

*SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Committee of the Whole Meeting
March 10, 2021 – Hybrid
Minutes*

The Board of School Directors of the Shaler Area School District held a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, in a hybrid format, in person at the Shaler Area Administration Building, Glenshaw, PA, and on Zoom, a virtual meeting platform, with Mr. Jim Tunstall, School Board President, presiding. This meeting began at 7:22 p.m.

Board Members Present: Mrs. Suzanna Donahue
Mr. James Fisher
Mr. Tim Gapsky
Dr. April Kwiatkowski
Mr. Jason Machajewski
Mrs. Jeanne Petrovich
Mrs. Eileen Phillips
Mr. Steve Romac
Mr. James Tunstall

Others Present: Dr. Sean Aiken, Superintendent
Dr. Bryan O’Black, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Kathleen Graczyk, Director of Student Services
Ms. Sherri Ludwig, Director of Business Affairs
Mr. Matt Hoffman, Solicitor
Catherine Clark, Student Representative

Notice of this meeting was posted as required.

- Mr. James Tunstall called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m.

Dr. O’Black then announced the following Education Items:

<u>ITEM</u>		<u>SUP</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
#	<u>EDUCATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>	#	<u>TAKEN</u>
A.1	Approve the naming of the walking trail at Reserve Primary School in honor of Mrs. Kimberly Young. Mrs. Young was a third-grade teacher at Reserve primary for 22 years before passing away unexpectedly in September 2020. <i>(This request follows the guidelines of Board Policy No. 701.1 Naming/ Renaming District Facilities.)</i>	A.1	_____
A.2	Approve a resolution by the Board of Directors of the Shaler Area School District supporting the development of an anti-racist school climate.		_____

- Dr. O’Black said a committee of parents, teachers, and administrators met over the course of several months to discuss the best way to honor Mrs. Young. He said the walking trail speaks to who Kim was and informational plaques to be placed along the trail will reflect her love of Reserve Township, Pittsburgh, science and education.

Dr. O’Black then announced the following Information Items:

Information Items:

1. Student Representatives – Catherine Clark said the mask compliance has improved at the high school and information about mitigation strategies and mask wearing has increased. She asked if there were any developments in a way to report compliance issues. She also noted that AP testing is approaching, the free and reduced lunch program applications are due, and there is a lot of anxiety at the high school level about what the future holds as the end of the year approaches. The school counseling department has done a lot to help with scheduling. Additionally, the class of 2020 donated its class funds to renovate the outdoor classroom space, so options are being discussed. The LIGHT class also is doing a lot to recognize Black History Month and Women’s History Month. Dr. Kwiatkowski asked what the format of AP testing will be. Dr. O’Black said there has been no direct communication from College Board but he will look into it. Ms. Clark said all of the tests will be in person but one. Dr. O’Black also reported that students can anonymously report concerns via the high school app and comment box at the high school. Dr. Aiken encouraged students to go to a trusted adult in school with any concerns. He said that he feels relationships are critical for high school students.
2. Shaler Area Education Foundation – Mrs. Phillips said the board met last Monday and reviewed the applications for the \$250 mini grants related to the pandemic to help teachers with student learning and staff challenges. She said there were some really great applications, so while the Foundation originally planned to fund eight grants, they chose 10 because of the benefit they will provide to students. She added that there is at least one grant recipient per building.
3. Spring 2021 PSSA Assessment Update – Dr. O’Black explained that the PDE applied for waivers from the federal Department of Education. Shaler Area is required to administer the assessments but has the option to administer them in the spring or fall. The district made the decision to administer the tests in the spring of the current year. That will enable the district to start the next school year in as normal of a school year as possible. He said the district considered the impact of testing after summer vacation and a potential summer learning loss. While the test data does not count toward district accountability, it will be used to inform the district’s decision making. He said administering the test in the spring means students will not have to go through two rounds of state assessments in the same school year as would happen if the district delayed administering the test.
4. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Aiken said the K-3 transition to 4-day instruction was smooth, however, traffic has been a challenge because of the number of families transporting students. On Monday, the elementary school will transition to 4-day in-person instruction and the district anticipates traffic to be a challenge there too. The administration is coming up with a plan for the secondary transition to 4-day in-person instruction in the month of April. In partnership with the state and AIU, teachers will begin to be vaccinated. Shaler Area is allocated 215 vaccines in the first round and in a short amount of time, all teachers will be vaccinated. Dr. Aiken said the district couldn’t be prouder of the Kim Young memorial plans, and the district also will rename the Extra Mile Award in her honor. He said that anyone who knew her as a teacher knew it was a 24/7 commitment for her. Additionally, the 50th anniversary planning committee is looking at the Class of 2021, the 50th graduating class, and ways to enhance how the district celebrates this class. Next year, the district will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the district and will release a commemorative logo. Finally, the district’s Response to Racism team has continued to meet and plan ways to address racism in the community and district. The resolution on the agenda is a piece of the work it’s doing. In February, the Shaler Area girls basketball players teamed up with North Allegheny to take a stand against racism at their game. It was very successful, and many districts are reaching out to Coach Nesbit to talk about expanding the initiative. Mr. Nick Haberman and a group of high school students also held a panel discussion on the Black experience and plan to use it to educate students throughout the district.

- Dr. Kwiatkowski thanked the district for keeping Mrs. Young’s spirit alive.
- Dr. Aiken confirmed that ABC Transit personnel will be vaccinated in tier 2 of the district’s vaccination process. Dr. O’Black confirmed that the bus drivers have registered and will be vaccinated through the process.
- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked about any concerns with the sanitization or custodial staff as the district transitions to 4-day in-person instruction. Dr. Aiken said there is either a part time or mid-day custodian at every school to help in addition to the typical daytime custodian. Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if the district was equipped to add students in the district’s larger buildings. Dr. Aiken said that it is a collaborative effort even at the middle school and high school. The custodians will continue to follow the cleaning schedule; the challenge is the individual desks in the cafeterias take more time to clean. He said he believes the district has the right staff, but transitioning the elementary school will provide more information as the district looks to transition the middle and high schools.
- Mr. Gapsky thanked the entire committee for their work to create a plan to honor Mrs. Young. He also added that the community response has been very positive for the transportation at the primary level with its transition to 4-day in-person instruction.

Ms. Ludwig then announced the following Finance Items:

<u>ITEM</u>		<u>SUP.</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
#	<u>FINANCE & OPERATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>	#	<u>TAKEN</u>
C.1	APPROVE FUND PROFILES:		
	A. General Fund – Schedule of Bills and Addendum	C.1A	_____
	B. Cafeteria Fund – Schedule of Bills	C.1B	_____
	C. Bond Proceeds – Schedule of Bills	C.1C	_____
	D. Year-to-Date Financial Reports	C.1D	_____
	E. Budget Transfers	C.1E	_____
	F. Fund Profiles and Investments	C.1F	_____
C.2	Cafeteria Operating Statement	C.2	_____
	<i>For Information: The USDA has extended free meals through summer.</i>		_____
C.3	Approve the purchase of district-wide uninterruptable power supply (UPS) to IntegraOne in the total amount of \$42,888.95.	C.3	_____
	<i>Background: The UPS systems will ensure that each building’s networking equipment will be protected from power surges and ensure there is a three to five minutes up time for power outages. Final estimated cost to the district will be reduced by approximately 30% as a result of E-rate funding.</i>		_____
C.4	Approve the sale of the 2004 Ford F350 Utility Bed truck to Ricci Hauling in the amount of \$3,105.	C.4	_____

- Mr. Romac clarified several line items on the check list.
- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if the district planned to serve students through the summer. Ms. Ludwig said the USDA extended the free meal program through Sept. 30 and currently the locations in the community are doing well.
- Dr. Aiken said Mr. Fisher and he have been meeting with Etna and Allegheny County and developers who have purchased 51 Bridge Street and are looking to develop the site but are requesting a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) from the school district, borough and county to help offset taxes. There will need to be a discussion within the school board to move forward. The long-term vision is exciting because they want to partner with students and the high school. Dr. Aiken said he will share additional information with the board next week. Mr. Fisher said he was intrigued by the AI and robotics and synergies associated with A.W. Beattie and the high school. He said the LERTA is really a tax suspension because the money will come back to the district, but the LERTA allows them to get the project off the ground. Dr. Aiken said the property sold for \$3 million in late fall and will be an abatement on the taxes. The district has not participated in a LERTA in some time so it's exciting for the district and Etna. Mr. Hoffman said the LERTA statute establishes the process whereby Etna will first hold a public hearing to establish the boundaries where the LERTA is available. Mr. Romac expressed some concerns with how the LERTA will be identified and about other properties in the area asking for the same accommodations. He said he is supportive but that Etna needs to initiate the process and lay out the parameters. Additional discussion occurred on how the LERTA would be established and how it would benefit the district.

- Mr. Tunstall then invited the board to speak on any other business.
 - Dr. Kwiatkowski asked how things were going with the exceptional students being in 4-day instruction. Dr. Graczyk said the department had been doing 4-day instruction so now the focus is on students who weren't as engaged.
 - Dr. Aiken thanked Dr. Graczyk and her department for hosting the Managing Stress event. He said he received a lot of positive feedback on it, and it is a resource that will continue to serve students and families. Dr. Graczyk said it was a lot of hard work by the school counselors and HSAO.
 - Dr. Kwiatkowski acknowledge Ms. Ludwig being the recipient of the PASBO regional chapter leadership award.
 - Dr. Kwiatkowski said six months previously, she brought up the district switching to one color for the caps and gowns at graduation and is disappointed that she feels it wasn't addressed. Mrs. Donahue echoed her disappointment. Dr. Aiken said that the high school has met about this subject and accommodations are currently made for students to choose the color gown they wish to wear. The students' desire was to maintain two color gowns. Dr. Kwiatkowski said those accommodations should not have to happen and that the students may not have understood the implication of having two color gowns. She said she is disappointed and wanted to express that publicly. Dr. Kwiatkowski said that taking out-of-the-box progressive steps in one area, such as the Response to Racism, but not others doesn't make sense. Mr. Tunstall said the topic warrants more discussion from students and staff. Mrs. Donahue said the reasoning to switch to one color gown needs to be explained better to students. Ms. Clark said she personally feels it's a good idea to switch to one color gown. She said that often students who struggle with these issues feel it's always their burden to decide on the gown color. In the interest of expanding gender awareness, she said she feels it's a good idea. Dr. Aiken said in the midst of a pandemic, and having to make large decisions on instructional models and the district's Response to Racism efforts, the administration has been cautious in how it pushes forward and the topics in focuses its attention on with other pressing issues. He said that these are important discussions but that they deserve the time and attention in order to make the right decision and at the right time. Mr. Gapsky said he agrees that the topic deserves more discussion.

- Mr. Tunstall then recognized the public to speak on any other items:
 - Bryan Whitaker, of Martha Avenue, said that he is a fan of consume choice and suggested giving the students options to customize their robes as is capable by the company that provides them.
 - Keely Sidick, of Wetzel Road, said she is excited by the K-3 transition to 4-day in-person instruction. She asked about the 7-12 transition. Dr. Aiken said the district hasn't published that transition date yet, but it hopes to within the week. Mrs. Sidick said she encourages the district to make that transition sooner rather than later and possibly before April. She said she has heard concerning reports that a large number of seniors are not on track to graduate.

After no further items were presented, final adjournment occurred at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bethany Baker
Assistant Board Secretary