

**PORTAGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
FEBRUARY 8, 2023 - 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 president, led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. Members and others present were: Susan Berardinelli; Jason Corte; Matthew Decort; Kathy Hough; John Jubina; Christian Smith; Dennis Squillario; Todd Dishong, Superintendent of Schools; Pete Noel, Director of Special Education; Jeff Vasilko, Business Manager; Jeremy Burkett, Junior Senior High School Principal; Jennifer Pisarski, Elementary School Principal; Dennis McGlynn, Esquire and Denise Moschgat, Recording Secretary. Absent was Tina Latoche.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Rich Haney, Portage Township resident, addressed the board concerning a minor accident that involved his daughter as she was on her way to school in a Tri-County Transportation school van. The accident occurred on Route 53 in Portage Township. As the van was stopped, a triaxle coal truck hit into the back of the van. There were no injuries or property damage. Mr. Haney believes that this was a hit and run accident and the driver of the coal truck was not identified. He stated that he wants to mitigate the risk of such an accident occurring again. He notified the board that he contacted Tri-County Transportation, Rosebud Mining, the Department of Transportation as well as the Pennsylvania State Police and Senator Wayne Langerholc as he the chair of the transportation committee to seek help in making this stretch of road safer for all motorists. He noted that this not the first accident in the area and that this has been a systemic problem for some time. Mr. Haney also notified a reporter at the *Tribune Democrat* to shed some light on this situation. He asked Senator Langerholc's liaison at the department of transportation to ask for a study of the area with possible remedies to make the route safer. He is looking at all angles and asked that the district join him in this endeavor. Mr. Squillario asked how the district has addressed it and that moving forward, the district needs to put pressure where it can to make bus routes safer. Mr. Haney noted that the van was at a full stop at the time of the accident and the truck kept going afterwards. He further noted that school vans do not have dash cameras. Dr. Dishong replied that the district will be on top of this issue.

**INFORMATION ONLY**

1. The Board held an executive session on Monday, January 30, 2022 at 6:00 for the purpose of discussing personnel matters.

**ROUTINE MATTERS**

1. Athletic Trainer Agreement with Chan Soon-Shiong Medical Center. Mr. Vasilko stated that the board will have to void its contract with them since it hired Siarra. Mr. Burkett thanked Tao Heckman for coming up on his own time to ensure that the teams had a trainer.
2. Student teaching assignments. Dr. Dishong noted that these three student teachers are going to be in the high school.
3. District policies – second reading and adopting Policy 624 Taxable Fringe Benefits. Mr. Vasilko noted that this policies will be ready publicly once more and then placed on the agenda for adoption. Policy 624 deals with what the IRS deems taxable.

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4. 2023-2024 school year calendar. Mr. Noel reviewed the 23-24 school year calendar with the board noting that the look of it is a little different but it's similar to other schools in layout. He pointed out that there will be half days at the end of each marking period and it looks like there are more student days on some months than teacher days. He advised that this is because a half day counts as a full day for students for instructional time. Dr. Dishong noted that it was instructional time.
5. Meadows Psychiatric Center agreement renewal. Mr. Noel reported that this agreement is in the event we need to place a student in that facility.
6. Agreement with Statewide Tax Recovery for delinquent per capita taxes. Mr. Vasilko reported that we used this company in 2019 and there were a few glitches and these seems to have them worked out. The bills then looked like a scam and he's worked with Statewide to make it more easy to read and understand. Mr. Vasilko estimated that there is about \$15,000 in delinquent per capita taxes owed. The fees are substantial and he is willing to send out a letter to those delinquent prior to turning them over to Statewide. Mr. Decort noted that the previous letter was threatening. Mr. Vasilko replied that they have revised the letter to be less so and provide a better explanation of the taxes owed. Dave Layo, Portage Borough tax collector, interjected that it was a poorly written letter that frightened people. He felt that the letter should come from the school district. Mr. Squillario suggested that the district should attempt to collect the money and if they have no success, send it out to this company.

**PERSONNEL MATTERS (Executive Session 6:35 p.m. to 7:44 p.m.)**

1. Personnel matters as listed on the regular agenda.

**BOARD AGENDA REQUEST/USE OF FACILITIES**

**POINTS OF DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD**

Time: 7:44 p.m.