

**PORTAGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
MARCH 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; Kathy Hough; John Jubina; Christian Smith; Dennis Squillario; Pete Noel, Superintendent of Schools; 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 were Matthew Decort and Tina Latoche.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Matthew Pisarski, Portage Township resident and parents, addressed the board concerning the band trip to Universal Studios. He provided the board with information on room arrangements, voicing his concerns about how students were grouped in the rooms. He also noted that he and his daughter had to cancel their trip because of these concerns and they did not receive a refund of \$564. He noted that he was no able to select his or his daughter's room nor what he informed that chaperones would be in the rooms with students. He asked the board to look into this matter and possibly revise how trips are planned in the future.

Mary Ann George provided the board with an overview of the "Let's Talk" program which will be offered at the high school through Victim Services. She provided the board members with information that was sent home to district parents. The program will cover the following topics: drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, suicide prevention, internet safety/sexting, teen pregnancy prevention, sexual violence and human trafficking.

Aileen Miller and Arielle Miller asked the board to revisit the hiring of a full time music teacher. Among the reasons they provided, they listed that this could bring back music lessons to fourth grade students. They outlined the benefits of having a strong music department to grow the program.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Met with Diane Zaman, Amanda Horvath and Bob Koban from Tri-County Transportation concerning bus stop safety. They will attend the April board meeting to discuss updates to school vehicles such as dash cams as well as hazardous bus stops. Does the board wish to request the Department of Transportation to conduct a study on Route 53 and Route 164?
2. The R.E.A.C.H. counseling program will be implemented in the high school beginning March 9. The district will share a licensed professional counselor with the Forest Hills School District to provide services to students who request it. The purpose of the program is to help identify mental health services to any student in need. This program is funded by Cambria County as a result of the opioid settlement.

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ROUTINE MATTERS

1. District policies – public readings of new policies, revisions to existing policies and retiring policies. These policies have been reviewed and the board will consider them during the regular meeting.
2. IU08 General Operating Budget for the 2023-2024 school year. The budget has been approved by the IU8 board and will be considered during the regular agenda.
3. Football stadium bleacher renovations/locker room project. Mr. Noel reported that there are two projects on the regular agenda for board consideration. One is the rehabilitation of the grandstand bleachers and the second is the construction of a separate building housing locker rooms.
4. Advertising for a school police officer. Mr. Noel reported that he and the administrators, working with Bubba Fatula and gather information from other school districts put together a job description which is on the regular agenda for board consideration. With board approval, the district will advertise this position.
5. Safety and Security Consultant. Mr. Noel explained to the board that Bubba has the expertise and knowledge to guide the district through the protocols and procedures that are required to be in place in terms of threat assessment and safety and security. The board will consider this item during the regular meeting.
6. Consultant to the administration. Mr. Noel reported that EFD, LLC is Mr. Zelanko consulting group and would provide services as needed. The board will consider this item during the regular meeting.
7. Adding a school bus to the district's fleet. Mr. Noel advised the board that Tri-County is simply replacing a school vehicle which is a spare bus used only when needed. The board will consider this item during the regular meeting.
8. Advertising for bids. Mr. Vasilko reported that this is a routine matter to be considered during the regular meeting.
9. Student teaching assignments. Mr. Noel stated that this is a routine matter to be considered during the regular meeting.

PERSONNEL MATTERS (Executive Session 6:47 p.m. to 7:10 p.m.)

1. Personnel matters as listed on the regular agenda.

BOARD AGENDA REQUEST/USE OF FACILITIES

POINTS OF DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD

Time: 7:10 p.m.