

**PORTAGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 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; Dennis Squillario; Erik Thrower; Eric A. Zelanko, Superintendent of Schools; Ralph J. Cecere, Jr., Junior Senior High School Principal; Pete Noel, Elementary School Principal; Dennis M. McGlynn, Esquire, Solicitor and Denise Moschgat, Recording Secretary. Absent were Matthew Decort and Jeff Vasilko. Absent were Matthew Decort, Tina Latoche and Christian Smith.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Janelle Myers, resident and parent, addressed Mr. Zelanko and the board asking why the district is engaging in more politics and testing healthy children for Covid. She asked for guidance so that she may make decisions regarding her childrens' education. Mr. Zelanko addressed Mrs. Myers to clarify that the testing is voluntary, not mandatory, for parents. The district is offering an option for parents who want their children tested. Attorney Dennis McGlynn reiterated that this would be a convenience to a parent who wanted to have their child tested. Mrs. Myers noted that she is not okay with this procedure and that healthy children should not be tested. Mr. Zelanko noted her concern and added that he is not in any way saying, nor is the school board saying, that parents should have their students tested. Mr. Cecere further added that this testing is like many services or conveniences to parents and students such as counseling/therapy services, transportation, etc. This makes it easier for parents to come to the school for services and offering testing for Covid is one more example. Mrs. Myers then asked about exemption forms for parents and Mr. Zelanko replied that they can contact the administration office to request one.

INFORMATION ONLY

ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Stage curtains. Mr. Vasilko reported that although the board had given verbal approval for the purchase and installation of curtains, a formal motion had not been made. He added that there was a \$700 change in the cost.
2. Trail Easement. Mr. Zelanko noted that the board had previously agreed informally to approve the easement and the 911 trail organization has not sent the Easement for approval.
3. Procurement Code of Conduct. Mr. Zelanko noted that this is the purchase of food for the cafeteria.
4. Agreements with Southwood Psychiatric Hospital and ACRP. Mr. Zelanko noted that these are routine annual agreements. The district could send an eligible student to these facilities if necessary.
5. Professional Middle Management Agreement Compensation Plan. Mr. Zelanko noted that these plans would cover the social worker and the speech and language pathologist.
6. COVID-19 testing program. Mr. Zelanko noted that this is voluntary and no one will be made to participate. It will be a pool testing which means that several specimens

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will be tested together and if a positive result is noted, individual tests will be given. This will be made available at no costs to parents and it will be at the school for the convenience of parents.

7. Health and Safety Plan revisions. Mr. Zelanko noted that the revisions are a result of new Department of Health orders and the district must abide by these mandates, which are mandatory. He is working, as always, to get clarification from the state. As usual, these orders were released late afternoon on a Friday which is why he opted to hold the parent meeting on Monday, September 7. He also noted that a few legislators filed a lawsuit against the orders, which he feels will probably fail. Mr. Zelanko also noted there are many students in the high school who are quarantining but that the use of masks helps in that far more students would be in quarantine had they had not been wearing a mask.

PERSONNEL MATTERS (Executive Session)

1. Staff matters

Mr. Squillario questioned the request of a staff member for days off without pay noting that these needed to be approved by the board prior to the dates requested. Mr. Zelanko replied that this was an emergency situation and the staff member needed to be off unexpectedly.

Mr. Squillario questioned the Middle Management Plans and why the speech and language and social workers were considered middle management and if they were not better classified as subcontractors. Mr. Zelanko replied that this was the best fit for these positions.

BOARD AGENDA REQUEST/USE OF FACILITIES

POINTS OF DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD

Time: 6:45 p.m.