

NORTHERN TIOGA SCHOOL DISTRICT

110 Ellison Road
Elkland, PA 16920

Minutes – Work Session
March 22, 2021

The Northern Tioga School District Board of Directors met for a work session in the Board Room at 110 Ellison Road, Elkland, PA. The session was called to order by Board President Julie Preston at 6:39 PM.

Board Attendance: Board Members Present: Ed Bonham, Greg Cummings, Jean Kohut, Ian McLaughlin, Jolene Meisner, James Moyer, Jim Neal, Kim Strauser, and Julie Preston.

Administrators Present: Superintendent Barnes, Kathy VanSchaick, Jeremy Freeman, Kris Kaufman, Jess Millard, Dan Fie, Amy Coots, and Christina Fry. Absent: Matt Sottolano and Cheryl Sottolano.

2021/2022 Budget

Kathy VanSchaick, Business Manager, provided information on the 2021/2022 budget. The proposed final budget will be presented to the board at the May 10, 2021 meeting with final budget adoption scheduled for the June 14, 2021 meeting. The assessed tax base for 2021/2022 has increased. The updated figure will result in \$24,446.00 in new money if there is no tax increase. The 2021/2022 Adjusted Index for Northern Tioga is 4.4% which equates to .8122 mills or approximately \$439,403.00 in increased tax revenue based on the February 2021 assessed tax base value. The Governor presented his proposed budget on February 2, 2021. It is the recommendation of state agencies that these figures not be included in our budget at this time. The recommendation is to remain level funded using 2020/2021 revenues for budgeting purposes. There are no federal revenue projections for 2021/2022 at this time. Kathy shared the following updated expenditure information: the BC/BS insurance rates have been finalized at 5.7% resulting in an overall increase of approximately \$289,000.00, it is recommended that the cyber school budget be increased by \$325,000.00, the PSERS retirement rate is 34.94% for an increase of approximately \$68,029.00, and salary increases for administrative, Act 93 and support groups are approximately \$151,00.00. The professional contract is currently under negotiation. Expenditures and revenues will continue to be reviewed and projections updated. The administration will be reviewing retirements and resignations. Equipment requests for 2021/2022 from the schools and other departments were reviewed by the board. It was also noted that some equipment requests will be funded with ESSER grant funds.

Williamson High School – Upcoming Events

Kris Kaufman, Principal of Williamson High School, discussed upcoming events at Williamson High School through the end of the school year.

- Prom – He said he met with the juniors to discuss what prom will look like this year. As opposed to previous years, prom will be held on campus. They are looking to use the high school gym, elementary school gym, cafeteria, stage, and an outdoor stage for prom. Students will sign up in groups of 6 and remain with the group throughout the evening to allow for contact tracing if needed. Chaperones will note the groups that enter each space and students will move from space to space as directed. Rotation through the spaces is yet to be determined but would be a 15-20 minute rotation. Hand sanitizer will be stationed throughout the spaces for use. Chaperones will assist with cleaning games and tables. Temperature checks will take place for all students and chaperones. Current face covering mandate/guidelines will be enforced.

- Jog-a-thon – This event is usually held in the fall, however, this year they are looking to hold the event at the end of the school year. Grades 7-9 and grades 10-12 will participate in the event separately. As has been done in the past, students will sign up in groups of 4-6. This will allow more effective contact tracing if it is needed. An organized/structured rotation will be used to move the groups through the various activities. Staff and/or history club members would clean game equipment. The track will be marked for social distancing of participants. Current face covering mandate/guidelines will be enforced. If food items are sold, they will be prepackaged.
- Trips – The 7th and 8th grade and the seniors hope to take class trips towards the end of the school year.
- Graduation – They would like to plan for an outdoor graduation again this year. They are still looking at the details for social distancing. Chairs may need to be rented for an outdoor graduation. James Moyer asked if there will be a limit on the number of guests per student. Mr. Kaufman said each student always gets a certain number of tickets. This year, they will probably get less tickets than normal.

Cowanesque Valley High School – Upcoming Events

Dan Fie shared information on behalf of Matt Sottolano, Principal of Cowanesque Valley High School, in regards to upcoming events at Cowanesque Valley High School through the end of the school year. Cowanesque Valley High School will have many of the same events as Williamson High School including prom, graduation, and day trips for 7th grade, 8th grade, and seniors. It is Cowanesque Valley's goal to have school and class activities outside whenever possible.

Yard Signs for Seniors

Dr. Barnes reminded the board that last year they purchased yard signs for seniors and asked if they would be interested in purchasing them again this year. Board members agreed that this school year has not been easy for seniors due to COVID. They would like to purchase the signs again this year. An item will be placed on the April board agenda to be voted on. Kim Strauser asked Mr. Kaufman if there are special face coverings for prom that could be purchased as well. These could provide a memento for students from what will not be a typical prom.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Dr. Barnes shared with the board that principals would like to offer face-to-face parent-teacher conferences in April. Appointments would be spaced apart to ensure that proper safety measures can be followed. These conferences are very important as we near the end of the school year. Virtual conferences would still be available for any parents who prefer them.

ESSER Grants

Amy Coots shared that funds from the ESSER I and II grants have been spent. Funds from ESSER III have not been spent. ESSER I was spent on remote learning. ESSER II is being spent on various items tied to social distancing, technology equipment, cleaning supplies, and remote subscriptions. ESSER III is still forthcoming and the exact amount of the grant is still unknown at this time. Dr. Barnes shared that a minimum of 20% of the funds must be spent towards addressing the learning gap. Districts are given quite a bit of freedom on how to spend the grant funds, however, districts should not use the money for any recurring expenses. Kim Strauser asked if the funds can be used towards virtual learning costs. Dr. Barnes said funds from ESSER I could but funds from ESSER II and III cannot. Jean Kohut

noted that the public often does not understand the specifics of how this grant money must be used. She suggested that perhaps an article could be included in the district update to explain the restrictions to taxpayers. Jolene Meisner asked if the funds can be used towards equipment. Dr. Barnes said that they can be used towards certain equipment and that the district is looking at these options. Greg Cummings asked if the money could be spent on previous expenses. Dr. Barnes said we can only go back to March 2020. Since these are federal funds, any projects would have needed to follow UGG federal procurement guidelines in order for these funds to be used.

Buildings & Grounds Committee Update

Greg Cummings shared that the Buildings & Grounds Committee conducted a walk-through at Cowanesque Valley High School before the meeting to review progress on the roof replacement project and any damage that has been caused by leaks during the project. He stated that the district will be working on creating a list of any damage to be shared with the contractor. Depending on what the contractor comes back with, the district may seek a second opinion on the damage to ensure that there are no long-term environmental concerns as a result of the leaks. Kim Strauser asked where they are at with the roof replacement and wondered if the contractor has acknowledged the damage. Jeremy Freeman, Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds, said the project is about complete. He said the contractor is aware that the district is looking at the damage and is waiting on us to approach them with our issues. He said they have not seemed resistant.

The committee is also aware of the chipping concrete floor issue at Williamson High School. Jeremy said Mike Jones of Hunt will be issuing a letter with his recommendation for fixing the floor. His recommendation is to add tile to the hallway floor. Committee members will investigate the issue further if the district is unhappy with Mike's recommendation once it is received.

Open Forum

No one from the public wished to address the Board at this time.

The board adjourned the work session at 7:40 PM.

The board convened for an executive session at this time for legal and personnel issues.

Alyson Yerrick
Board Secretary