

*SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Committee of the Whole Meeting  
November 8, 2023 – Hybrid  
Minutes*

The Board of School Directors of the Shaler Area School District held a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, in a hybrid format, in person at the Shaler Area Middle School Library, and on Zoom, a virtual meeting platform, with Dr. April Kwiatkowski, School Board President, presiding. This meeting began at 7:28 p.m.

Board Members Present:               Ms. Elizabeth Dunn  
  Mr. James Fisher  
  Mr. Tim Gapsky  
  Dr. April Kwiatkowski  
  Mr. Jason Machajewski  
  Mrs. Eileen Phillips  
  Mr. James Tunstall

Board Members Absent:               Mrs. Jeanne Petrovich

Others Present:                        Dr. Sean Aiken, Superintendent  
  Dr. Bryan O'Black, Deputy Superintendent  
  Mr. John Kaib, Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds  
  Mr. John Vogel, Solicitor  
  Mr. Matt Franz, HHSDR

Notice of this meeting was posted as required.

➤ Dr. Kwiatkowski called the meeting to order at 7:28 p.m.

Dr. Aiken introduced Lena Hannah, from the PA School Board Association. Mrs. Hannah presented certificates to Mrs. Phillips, Mr. Tunstall, Mr. Machajewski for each having eight years of service. She presented awards to Mr. Fisher for 28 years of service and Mrs. Petrovich for 24 years of service. She congratulated these board members for a combined 76 years of service to Shaler Area!

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

<u>ITEM</u>		<u>SUP</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
<u>#</u>	<u>EDUCATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>TAKEN</u>
A.1	Approve a Memorandum of Understanding with the Pittsburgh Mercy School-Based Outpatient Program to provide outpatient mental health assessments for students during the 2023-24 school year.	A.1	<hr/>
A.2	Approve the first reading of the following new policies: a. Policy No. 236.1 – Threat Assessment b. Policy No. 805.2 – School Security Personnel	A.2	<hr/>
A.3	Approve the first reading of the following revised policies: a. Policy No. 805 – Emergency Preparedness & Response b. Policy No. 808 – Food Services c. Policy No. 815 – Acceptable Use of Internet, Computers and Network Resources	A.3	

- A.4 Approve the following out-of-district travel: A.4
- a. Boys & Girls Varsity/JV Basketball Teams travel to State College, PA, December 28-29, 2023, to participate in the State College Christmas tournaments. No cost to the district.
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- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if there were any questions from the board.
- There were none.

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

1. Student Representatives – Isabelle Dutkovic & Elena Karnavas

Dr. Aiken introduced Elena (Leni) to the board and welcomed her as the Junior Class Representative.

All primary schools and the elementary school celebrated Red Ribbon Week October 23-31.

**Burchfield Primary** – November 6-11 we are celebrating “Gratitude Week” each day with a them of things we can be thankful to such as our classmates, our country, our school. Carnival Night is November 10 at 6:00 p.m. High School students will be volunteering.

**Reserve Primary** – Our parent club held a Fall Festival last Friday with games, pumpkins and face painting. We had a huge community turn out and Police, EMS, Fire and maintenance department all brought vehicles for students to tour. These groups also came to safety week and taught lessons and answered questions.

**Scott Primary** – Halloween parades were live-streamed so relatives could be part of celebrations. Grade 3 students made friendship bracelets to share with local veterans at the middle school breakfast. Students from Thailand and Ecuador were welcomed – our school is comprised of almost 11% English learners. Students are collecting food for North Hills Community Outreach.

**Middle School** – On November 8 we will host our annual Veteran’s Day breakfast from 8-10 in our cafeteria.

**High School** – “The Homecoming” will be presented November 17 & 18. The first blood drive is this Friday. Winter sports physicals were yesterday and winter sports parents meeting is next Tuesday. Carson Pierce was named to the Steelers All-Peer Team. The Powder Puff game is November 21 and seniors will be hosting a bake sale. Seniors are starting a Sarris candy fundraiser and a Moe’s fundraiser to raise money for class funds. Dr. O’Black mentioned that students who took AP tests in the spring should be receiving their reimbursement checks sometime next month.

2. Shaler Area Education Foundation – Mrs. Phillips reported that the committee met on Monday night. The foundation was pleased to provide a grant for Literacy Under the Lights on October 27. The Taste of Shaler Area is being planned for Saturday, April 6. The Alumni Relations Committee will meet on November 20, all are welcome to attend.

3. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Aiken

- The high school play is next weekend.
- Mr. Rauscher will be hosting a winter athletic parent meeting on November 14.
- Next Wednesday will be Mrs. Petrovich’s last meeting as she is retiring from the board after 24 years of service.
- Dr. Aiken and Dr. O’Black attended an athletic signing event today at the high school Four student athletes were recognized.
- The middle school hosted their annual Veteran’s Day breakfast this morning. SAMS students served between 250-300 breakfasts.
- Literacy Under the Lights was a big success.

- We hosted a Community Wellness Event on Monday night. The keynote speaker was the AHN Sports Director of Sports Performance for the Allegheny Health Network whose message was to encourage students to be healthy and well. Eighteen vendors were present in the cafeteria. Another parent night is being planned in January.

Dr. Kwiatkowski asked for more information on the Steelers All-Peer Team. Dr. Aiken explained that Carson is worthy of this recognition as he is a truly great teammate. During his senior football season, Carson was injured in the second game of the season. An emotional leader on the team, Carson could be seen over the next four games encouraging and celebrating his teammates from the sideline. He battled to play with a broken hand in the last four games of the season. Our students are amazing and do great things in the classroom and around the school.

Mrs. Jaffee then announced the following Finance Items:

<u>ITEM</u> #	<u>FINANCE &amp; OPERATION ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL</u>	<u>SUP</u> #	<u>ACTION</u> <u>TAKEN</u>
C.1	<b>APPROVE FUND PROFILES:</b>		
A.	General Fund – Schedule of Bills and Addendum	C.1A	_____
B.	Cafeteria – Schedule of Bills	C.1B	_____
C.	2019 Bond Proceeds – Schedule of Bills	C.1C	_____
D.	Bond Transfers	C.1D	_____
E.	Year-to-Date Financial Reports	C.1E	_____
F.	Fund Profiles and Investments	C.1F	_____
C.2	Cafeteria Operating Statements (September)	C.2	_____
C.3	Approve additional ABC Transit personnel	C.3	_____
C.4	Approve change order GC 001 with Caliber Contracting for the final contract amount adjustment for unused field quantity allowances for the Titan Stadium Press Box Project. Deduct (\$6,595).	C.4	_____
C.5	Approve the rejection of all bids for the Shaler Area Middle School library rooftop unit.	C.5	_____
C.6	Approve the authorization to participate in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Joint Purchasing Program.	C.6	_____

➤ Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if there were any questions from the board.

- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked when we are closing last year's cafeteria statements. Mrs. Jaffee explained that we have done very well because of the free breakfast program and we could see a net income of \$300,000.

➤ Dr. Aiken introduced Matt Franz and James Vizzini to review information presented at the October 25 Buildings and Grounds Committee. Dr. Aiken stressed that we will take our time and review all necessary information before making any final decisions. This will take time and decisions will be made in the best interests of our students. He

also stated that we will host public meetings so that those interested will have an opportunity to speak. Mr. Franz reported that no major projects have been done since the 1980's. He then reviewed some of the code/safety improvements that were completed to improve each school's entry way, stair guard rails, restrooms, door hardware, and improvements to building infrastructure such as parking lots, sidewalks and curbs, stair treads, HVAC, plumbing (storm system backups SAMS, and sanitary pipe SAHS). Immediate needs projects – summer 2024 include: paving remaining sidewalks SAMS, Titan Stadium bleacher structure improvements, and Shaler Area High School athletic field buildings roof replacement.

Dr. Aiken explained the need for a plan at this time. We have approximately 3,770 students with noticeable enrollment declines over the last 10 years and this decline is projected to continue. The district is seeking a short-term or a long-term plan for the sustainability of our school district. Of our seven schools, Scott Primary and Shaler Area High School are in good condition, all remaining schools require significant work. Five of the seven schools do not have air conditioning. We have significant financial constraints, a fund balance that has been used to help balance the budget, and taxes were raised to the index this past year. The cost of construction has risen greatly over the last two years and in some cases has prevented ongoing maintenance. Inflation is impacting the school district – i.e., construction, supplies, services. Ignoring the issues and pushing down the road only further exacerbates the issues and increases the cost of construction over time. Dr. Aiken then reviewed three options for the board to consider:

#### **Option 1:**

- **Marzolf Primary School** – Full building alterations and possible building additions (gymnasium).
- **Burchfield Primary School** – Full building alterations and possible building additions (kitchen).
- **Elementary School** – Full building alternation.
- **Reserve Primary School** – Full building alterations.

#### **Option 2:**

- **Marzolf Primary School** – "Right size" building for current relocated, and future enrollments. Full building alteration and possible building addition (classroom and new gymnasium).
- **Burchfield Primary School** – "Right size" building for current relocated, and future enrollments. Full building alteration and possible building addition (classroom and new kitchen).
- **Reserve Primary School** – "Right size" building for current relocated, and future enrollments. Full building alteration.
- **Elementary School** – Implement steps to consider closing Elementary School. Relocate and reorganize students and staff to renovated and expanded K-5 Elementary Schools and transition 6<sup>th</sup> Grade to Shaler Area Middle School. Consider constructing a new Natatorium at Shaler Area High School.

#### **Option 3:**

- **Reserve Primary School** – Implement steps to consider closing Reserve Primary School. Relocate and reorganize students and staff to expanded K-5 Elementary Schools.
- **Marzolf Primary School** – "Right size" building for current relocated, and future enrollments. Full building alteration and possible building addition (classroom and new gymnasium).
- **Burchfield Primary School** – "Right size" building for current relocated, and future enrollments. Full building alteration and possible building addition (classroom and new kitchen).
- **Elementary School** – Implement steps to consider closing Elementary School. Relocate and reorganize students and staff to renovated and expanded K-5 Elementary Schools and transition 6<sup>th</sup> Grade to Shaler Area Middle School. Consider constructing a new natatorium at Shaler Area High School.

\*\*Additional considerations include (2) larger K-5 Elementary Schools located on existing school property. The option was discussed during the October 25, 2023 Buildings & Grounds Committee meeting and is currently being investigated by the District's Architects.

- Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if there were any questions from the board.
  - Dr. Kwiatkowski asked what is the recommended way to group students. Dr. Aiken explained that middle school in Pennsylvania is typically grades 6-8.
  - Mr. Gapsky likes the K-5 option in the primary schools.
  - Mr. Tunstall would like to see a demographer's study. He likes option #2 and feels that the middle school is underutilized.
  - Ms. Dunn agrees with Mr. Tunstall – she feels that option #2 is better from a learning standpoint.
  - Mr. Machajewski would also like to see a demographer's study.
  - Dr. Kwiatkowski asked if Plancon 2.0 was available to offset construction costs. Dr. Aiken replied that Scott Primary was one of the last projects to utilize these funds.
  - Mr. Kress would need to see concrete numbers before making any decisions.
  - Mrs. Phillips would also need to see numbers from a demographer's study.
  - Mr. Fisher stated that his decision would be based on economics. He believes that the board should look at the community as a whole and \$60-\$80 million to renovate the buildings is a lot for the taxpayers to bear.
- Dr. Kwiatkowski invited the board to speak on any other business.
  - Ms. Dunn stated that the elementary school PTO is having a fall festival on Saturday from 12-3 at the elementary school.
- Dr. Kwiatkowski then recognized the public to speak on any other items:
  - Dorothy Petrancosta, 148 Skylark Drive, believes that PDE has been on the ball for enrollment projections and that Reserve Primary is underutilized.
  - Gina Dayieb, 110 DeAngelo Drive, stated that she “doesn’t have a dog in the fight” as her son is in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but believes that there needs to be more transparency and more town hall meetings.
  - Lori Howe, 2125 James Drive, asked what projects we would be doing this summer. Dr. Aiken stated that there is discussion about the middle school parking lot, Titan Stadium bleachers, and the middle school roof.
  - George Brown, 2055 Pittview Ave., asked how do you prove anything, don’t waste money on a demographer’s study and don’t spend money on bleachers.
  - Robert Toff, 320 Faber St., understands what Mr. Fisher says and make your decision with an open mind.
  - Jessica Johnson, 4355 Spring Garden Road, stated that she got a phone call two weeks before the start of school about moving her child from Reserve to Marzolf. Dr. Aiken explained that this practice goes on in all primary schools to balance the class sizes.
  - Leeanne Mocniak, 2 Willow Lane, has a Title I student at Reserve and believes she is getting everything she needs and more.
  - Ashley Jackson, 115 Arlington St., has a child in second grade at Reserve. He loves his teachers and friends. She also has a 5<sup>th</sup> grader who has had so many problems at the elementary school.
  - Ron Brown, 18 Forno Lane, believes that closing Reserve would be a mistake and would like to see K-5 primary schools.
  - Arlyn Kalinsky, 211 Joyce Drive, believes that the groundwork the teachers do at K-5 is so important – that’s where the foundation is built. Her family moved here because of Reserve.
  - Kelly Toth, 320 Faber St., is a graduate of Shaler and went to Reserve. She is friends on Facebook with teachers. The school was built on community.
  - Mark Ludwig, 215 Bernardi Drive, daughter had the best experience at Reserve. She was in the Title I program and is now in the GATE program at the elementary school.
  - Leigh Ann Rose, 813 Geyer Run Ext., went to school in the city and accidentally stumbled into Reserve. Closing would be detrimental to the community.

- Kathryn Burks, 1966 Pittview, redistrict and move children you took away. Marzolf maxed to capacity and would affect traffic patterns.
- Jamie Mares, 2379 East Beckert Ave., asked will class sizes remain the same, will there be less than 20 in every class. Dr. Aiken replied that we don't have that now. The demographer's study will give projections on birth/death rates. This board is committed to keeping class size balanced at the K-1 level.
- Lorena Smith, 2832 Wohleber St., graduated in 1974 with 996 students. She is worried about the economic effect on her home if Reserve is closed.
- Heather Forney, 843 Geyer Road, suggests we take students from other schools and put into Reserve.
- Megan Brown, 2026 Alfred St., is a Shaler and Reserve alum., bought a house in Reserve but now needs a bigger house and is looking at other districts. Would like to see 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders back in primary school. Son now gets home at 5:00 and has had problems at the elementary school.
- Jamie Detweiler, 414 Irwin Lane, asked what is included in the feasibility study. Dr. Aiken stated that we will host more town hall meetings in the future. Until we have more information from the demographer's study we can come up with total costs for each option.

➤ Dr. Kwiatkowski then invited the remote public to speak on any other items:

- Rose Vano, 3925 Mt. Troy Road, asked who was the board member looking at financials only. Thinking of having a Kindergartner on a bus for 1 ½ hours is unbelievable. She hopes things like that are being considered.
- Diana Meyer, 133 Willowood Drive., loves Reserve and had 3 kids go through Reserve. Hope you have more innovative and forward-thinking instead of financial. She likes option #2 keeping students in K-5. Need a plan for development and grants to find more money.
- Tiffany Johnson, 4355 Spring Garden Road, believes keeping kids in K-5 together is the best decision you could make. Talk about declining enrollment – birth rates are remaining steady.
- Melissa Phillips, 99 Maplewood Drive, decided to stay in the district solely because of Reserve. Teachers are wonderful – K-5 option is ideal.
- Jason Voit, 402 Kinkura Drive, as a teacher of 15+ years he feels that smaller classes create academic success. He believes that the elementary school should be closed.

After no further items were presented, final adjournment occurred at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherri M. Jaffee,  
Board Secretary