

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

The Board of School Directors of the Shaler Area School District held a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, November 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. James Tunstall, School Board President, presiding. This meeting began at 7:29 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, Deputy Superintendent
- Ms. Sherri Ludwig, Director of Business Affairs
- Mr. Matt Hoffman, Solicitor
- Avery Gallant, Student Representative

Notice of this meeting was posted as required.

- Mr. Tunstall called the meeting to order at 7:29 p.m.
- Dr. Aiken shared information regarding masking in schools based on information shared by Gov. Wolf earlier in the day and Secretary of Education Noe Ortega. He clarified that part of Shaler Area's Health and Safety Plan includes a requirement to wear a mask and reiterated that the district would continue this requirement until further notice.
- Marty Martynuska, principal at Reserve Primary, presented on some of the programs and highlights at the school along with staff members Mike Chmielewski, physical education teacher and academic coach, Carrie Miller, school counselor, Kaitlyn Corcoran, a teacher, and Tammy Jarosinski, a teacher. Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if the staff noticed any difference in Kindergarten students since starting the Pre-K Counts program at the school. Mr. Martynuska said there is a huge benefit. The students in the program are included in everything the school does. Mrs. Donahue asked about the biggest challenges. Mr. Martynuska said the school has wonderful supports but it can be difficult to coordinate all of them especially with staff who wear so many hats. For students, being in a smaller school places them under the microscope more. And for parents, they say that getting to the school in the winter is a challenge. Mrs. Petrovich asked if there was any issue with attendance. Mr. Martynuska said overall, attendance is very good, however there are pockets of children and families who struggle. There is a social worker who comes in once per week to review and address attendance issues. Mr. Martynuska added that it was more challenging when in virtual instruction and this school year's attendance is better than ever. Mr. Tunstall complimented Mr. Martynuska on the way that he promotes his school.

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

<u>ITEM</u> #	<u>EDUCATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>	<u>SUP</u> # <i>Board Only</i>	<u>ACTION</u> <u>TAKEN</u>
A.1	Approve a Disciplinary Action for Student #1 for the 2021-22 school year.		_____
A.2	Approve a pilot reimbursement program for advanced placement exams for the 2021-22 school year.	A.2	_____

- Dr. O’Black said that based on the information shared by high school principal Dr. Tim Royall, the reimbursement cost for Item A.2 would be about \$18,000 for students who score a 3, 4, or 5 on the test. After the pilot year, the district can review the data and decide if any adjustment needs to be made. The reimbursement program will be based on the student’s test score.

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

Information Items:

1. Student Representatives – Avery Gallant said the pilot program for the AP tests is great. She also said that there are students who have to quarantine or who get sick and miss school and missing a day can put a student back a lot. She said she knows that it is hard for teachers and students to be in virtual or hybrid, but students who are getting quarantined are not getting the same resources as their in-person peers. She said that the issue has been discussed by the student government that Google Classroom is not like being in class. She offered some suggestions for how the district can provide a virtual option for students who are sick such as sending a link to the class directly to the quarantined students or having the teacher host office hours to connect with students. She also promoted the upcoming high school fall play. All shows will be in person and performers on stage will have clear masks. The English Honor Society also is hosting a storytelling event and photo booth for the show.
2. Shaler Area Education Foundation – Mrs. Phillips said the grant application is now online. The Foundation also is working on a formalized alumni program that would work in concert with the social alumni group. The members are working to create a logo for the Foundation as well. Finally, she said the Foundation is part of Amazon Smile. Dr. Aiken said the group is very positive about its direction right now. He said the Foundation is supporting a district postcard project to provide recognition to students and staff. The postcards are a districtwide initiative. He said they will challenge staff to reconnect with all students and engage all families.
3. Dr. O’Black shared that the PA Department of Education has approved our request for an Emergency School Closing waiver due to widespread flooding on September 1, 2021, for Shaler Area Elementary School, Burchfield Primary, Marzolf Primary, Reserve Primary and Scott Primary schools.
4. Dr. O’Black shared that the PA Department of Education has determined that Shaler Area School District has met the requirements with IDEA for the federal fiscal year 2019.
5. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Aiken said Nick Haberman recently presented to the District Parent Council about his role in the district, which has expanded to include a focus on inclusivity and belonging. He said the reach is significant and Mr. Haberman is exceeding what the district initially envisioned. He said the district is moving forward with the 50th anniversary event plans including the storytelling event in March and the scavenger hunt in April. Ms. Gallant suggested reaching out to Tara Wells for the storytelling event because the students work with

small children. Dr. O'Black shared details about the vaccination clinics that are being hosted at Scott Primary. The school nurses are working with The Medicine Shoppe to host booster clinics for staff as well as a vaccination clinic for students age 5-11 on Nov. 23 and Dec. 14. Dr. Aiken shared that based on the conversation last month about caps and gowns, the district convened a group of individuals to look at gender and equity in the district and how the district might improve the school environment as well as the specific issue of caps and gowns. There were three options that were discussed: 1.) maintaining blue and white gowns without any gender label attached to the colors, 2.) have the students create a new, unified gown, and 3.) maintain blue and white gowns without any gender label for the Class of 2022 and implement a new, student-designed, unified gown for the Class of 2023. Recognizing that the timeline is a challenge, the third option would give the district the opportunity to work through the design process. Ms. Gallant said that regardless of what the district does, people will be upset. She said she doesn't believe a change at this point in the school year would be beneficial to the student body. She felt the best decision would be to maintain the white and blue options without a link to gender and change the gown for the Class of 2023. She said the change needs to occur at the beginning of the school year to make it easier for everyone to be on the same page. She added that graduation is only one day and the students who are affected by the decision live in the hallways every day. While changing the gowns is a visual representation, it's important to continue to work on inclusivity of everyone. Dr. Kwiatkowski asked what the expert's decision was. Dr. Aiken explained that the individual was involved in the discussions as a resource and did not take a stance with the entire group but rather spoke to creating a more inclusive environment. Dr. Kwiatkowski said she was concerned that the Class of 2023 would protest and it would just be kicking the can down the road. Mrs. Donahue wanted to know if the district was basing its decision on students threatening to protest. Dr. Aiken assured the board that the topic never came up. He said the district does believe timing is critical and making the decision to say the change will come with next year's graduating class is not kicking the can. Additional discussion occurred among the board members. Ms. Gallant clarified that before the committee was created, the only discussion about inclusivity in the district was around the gowns and that was the driving force for many students' frustrations. Dr. Aiken said students also didn't feel like they were being given a voice in the matter. He said that typically the district takes the time to plan and involve student in the process to make any change, and since he has been in the district, the district and board has listened to the students' voice. He said that the conversation is about involving people in the process and an awareness that the graduation gowns are just one piece of the discussion. After some additional discussion, Mr. Gapsky asked what the administration needed from the school board. Dr. Aiken said the district can make the decision right now, and it does not require a board vote. He also believes that the district can make a final decision on the new gowns for the Class of 2023 and beyond by the spring. Dr. Aiken thanked Ms. Gallant for her insight and involvement and said that the district would come up with a plan with the high school administration to further create an inclusive environment.

- Dr. Kwiatkowski shared that the AP tests are up to \$96 and asked if fewer students are taking AP courses because they are taking College in High School courses instead. She asked if the district should consider offering the same monetary amount to those students. Dr. O'Black said the district would review the data after the pilot year.

Dr. O'Black then announced the following Discussion Item:

Discussion Item:

1. Reserve Primary School Presentation was given at the beginning of the meeting.

Ms. Ludwig then announced the following Finance Items:

<u>ITEM</u> #	<u>FINANCE & OPERATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>	<u>SUP</u> #	<u>ACTION</u> <u>TAKEN</u>
C.1	APPROVE FUND PROFILES:		
	A. General Fund – Schedule of Bills	C.1A	_____
	B. Cafeteria Fund – Schedule of Bills	C.1B	_____
	C. 2019 Bond Proceeds – Schedule of Bills	C.1C	_____
	D. Year-to-Date Financial Reports	C.1D	_____
	E. Fund Profiles and Investments	C.1E	_____
	F Student Activity Funds & Investments – High School, Middle School and Elementary School –July 1 1, 2021, and September 30, 2021.	C.1F	_____
C.2	Cafeteria Operating Statements (September & October)	C.2	_____
C.3	Approve additional ABC Transit personnel.	C.3	_____
C.4	Approve the disposal of surplus books from Burfield Primary.	C.4	_____
C.5	Approve the disposal of surplus books from Shaler Area High School.	C.5	_____
C.6	Approve Tri-Cog Land Bank’s Notice of Intent to Acquire the Property and does not object to the Land Bank’s acquisition and the waiver of all taxes, tax claims and municipal claims due against the Property upon the TCLB’s acquisition.	C.6	_____
C.7	Approval of Resolution of the Shaler Area School District, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, authorizing previously issued its General Obligation Bonds, Series C and D of 2016, for capital improvements purposes; and a change in application of Bond Proceeds obtained from prior bond issues of the district, authorizing and directing officers and administrators of the district to execute all documents and undertake all actions necessary to put the foregoing resolution into effect, repealing all inconsistent resolutions and setting forth an effective date.	C.7	_____

- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked where the quarterly interest went that was reflected in the activities report at the high school. Ms. Ludwig said it is carry over from the previous year. She said typically when it gets larger, it is allocated to the various groups.
- Dr. Kwiatkowski announced the upcoming elementary school play.
- Mr. Gapsky acknowledged all of the students and staff involved in the middle school play.

- Mr. Tunstall then recognized the public to speak on any other items:
 - Thomas Berret, of Loire Valley Drive, said he had concerns about the 6th period school lunch room at the high school. He said he expressed his concerns to the high school administration but he wants to know if the district plans to increase supervision or security in the lunch room. Mr. Tunstall said the conversation is one that has been brought up. Dr. Aiken said the district is working with the high school administrative team to understand the situation. He said he will follow up with the high school, however, the district is not able to share exact details or discuss disciplinary action. He assured Mr. Berret that all protocols have been followed. Mr. Berret said saying that the district is “taking appropriate action” is not sufficient.
 - Elizabeth Hanulak, of Vilsack Street, supported Mr. Berret in his comments and said her child also struggled in the lunch room. She said her complaint is with the graduation gowns and the dialogue and sexism around the dress code. She asked if any conversation occurred about gender neutral bathrooms or locker rooms. She said that being able to graduate with an education is privilege enough and it shouldn’t matter what the gown color is.
 - Crystal Corfield, of Seavey Road, said the school board spent 40 minutes talking about equity and graduation gowns. She said she’d like the same attention to be placed on equity in education. She said her son is currently at home with COVID, which makes four weeks that he has not been in school because of illness or quarantine. She asked when teachers would be required to post live lessons. She said her son is ineligible for sports because he has an F in one class, which happens when he is out for 2 weeks. Dr. Aiken said that the district has listened to her concerns and has been monitoring the situation. He said when teachers posted links to the class last year, many students stayed home. The district’s quarantine numbers have remained manageable; however, he will work with the administrative team to come up with a solution as quickly as possible.
 - Julia Ehrenberger, senior class president, said her job, and the job of her cabinet is to speak for all students and that’s what they try to do. The student voices were heard, and they appreciate that. She said that change is important and there are other changes that are more important which is what they hope to work on in the coming months with the district.
 - Keely Sidick, of Wetzel Road, said she wanted to echo Ms. Corfield’s concerns. She said she didn’t understand why if the district has the technology a teacher can’t go through a math lesson virtually.
 - Becca Beckas, senior class vice president, said the district and students are trying to make the change however in the amount of time it feels rushed. She said the students feel there are bigger issues and they want a clear change.
 - Maria Eshelman, of Topaz Drive, said she is disappointed in the community and the district because she feels moving to one unified gown is a no brainer. She said students will continue to choose a gown based on their gender and changing the order form does not take care of the issue. She said this is an administrative decision that should have been made by the administration and not the community. She doesn’t see how the district can make a big decision like around a bathroom if it can’t make a decision about a gown color.

- Mr. Tunstall then recognized Dr. Aiken for a public recognition:
 - Dr. Aiken recognized Mrs. Donahue for her years of service on the school board, her hard work, her passions and her convictions. He said that the district has appreciated everything she brought to the district in her position as school board member and the legacy that she is leaving. Mrs. Donahue said serving as a board member was an honor and a pleasure.
 - Dr. Aiken then announced the girls volleyball team’s next game on Saturday as they chase a state championship title.

After no further items were presented, final adjournment occurred at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bethany Baker
Assistant Board Secretary