

WYOMISSING AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 2008-3910

Minutes May 27, 2008

The regular meeting of the Board of School Directors convened at 7:34 p.m. in the auditorium of the Jr./Sr. High School with Mr. Snyder, Board President, presiding.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the pledge, the secretary called the roll of Board members.

Board Members Present: Mrs. Barnett, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mrs. McCready, Mr. Hinsey, Mr. Portner, Mrs. Sakmann, and Mr. Snyder.

Board Member Absent: Mr. Althouse and Mr. Larkin

Administrative Staff Present: Dr. Pulkowski, Ms. Garman, Mrs. Mason, Dr. Speace, Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Whye, Dr. Zerr, and Dr. Larson.

Attendees: Mr. Brian Boland, Kozloff Stoudt, Diane Schaeffer, recording secretary. Audience sign-in sheet included as part of these official minutes.

WELCOME

President Snyder welcomed everyone and announced the Board meeting dates of June 16 and June 23, 2008, at 6:00 and 7:30 p.m. He also noted that two executive sessions were held, one on May 19, 2008 and one earlier in the evening, to discuss personnel issues and no action was taken.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

He also noted that the Board received an addendum to the agenda that included three personnel items – a professional staff resignation, a professional appointment date, and a supplemental activity advisor resignation.

There was also the finance item to award bids for the nurse's suite project.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

President Snyder requested that anyone wishing to make a public comment on the agenda, please state their name and address prior to commenting at the microphone.

Mrs. Catharine Lentz read a prepared letter relative to the resignation of Mrs. Sheila Simyak, Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center Principal.

Mrs. Loni Pottieger suggested the Board conduct exit interviews to learn why people are choosing to leave the District.

Mr. William Murray apologized to the newly hired staff in attendance who had to witness the meeting events that evening. He asked Ms. Garman if the new science department candidates were the best ones for the positions since they had no prior teaching experience. He also voiced concern about the number of individuals leaving the district that

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includes two assistant superintendents, a high school principal, a technology director, and a facilities director. He asked the Board what they plan to do to stop the downward slide and also what happens after the referendum because the community is divided on the issue. He stated his hope was to return to being a good school district.

Mr. John Fehman supported the comments made and stated he is concerned about the personnel issues. He also voiced concern about the \$37 million. He asked where the educational value is in taking a building by eminent domain and tearing down another building. Mr. Fehman stated that he would like to hear a motion that the Board is not accepting Mrs. Simyak's resignation at this time and not hide behind "it is her choice." Good employees can be kept and rewarded for their service.

Senior student Sophia Schuster noted that the members of the community take pride in their school, but she is ashamed to go to school here this year. She suggested that someone might want to ask the student body what they think.

Steve Ohnsman stated they moved here because of the school and if they move away, it will be because of the school. His concern is not only because of the staff who have left but because of the fear of those who are still here and afraid of saying the wrong thing. He reminded the Board that they are working for the community and their children.

Peter Schiaroli noted that care must be taken when administration makes changes because the district is left to deal with those changes after they are gone. Mr. Schiaroli suggested the Board offer an apology to Mrs. Simyak for any ineptitude and consider whether it is time to buy out the superintendent's contract.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Fitzgerald reported that the BCIU sponsored state legislators' meeting will be held on Thursday evening and the Board was invited to attend.

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Upon motion by Mrs. McCready, seconded by Mrs. Barnett, the minutes of the following meetings were approved as presented:

- April 21, 2008 Work Session
- April 28, 2008 Regular Board Meeting

Yeas: 7.

Nays: 0. Motion carried.

PERSONNEL

President Snyder asked for a motion to approve the personnel items on the addendum and the report, excluding item II. The resignation of Mrs.

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Sheila Simyak, Elementary Principal.

APPROVED
PERSONNEL REPORT

Upon motion by Mrs. Barnett, second by Mrs. McCready, the Board approved the May 27, 2008 Personnel Addendum and the Report, excluding item II, which are included as part of these official minutes.

Yeas: Barnett, Fitzgerald, Hinsey, McCready, Sakmann, Portner, and Snyder.

Nays: None. Motion carried.

APPROVED
ADMINISTRATOR
RESIGNATION

Upon motion by Mrs. Barnett, second by Mrs. McCready, the Board approved the administrative resignation of Mrs. Sheila G. Simyak, Elementary Principal at Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center, effective June 30, 2008.

Yeas: Barnett, McCready, Sakmann, and Snyder.

Nays: Fitzgerald, Hinsey, Portner. Motion carried.

CURRICULUM

There were no curriculum items on the agenda.

**FINANCE/BUSINESS
OFFICE**

It was noted by President Snyder that the approval of the final general fund budget, Item I. on the agenda, would be acted on separately.

A motion was made by Mr. Portner, second by Mrs. Barnett to approve the Finance/Business office Items II. through XIV as follows:

APPROVED
FINANCIAL REPORTS

Financial Reports for April 2008 and included as part of these official minutes.

APPROVED PAYMENT
OF INVOICES

Payment of properly approved vendor invoices for the General Fund, Athletic Fund, Food Service Fund, and the 2003 G.O. Bond.

APPROVED
INCREASE TO LUNCH
PRICES

Increase to student lunch prices for the 2008-09 school year – Elementary \$.15 to \$2.00 and Secondary \$.20/\$.20 to \$2.20/\$2.70.

AWARDED BCIU
JOINT PURCHASING
BIDS

BCIU Joint Purchasing Bids for the 2008-09 school year:

Art Supplies	\$6,340.55
Medical & Nursing Supplies	\$2,677.95
Copy Paper	\$5,549.70
Classroom/Office Supplies	\$15,317.16

APPROVED
HOMESTEAD/
FARMSTEAD
EXCLUSION

Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion Resolution

Background Information: PDE certified an amount of \$484,916.77 that is to be used for property tax reduction purposes for 2008-09. This amount will be allocated to each approved homestead. The assessed

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value reduction that must appear on each tax notice as a homestead exclusion for each approved homestead is \$6,236. The real estate tax reduction amount applicable to each approved homestead is \$164.71.

APPROVED BIDS FOR NURSES' SUITE

Nurse's Suite bids to the following vendors:

General Construction – Purcell Construction Company - \$58,700
Plumbing Construction – Vision Mechanical, Inc. - \$16,877
HVAC Construction – Spotts Brothers, Inc. - \$30,800
Electrical Construction – High Peak Electrical, Inc. - \$22,100

Mrs. McCready noted that she will make sure as facilities liaison that she talks to the nurses and special education staff to make sure everything needed is included.

APPROVED ADDENDUM TO AUSTILL'S AGREEMENT

Contract with Austill's for therapy services to extend through June 30, 2010 which will maintain the current hourly rate of \$57.

APPROVED SUBMISSION OF 2007 DELINQUENT PER CAPITA TAX

Submission of 2007 Delinquent Per Capita Tax in the amount of \$8,338 to Statewide Tax Recovery.

APPROVED BCIU AGREEMENT RATES

BCIU Agreement Rates for 2008-09 programs and services – Early Intervention, Special Education, Alternative Education and Emotional Support.

ACCEPTED ANONYMOUS DONATION

Anonymous donation of \$300 to be used towards Shaner Meet food service costs.

APPOINTED SCHOOL BOARD TREASURER

Appointed Lawrence Fitzgerald to serve as School Board Treasurer for the term July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 with no wage payments.

APPROVED TUITION RATES 2007-08

Approved Tuition Rates for 2007-08 - \$9,604.31 elementary, \$10,661.07 secondary.

APPROVED KOZLOFF STOUDT AS SOLICITOR

Approved Kozloff Stoudt Professional Corporation, with Brian F. Boland, Esq., for legal representation and school solicitor for the 2008-09 school year, as per the terms of the engagement letter as follows: There will be no retainer. Billing services based on the shareholders of the firm at \$140.00 per hour, associates at \$110.00 per hour, and paralegals at \$85.00 per hour, effective July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009.

Yeas: Barnett, Fitzgerald, Hinsey, McCready, Sakmann, Portner, and Snyder.

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Nays: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mrs. McCready, seconded by Mr. Hinsey to approve the final general fund budget for 2008-09.

Mr. Fitzgerald brought up the idea of lowering the millage to 4.4% which was then discussed by the Board.

APPROVED
AMENDED TAX
MILLAGE

Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to amend the tax millage increase from 4.94% to 4.4%.

Yeas: Fitzgerald, Hinsey, McCready, Sakmann, and Portner.

Nays: Barnett and Snyder. Motion carried.

Dr. Larson suggested that Mrs. Mason would like time to consider whether the suggestions have merit since this is a late entry into the process.

Mr. Snyder requested a motion to table the budget until next month.

APPROVED TABLING
OF BUDGET

A motion was made by Mr. Fitzgerald and seconded by Mrs. McCready to table the budget until next month.

Yeas: Barnett, Hinsey, McCready, Sakmann, and Snyder.

Nays: Fitzgerald and Portner. Motion carried.

FACILITIES

There were no agenda items for Board approval.

**SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES &
ATHLETICS**

There were no agenda items for Board approval.

TECHNOLOGY

There were no agenda items for Board approval.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
OFFICE**

A motion was made by Mrs. McCready and seconded by Mrs. Sakmann to approve/ratify the Superintendent's Office items as follows:

ADOPTION OF
REVISED POLICIES

Adoption of Revised Policies –
Policy 601 – Objectives
Policy 602 – Budget Planning
Policy 606 – Tax Collection

APPROVED
SUBMISSION OF SP.
ED. STRATEGIC PLAN

Submission of Special Education Strategic Plan to PDE.

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RATIFIED
HOMEBOUND
INSTRUCITON

Ratified homebound instruction for one elementary student, ID#, 202844 effective April 28, 2008, for a maximum of 5 hours per week, for a minimum of three weeks based upon verification of continued need.

Yeas: Althouse, Barnett, Fitzgerald, Hinsey, Larkin, Sakmann, Portner, and Snyder.

Nays: None. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE
REPORTS

Treasurer's Report (Informational)

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION

Many residents commented that their strong feelings were ignored and the Board should have tabled the administrator resignation.

Mrs. Vicky Whitmoyer noted there was a flurry of activity since Mrs. Simyak's resignation, and the Board's decision to accept her resignation was a slap in the face. She noted that the group of residents had gone to the Hills building earlier in the day to show support for Mrs. Simyak and were called a bunch of bored housewives by the Director of Human Resources.

Mr. Murray requested a list of the expenses incurred on the West Reading Elementary project. He noted the Superintendent is violating policy 321 by going out to promote the referendum.

Kathy Bell thanked Mrs. Whye for communicating with the parents in the community.

Several residents responded that they were at the Hills building to support Mrs. Simyak but treated rudely. Carolyn Bamberger indicated the Board could convince Mrs. Simyak to rescind her resignation.

Ann Melcher questioned Mr. Snyder's intent to move out of the district and whether he should be involved in the decision.

President Snyder indicated he is a resident and does have the right to vote.

President Snyder called for a recess at 8:50 p.m. The public meeting reconvened at 9:00 p.m.

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Mr. Snyder commented that the Board has very fond feelings of Mrs. Simyak. Mr. Snyder also explained the Board acted on Mrs. Simyak's resignation tonight because her resignation letter asked it to be acted on this evening. He placed two phone calls and did not hear from her. If she wants to rescind her letter of resignation, the letter had to be received before the June work session and the Board will put it on the June work session agenda. They would also allow a phone vote if necessary.

Several residents encouraged Mr. Snyder to attempt to reach Mrs. Simyak as soon as possible and he agreed that he would.

Mrs. Garman addressed the audience to clarify her comments made at the Hills building earlier in the day. She noted Mrs. Simyak was her second grade teacher and she went to the building to speak with her. Unfortunately, because of communications received that were especially devastating and hurtful, she made comments that were inappropriate. She apologized for her mistake and asked for their understanding.

Mike Mitchell Sr. asked for an explanation on the different numbers in the fund balance that Mr. Fitzgerald and Mrs. Mason were discussing.

Mr. Fitzgerald indicated they would be taking a look at the fund balance and budget during the week.

Karen Moser said that all of the work about the West Reading project was above board and the efforts were to get information out to the people and get them out to vote, it did not matter if you were for or against.

Dr. O'Rourke stated that the public forums held on the West Reading project were very informative. He expressed concerns about the "personnel hemorrhage" but does appreciate the work done by the board and understands they have restrictions. He asked the Board which is more important, a parking lot or attracting good personnel. He encouraged someone to talk to them too.

Ms. Garman stated they can not provide reasons as to why people are leaving. She asked that they keep in mind the Board's responsibility to try to keep salaries at a reasonable level and also keep taxes in control.

Amy Beadle stated that they have no right to speak for the staff that is leaving or the reasons why.

Mrs. Simyak's attorney, Thomas Beaver, confirmed that Mr. Snyder did

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try to reach Mrs. Simyak twice that day but upon his recommendation as her lawyer, she did not return his calls. Mr. Beaver noted that what Mr. Snyder did not report was the numerous times he tried to contact the Board or solicitor without a response. Mrs. Simyak's request to see the contents of her personnel file has not been granted and there were also violations of the School Code with regard to Dr. Larson's treatment.

President Snyder noted he did attempt to contact Mrs. Simyak

Sarah Harvey asked why the Reading Recovery Program was dropped and if there is an alternative.

Dr. Larson said that no plans are finalized to abandon the Reading Recovery Program. Governor Mifflin dropped the program and we are in the midst of studying the situation and looking at possible interventions.

Mr. Ted Lentz asked what recourse Mrs. Simyak had and how she would get a fair hearing.

Mr. Snyder said his questions could not be answered because it is a personnel matter.

Cara Wojciechowski, grade 8, said that when she was at Hills Elementary, each morning Mrs. Simyak told them they were "special and important" and they knew they could always talk to her. The students love her and don't want her to leave.

Mrs. Michelle Davis, an employee and parent of a child in the district noted how sad the situation is, and asked the Board to take a step back and try to grasp everything that has occurred. Mrs. Simyak inspires the staff and students.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:25 p.m.

Corinne D. Mason
Board Secretary

PERSONNEL REPORT

- I. Approve Professional Staff Retirement – **Amy L. Beadle**, Secondary Science Teacher at the JSHS, effective June 11, 2008.
- II. Approve Administrator Resignation – **Sheila G. Simyak**, Elementary Principal at Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center, effective June 30, 2008.
- III. Approve Professional Staff Resignation – **Elizabeth T. Kirchner**, Secondary Science Teacher at the JSHS, effective June 11, 2008.
- IV. Ratify Support Staff Resignation – **Marcia Gruver, Jr./Sr.** High School Guidance Department Secretary, effective May 14, 2008.
- V. Approve Administrator Appointment – **Craig L. Fries**, Director of Buildings and Grounds, effective July 7, 2008, at \$77,000 per year, prorated, pending receipt of all necessary documents.

Background Information: Mr. Fries graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and an A.S. in Mechanical/Electrical Design. Mr. Fries has over 30 years experience in project management and facilities. Since July 2004 he has been employed by the Berks Career and Technology Center as the Director of Facilities and Grounds

- VI. Approve Professional Appointments
 - a. **Robert P. Cushman**, Secondary Science Teacher at the JSHS, based on M, Step 1, \$41,650, effective the 2008-09 school year, pending receipt of all necessary documents.

Background Information: Robert P. Cushman earned his Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction (Special Education Option) from Pennsylvania State University in December 2007 and his Bachelor of Science in Biology in August 2005. He was a per diem substitute at Spring-Ford High School from March – June 2008 and prior to that a per-diem substitute with the Pottsgrove and Spring-Ford School Districts. His student teaching experience was completed at Keith Junior High School, Altoona, PA. Mr. Cushman will replace Maureen Nolan.

- b. **Daniel S. Melot**, Secondary Science Teacher at the JSHS, based on B, Step 1, \$38,750, effective the 2008-09 school year, pending receipt of all necessary documents.

Background Information: Daniel S. Melot will graduate from Shippensburg University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with certification in Biology Education and General Science Education, grades 7-12, and Environmental Science Education, grades K-12, in May 2008. He completed his student teaching experience at Greencastle-Antrim School District, Tayamentasachta Environmental Center and at Chambersburg Area Senior High School in the Chambersburg Area School District. Mr. Melot will replace Elizabeth Kirchner.

VII. Ratify/Approve FMLA:

- a. **Barbara Brehony**, Elementary Secretary at WHEC, a family and medical leave of absence effective April 28-May 2 and May 15, 2008, with an anticipated return of one to two weeks.
- b. **John Clauss**, Instructional Technology Specialist at the JSHS, a family and medical leave of absence effective April 11 - 17, 2008.
- c. **Benito Diaz**, Custodian at the JSHS, a family and medical leave of absence effective May 19, 2008 until approximately June 3, 2008.
- d. **Mark Flannery**, Secondary Teacher at the JSHS, a family and medical leave of absence effective May 19, 2008 – May 27, 2008.
- e. **Barbara Lofgren**, Elementary Teacher at WREC, a family and medical leave of absence effective April 30 - June 11, 2008.
- f. **Barry Matz**, Custodian/Inventory Specialist, a family and medical leave of absence effective May 5 - 16, 2008.
- g. **Jamie Whye**, Principal at WREC, a family and medical leave of absence effective June 26, 2008 for approximately 6 weeks.

VIII. Approve FMLA/Child Rearing Leaves:

- a. **Jessica Lengle**, Special Education Teacher at WHEC, a family and medical leave of absence and child rearing leave effective on or about October 24, 2008 and returning the start of the 2009-10 school year.
- b. **Lindsay Rada**, Secondary Teacher at the JSHS, a family medical leave of absence and child rearing leave effective on or about September 18, 2008 and returning the start of the 2009-10 school year.

IX. Ratify Effective Date for FMLA/Child Rearing Leave – **Melissa Devlin**, Secondary English Teacher, began her leave on April 22, 2008.

Background Information: On January 28, 2008, the School Board approved the leave request for Ms. Devlin to be effective on or about May 5, 2008.

X. Approve Change in Part-Time Energy Educator/Manager Stipend – **Chris Nugent**, at an annual stipend of \$21,013 for the 2008-09 fiscal year. *This stipend is the result of energy saving measures guaranteed by Energy Education.*

Background information: A stipend in the amount of \$20,500 was approved at the April 28, 2008 Board meeting.

XI. Ratify Homebound Instructors – **Dorothy Brandt**, elementary teacher at WHEC, and **Amanda Johnson**, elementary teacher at WHEC, to provide homebound instruction for one elementary student ID#202844 for a maximum combined total of 5 hours per week, for a minimum of 3 weeks and based upon verification of continued need for instruction, effective April 28, 2008, at the professional contract rate of \$31.00 per hour.

XII. Ratify Support Staff Training Outside Contracted Year – **Lauren Yelinek**, full-time Special Education Instructional Aide at WHEC, VB training, April 18, 2008, 6 hours at her approved hourly rate.

- XIII. Ratify Support Teacher – **Erin Tyrrell**, support teacher to Jo Ellen Cobb, Elementary Teacher at WHEC, for the 2007-08 school year, with a \$500.00 stipend.
- XIV. Ratify/Approve Support Staff Unpaid Leave Requests:
- a. **Susan Bennett**, part-time ESL Instructional Aide at WHEC, unpaid leave May 21-23, 2008.
 - b. **Cheryl Davis**, Part-time Teacher’s Instructional Aide at WHEC, unpaid leave November 10 - 14, 2008.
 - c. **Lisa Schlappich**, part-time Special Education Secretary, unpaid leave April 4-18, 2008.
- XV. Approve Department Chair Resignation – **John Yoder**, Science Department Chair, effective June 30, 2008.
- XVI. Approve Supplemental Activity Advisor Resignations effective the end of the 2007-08 school year:
- a. **Corinne Fecho Yanes**, Co-Advisor, Debate Club
 - b. **Marsha Long**, Co-Advisor, Cultural Club
 - c. **Jennifer Pors, Jr.** High Drama Director
 - d. **Maureen Nolan**, Quiz Bowl Co-Advisor
 - e. **Kim Tetley, Jr.** High Drama Producer
- XVII. Ratify Supplemental Activity Co-Advisors for the Homework Club at WREC for the 2007-08 school year, 19 points, \$1,530 shared as follows:
- a. **Mary Hedbavny** - \$127.50
 - b. **Erika Homan** - \$127.50
 - c. **Jennifer Wolfe** - \$382.50
 - d. **Diana Swavely** - \$892.50
- XVIII. Approve Proposed Work for Summer 2008 at the approved professional contract rate or support staff hourly rate. (List is included as part of the Board packet.)
- Background Information: These are the tasks that teachers or support staff typically accomplish during the summer at an administrator’s request.*
- XIX. Approve additions/deletions to substitute list.
- XX. Approve additions to district volunteer list.

**Wyomissing Area School District
Addendum to Agenda**

May 27, 2008 Board Meeting

PERSONNEL

- III. Approve Professional Staff Resignation – Martha M. Lobaugh, Elementary Music Teacher, effective June 11, 2008.

- VI. Approve Professional Appointment Date for Robert P. Cushman and Daniel S. Melot, Secondary Science Teachers, effective August 12, 2008.

- XVI. Approve Supplemental Activity Advisor Resignation – Martha M. Lobaugh, West Reading Elementary Center Handbell Choir Advisor, effective the end of the 2007-08 school year.

FINANCE/BUSINESS OFFICE

- VII. Award the following bids for the Nurse’s Suite:

General Construction – Purcell Construction Company - \$58,700

Plumbing Construction – Vision Mechanical, Inc. - \$16,877

HVAC Construction – Spotts Brothers, Inc. - \$30,800

Electrical Construction – High Peak Electrical, Inc. - \$22,100

Background Information: This bid opening took place on Friday, May 23 at 1:30 PM. These bids have been reviewed by the architect to make sure all of the bidding requirements were met. With the awarding of these bids, the architect will issue Intent to Award Letters to each of the successful bidders. Construction is set to begin June 16.