

BOARD NOTES
January 25, 2021

The regular meeting of the School Board was held Monday, January 25, 2021, at Olive Twp. Elementary School with Mr. Phil King, Mr. Al Williamson, Mr. Dale Groves, Mr. Jason DeMeyer and Mrs. Jill Smith present. Dr. Paul White, Superintendent, was also present.

Mr. Phil King, Board President, reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

There was a motion by Mr. Groves to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Smith. Mr. Groves made a motion to amend the Agenda removing Action Item "G", and adding Action Items "L" and "N", seconded by Mr. DeMeyer and approved by the Board.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

(A) Olive Twp. Elementary School Presentation

Mrs. Bush, Principal at Olive Twp. Elementary provided a presentation showcasing Olive's approach to continue striving for high levels of learning during the hybrid attendance plan. Mrs. Bush described how reading was a focus following students return from summer break. She explained that the collaboration between Olive Twp Elementary and the Olive Twp./New Carlisle Library has increased student reading engagement. Interventions with students who struggle reading has found great success so far this year. Mrs. Bush also explained how they are helping students with social & emotional issues. The Olive Elementary Special Education Team along with Instructional Assistants have worked one on one through Zoom calls to help students in need. Finally, Mrs. Bush explained how proud she is of Olive teachers and the extensive number of hours they put in creating eLearning assignments, highlighting her Kindergarten teachers and their online programs during this hybrid situation.

CONSENT ITEMS

The Board approved the following Consent Items:

- (A) Minutes – December 14, 2020, January 4, 2021
- (B) Financial Reports
- (C) Claims
- (D) Payroll
- (E) Personnel Report:

CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations/Retirements
 1. Brittney Kreighbaum – Intermittent FMLA Leave as Dyslexia Reading Specialist beginning 11/20/2020 through 3/12/2021
 2. Steve Wade – Intermittent FMLA Leave as NPHS Mathematics Teacher for the 2020-2021 school year
- Employment
- Employment – Extra-Curricular
 1. Julie Beakas – NPHS Girls Head Track & Field Coach for the school year 2020-2021
 2. Alexandria Homann – NPHS Boys Golf Coach beginning 2020-2021 school year
- Adjustments

CLASSIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations/Retirement
 1. Michael Krivak – FMLA Leave as Grounds Maintenance beginning 12/22/2020 through 3/13/2021
 2. Richard Peterson – FMLA Leave as NPUSC Maintenance beginning 12/30/2020 through 3/21/2021
 3. Shawna Murray – Resignation as NPMS Nutritional Services Worker effective 1/22/2021
 4. Don Sudlow – Resignation as Grounds Maintenance Worker for NPUSC effective 1/18/2021
 5. Jackie Woltman – Resignation as NPUSC Bus Driver effective 1/29/2021
- Employment
 1. Jessica Schmidt – NPUSC Bus Driver, HS/MS single route, Bus 66 beginning 1/6/2021
 2. Anna Piesyk – Olive Twp Elementary School Instructional Assistant beginning date pending
- Employment – Extra-Curricular
 1. Philip Strader – NPHS Head Boys Track Coach for the 2020-2021 school year
 2. Brad Jasinski – NPHS Assistant Girls Track Coach for the 2020-2021 school year
- Adjustments
 1. Dana VanLue to change from single HS/MS route Bus 66 to single HS/MS route Bus 41.
 2. Alicia Deutscher was previously approved as Nutritional Services Floater now transferred position to NPMS Nutritional Services Crew Leader.
 3. Randy Smith – Transfer position from NPUSC Maintenance Worker to NPUSC Grounds Maintenance Worker beginning 1/18/2021

REPORTS

- Dr. White thanked Mrs. Bush for sharing her information tonight. Dr. White expressed his respect for NPUSC teachers and their outstanding efforts and hard work during this time.
- Dr. White explained the highlights of the 2021-2022 School Calendar put together by a committee to be approved this evening and that it may need to be revisited in the spring depending on COVID.

ACTION ITEMS

- (A) The Board approved the Conflict of Interest Statements for:
 - Jason DeMeyer
 - Ashley Williamson
 - Mindie Colanese

*Note-Vote was 4-0-1 with Jason DeMeyer abstaining
- (B) The Board approved the Transfer of Funds from Education Fund to Referendum Fund
- (C) The Board approved the Unleaded and Bio-Diesel Fuel Bid Renewal
- (D) The Board approved the School Days Calendar for 2021-2022
- (E) The Board approved Debt Payments
- (F) The Board accepted Donations:
 - New Prairie Building trades will be giving out the Jim Marks Memorial Scholarship starting this year. The Scholarship will go to students that are going into the construction trades. The money is from an anonymous donor.

- Laporte High School Building Trades Board donated \$4,000 to the New Prairie Building Trades Class.
- NPHS Building Trades received a grant from the Indiana Builders Association for \$1,500
- NPHS Art Department received a donation of an i3 3D printer from Matt Grabarek

~~(G) Approve the MOU for the 2020-2021 Master Teacher Contract~~

(H) The Board approved the Resolution COVID Leave Guidelines 2nd Semester, 2020-2021 School Year for the Classified Staff

(I) The Board approved Closure for all Transfer Students, January 29th, for the remainder of the 2020-2021 School Year

(J) The Board approved the 2021 New Prairie Little League and Rolling Prairie Baseball Association Agreements

(K) The Board approved Emergency Repair Expenditure

(L) The Board approved Closeout of Old Fund Balances

(M) The Board approved the NPUSC Attendance Plan for the 2020-2021 2nd Semester

*Note-Vote was 3 to 2 for approval (Yes-A Williamson, P King, J DeMeyer; No- D Groves, J Smith)

(N) The Board approved updated ECA Attendance Policy

The Board heard comments regarding Action Item "M" prior to the Board vote as follows:

- Mrs. Lisa Smiertelny, Elementary Teacher at Rolling Prairie Elementary School, expressed her thoughts on erring on the side of caution as school buildings are full of unknowns. She feels that students returning fulltime will be putting others at risk. She stated that students are currently coming to school sick daily. Students returning at 100% have no choice but to be close to each other as there is no way to social distance. Mrs. Smiertelny believes that at 50% we are delivering strong learning. She wished to urge the Board not to go back 100% attendance while the county is red.
- Mrs. Heather O'Connell, Prairie View and Olive Twp. Elementary Vocal Music Teacher, expressed that she is very nervous going back to school at 100% attendance while on red. She feels that the Board should consider the advisory from the State website that cites that schools should wait to go back to school 100% 2 consecutive weeks following an orange metric.
- Mrs. Jennifer Hite, NPMS Teacher, NPCTA President and community member, has attended and spoke at many Board meetings and participated in many surveys. Mrs. Hite cited percentages from the latest survey that showed that parents, community & staff all want more eLearning when our numbers increase and the county is red, and did not even have majority vote for more attendance on Orange. Everyone thought that their voices were being heard. Mrs. Hite asked how the survey data is being used. Why are we not doing more eLearning until the numbers come down and vaccines have been administered or follow the survey results? Mrs. Hite stated that she loves teaching and is doing everything possible to keep kids safe, however, returning at 100% she cannot keep kids socially distanced in her classroom. We can save lives on eLearning so why are we not doing this? How can we keep our community safe when we put our kids in classrooms that cannot be social distanced?
- Mrs. Renee Mischak, Elementary Teacher at Olive Twp. Elementary, explained that she has been in this community her entire life and feels deeply in her heart about what is happening with COVID. She stated that she prides herself on giving her students the highest quality of education. She explained that she always teaches her students that safety comes first and there simply is not enough room to open up at 100% safely. Mrs. Mischak stated that we cannot risk lives to open up to a more convenient teaching option at the moment. She said that she is speaking today not just for herself but for

many more teachers who are too afraid to speak for themselves. She went on to state that there have been outbreaks within the schools and community recently so why would we open to 100% and add to it. Please consider keeping New Prairie safe for everyone.

- Mrs. Jemiah Piesyk, Rolling Prairie Elementary School Teacher, spoke as one of the teacher's in the corporation who had COVID and was not symptom free. She went on to state that teachers want the best for their students no matter what the cost to themselves. Students are resilient and do what is asked of them. Mrs. Piesyk stated that she knows everyone is united in wanting what is best for students especially not wanting them to get sick. Mrs. Piesyk asked that the Board continue making the best decisions possible for everyone and thanked them for all that they do.
- Mr. Mark Stone, NPHS Ag Science Teacher, spoke on the fact that he has supported the Board on their decisions regarding being in school on blue, yellow and orange, however, he feels on red we should not be in attendance as it is much too risky.
- Mr. Tom Pietrzak, parent and husband to a NPHS Teacher, echoed all that has been said this evening. He feels the decisions of the Board to attend on the Hybrid schedule has been good. He went on to say that we are entering into a new territory with new strains of COVID in Indiana and Michigan. Scientists have determined the new strains are twice as contagious. He has been in the classrooms in the schools, CDC recommends 6' spacing with masks and that is not possible at full attendance. With full attendance 3' spacing is half of what is recommended. Mr. Pietrzak pleaded not to push for full attendance and take the information presented tonight into consideration before voting.
- Mrs. Angela Ruiz, NPHS Teacher, explained that she averages 30 students per class period at 100% attendance. The hybrid schedule is efficient but would like adding Friday in-person attendance to the hybrid plan alternating weeks. Mrs. Ruiz expressed attendance planning is very important to teachers and parents asking for the schedule decision to be made well enough in advance for time to prepare.
- Mrs. Jennifer Younggreen, Olive Twp. Elementary Teacher, explained that she wholeheartedly believes that students need to be in school but feels it not feasible or practical to attend 100% while in the red. She went on to explain how teachers are just managing as it is and believes that going back 100% while on red will ultimately lead to eLearning 100% in the near future.
- Mrs. Shannon McBride, New Prairie Middle School Teacher, feels that the Board is listening to what is being said but challenged the Board to actually hear them. When she received the email regarding the Board implementing 100% attendance while on red, she was not surprised but disappointed. When everyone was invited to attend this meeting and speak out she heard many people reply "what is the point". Concerns were voiced at previous Board meetings and fell on deaf ears. What is the point in filling out surveys, and attending hours long discussions when it really doesn't matter. She feels that attending at 50% should continue until vaccinations are offered to the teachers and the community. If it is safe enough for students to attend school at 100% then parents should be able to attend their students' extra-curricular activities.
- Mr. Dale Groves, Board Secretary and parent, thanked everyone who attended this evening and spoke. Mr. Groves assured everyone that he 100% knows how he will vote. He feels the concerns stated are legitimate. He understands that by returning to school students will be closer in the classroom. Please understand that what you say to us does not fall on deaf ears. He stated he will vote "no" and feels everyone has made good points from everyone. He closed stating that there is no perfect plan.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Mr. King thanked everyone for attending and their comments and a special thank you to Mrs. Bush, Principal at Olive Twp. Elementary School, for hosting the Board Meeting this evening. The next Board meeting will be on February 22, 2021 at the Central Office Board Room.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Groves made the motion to adjourn at 7:16 p.m.