24, 2024.
10. Elimination of one 4th grade position at Independence Elementary School effective the 2024-2025 school year.
11. Elimination of one 5th grade position at Hopewell Junior High School effective the 2024-2025 school year.
12. Establish one 6th grade position at Hopewell Junior High School effective the 2024-2025 school year.

Transportation: Ms. Bell, Chair; Mrs. Klessner, Co-Chair

Recommendation to approve the following:

1. Request of Hopewell Township to use District buses and drivers for Park Fest, July 13, 2024.

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.

Kerry Wilson, Music Department Chair, asked the Board to reconsider the realignment of the Music Department based on her belief that it would drastically change music instruction at the elementary level. She believes that there will be a decrease in hands-on music instruction and student performances and that this will have a long-term negative effect on students. She stated that the District has reduced music opportunities for students in grades 5 and 6 and eliminated general music requirements in grades 7 and 8 and that a further reduction in staff will curtail music opportunities district-wide.

Kelly Kypta, a 2021 Hopewell graduate and former Hopewell Drum Major, spoke in support of the music program and the tremendous impact her music teachers had not only on her music abilities but also her confidence, character and outlook on life. She believes that the reduction in staff will lead to teacher burnout due to an excessive workload and lack of adequate resources.

Kathy Ujhazy, the parent of 3 children living in the District, spoke of the outstanding music education her son, Luke, received while attending Hopewell. Luke has received many musical awards and is currently a member of the PMEA All-State Chorus. Recently, after being accepted into a performing arts charter school, Luke chose to remain at Hopewell because of the outstanding music teachers. Mrs. Ujhazy does not want to see a reduction in the music education staff because she believes it will be detrimental to the entire music program.

Katie Holcomb also spoke in support of the current structure of the music department and believes that the advantages of having additional staff far outweighs the disadvantages.

Crystal Borrer expressed her belief that the District needed to add special education teachers and an additional guidance counselor at the elementary level. Ms. Borrer believes there are significant gaps in support and resources allocated to meet the diverse needs of students.

Deanna and Danica Hiltz spoke in support of the teachers in the music department. Mrs. Hiltz specifically thanked Mr. Toporski and Mrs. Wilson for their support of Danica. Danica, speaking through her Dynavox, said that she loved chorus and band and that she loved Mr. Toporski and Mrs. Wilson. She expressed that, in their classes, they “let me be me”.

June Wulff thanked Dr. Beltz for his explanation for the decision to realign of the music department. She thanked the Board for their commitment to navigating the complexities

of education with limited resources and believes that they are doing their best with limited resources.

Helen Davis, Sean Regan and Alyssa Myers also spoke in support of the current structure of the music department. Ms. Myers compared the District's student-to-teacher ratio in music education to that of neighboring districts. She stated that Hopewell will have fewer music teachers than similar sized districts. Mr. Regan saw the need for additional staff, as it would mitigate the risk of teacher burnout. He believes that investing in staff resources would not only prioritize the well-being of our teachers but contribute to the overall quality of the education the District provides.

David Bufalini spoke in support of the music teachers. He believes that the current staff has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to enriching the music program through their outstanding assortment of music options such as guitar, piano, drum, and jazz band. However, Mr. Bufalini also uniquely understands the difficult decisions that the Board must make, as he was once President of the Board. While he recognizes the desire to realign the department, he also acknowledges the limitations on potential for future growth that this decision will cause.

At this time, Mr. Santia returned to Buildings and Grounds.

Buildings and Grounds by Dan Caton

MOTION #2

By Dan Caton, seconded by Carla Buxton, approved the request of David Bufalini and the Robert W. Young VFW Post 8805 to use the Junior High School Memorial on May 27, 2024 for the Memorial Day ceremony. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Finance and Budget by Lindsay Zupsic

MOTION #3

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Victoria Gill, approved the audit report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023 prepared by Hosack Specht Muetzel & Wood. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #4

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Bethany Pistorius, approved the adoption of the Hopewell Area School District Proposed final 2024-2025 General Fund budget, which projects revenues and appropriations of \$47,821,729.00. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #5

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Jeanette Miller, approved EHD as the Broker of Record for Workman's Comp, Liability and Automobile insurance. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #6

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Jeanette Miller, approved the request of Chris Pritt to purchase parcel 65-002-0110-000-01-1 located in Hopewell Township out of the Beaver County Repository. All delinquent taxes from 2020-2021 tax year and prior years are exonerated. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #7

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Victoria Gill, approved the Resolution to approve Dr. Jeffrey Beltz, Superintendent, to apply for the Public School Facility Improvement Grant for roof replacement at the Senior High School building in an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000.00 The District agrees to adhere to all program guidelines and requirements. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative roll call vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #8

By Lindsay Zupsic, seconded by Jeanette Miller, approved the agreement with Dr. Daniel Zorn and Skyline Chiropractic & Sports Medicine to provide employee physicals at a cost of \$70.00 per physical. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Personnel by Bethany Pistorius

MOTION #9

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Victoria Gill, accepted the resignation of Donald Short, Athletic Director and Trainer, effective July 5, 2024. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Mr. Santia acknowledged that the District will be at quite a loss with the retirement of Mr. and Mrs. Short.

MOTION #10

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Lindsay Zupsic, accepted the resignation for retirement of Lynn Short, paraprofessional at Hopewell Elementary School, effective June 1, 2024. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #11

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Jeanette Miller, approved the change of employment status for Kimberlee Halfhill, bus driver, to substitute driver, effective April 29, 2024. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #12

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Lindsay Zupsic, accepted the resignation of Shanna Hawthorne, transportation aide, effective April 28, 2024. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #13

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Victoria Gill, approved the request of Beth Butter, Junior High School cafeteria, for an unpaid leave of absence through May 31, 2024. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #14

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Carla Buxton, approved the employment of Colleen Tormey, substitute custodian, effective May 15, 2024. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #15

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Carla Buxton, approved the employment of Hunter Quel, substitute custodian, pending receipt of all clearances. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

MOTION #16

By Bethany Pistorius, seconded by Jeanette Miller, approved the employment of Bobbie Jo Chauvenne, substitute custodian, pending receipt of all clearances. MOTION carried unanimously by an affirmative vote of all Directors in attendance.

Other Business

Dr. Beltz reminded everyone that there would be a community meeting with DRAW Collective this Saturday, May 18, 2024, at noon.

Upcoming School Board Meetings

May 28, 2024, Regular Business Meeting will be in the Central Administration Board Room and virtually.

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

Mr. Santia adjourned the meeting at 9:31 p.m.

HOPEWELL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

Daniel Santia, Board President

Nancy Barber, Secretary