

NORTHERN TIOGA SCHOOL DISTRICT

110 Ellison Road
Elkland, PA 16920

Minutes – Work Session
January 25, 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 6:02 PM.

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

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

2021/2022 Budget

Kathy VanSchaick, Business Manager, provided information on the 2021/2022 budget. Kathy stated that May 31, 2021 is the deadline to adopt the proposed final budget and June 30, 2021 is the deadline to adopt the final budget. The assessed tax base for 2021/2022 has decreased. This will result in a decrease of approximately \$5,708.00 in tax revenue if there is no tax increase. The 2021/2022 Adjusted Index for Northern Tioga is 4.4% which equates to .8122 mills or approximately \$438,077.00 in increased tax revenue based on the November 2020 assessed tax base value. Kathy shared that the Governor will present his budget on February 2, 2021. There are no federal revenue projections for 2021/2022 at this time. Kathy shared the following expenditure information: the BC/BS insurance increase was 5.9% for a total of approximately \$297,000.00, 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 is approximately \$151,00.00. Kathy noted that the professional contract is currently under negotiation. Kathy said she will continue to review expenditures and revenues and update projections.

Update on Secure Entrances/CVHS Roof

Jeremy Freeman, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, provided an update on the secure entrance project at the elementary schools. He said that some changes, including changes to door hardware at R.B. Walter Elementary, have resulted in a change order. Even with the change order, the project is still in budget. Jeremy stated that the electricians and NRG are working to finish one school at a time and then move to the next. They are still having trouble getting the concrete blocks needed to finish the project. They are currently working to get things to a point where secretaries can move back to their desks to work. Jean Kohut asked Jeremy what the holdup has been with the electrical work. Jeremy said the rough-ins for the electrical work are complete and the remaining work is just finishes. The electricians have been trying to coordinate with NRG to come and complete work at the same time. Jean asked Jeremy if he has a timeframe for completion. He said they are hoping to have the Clark Wood Elementary secretary back to her desk by the end of this week. They will move to the other schools from there.

Jeremy stated that he does not have an update on the roof replacement at Cowanesque Valley High School at this time. He is waiting to hear back from the contractor with an update. He stated that the weather has been an issue.

Discussion of Possible Extension of FFCRA Leave

Dr. Barnes shared that Kathy VanSchaick surveyed surrounding school districts to see if any will be extending their FFCRA leave since it ended on December 31, 2020. Kathy reported that no surrounding school districts will be extending the leave. Kathy noted that if the board chooses to extend the leave, it would need to be voted on at a future regular board meeting.

Update on Vaccinations

Dr. Barnes shared that educators are in Phase 1B for the COVID vaccine. Phase 1A has been expanded and there is currently a shortage in supply of the vaccines in Pennsylvania. Many areas are facing frustrations around when more vaccines will be received. UPMC, Laurel Health, and Guthrie are working together to prepare for the vaccines.

Update on Remote Learning Enrollment

With the end of a semester just behind us, Dr. Barnes asked Amy Coots to provide an update on remote learning enrollment. Mrs. Coots reported that the end of a semester has brought some shifts in enrollment numbers. All schools, with the exception of Clark Wood Elementary School, have seen a decrease in Northern Tioga Academy enrollment and an increase in the number of students returning to in-person instruction.

Mrs. Coots shared that the district is currently gathering data from parents regarding remote learning to help with program planning for next year. Jolene Meisner asked what the district is planning for next year. Dr. Barnes explained that the district realizes that not all students who have switched to remote learning this year will want to come back to in-person learning. The administration is looking at how we can provide a quality remote opportunity outside of the VLN platform used through the Northern Tioga Academy. Mrs. Coots said that the cost for outside cyber schools is very high for the district and working to offer other opportunities could help to reduce this cost. Dr. Barnes and the administration explained that there are many factors to be considered when developing such a program. Scheduling and methods of instruction delivery are two big factors. The fluid movement into and out of remote learning is an issue that would need to be addressed. The district may allow for some flexibility for students who would like to attend in-person for hands on elective classes. Mrs. Sottolano explained that remote learning is more difficult at the elementary level. Elementary principals do not want to give the impression that remote learning will be just as good and effective as in-person learning. While remote learning is beneficial to some students, the administration agreed that in-person learning is the best option. Ian McLaughlin asked if the Option 2 remote learning platform at Williamson High School has resulted in smaller class sizes. Mr. Kaufman stated that while in-person classes are smaller, the teachers are still responsible for the students through Williamson High School's Option 2 remote learning.

Open Forum

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

Senior Projects

Mr. Sottolano and Mr. Kaufman explained that this is the time of year when juniors and some sophomores begin sending out applications to complete the community service hours for their senior projects. Due to many businesses still being closed, they do not believe it will be feasible for juniors to complete these hours. They asked if the board would consider waiving the community service requirement again this year for the class of 2022 at the next regular meeting.

The board adjourned the work session at 7:10 PM.

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

Alyson Yerrick
Board Secretary