

*SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Committee of the Whole Meeting
September 8, 2021 – Hybrid
Minutes*

The Board of School Directors of the Shaler Area School District held a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, September 8, 2021, in a hybrid format, in person at the Shaler Area Middle School library, Glenshaw, PA, and on Zoom, a virtual meeting platform, with Mr. James 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
 Ms. Sherri Ludwig, Director of Business Affairs
 Mr. Matt Hoffman, Solicitor
 Catherine Clark, Student Representative
 Avery Gallant, Student Representative

Notice of this meeting was posted as required.

- Mr. Tunstall called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.

- Dr. Aiken stated that the school board would provide a public comment period at the end of the Committee of the Whole meeting.

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

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUP</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
#	#	<u>TAKEN</u>
<u>EDUCATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>		
A.1 Approve the following out of district trip:	A.1	
a. Shaler Area Girls Volleyball team – travel to State College, PA – October 8 & 9, 2021 to participate in volleyball tournament.		_____

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

Information Items:

1. Student Representative – Dr. Aiken introduced Catherine Clark and Avery Gallant. Ms. Gallant introduced herself and said she was already involved in student government at the high school. She said she is interested in connecting students and administrators. She has aspirations of going to college to be a high school English educator. Ms. Clark thanked the school district for everything it did to get the students back in school safely. She said the students are happy to have a homecoming dance even if it is outside. She also followed up with the school board on the idea of subsidizing the AP test fees. She asked the school board to consider reimbursing students who do well on an AP test. Ms. Gallant said everything has been going well with the start of school. Being in person has meant more engagement and the students appreciate that the number of people who must quarantine when a positive case occurs is controlled. Dr. Aiken added that overall the students in the district are adjusting well and thriving and connecting. Dr. Kwiatkowski followed up with Ms. Clark’s AP test suggestion. Dr. O’Black said he will reach out to the high school. He said there are fee waivers from College Board and the school district continues to offer that however the suggestion is to go above that. Dr. O’Black said he will start the conversation with the AP coordinator at the high school.

2. Shaler Area Education Foundation – Mrs. Phillips said the Foundation has not met since last meeting. They are currently finalizing the digital application for grants and organizing a booth for homecoming. Dr. Aiken said one grant application came in last week related to the high school STEAM competition, and he is looking forward to reviewing it the following Monday night when the board meets.

3. Back to School 2021 – Dr. Aiken reported that the start of the school year is going well and connections are being made with peers and teachers. He identified masks as an obstacle which is why connecting is so important and teachers are being creative in finding new ways to connect. One concern that has been raised is recess at the Elementary School. Administration has worked diligently over the last month to make significant adjustments to the schedule which will start later this month. There will be a dedicated lunch and recess period for every student in grades 4, 5, and 6. The 50th anniversary of the school district will be celebrated during homecoming with several alumni events. Homecoming dance will be held on Biles Field. Dr. Aiken said he spoke with the Allegheny County Health Department last week to find the safest way to host these larger events. The district also had a District Parent Council meeting earlier that morning, which was the first time to reconnect in over a year. They are accepting nominations for officers, and Dr. Aiken said it’s a great opportunity to reestablish relationships with parents. Dr. Aiken said he is looking forward to planning some additional evening meetings and events. Dr. O’Black agreed that it was a great start to the school year. After visiting with a large number of staff, he said there is a high level of energy. The district’s focus for the year is to reconnect, reimagine, and inspire.

4. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Aiken’s report was included in the Back to School report.

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 – Schedule of Bills	C.1B	_____

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D.	2019 Bond Proceeds – Schedule of Bills	C.1D	_____
E.	Year-to-Date Financial Reports	C.1E	_____
F.	Fund Profiles and Investments	C.1F	_____
C.2	Approve the attached list of Bus Stops for the 2021-22 school year.	C.2	_____
C.3	Approve additional ABC Transit personnel.	C.3	_____
C.4	Approve additional school of attendance exception applications for the 2021-22 school year (pending final enrollment).	C.4	_____
C.5	Approve an extension of our current agreement with peoples Natural Gas as negotiated by The Western Pennsylvania Natural Gas Consortium Committee for the period from September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2025, with a Basis price of minus \$0.44 cents per dth. Our current agreement has a Basis price of minus \$0.39 cents per dth.	C.5	_____

- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked about the overall difference for Item. C.5. Ms. Ludwig said it will be a decrease with the new contract starting next year.

Ms. Ludwig then announced the following Information Item:

Information Item:

1. Shaler Area Elementary School fan donation — A total of 27 fans were donated by Allegheny County Sheriff’s Department to be utilized in classrooms at Shaler Area Elementary School. This donation was coordinated through conversations between a SAES family, SAES administration and the county Sheriff’s Department.

Ms. Ludwig then announced the following Discussion Items:

Discussion Items:

1. Shaler Area Ventilation System Assessment – Ms. Ludwig said both discussion items will be tabled until the following week. Mr. Romac confirmed that the items would be discussed and not voted on.
2. Shaler Area Facilities Study Update

- Mr. Tunstall then invited the board to speak on any other business.
 - Mr. Romac asked if the district would implement TEN as well and if they would be involved in the discussions about ventilation. Dr. Aiken said Huckestein and TEN on working on a report for the district to review some of the upgrades. Mr. Romac suggested bringing everyone together, including HHSDR, Huckestein, and TEN. Dr. Aiken said he would speak with John Kaib, supervisor of buildings and grounds, and Greer Hayden with HHSDR would be available the following week to provide an update. Mr. Romac expressed some concerns about conflict of interest and duplication of services with the involved parties. Dr. Aiken said the district is looking at collecting information. Additional discussion about this issue took place with the agreement to discuss in more detail at the upcoming meeting.
 - Dr. Kwiatkowski said she received communication from a Class of 2020 alum regarding their concerns with Policy 202, which covers eligibility. She said the alum felt it was important to review this policy especially as students return to normal. Dr. Aiken said the athletic director is working to get students involved and there is some leeway with superintendent approval. Dr. Kwiatkowski asked that the eligibility extends to activities as well and the activities director is involved. Dr. O'Black said the district reviews situations on a case by case basis. Mrs. Donahue suggested reviewing the meeting minutes because she recalls the concern being about timing of the grades and not having enough time to make up work. Ms. Gallant said there are some teachers who do take more time to input grades. Ms. Clark said a lot of the issue is at the beginning of a 9-week period because of weighing grades. She said there are some teachers who are very aware of the policy. Mrs. Donahue suggested a policy committee meeting to review the policy to ensure it is accurate since it sounds like internal procedures are in place.

- Mr. Tunstall then recognized the public to speak on any other items:
 - Dorothy Petrancosta, of Skylark Drive, said the district's facilities are at less than 62 percent capacity and requested that the school board look at "butts in seats" and make sure the district needs all of its buildings. She believes that two schools can be closed and administration needs to reassign and realign the district. Ms. Petrancosta said the district should conduct a study because she is paying for 38 percent more facility than is need. She requested a special committee look at this issue. She also said she approves of and supports masking.
 - Keely Sidick, of Wetzel Road, asked what the district's long-term plan is for the pandemic. She said as a working parent, she needs to know when students might be pulled to go virtual. She also asked what the district is doing for students who need to quarantine because 10 days without instruction is a lot. Additionally, she asked why the Sea Dogs were not allowed to swim in the district pool, why middle school students were not allowed to go to their lockers during the school day, and why students can't bring out of district guests to the homecoming dance. Dr. Aiken said he will follow up with Dr. Royall and Dr. Stennett with her concerns.
 - Erin Vincent, of Willowwood Drive, said she doesn't feel Gov. Wolf has the authority to mandate masking in schools. She argued that parents should have the authority to decide if their child should be masked or not. Children were playing together throughout the summer. She also cited scientific studies on the harms of masking.
 - Amanda Ravsten, of Parker Street, said she appreciated the district survey and argued that no majority should be given control over our children. She cited the psychosocial effects of children wearing masks, the loss of nonverbal communication, children missing out on communication and social cues, communication issues and mental health issues, derealism or the psychosocial repercussions. She said it's important to understand how COVID deaths are counted and how this data is being used to force masking.

After no further items were presented, final adjournment occurred at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bethany Baker
Assistant Board Secretary