

**PORTAGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 4, 2024**

The Reorganization Meeting of the Portage Area Board of School Directors was called to order. Members and others present were: Susan Berardinelli; Jason Corte; Matthew Decort; Kathy Hough; John Jubina; Jacob Myers; Nancy Sherbine; Brian Shope; Pete Noel, Superintendent of Schools; Jeff Vasilko, Business Manager; Troy Eppley, Director of Special Education; Jeremy Burkett, Junior Senior High School Principal; Dennis McGlynn, Esquire and Denise Moschgat, Recording Secretary. Absent was Jennifer Pisarski

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Tony Farren, a resident of Portage Township, addressed the board concerning the proposed solar array.

Kelli Swires, a resident of Portage Township, addressed the board concerning the proposed solar array.

Devonnie McCabe, a resident of Portage Township, addressed the board concerning the proposed solar array.

Milissa Taylor, a resident of Portage Township, addressed the board concerning the proposed solar array.

Mike Pesta, a resident of Portage Borough, addressed the board concerning the proposed solar array.

Cara Ferrante from Wessel and Company presented the audit review for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024. She presented an unmodified opinion, which is the best designation possible.

NOTICE TO PERSONNEL

There may be reductions and/or reassignments of personnel due to fiscal circumstances.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Len Chappell Gymnasium sound system. Mr. Noel reported that the cost for this upgrade came in at \$7,000 which was lower than what was budgeted.
2. Custodial contract. Mr. Noel noted that he and Mr. Vasilko continue to work with the union representative on the contract and that it's going well.

INTERVIEW OF APPLICANTS FOR SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTOR

The board interviewed Branden Miller and Mary Gouse for the position of board director.

EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PERSONNEL (7:56 p.m. to 8:21 p.m.)

ROUTINE MATTERS

NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The Committee of the Whole Meeting will be held **January 8, 2025**, beginning at **6:30 p.m.** in the elementary school auditorium, 84 Mountain Avenue, Portage, PA with the Regular Meeting immediately following.

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APPROVING THE MINUTES

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends approving the November meeting minutes. A copy of the minutes was distributed with the advance agenda.

ADDITIONS, DELETIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Board moves to approve the written agenda with any noted additions, deletions or corrections as discussed.

Personnel Matters, ADD Line Item 2, hiring paraprofessional
Agenda Requests, ADD Field Trips, Middle School Leadership Conference

APPOINTING A SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Board moves to appoint Branden Miller as a school board director to fill the remainder of Mr. Smith's term, which expires the first Monday of December, 2025. Mr. McGlynn administered the oath and Mr. Miller took his seat.

REPORTS

Vo-Tech Operating Committee representative **Mr. Jason Corte** reported that in January the students will participate in SkillsUSA competitions.

Superintendent **Mr. Pete Noel** welcomed Branden as a new board director. He also noted that the Directec will be coming in to look at the pa system, the bells and clocks. The AMVETS are possibly providing the district with an AED. He advised the board that because of some licensing issues with Googles, a lot of our student devices are not working correctly with Microsoft. Ryan is working to get the issue corrected. On Sunday, December 15, the district will host the second annual Mustang Family Christmas.

Director of Special Education **Mr. Troy Eppley** noted that it's been very busy with data reports to the state and child count reports. The PIMS window is now open and Elysia and Mrs. George have been busy getting the data entered.

High School Principal **Mr. Jeremy Burkett** winter sports are gearing up and upcoming events include parent-teacher conferences and the band conference.

Elementary School Principal **Mrs. Kelly Mignogna** reported that parent-teacher conferences were well attended and thanked the staff for doing a great job and used assessment data for reference. She noted that since the implementation of PBIS, demerits and bus conduct referrals are decreasing. She thanked the staff for participating in the program. She noted that upcoming

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holiday events are Santa Shop, the Christmas Village and holiday concerts. She thanked Irene Huschak for her help.

School Solicitor **Dennis McGlynn, Esquire** reported that is has been a very busy month as can be seen on the agenda.

Business Administrator **Mr. Jeff Vasilko** noted that as addressed in the audit presentation, there will be about \$2M that will need to be moved to a capital fund.

Board President **Kathy Hough** noted that she attended the winter theater production and it was fantastic and amazing. She noted that the actor did an amazing job.

APPROVING ACCELERATED BUDGET OPT OUT RESOLUTION

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors of Portage Area School District, makes the following unconditional certifications:

1. The school district's various tax levies and other revenue sources will be sufficient to balance the school district final budget for the next fiscal year (2025-2026) based on maintaining current tax rates or increasing tax rates by an amount less than or equal to the Act 1 index applicable to the school district as calculated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This conclusion is based on the school district preliminary budget or other information available to the School Board.
2. The applicable adjusted index for the next fiscal year is 6%, and the School Board will not for the next fiscal year increase the rate of its real estate tax, or any other tax for the support of public education, by an amount that exceeds the applicable index.
3. The School Board has to date and, in the future, will comply with the rules set forth in School Code §687 for adoption of the school district proposed and final budgets for the next fiscal year.
4. The School Board understands that the school district will not be eligible to use Act 1 referendum exceptions for the next fiscal year.

AUTHORIZING ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS PROCESS

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

Resolved: The board of School Directors of the Portage Area School District does hereby authorize the Administration to work with PFM Financial Advisors, as Financial Advisor, Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC as Bond Counsel, and the local solicitor in conjunctions with the issuance of the General Obligation Bonds, Series of 2025, for the purpose of financing various capital project including but not limited to boiler replacement, via a competitive sale, in an approximate amount of \$1,500,000 as structured in Option 2a.

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APPROVING PERFORMANCE BASED ENERGY SAVINGS AGREEMENT

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

The Administration recommends approving The Performance Based Energy Savings Agreement (guaranteed energy savings contract) with the McClure Company to achieve reductions in energy consumption or demand. The amount of this contract is \$1,382,513.

APPROVING SOLAR SITE LEASE AGREEMENT
THIS ACTION WAS TABLED

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends approving the Solar Site Lease Agreement with the McClure Company through PASD Solar, LLC to install, maintain and operate a solar energy generating system on district property as described within the Agreement.

APPROVING SOLAR POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT
THIS ACTION WAS TABLED

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends approving the Solar Purchase Agreement with the McClure Company through PASD Solar, LLC to purchase energy per the terms as set forth within the Agreement.

APPROVING PUBLIC WATER LINE EASEMENT/RIGHT-OF-WAY

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

The Solicitor recommends approving a Public Water Line Easement/Right-of-Way Agreement between the District and the Municipal Authority of the Borough of Portage on property located at 1510 Caldwell Avenue, Portage Township, for the installation, construction, reconstruction, maintenance, repair, operation and inspection of water lines and necessary appurtenances on the land of the Grantor.

APPROVING SALE OF CAFETERIA EQUIPMENT

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

The Administration recommends approving the winning bid from Joseph Tackett of \$726 for the Southbend stove/griddle/oven.

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APPROVING WEBSITE HOSTING AGREEMENT

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

The Administration recommends approving an agreement with ParentSquare to provide website hosting and mobile app services to the district for the three-year period July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028 at a cost of \$4,640.25 annually.

APPROVING REQUEST TO HOST SNOWBALL DANCE

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Cheer boosters request permission to advertise and promote the Snowball dance being held on Saturday, February 22, 2025 at the Royal Ballroom.

APPROVING STUDENT TEACHER PLACEMENTS

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends approving the following student teaching assignments:

Keegan Shannon (UPJ) with Tyler Johnson (Student Teacher)	Jan-Apr 2025
Julie Rainer (UPJ) with Bryan Jubina (Student Observer)	Jan-Apr 2025
Ben Cotchen (UPJ) with Josh Burkett (Student Observer)	Jan-Apr 2025

APPROVING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH MOUNT ALOYSIUS COLLEGE

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends approving a cooperative agreement with Mount Aloysius College to participate in the "College to High School: program in order to provide course for which student may earn college credit. This Agreement is for the 2024-2025 school year.

ADOPTING DISTRICT POLICY

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends adopting Policy 104 Discrimination/ Harassment Affecting Staff which has been read at three public meetings.

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PERSONNEL MATTERS

ADDING VOLUNTEER COACH

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

The Administration recommends adding the following volunteer coaches:

Koby Kargo Boys Basketball

HIRING PARAPROFESSIONAL

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

The Administration recommends hiring Desarae Miller as a paraprofessional. Salary will be based on the current salary scale for paraprofessionals.

BOARD REQUESTS / USE OF FACILITIES

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0
(Roll Call Vote)

Request for Approved Field Trips:

Requester	Destination	Date(s)	Approximate Cost	Budgeted Y/N
Mary Ann George	Take 9 th grade students to tour Admiral Peary Vo Tech	January 24, 2025	\$281.38	Yes
Addison Holyfield	Two students to participate in PMEA District Band Bellwood HS	January 22-24, 2025	\$360.00	Yes
Mary Ann George	Take 4 students to St. Francis University for the Middle School Leadership Conference	December 11, 2024	\$0.00	N/A

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Requests for Use of Facilities:

Requester	Purpose	Facility	Date(s)	Rental Fee/ Amount
Jennifer Pisarski	Mustang Family Fun Night	HS Cafeteria	Jan. 7, 8, 14,15, 21, 22 & 28, 2025	No Charge
Matthew Hill, Elementary Wrestling program	Wrestling Practice	ES Wrestling Room	Dec – March Mon through Thursday 5:30 – 9:00 p.m.	No Charge
Matthew Hill, Elementary Wrestling program	Wrestling Meets	Elementary Gymnasium	A schedule will be provided	No Charge
Tina Lutz, Wrestling Boosters	Booster Meetings	Elementary Cafeteria	December 5, 2024 and other dates TBD	No Charge

MOTION TO MAKE THE AGENDA PART OF THE MINUTES

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

MOTION SHOULD BE MADE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING

Motion Decort Second Shope Vote 8-0

Time: 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew R. Decort, Board Secretary

Denise Moschgat, Recording Secretary