



South Fayette Township School District

Committee Meeting of the Whole

Minutes – Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, February 16, 2021
7:30 PM

The Committee Meeting of the Whole of the South Fayette Township Board of School Directors was called to order at 7:39 PM in the High School Studio by President Alan Vezzi with the Pledge of Allegiance. President Vezzi apologized for the late start as the Board held an Executive Session prior to the start of the meeting to discuss personnel and/or legal issues. President Vezzi also announced an Executive Session was held on February 2, 2021, to discuss personnel items regarding the Director of Innovation, Strategic Partnerships, and Instructional Technology and Assistant to the Superintendent for Secondary Education positions and the scheduled Special Meeting was not called into session.

Present: William Ainsworth, Tom Iagnemma, Paul Brinsky, Teresa Burroughs, Lena Hannah, Jen Iriti, Alan Vezzi, Len Fornella

Absent: Todd Petrillo

Others: See attached list of attendees.

The following 2021-2022 budgets were presented:

- Technology – Rob Warfield, Kim Sahady

On behalf of the Board, Mrs. Burroughs thanked Mr. Warfield and the entire technology team for their hard work during this pandemic.

- Transportation – Brandon Soubie
- Maintenance/Custodial/Grounds – Reggie Hale, Steve Lower, Steve Timmins

Consent Agenda

1. The Board considered approval of Minutes from the following Board Meetings:

Committee Meeting of the Board	Tuesday, January 19, 2021
Regular Board Meeting	Tuesday, January 26, 2021

2. The Board considered approval of the following Financial Reports which have been reviewed by the Superintendent and Secondary Administration:

Athletic Fund	Mark Keener
High School Activity Fund	Rebecca Bruce
Middle School Activity Fund	Rebecca Bruce
Board Summary Reports (May thru August 2020)	Maria Brewer Aguilar
Tax Collector Reports (September 2020 thru January 2021)	Kevin Biber

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

4. The Board considered approval of expenditures that were submitted for Board review to be approved at the Regular Board Meeting.

Superintendent's Monthly Report – Dr. Kenneth Lockette

Dr. Lockette reported:

- March 1 - MS and HS will transition to four-day/asynchronous Wednesday instructional model
- Working with area vendor/pharmacies and the AIU to schedule faculty and staff to be vaccinated
- Three high school students, Kelsey Go, Kyle Lynch and Darshan Reddy selected as National Merit Finalists
- HS STEM Team members Sahishnu Hanumolu, Griffin Hurt, and Rohan Kandala named one of 75 semi-finalists from across the US, in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow STEM competition; won \$15,000 for the high school; have a chance to earn up to \$65,000
- Three high school orchestra students, Kayla Uhrlen (violin), Olivia Moore (violin), and Ella Newhouse (cello), all qualified to audition for the All-State Orchestra festival
- Ariel Radinovic auditioned for and accepted for the 2021 PMEA District and Region Choir, her third consecutive year achieving this honor
- High school Wind Ensemble members Tyler Evans and Ella Schiro selected to audition for the 2021 PMEA District 1 and Region 1 Band Festival
- Thirty-one students signed on National Letter of Intent Day; another signing in the spring
- Eryn Carranza selected to perform with the Band Directors Marching Band by the Saluting America's Band Directors project and the Michael D. Sewell Memorial Foundation in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses® Rose Parade on January 1, 2022
- Two teachers, Melissa Unger and Alexandra Toras, honored with an AIU OnRamp Grant for Remote Learning

Business Office

1. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval of the 2019-2020 School District Audit as prepared by Hosack, Specht, Muetzel & Wood, LLP.

Mr. Tony added Steve Neidenberger from Hosack, Specht, Muetzel, & Wood will present the audit findings at the February 23 meeting.

2. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent for Board approval of the proposed 2021-2022 Allegheny Intermediate Unit Program of Services Budget in the amount of \$2,161,057.00. The Allegheny County (AIU3) school districts' total contribution to the budget is \$1,811,545.00. The South Fayette Township School District contribution to the Program of Services Budget is estimated to be \$39,108.00 and will be determined by PDE according to District Aid Ratio and Weighted Average Daily Membership (WADM).
3. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Finance Brian Tony, and Facilities Director Steve Timmins for Board approval to authorize the administration to advertise for a trash removal 3-year contract beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.
4. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Safety and Security Co-Coordinator Tyler Geist and Kevin Maurer for Board approval to enter into a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the South Fayette Township Police Department and the South Fayette Township School District, effective for a two-year period beginning February 24, 2021.

Personnel

The following personnel items were discussed in Executive Session.

Brinsky seconded Ainsworth on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval to hire Dr. Matthew Callison as the Director of Innovation, Strategic Partnership and Instructional Technology, a 12 month position, at the salary of \$97,000, prorated for the 2020-2021 school year, effective date to be determined. The contract offer extends through the 2023-2024 school year. Dr. Callison's next salary increase eligibility date will be July 1, 2022.

SUSPENSION OF BUSINESS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS ON THE ABOVE MOTION.

There were no comments at this time.

Voice Vote – Ainsworth, Iagnemma, Brinsky, Burroughs, Iriti,
Fornella, Vezzi – All Yes
Hannah – No

Brinsky seconded Iriti on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval to hire Kristin Deichler as the Assistant to the Superintendent for Secondary Education, at the salary of \$128,700, prorated, for the 2020-2021 school year, effective date to be determined. This position is part of the Act 93 agreement.

And the recommendation of the Superintendent and Middle School Principal Kristin Deichler for Board approval to hire Claire McCourt as the Middle School French teacher at the Master's Step 1 rate of \$50,403, prorated, effective date to be determined. This position is due to a retirement.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Facilities Director Steve Timmins for Board approval of the resignation of Steven Lower as the Custodial Shift Manager. Mr. Lower's last day worked will be March 5, 2021.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval to hire the following substitute (call-as-needed) teacher for the 2020-2021 school year, pending receipt of required documents:

- Ryan Richards, Biology 7-12

SUSPENSION OF BUSINESS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS ON THE ABOVE MOTION.

There were no comments at this time.

Voice Vote- All Yes

On behalf of the Board, Mrs. Burroughs thanked Mr. Lower for his dedication and service to the District.

Education

1. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principal Dr. Laura Hartzell for Board approval of the list of 2021 potential graduates, based on fulfilling all requirements for graduation.

2. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principals for Board approval of revisions to the 2021-2022 High School Program of Studies.
3. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principal Dr. Laura Hartzell for Board approval to enter into a Dual Enrollment Agreement with Community College of Beaver County effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025.
4. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Assistant to the Superintendent for Elementary Education Stephanie DeLuca and Elementary and Intermediate School Principals for Board approval to conduct a Summer Recovery Learning program in the summer of 2021 offering reading and math learning opportunities for students enrolled in grades K-5 during the 2020-2021 school year. The program will run Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., beginning June 21, 2021, through July 22, 2021. The District will be closed on Monday, July 5, 2021, in observance of the July 4 holiday. The cost of the program will be included in the ESSER II Federal grant.
5. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principal Dr. Laura Hartzell for Board approval to move the High School to asynchronous days on Tuesday, May 18, Thursday, May 20, and Friday, May 21, 2021, to administer the Keystone Exams.
6. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principal Dr. Laura Hartzell for Board approval to conduct a trial Cash Club in the High School for the 2020-2021 school year.

Transportation

There were no additional items discussed.

Athletics

Coaching personnel were discussed in Executive Session.

Construction

There were no items discussed.

Miscellaneous

1. The Superintendent and Administrators recommend Board approval of the either Option 1 or Option 2 of the DRAFT 2021-2022 school calendar.
 - Option 1 – first day of school August 18, 2021; last day of school June 2, 2022, graduation day June 3, 2022
 - Option 2 – first day of school August 25, 2021; last day of school and graduation day June 9, 2022
2. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Safety and Security Co-Coordinator Tyler Geist and Kevin Maurer for Board approval of the final reading of PSBA Policy 805.1 Relations with Law Enforcement Agencies.
3. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval of the second reading of revised Board Policy 610 Purchases Subject to Bid/Quotation.

4. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval of the second reading of revised Board Policy 611 Purchases Budgeted.
5. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principal for Board approval of the first reading of Board Policy 214 Class Rank.

* In April 2019 the Board approved to maintain class rank internally and not list on a student's transcripts beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.

Dr. Lockette and Administrators recommended Option 2 of the 2021-2022 Calendar as it gives the District more time to complete the hiring process for new staff and with a long school year, the additional week off is better overall.

The Board discussed the conflict of the prom falling the same weekend as the PIAA Track & Field Championships, moving the prom to another date that does not conflict with other athletic or academic events. Dr. Hartzell explained the current options for the 2022 and 2023 prom dates solely rest on if the 2021 prom will take place. The 2022 and 2023 options include the Hilton Garden Inn and the Gateway Clipper Fleet and neither one on Memorial Day weekend.

Board Comments

There were no additional comments at this time.

SUSPENSION OF BUSINESS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS

Dear South Fayette School Board Members:

I am writing to you in advance to tomorrow night's school board to convince you to reconsider renewing Dr. Kenneth Lockette's contract. I believe that Dr. Lockette has a clear vision for the district and has always had the students, administration and staff's health, safety and welfare as a top priority during this entire pandemic. He's had enormous logistical and pedagogical challenges to solve for the district for almost a year now. I believe he has been a great instructional leader in our community and has always worked to ensure our children achieve academic success even during the pandemic. He's been knowledgeable of the best practices for maximizing student achievement while providing support to the teachers in our district. Dr. Lockette's clear vision and guidance have proven him to be an effective communicator throughout his term, and he has always taken a collaborative rather than an aggressive approach.

Not renewing his contract and bringing in someone new would be a monumental mistake to this community. I know first-hand what it takes to be an effective Superintendent, for my father was a school superintendent for the same district for almost 15 years. To be a great superintendent as my father was, one needs to manage the position's politics, adapt to board members, changes in state funding, and challenges faced in the school community while not sacrificing the district's vision. I too believe Dr. Lockette has effectively accomplished this as my father did many, many years ago. If Dr. Lockette is forced to leave his position, it will have a detrimental effect not only on this district but also our community. Please consider your actions by thinking of this community and what's best for everyone who has a vested interest in South Fayette SD!

Sincerely a concerned parent,
Kristen Weiss
Hickory Heights Drive, Bridgeville

Dear School Board,

South Fayette Prom has traditionally been held on the Friday before Memorial Day. However, over the past several years, this has become an increasingly bigger issue, because this is the same day the PIAA Track & Field Championships are held in Shippensburg, PA. I along with my Track & Field teammates are requesting that the South Fayette Prom be moved to a different day for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond, to minimize conflicts with all South Fayette athletes.

On behalf of a number of T&F teammates, I contacted Dr. Hartzell last month to request that a new date for Prom be recommended to the Board, and last night I sent her an email repeating our request, along with supporting data that shows:

- 1) there are other Fridays & Saturdays in May that will not affect any high school sport playoff dates (based on data since 2016), and
- 2) many other neighboring schools have set dates for their Proms that do not conflict with the PIAA Track & Field Championships.

I have attached below, that email along with her reply.

Instead of the holding Prom on the Friday before Memorial Day, which affects 4 of our sports we recommend moving it to one of these alternate dates:

- 1) 3rd Friday before Memorial Day (affects 0 sports, based on data since 2016)
- 2) 3rd Saturday before Memorial Day (affects 0 sports, based on data since 2016) – proposed by Dr. Harzell in her email to me earlier today.
- 3) 4th Saturday before Memorial Day (affects 0 sports, based on data since 2016)

I respectfully request that the Board ensure that Dr. Hartzell's new recommended date for Prom, May 14th, be listed on the 2021-2022 school calendar before it is approved.

Sincerely,

Lauren Iagnemma

To whom it may concern,

Since we did not have an opportunity to comment during the school board meeting last evening, we wanted to put our comments in writing to the school board members.

We are very surprised to learn that Dr. Lockette's contract was and is under consideration. With only a very vague indication of this noted in the agenda, we, along with most residents, did not realize his contract was being considered for renewal. Because of this, we did not have a chance to attend the meeting and comment. This leads us to believe that something nefarious is underway. How disheartening! Especially during a very unsettled time. We all deserve more respect than a sneakily worded agenda item to try to oust a very effective administrator like Dr. Lockette.

Surely Dr Lockette deserves a show of respect! His handling of the current and prior school years during a pandemic has been nothing short of remarkable. His communication and the steps he took to ensure our children's safety, the safety of the teachers and administration, and the community, all while trying to provide the best learning environment has been exceptional. We fail to understand how another superintendent could have performed better under the tremendous challenges Dr. Lockette faced.

We very strongly disagree with this decision and with the way it is being handled!

We are very proud of the community we live in and the school district where our daughter attends high school. This conduct certainly makes us question certain board members, their transparency and their agenda!

We would welcome the chance to publicly comment on this matter and would also welcome a response from the Board.

Thank you -

George & Mary Kay Adams
Pine Creek Drive
Bridgeville PA 15107

Danielle Puhatch
Newbury Highland Dr.
South Fayette School Board,

The School Board's decision to actively search for a new Superintendent during a pandemic while concurrently having other costly, detail oriented, time consuming projects in progress causes me great concern for the short-term and long-term future of our District.

While I appreciate the efforts of the volunteer School Board members and respect the right of the Board to search for a new Superintendent, the decision to search for a new candidate during a pandemic, during active construction, during active searches for central administration replacements, and on the verge of a teachers' contract negotiation is poorly timed and creates a situation for costly failure on many or all fronts. A change in leadership, at this time, may cause another disruption in the continuity of education, potentially cause regression in the execution of the COVID education and recovery plan, and may cause the District to fall behind other districts offering higher quality and more effective learning experiences.

These concerns are not just mine. Many other taxpaying, constituents within the South Fayette School District feels the same. Attached to this email is a petition and 294 signatures of those share these concerns. The petition is asking the South Fayette School Board to rescind their vote to search for a new candidate for the Superintendent of Schools and to extend Dr. Lockette's contract for ONE year. In short, the rationale for the request to rescind the vote and to extend the contract is to allow for a thorough, proper and **diverse** Superintendent search to be done without the restrictions and limitations of the COVID pandemic, without compromise to the District's current, costly projects, and without further compromise and disruption to our childrens' education.

The petition document, in its detailed entirety, with an electronic signature log are attached to this email along with the link to the original petition platform for your review and consideration.

Thank you.

Petition document

Electronic Signature Log as of 2/15/21. 294 signatures were collected through 2/16/21. Software updates in congruence with the a timely School Board meeting comment submission did not allow for the entire list to be submitted to the Board. A completed list will be submitted to the Board.

Petition link (for viewing of the petition and 294 total online electronic signature submission tally)

<https://www.change.org/p/south-fayette-school-board-due-to-covid-rescind-the-vote-extend-lockette-s-contract-1-year>

Burroughs seconded Ainsworth on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Administrators for Board approval of Option 2 of the 2021-2022 Calendar, first day of school August 25, 2021, last day of school and graduation day June 9, 2022, and removing the prom date of May 27, 2022, to be determined at a later date.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Brinsky seconded Burroughs to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 PM.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Cynthia Geisler, Board Secretary