

Regular School Board Meeting

February 13, 2024

A regular meeting of the Redbank Valley School Board was held on February, February 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at the Redbank Valley High School. The following members were in attendance: Chris Merwin, Heidi Byers, Chris Adams, Kevin Johnson, Bill Reddinger, John Kimmel, John Sayers, Brent Wile, and Matt Confer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson and seconded by John Sayers to approve the minutes of the Board Meeting on January 16, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Shirey presented the Primary and Intermediate Report. She stated that the district held parent conferences on January 15th and there was 90% participation at the Primary School and 86% at the Intermediate building. The top three spellers from 1st – 5th grade went to the high school for a spelling bee challenge. She stated that parent communication is going strong at both of the buildings. PTO is sponsoring the first ever Snowball dance for Kindergarten through 5th grade students. She also noted that Kristen Landers was presented with the Pioneer Award at Pete&C and congratulated her on receiving the award.

Mr. Hartle presented the Secondary Report. This past month he held departmental meetings and included budget discussions. Report cards were made available January 11th only through the Student and Parent Portals. Mr. Hartle attended a principal meeting on February 1st. At the principal's meeting, the division chief of PDE spent time in person with Mr. Hartle and explained TSI in further detail. The PDE rep said that TSI is not a school improvement plan. The plan is based on all the schools in the state and they are there to help if a district is struggling. Mr. Hartle stated there was an Act 80 day on January 15th where he had parent teacher communication. It was a requirement if anyone was failing in the 2nd semester or 1st semester going into the 2nd semester, all those families were communicated through personal phone calls. He stated that 4 students participated in district band and 4 students participated in district chorus. Budgets were completed Feb 1st and now he is reviewing those. The Guidance Department had Brief Awareness Month and conducted FASFA night. National Honors Society had a blood drive. There were 15 students that took advantage of scholarships through the Armstrong Career Center. In sports, the girls and boys basketball teams both won their leagues and will be competing in KSAC Championships. The girls wrestling team hosted their first ever match on February 8th. No further questions.

Mr. Temchulla presented the Special Education report. Mr. Temchulla posted information on the district website and provided explanation on what information is on the website. He spoke about the success of the spelling bee. Mr. Temchulla attended the monthly Special Education contact meeting by the IU6. The Kindergarten EL Transition meetings were held on February 6th and 7th. At this point, 13 student's parents signed the letter of intent to attend Kindergarten in the fall. Planning and meetings for the Special Education Budget for next school year have been completed and he will be meeting with the Business Manager and Dr. Rupp for review.

Mr. Rapp presented the Maintenance Report. He stated that Grease trap repairs and upgrades have been completed for the Intermediate school and they seem to be operating correctly. He stated that work continues with Johnson Controls to repair and upgrade the HVAC systems. The auditorium roof top unit should be operational by the end of the week if all goes well. Mr. Rapp stated that he has been meeting with several representatives from various companies obtaining quotes and pricing to assist Dr.

Rupp in applying for grants to include keyless entries, fencing, and safety issues. The campus plow trucks have both been inspected and serviced and no repairs were needed for either vehicle. Mr. Sayers questioned the Johnson Control Repairs and Dr. Rupp stated the repairs are covered with ESSERS funds.

Mr. Reitz presented the Cafeteria Report. He discussed the school lunch participation rate and says it is good but would always like improvement. Mr. Reitz attended a Food Service Conference last Friday. There were a lot of vendors at the show, and he stated that there are new food items coming out. Mr. Reddinger questioned with budget time coming up if Mr. Reitz needed any equipment purchased. Mr. Reitz stated he has been slowly replacing equipment. The compressor in the walk-in freezers may need to be replaced.

Mrs. Reitz gave the Business Manager's Report. Mrs. Reitz stated that she is still working with the auditor on finishing up the audit for the 22-23 school year and is hoping to have everything finished up by the end of February but that is still uncertain at this time. She stated that the teachers have completed the Purchase Requisitions and now the Principals are reviewing the items and that she will be reviewing the requisitions with Dr. Rupp as well. Mrs. Reitz also discussed a few items on Governor Shapiro's budget address on 2/6/24. Shapiro proposed an increase in BEF funding, which could bring the district an additional \$510,872 next year if the adequacy investment proposal passes. Shapiro also proposed a statewide cyber tuition rate of \$8,000 per student which could also result in a savings of \$579,487. PASBO at this time recommended not to budget for this since it is a great possibility this cyber reform won't pass. There is also a proposed increase of \$27,737 for Special Ed funding from last year. Dr. Rupp also asked her to speak about item #24 on the budget. The district currently has a CD with Clarion County Community Bank that matured on 2/8/24. The district has 10 days to get this money moved. Mrs. Reitz's proposal is to keep ½ of the CD at Clarion Community Bank at a 14 month term at 5.15% and ½ of the CD to PLGIT in a savings account that is currently receiving a variable rate of 5.52%. Mrs. Reitz was questioned about other banks and she stated she checked other local banks and the proposal she made gives the district the best rates at this time and moving half of the money to PLGIT allows the money to be liquid in case the district needs it.

Dr. Rupp gave the Superintendent's Report. She stated that Johnson Controls were at the district and installed the correct unit in the Auditorium. The previous Confidential Secretary position has now been changed to Business Operations and Transportation Administrator. Interviews will probably be held at the beginning of next week. She discussed the two conferences on the Agenda which provides updates on federal grants. Dr. Rupp applied for the meritorious safety grants for safety and mental health. The district has already been approved for the \$30,000 to offset the cost of the Elementary Personnel for next year. The mental health grant is still pending review. Dr. Rupp also talked about mental health and the need for mental health services and what services the district provides. She also discussed how social media also plays a factor on mental health and the district will work with students and teach them how to better communicate with each other. She found out about a large facilities grant where you can receive \$500,000 but the district will have to put in 25%. She discussed the need for plumbing but will also work with Mr. Rapp with this.

Mrs. Byers had nothing to add to the Career Center Report.

Mr. Confer didn't have anything to add to the Intermediate Report. Mr. Confer stated that he went to his first official meeting at the Intermediate Unit.

John Sayers spoke about the Board Committee Report. Mr. Sayers stated that there was a Facilities meeting on January 29th at the High School. Some topics discussed included putting in a crosswalk from the sidewalk to the football field or putting up a yield sign. There was discussions about getting a new generator at the Intermediate building, as well as a walk behind scrubber at the high school. The next meeting will be March 25th at 4:00pm at the Primary building. Brent Wile also discussed his concern for the Announcers Booth at the Little League field at the Primary Building being unsafe. To get into the announcers booth, you have to pull down a set of attic steps which are no longer functioning properly. He feels the best option is to remove the pull down steps, cover up the hole in the floor, build a set of steps and landing on the outside, and add a doorway. He feels it is not fair for Little League and

Boosters to pay for it and would like the school district to help pay for it, especially since it is a safety factor. John Sayers stated that the stairs have been repaired many times while he was employed at the district. Mr. Wiles said that Kory Wilson with Ryko Construction is working on a quote right now to get an idea of how much the project would cost. Mr. Johnson asked for quotes.

Dr. Rupp stated that the Education Foundation met yesterday and welcomed Mr. Johnson to the group. The foundation is organizing and getting prepared to enable scholarships and open doors for new scholarships. The original agreement with Bridgebuilders was to have \$30,000 endowed and everything over that would be used for scholarships. Right now there is \$24,000 in the fund. They are going to vote at the next meeting to change it to \$20,000 endowed so they have \$4,000 to work on scholarships. The foundation is going to look at a few fundraisers.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Gordon Barrows spoke with the Chief of Police on behalf of the Southern Clarion County Regional Police Dept. There is a grant available for a school resource officer through the Competitive School Safety Grant. The police department will work together with the school board and the school will get a police officer for 2 years. The grant is for \$150,000 over 2 years. The police officer will be at the school for $\frac{2}{3}$ of the year and will work with the boro police for the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ of the year. The $\frac{1}{3}$ will be for summer work.. There are tasks the current security guard doesn't have the authority to do, so the security guards and police officer will work together. The Grant is due February 29th. The police department will do all the work and the school will receive the benefits. This grant won't affect any other grants because they are applying at the local level. Training is required but would be paid by the police department. The grant money would become awarded at the start of the fall semester.

Mrs. Kim Constantino brought her dog into the meeting, which is a 6 month old lab named Rocko. Mrs. Constantino stated that mental health issues have increased. She stated that children are like onions with many layers around them because they don't trust the adults in their lives and it can take years for them to open up about what is going on in their lives. She then began speaking about Rocko and that he has been through training, but is looking for more exposure. The dog doesn't have therapy certification because he has to be one year old and have exposure in order to pass the testing. She would like to take Rocko one or two days a week at the schools to get exposure. She had a case where a student would not open up to her, but when asked to tell the dog, the student immediately opened up about everything to the dog. She stated that other local school districts have been utilizing therapy dogs. Dr. Kimmel spoke and said that Union School District was hesitant at first, but more on the administrative side. However, the staff stepped up to help with the dog at their school and having a therapy dog has been very positive, and they have received a lot of great feedback from families and staff members. Mr. Sayers spoke on all the positive articles he has read, but he did question liability concerns. Mrs. Constantino stated that she purchased a policy through Policy Dogs International, and that the dog falls under her insurance. Mr. Wiles questioned where the dog would be during the day and wanted to verify that the dog wouldn't be a distraction to the students. Mrs. Constantino stated that she will take the dog with her if she gets called away or ask another staff member to help so that the dog is always supervised.

Mr. Bill Clepper spoke about his busing company, which is Valley Lines. Valley Lines is currently one of the district's bus contractors and has been with the district for 18 years. He stated that they received a call from Dr. Rupp stating that the district may not renew the contract with Valley Lines at the end of June because the district may go with one carrier. He stated he was very surprised because he didn't know of any safety problem, or vehicle problem, and sees no issue as to why their contract wouldn't be renewed. He stated that he runs good equipment, provides safe transportation, and even purchased a wheelchair van when the district needed one (which doesn't produce much revenue). He stated that he stopped at Barrett's previously, however he never spoke to anyone about fixing the bus pricing. He stated he was only interested in discussing routes and rates and to see if both companies could consolidate a few runs. He went on to explain that he pays taxes in the area because he has a storage building in the area, deals with local vendors, and purchases new vehicles in New Bethlehem. He

doesn't see a need to go to one busing company, and stated that he feels that the district needs to have a backup.

Mr. Brad Barrett spoke, representing Barrett Busing. Mr. Barrett has been providing transportation to the district since 1962, and he has personally been driving buses for 22 years. He stated that he didn't speak with Mr. Clepper when he was at his residence months back. He stated that the benefits of going to one busing company is less people involved, better communication, and the simplicity of handling extracurricular activities. He has more van availability, gives the teachers the ability to drive for short trips, contributes to the tax base, and has several large buses. He stated that he has no problem taking staff from Valley Lines, however if they choose to not work, he has no concerns regarding enough staffing for the district.

Mr. Wiles questioned why the district wanted to consider going with one busing company. Dr. Rupp stated that she contacted other superintendents, and dealing with one company has many benefits such as convenience, ease, and streamlining of the process (which helps with the change in the business office as well).

OLD BUSINESS

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson and seconded by John Sayers to approve the second reading of policies 813-828 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board then went into Executive Session for legal matters and personnel from 8:00pm – 8:37pm.

NEW BUSINESS

A motion was made by John Kimmel and seconded by Brent Wile for to approve the first reading of policies 901-902, 904, 906-911 and the first reading of policy 210 as presented. Policy 210 allows administration to administer medicine in an emergency situation. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson and seconded by Brent Wile to approve the 2024-2025 school calendar as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by John Kimmel and seconded by Chris Adams to approve the resolution to participate in ARIN's Cooperative Purchasing program for the purchase of paper for the 2024-2025 school year. Mrs. Reitz stated that with the large amount of paper purchased from each district each year, the districts formed a consortium a few years ago so they can get a lower price since the quantity being purchased is so large. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson and seconded by John Kimmel to enter into a 5 year contract with Barrett Busing as presented beginning on July 1, 2024. 7-1 (Matt Confer), and Bill Reddinger abstained from the vote.

A motion was made by John Sayers and seconded by Brent Wile for consideration for the Redbank Valley Board of Directors to approach the Board Members of Union School District to glean interest in the merging of the two districts. Mr. Sayers stated he has received nothing but positive feedback ever since he introduced the idea at the last board meeting and discussed the cost savings. Mr. Johnson spoke and doesn't feel that two public institutions merging would make things more efficient, cheaper, or solve the problems with the budget. Mr. Johnson stated we also have cultural things to consider like the attractiveness of the area. Mr. Kimmel spoke and said he does not feel the cost savings are as big as what Mr. Sayers stated if both schools merged and mentioned in particular that administrative staff would not decrease considerably due to the size of the district. Mr. Kimmel also is concerned about the distance between the schools. Mr. Johnson really appreciated Mr. Sayers thinking outside the box even though he disagreed and mentioned the possibility of more legacy funding in the future. 1-7 (Chris Merwin, Chris Adams, Heidi Byers, Matt Confer, Kevin Johnson, Brent Wile, Bill Reddinger), and John Kimmel abstained from the vote.

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson and seconded by John Sayers to approve the Therapy Dog Proposal as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

A motion was made by John Kimmel and seconded by John Sayers to approve the January 2024 Treasurer's Report, the General Fund expenditures in the amount of \$1,746,800.21, and the January 2024 Cafeteria Fund Expenditures in the amount of \$41,949.88. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Brent Wile seconded by John Sayers for the consideration to approve the Business Manager's recommendation of moving the mature CD at Clarion County Bank as presented, which is ½ to Clarion County Community Bank for a 14 month term at 5.15% interest and ½ to PLGIT in saving account currently at a variable rate of 5.52%. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Brent Wile and seconded by Kevin Johnson to approve the quarterly 2024 Redbank Valley High School Activities Report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

PERSONNEL

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson and John Sayers to permit Dr. Rupp to attend the PARSS conference on April 24-26, 2024 in State College for a total cost from 22-23 Title 2A funds is \$758.18 and to attend the PAFPC Conference on April 14-17, 2024 in Pittsburgh for a total cost from 22-23 Title 2A funds is \$1,037.04. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson seconded by John Sayers for Karen Crawford to attend the 2024 PA Dept of Education Special Education Conference in Hershey, PA from 2/28/24 to 3/1/24. Total cost from Title 2A is \$535.68. Total substitute cost from the district is \$438.57. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by John Kimmel seconded by Chris Merwin to accept the resignation of Anita Otero effective 2/22/24. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson seconded by John Kimmel to eliminate the position of Confidential Secretary to the Superintendent/Director of Transportation/Benefits Coordinator effective 2/5/24. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Kevin Johnson seconded by Chris Merwin to approve the job description of Business Operations and Transportation Administrator.

ADDITIONAL BOARD ITEMS : There were no additional items.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mr. Darr stated that tonight was the Girls Wrestling Team's first match for wrestling and Redbank was the winner.

Also, John Sayers stated that he wanted to commend the Board and finds it refreshing that everyone is getting along despite disagreements.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by John Sayers and seconded by John Kimmel to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rochelle Reitz
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