



South Fayette Township School District

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, October 22, 2024
7:30 PM

MINUTES

The Committee Meeting of the South Fayette Township Board of School Directors was called to order at 7:49 p.m. in the Studio in the High School by President Tom Iagnemma with the Pledge of Allegiance. President Iagnemma apologized for the late start announcing the Board held an Executive Session prior to the start of the meeting to discuss personnel and/or legal issues.

Present: Esther Cardillo, Rebecca Bruce, William Gray, Len Fornella, Joe Welch, Tom Iagnemma, Teresa Burroughs, Jen Iriti, Prajakta Pantankar

Others: Chris Voltz, Tucker Arensberg, P.C., Superintendent Dr. Michelle Miller, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristin Deichler, Director of Finance Brian Tony, Director of Finance Ryan Neely, Director of Human Resources Mike Radage, Student Representative Nandana Menon, Director of Technology Rob Warfield,, Superintendent's Assistant/Board Secretary Susan Vasalani, Molly Mehok, Allison Sukulski, Tami Aubrey, Anitha Varagah, Echfak Kacem, Jen Greenawald, Molly Hoag, Leslie Willetts, Kathy Coll, Sophia McNavish, Karen Godfrey, Heather Godfrey, Molly Kuczinski, Brian Kuczinski, Carlyn Potts, Cloe Hall, Jen Swider, Jeanne Tupper, Mark Petrillo

DRAW Facility Project Update - Daniel Engen

Intermediate School Additions (Construction Document Phase)

- 90% construction documents completion due Friday, internal coordination reviews begin next week
- Currently in the final design verification time with administration and staff
- Recent design decision includes alternates for cell phone booster systems at all schools
- On track to complete construction documents by the end of November
- Final document review and coordination by DRAW and PJ Dick in December
- December 2, 2024, submission to municipality for final code and permit approval
- Out for public bidding beginning of January 2025

New Primary School (Schematic Design Phase)

- Completed first design meeting of administration core team and K-2 grade level teaching leads
Monthly meetings are planned moving forward
- Preparation of preliminary Geotechnical investigation proposal in progress
- Civil engineering response to Board for November review/approval
- Upcoming educational department meetings planned prior to years-end\

New Transportation / Maintenance Facility (Schematic Design Phase)

- Land surveying begins tomorrow (October 23, 2024)
- Schematic site design and building schematic planning options to be complete by the end of October

CONSENT AGENDA

Iriti seconded Welch on the approval of the Minutes from the following Board Meetings:

Committee Meeting
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, September 17, 2024
Tuesday, September 24, 2024

And on the approval of the following Financial Reports which have been reviewed by the Superintendent and Secondary Administration:

Athletic Fund
High School Activity Fund
Middle School Activity Fund

Mark Keener
Ryan Neely
Ryan Neely

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Finance Brian Tony, and Tax Collector Kevin Biber for approval of the provided list of Real Estate Refunds due to reduction in assessment and/or overpayment.

And on the authorization for payment of monthly invoices from the General Fund for the amount of \$1,225,276.07 beginning with check number 78569 through check number 78908 and the Cafeteria Fund for \$124,630.19 beginning with check number 8776 through check number 8796, and the Construction Fund for the amount of \$73,554.80 beginning with check number 81200047 through check number 81200048.

Voice Vote - All Yes

SUSPENSION OF BUSINESS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS

There were no comments.

Old Business

There was no old business discussed.

New Business

There was no new business discussed.

Superintendent's Monthly Report – Dr. Michelle Miller

- High School student Sam Bishop ranked 39th in the Individual State Championship for golf.
- Extracurricular activities
 - Students' fondest memories come from extracurriculars.
 - Impact students' wellbeing, attendance, academic performance, and college preparedness, Promote social, emotions, and mental health, build relationships, develop social skills, reduces stress
 - According to the National Federation of State High School Association, students engaged in extracurricular activities report higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression and improve emotional regulation.

Student Representative's Monthly Report – Nandana Menon

- Elementary School students will be participating in the Fall Festival Parade on October 31. The PTA provided K-2 classroom teachers with a craft and game to enjoy.
- Intermediate School students have the opportunity to win one of 12 decorated pumpkins through the annual pumpkin raffle fundraiser. Proceeds go toward the Districts Holiday Food and Gift

Drive. Students are continuing to explore the different ways to move their bodies in the tag and invasion unit in Physical Education class.

- The Elementary and Intermediate School Science and Invention Fair will be held in November. They'll be able to showcase their own projects and science experiments.
- Middle School Spanish Club students will celebrate the Day of the Dead by going to a Mexican bakery in Mt. Lebanon to try authentic Mexican food. The annual Halloween Dance will be held on October 25.
- The High School PSAT testing (grades 10 and 11) was held on October 22. Students in grades 9-11 worked on Positive Behavior Expectations, a school safety and security review, student engagement activities, and post-secondary exploration.
- The annual Culture Day was held across the district where students participated by wearing their cultural outfits and sharing with their friends and classmates about their traditions, creating both a beautiful and accepting environment at South Fayette.
- The South Fayette Artificial Intelligence Summit was held where educators from all over the region and beyond joined to opportunity to showcase available to the students including the CAVERN space in the High School Library.
- The Girls Varsity Soccer Team advanced to the WPIAL Class 3-A Playoffs and the Girls Varsity Volleyball Team will be going to the WPIAL Class 3-A Playoffs.
- The Boys Varsity Golf team was invited as the alternate to the PIAA State Team Championships next week in State College.

BUSINESS OFFICE

Cardillo seconded Fornella on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval to authorize budget transfers as necessary beginning retroactive to October 1, 2024. If any transfers are necessary after the fiscal year end, appropriate detail will be supplied to the Board for ratification.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Student Support Services Dr. Rachel Andler for Board approval to rent space in the Middle School to Allegheny Health Network to operate the AHN Summer Chill Project Summer Program from June 22, 2025, through July 24, 2025.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Facilities Steve Timmins, and Maintenance Manager Athan Tsourekis for Board approval to purchase replacement VFD pump controllers at the Middle School from V-systems for \$8,255.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Facilities Steve Timmins for Board approval for A1 Electric to install replacement bollards and perform all electric work along the front entrance of the stadium for \$13,400.25.

Voice Vote - All Yes

PERSONNEL

Patankar seconded Burroughs on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Athletics Director Mark Keener for Board approval of the following volunteer positions for the 2024-2025 season, pending receipt of required documents.

- Hannah Finestone, Volunteer Assistant Swim Coach
- Kara Pappas, Volunteer Assistant Unified Bocce Coach

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Athletic Director Mark Keener for Board approval to hire the following coaches for the 2024-2025 school year.

- Joe Silhanek, Head Coach, Unified Bocce
- Jett Pattison, Assistant Wrestling Coach

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Kristin Deichler for Board approval to hire the following After School Tutors for the 2024-2025 school year.

- Breanna Snyder - Middle School PSSA Math Tutor
- Jessica Kent - Middle School Math PSSA Tutor

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristin Deichler for Board approval for Thiel University student Lauren Vuono to complete an externship with Intermediate School Speech Teacher Tanya Brehm from January 20, 2025, to April 25, 2025, pending receipt of required documents.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Board approval of the following student teachers, pending receipt of required documents.

- Maya Whalen, Duquesne University, with High School Teachers Michelle Lockette and Jeannie Scott from January 6, 2025, through April 25, 2025
- Sophia Lee-Houser, Point Park University, with Middle School Teacher Renee Goedert from January 6, 2025, through April 18, 2025

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent for Board approval of Director of Finance Ryan Neely as the School Board Treasurer effective November 1, 2024, at the annual stipend of \$1,500.00, prorated.

Voice Vote - All Yes

Iriti seconded Burroughs on the recommendation of the Superintendent for Board approval of the resignation of Dr. Rachel Andler, Director of Student Support Services, effective date to be determined.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Food Services Nicolle Pleil for Board approval to hire Rachel Vighetti as a Food Service Worker at the probationary rate of \$12.61 per hour. After completion of a successful probationary period, the rate will be \$15.76 per hour, pending receipt of required documents, retroactive to October 16, 2024.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Athletic Director Mark Keener, and Head Varsity Boys Basketball Coach Dave Mislán for Board approval to hire Ryan Kacsur as the Head 7th Grade Basketball Coach, effective date to be determined, pending receipt of required documents.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Transportation Brandon Soubie for Board approval of the retirement of Bus Aide Lori Mebane, effective January 3, 2025.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristin Deichler for Board approval for Robert Morris University student Clara Lucas to be a Student Teacher with Elementary School Teacher Liz Frambes from January 21, 2025, through March 12, 2025, and with Intermediate School Teacher Dr. Elizabeth Kline from March 13, 2025, through May 2, 2025.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Intermediate School Principal Tom Kaminski for Board approval to hire Andrea Dawson as a Special Education Teacher at the Bachelor's Step 3 rate of \$54,320, effective date to be determined, pending receipt of required documents.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristin Deichler for Board approval for Point Park University student Kristen Hansen in the ABCTE program to be a Student Teacher with Middle School Teacher Christine Thomas from November 11, 2024, through March 1, 2025.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Facilities Steve Timmins for Board approval of the resignation of Custodian Andrew Wilson, effective immediately.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristin Deichler for Board approval of a trial year of a High School Pickleball Club EPR.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval of the adjustment of the Substitute Food Services Worker rate from \$9.25 per hour to \$11.55 per hour.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval of the following (call as needed) Substitute Teachers, pending receipt of required documents, effective for the 2024-2025 school year.

- Shane Wigton
- Faith Miller
- Samantha Smith

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Elementary School Principal Tyler Geist for Board approval to hire Melanie Cole as a Building Substitute for the 2024-2025 school year at the rate of \$150 per day, effective date to be determined, pending receipt of required documents.

Voice Vote - All Yes

EDUCATION

Welch seconded Cardillo on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristin Deichler for Board approval to enter into a five year affiliation agreement with Pennsylvania Western (PennWest) to provide educational experiences to PennWest's students in the area of school psychology.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Finance Brian Tony, and Director of Student Support Services Dr. Rachel Andler recommend Board approval to enter into an Independent Contractor Agreement with the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (WPSD), to provide hearing itinerant services for South Fayette students attending the Western PA School for Blind Children (WPSBC), effective retroactively for the 2024-2025 school year.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Student Support Services Dr. Rachel Andler for Board approval to enter into an agreement with Amergis (previously Maxim Services) to provide 1:1 nursing and substitute nursing services, retroactive to August 30, 2024.

Voice Vote - All Yes

TRANSPORTATION

There are no items to discuss.

ATHLETICS

Patankar seconded Gray on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Athletics Director Mark Keener, and Head Varsity Track and Field Coach Scott Litwinovich for Board approval for the Girls and Boys Track and Field teams to travel to Orlando, Florida, to compete in a track and field meet. The team would depart from South Fayette, tentatively on Thursday, March 20, 2025, and tentatively return on Tuesday, March 25, 2025. There will be no cost to the district.

Voice Vote - All Yes

CONSTRUCTION

There were no items discussed.

MISCELLANEOUS

SUSPENSION OF BUSINESS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS

Molly Mehok, 22 Lockhart Road - Good evening. School board, district staff and community members. I'm speaking on behalf of the members of South Fayette Education Support Professionals who are on our 113th day without a new contract. We want to explain that one of the main reasons we do not have a contract is the district continues to propose that we pay more for health insurance than more highly compensated employees in our district. As we have said before, we are the lowest paid and contribute the most towards health insurance. We are struggling to make ends meet because when our wages and charges for health insurance are combined, we do not take home enough to support ourselves. Here are some examples. We have a paraprofessional who works directly with special education students in the classroom. She works the full day, has an associate's degree in education and has 15 years of experience. After paying for health insurance. She brings home \$370 per week. She has her own children at home, lives in the district, and has to work an extra job to make ends meet. We have an employee who works in food service, and as a bus aide, working six hours per day. She maintains appropriate behaviors and a safe environment on the buses, and provides meals to hundreds of students every day with over 11 years of experience at South Fayette School District She brings home 332 days. I'm sorry, \$332 per week after taxes and healthcare. She has to work extra jobs to make ends meet. Another food service worker and bus aide who works eight hours per day, only takes home \$380 per week after taxes and healthcare. She too works a second job outside of the district. In addition to working school food service events. We have a full time custodian with 11 years experience. He works to clean, maintain, and disinfect the schools, and sets up for school events. He brings home \$341 per week and worries about making ends meet. The district can afford to do better for the support staff. According to the district's annual financial report, the district has averaged yearly extra funds of 1.4 million dollars each year over the last 5 years, adding to an already very healthy fund balance. We love the work we do and are members of the community. We want to support our families and continue to recruit and retain the best employees for our students. We want and need a fair contract. Thank you.

Evan Wolfson - Thank you for letting me speak today, members of the Board. I am a social security disability attorney and a member of the South Fayette Democratic Committee. I've lived in this community for a decade. Now I have one kid who graduated from South Fayette High School and two more kids, one in the intermediate school and one in the elementary school. I was listening to and watching the last school board meeting on television and invited my son Caden, who some of you may know to to watch with me. And I thought it would spark some, you know general interest in him, but I was really surprised. To see him so excited to see members of the school staff that he knew by name come up and talk about their work. It meant a lot to him, and I think it was a learning experience for him as well. So I thank you all for that. Who were here at the last meeting. The staff who are trying to negotiate a fair contract are valued members of the community, and it's important that we recognize their contributions by treating them fairly. What does that mean? It means making sure they aren't paying some of the highest healthcare contributions for school staff in Allegheny County. My understanding is right now, they pay the second to highest contribution of all staff in Allegheny County. What else does it mean? It means showing staff that we value them by not paying them poverty wages. We have to pay them enough to raise their own families here, and not need to take a night job, a weekend job or something, you know, in addition to what they're doing already for essentially an eight hour time block during the day, sometimes longer. It's very hard, because they're expected to make themselves available to the school for a lot of their jobs, for you know, different blocks of time during the day. It makes it very hard to to find, you know, a second job that's suitable. And then, of course, they end up working tremendous hours and not being able to spend time with their families, not necessarily feeling refreshed and invigorated at work. So I think we really need to make an effort to support them more. I know this contract expired months ago over a hundred days ago. And I haven't gotten the feeling from from listening to the board meetings that it's a priority. I haven't seen updates or heard updates discussed. I think the South Fayette commuter needs to hear more from this board as as to how these workers are a

priority for us here in South Fayette. I know I know we can do better. So let's do better South Fayette. Thank you.

Allison Sikowski, 820 Kingston Drive - Last Friday, So I get up in the mornings, I get up at 7. I ride the bus for an hour because I'm a bus aide. I ride that from 8 to 9, 9 o'clock. I go to the kitchen at the cafeteria in the middle school. I'm a cashier, plus we help out in the back. We all help each other out 2 to 3 o'clock. At 2 o'clock when I'm done, I have an hour until I get back on the bus to be a bus aid again to get all my hours in. I get seven hours in a day. So the head of custodial comes down on Friday and says to me and my leader, "We're really short in the custodial. Is there any way you could stay to work extra?" Well, my leader can't stay and work extra, because she would be overtime. But me, I could stay an extra four hours. So I'm like, well, do I do it? He says, "Well, I really need the help." So what did I do? I ended up after working my seven hours cleaning the kitchen, went to the bus for an hour, and came back and wiped up the kitchen floor and mopped it up just to get my extra hours. So when I get that paycheck I can really see that I had that extra money. Thank you.

Karen Godfrey, 422 Meeting House Road - My plan was not to come here and speak tonight. My plan was to come and listen. I'm a lifelong resident of this district. I graduated from this school. My parents graduated from this school, my brother, my daughter, and I'm saddened to hear that we are not doing what is right for these employees. They are what keep this school moving. Dr. Miller made a very important comment today about extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities do not happen without all of them. They are the ones who drive your students. They're the ones who clean up after your students. They are the ones who take care of your students day in and day out, and I'm saddened to hear that we are still fighting this fight months upon months. And I know many of the people on this board. I've known them for a very long time, and it's hard for me to sit here and watch and listen, and to know that we aren't doing anything as a taxpayer and as a lifelong resident, and someone who takes pride that I have not left this township. I'm very, very saddened to hear that we are not taking care of our employees. Thank you.

Solicitor's Report

There was no report.

Board Comments

Mr. Fornella stated the following on the behalf of himself and School Board Vice President Teresa Burroughs. Since the inception of negotiations with a Support Union, the District has been bargaining through 17 separate sessions in a fair and reasonable manner, and with the utmost of good faith, all the while attempting to reach an agreement that is fair, equitable, and responsible. The District has made serious offers to the Union that are more than reasonable and more than competitive in the relevant market. The District does not believe it to be appropriate or productive to negotiate with the Union in public, and to this point in time has refrained from doing so, despite the fact that the Union has repeatedly done so, both here at these meetings and through social media. Presently the District does not wish to engage in public bargaining. The Union and the District are currently operating under an extension of the terms of the existing contract. As in the past, the District will continue to negotiate with the Union in good faith in the appropriate private sessions for the time being, with the hope that with full cooperation we can amicably achieve a contract resolution that is satisfactory to all.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Executive Committee Report

Mr. Iagnemma had no report

President Tom Iagnemma

B. South Fayette Foundation

- Dr. Miller reported that Fun Fest fundraiser was held on October 18.
- Letters for Santa fundraiser is underway.

Jen Iriti

C. PSBA/Legislative Committee Report

Prajakta Patankar

- Two upcoming training sessions available.

D. Parkway West

Mr. Iagnemma had no report.

Tom Iagnemma

E. SHASDA

Mr. Welch had no report.

Joe Welch

Gray seconded Fornella to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Voice Vote - All Yes