

**PORTAGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
NOVEMBER 10, 2021 - 6:30 P.M.**

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Portage Area Board of School Directors was called to order. Erik Thrower, board president, led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. Members and others present were: Susan Berardinelli (6:31 p.m.); Jason Corte; Kathy Hough; John Jubina; Tina Latoche; 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, Christian Smith and Pete Noel.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

David Hayes, a resident of the district and a member of Portage Borough counsel, addressed the board to state that according to state law, he is permitted to video record public school board meetings. He also invited all members of the board to come down to the borough meetings and record if they so desired to. He asked how the district keeps track of employees' arrival times and days off. Mr. Zelanko replied that it is done by a FOB system. Mr. Hayes asked if that was how administrators clocked in. Mr. Zelanko replied in the negative. When Mr. Hayes asked why they did not, Mr. Zelanko replied that they are not a part of a CBA and therefore they do not.

Todd Learn, a resident of the district and a member of Portage Borough counsel, next addressed the board regarding vaccine clinics. He stated that holding them in the school is unnecessary in that there are plenty of sites elsewhere to hold the clinic and that the school is not a doctor's office. He advised the board and administration, Mr. Zelanko specifically, to spend time on education, not clinics. Parents can schedule the shots on their own time. Mr. Learn then asked why these clinics were not on the agenda for board approval. Mr. Zelanko, Mr. McGlynn and several members of the board replied that approval was given several months ago to hold clinics. Further discussion was held in this matter with Mr. Learn eventually returning to his seat.

Janelle Myers, parent and resident of the district, asked the board whether the mask policy would change given that a higher PA court had overturned Governor Wolf's mask mandate. Mr. Thrower replied that the news of this is just breaking and the board is waiting to see if the ruling stands or if the governor appeals it. The board only learned of this information a few hours ago and there's a lot that remains to understand.

Kelli Swires, teacher and resident of the district, addressed the board concerning several emails she had sent them pertaining to face masks and urged them to read the information contained in them. She additionally stated that she met with an attorney regarding masks and the illegal vaccine mandate. The school board should 100% be making all decisions regarding masks and vaccines. In regard to vaccines, Mrs. Swires stated that it is 100% true that there is no FDA approval. She asked why we are experimenting on five years olds by giving them the vaccine. Any vaccine injuries which may occur could come back on the district and put the schools at risk. She noted that the side effects of the vaccines have been under-reported and that many more injuries have occurred. She further asked what the benefits vaccines are.

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Christie Pough, a parent and resident of the district, addressed the board and after introducing herself, mentioned that this is the first time she had been at a board meeting. She asked the board what the district policy is for when a student is sent home presumably symptoms of COVID. She explained that her seventh grader had been sent home feeling sick and with a cough. As she was in the high school parking lot, she received a call from the elementary school asking that she pick up her two elementary school students as well. This resulted in her having to take them out of school for two days, take them to the doctor for testing, pay co-pays with negative results for COVID. The seventh grade student was diagnosed with allergies. Her elementary students showed no symptoms but missed school. She asked why all three students had to be sent home prior to the results of the testing, missing school and having to do make up work. She stated that she does not want her kids to miss school and asked the board to look into the district's procedures. The board thanked her for bringing this to their attention and that they would investigate her concern.

**INFORMATION ONLY**

The board members are required to take advanced training and the nearest training is Richland School District on January 12, 2022, the date of the board meeting. Does the board wish to change the date of the January, 2022 board meeting and attend the mandatory training or do an online option? The board determined that the January meeting would be held on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The December reorganization meeting will be held December 1, 2021 with the regular meeting following.

**ROUTINE MATTERS**

1. December and January board meeting dates. The Board will meet on December 1, 2021 for their reorganization meeting with the regular meeting following. The board will meet on January 18, 2022 for the regular voting meeting.
2. Second readings of board policies. Mr. Zelanko noted that three policies had been stricken as they do not pertain to the district or further review is necessary.
3. Twin Lakes agreement. This is a routine agreement and the district would only incur costs if it would send a student to the facility.

**PERSONNEL MATTERS**

1. Staff matters

**BOARD AGENDA REQUEST/USE OF FACILITIES**

**POINTS OF DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD**

Time: 6:57 p.m.