

April 9, 2024

**HANOVER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING**

MINUTES

April 9, 2024

Hanover Area Junior/Senior High School
Hanover Township, Pennsylvania
April 9, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Hanover Area School District was held on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 7:00 PM. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Brian C. McDermott.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO OUR FLAG

ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS:

PRESENT: Stacy Bleich, Jacob Hyder, Dr. Vic Kopko, Michael Mazur, Brian C. McDermott, Richard Oravic, Rick Stevens, and Matthew Redick

ABSENT: Paul Holmgren

Rick Stevens, Secretary, stated a Quorum was established for the meeting.

OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT: Mr. Nathan Barrett, Superintendent; Attorney Mark Bufalino, District Solicitor; Mrs. Lynn Vitale, Administrative Assistant; several District Administrators and several citizens.

Mr. McDermott, Board Chairman, asked for public input on the Board Agenda Items.

No one from press or public volunteered input on Board Agenda Items.

Brian McDermott, Board President, provided the following Executive Session Report: "Pursuant to the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, the Board President wishes to announce that at its Regular Meeting convened for general purposes on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, the Board of Education of the Hanover Area School District held an Executive Session to discuss matters of employee relations, labor negotiations, threatened or actual litigation and went into a closed executive session at 5:10PM and began the public meeting at 7:00PM. The subjects discussed in executive session related solely to matters of employee relations, labor negotiations and threatened or actual litigation."

Chairman McDermott solicited public input on Board Agenda Items.

Mary Ann Potsko, Hanover Township, addressed the following:

- Procedure Implementation for Suicide Awareness, specifically asking for the number of cases the district has had to address.
 - Mr. Barrett replied "thankfully, there have been no suicides in this district in the last 2 years". However, he noted that the district consistently has students in crisis.

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- Mrs. Potsko, grateful that there have been no actual instances of student suicide, remains concerned that programs of this nature might “plant the seed for suicide” in students. She highlighted that the district has “never had these problems before” and is unclear why we need programs like this now, that would begin discussing topics like depression and suicide as early as the 6th grade.
- Potsko highlighted that 4 hours of training for teachers is not enough for teachers to be expected to consult students on these sensitive topics for an extended period and questioned exactly where in the curriculum this instruction would fall beyond Health classes. She noted she was sensitive to students who might be experiencing mental or emotional difficulties, and, in those instances, those students should be helped. She remains upset by the fact that it appears this instruction would fall to all teachers, for an area that requires a particular expertise and believes the school-wide program is wasteful on taxpayers and burdens ill-equipped teachers.
- Chairman McDermott commented that “as a layperson, I agree with you”. He asked Superintendent Barrett directly if this programming was mandated by the state.
 - Mr. Barrett replied in the affirmative, noting that suicide is the number one killer of students 16-21 years old. He noted that he was strongly in favor of this, explaining that teaching about this at a younger age would have a positive effect on teaching students in this age group how to cope or where to go for help if they did have some ideology. Mr. Barrett stated that he was respectful of Mrs. Potsko’s opinion and thanked her for sharing her thoughts. He noted that the programming is a result of state mandate.
- Mrs. Potsko reacted with an insistence that this programming, state mandated or not, should not be the business of district schools, but rather a private matter between the child, their parents, and their doctor.
 - Chairman McDermott, again agreed with Mrs. Potsko, but reiterated that the Board was compelled to cooperate with Pennsylvania State requirements.

APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES/REPORTS:

It was moved by Michael Mazur and seconded by Stacy Bleich to approve the following minutes:

- Regular Board Meeting minutes of March 4, 2024
- Luzerne Intermediate Unit Board of Directors Regular Meeting minutes of February 28, 2024

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BOARD VOTE:

YES: YES: Bleich, Hyder, Kopko, Oravic, Mazur, McDermott, Stevens, Redick

NO: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

ABSENT: Holmgren

Chair declared the motion carried.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Mr. Nathan Barrett, Superintendent, offered his report, which noted the following:

Recognized the following students:

- Kailey Remish, Hanover Area Jr/Sr High School Student of the Month for March
- Skyler John Steinrick Wilkes-Barre Area CTC Student of the Month for March

Congratulated the Hanover Area K'nex Design Challenge winners:

1st Place 8th Grade

- Tzaliah Lewis
- Joanelis Rivera-Roman

2nd Place 7th Grade

- Payton Burd
- Victoria Arajoa
- Emily Pask

It was moved by Jacob Hyder and seconded by Matthew Redick: To accept the Report of the Superintendent.

BOARD VOTE:

YES: Bleich, Hyder, Kopko, Oravic, Mazur, McDermott, Stevens, Redick

NO: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

ABSENT: Holmgren

Chair declared the motion carried.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

GENERAL:

It was moved Michael Masur by and seconded by Rick Stevens: To approve the following motions #1 through 5:

1. Approve the Second Reading of the following School Board Policies. (Exhibit G-1)

Policy #011 Vol IV 2022	Principles for Governances and Leadership
Policy #006 Vol III 2023	Meetings
Policy #137 Vol I 2023	Home Education Programs
Policy #137.1 Vol I 2023	Extracurricular Participation by Home Education Students
Policy #137.2 Vol I 2023	Participation in Co-Curricular Activities and Academic Courses by Home Education Students

2. Approve the First Reading of the following School Board Policies: (Exhibit G-2)

Policy #819 Vol IV 2023	Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response
Policy #137.3 Vol I 2023	Participation in Career and Technical Education Programs by Home Education Students

3. Approve the following Administrative Regulations (Exhibit G-3)

137.3-AR-O	Prioritization and Placement for Participation in Career and Technical Education Programs
138-AR-6	State Required Reclassification, Monitoring and Re-designation of English Learners (Els)
200-AR-O	Enrollment of Students

4. Approve the Easement Agreement between Hanover Green Elementary School/ Hanover Area School District and Ralph and Marilyn Bellantoni.

5. Approve the Public-School Facility Improvement Grant Program Appendix II Authorized Official Resolution. (Exhibit G-5)

BOARD VOTE: (ON MOTIONS #1 TO AND INCLUDING #5 ABOVE):

YES: Bleich, Hyder, Kopko, Masur, McDermott, Oravic, Stevens, Redick

NO: None

ABSTAIN: Masur on #2

ABSENT: Holmgren

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Chair declared the motions carried.

FINANCIAL:

It was moved by Michael Masur and seconded by Rick Stevens: To approve the following motions #1 through #6:

1. Ratify the following FNCB check register(s): (Exhibit F-1)
February 29, 2024 to April 2, 2024
2. Approve the FNCB check register(s): (Exhibit F-2)
April 3, 2024
3. Law Office of Mark W. Bufalino
Attorney Mark Bufalino
April 2024 (March Services) \$4,415.34
4. Accept the verification from PA Department of Military Veterans Affairs of Disabled Veterans Real Property Tax Exemption for:

Sharon A. Dobbs Effective February 2024

Note: The Board thanks Ms. Dobbs for her service and sacrifice to our Country.

5. Approve the agreement to purchase a step van from Ken Wallace Dealerships through COSTARS Cooperative Purchasing Program.
6. Approve the purchase of School Police Officer equipment. \$2,225.94

BOARD VOTE: (ON MOTIONS #1 TO AND INCLUDING #6 ABOVE):

YES: Bleich, Hyder, Kopko, Masur, McDermott, Oravic, Stevens, Redick
NO: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Holmgren

Chair declared the motions carried.

PERSONNEL:

It was moved by Jacob Hyder seconded by Michael Masur: To TABLE Motion #2

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It was moved by Rick Oravic, seconded by Stacy Bleich: To approve Item #1 and Items #3 through 8.

1. Accept the resignation of Beth McNulty, as part-time cleaner, effective February 29, 2024.

2. TABLED—Motion to approve the settlement regarding Hanover Area School District and Student “A”. (The student’s name cannot be disclosed because of Federal and State Privacy Laws.)

3. Approve the intermittent FMLA request for Employee #32258, beginning immediately, time off would be unpaid.

4. Appoint Caitlyn Bly, as Assistant Jr. High Track Coach, at a salary of \$1,951.00 for the 2023-2024 school year extracurricular personnel.

5. Approve the request of Employee #31268 to take April 17 as a Personal Day, April 18th and April 19, 2024 off as UNPAID. (Exhibit P-5)

6. Approve the request of Employee #30236 to take May 20, 2024, and May 21, 2024 off as UNPAID. (Exhibit P-6)

7. Approve the Memorandum of Understanding between Hanover Area School District and Hanover Area Education Association pending the Solicitor's negotiation for pending credits from the Hanover Area Education Association and the School District. (Barrett noted that there is one outstanding item, but it is his recommendation to approve.)

8. Approve the request of Brooke Adair to carry over 1 sick and 2 personal days from Abington Heights School District, as per the PA School Code. (Exhibit P-8)

BOARD VOTE (on Motion to TABLE Item #2):

YES: Bleich, Hyder, Kopko, Oravic, Mazur, McDermott, Stevens, Redick

NO: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

ABSENT: Holmgren

Chair declared the motions carried.

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BOARD VOTE (on Motion #1 and Motions #3 through #8):

YES: Bleich, Hyder, Kopko, Oravic, Mazur, McDermott, Stevens, Redick

NO: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

ABSENT: Holmgren

Chair declared the motions carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mike Potsko, Hanover Township, voiced the following:

- Clarified that the state cannot require a local government to institute any policy, noting that this is an autonomous local government that could choose or choose not to implement or enforce any policy. He continued, "that is how the Commonwealth was established".
- Noted that the Federal Government could threaten to withhold monies and funds. Highlighted "that is a way they can pressure local governments into doing what they want. So, no, the state cannot require. Certainly, they can go out of their way to make it fiscally necessary, but I would just kind of caution you on that".
- Highlighted that he sees "lots policy changes, money going out and people being hired for all this mental health care", as well as athletic facilities and several projects throughout the district. Questioned how much money has been allocated during these meetings that are addressing the educational performance of our students. Do we know what the educational performance is now or are we average, below average or above average in the state. He noted that part of the frustration as a taxpayer is that all we seem to hear about is mental health and not the educational performance of our students.
 - Mr. Barrett replied that in the October meeting of the Board of Education, every single measure of the high stakes' tests showed progress in the Memorial building, the High School Building showed tremendous growth in 11 out of 13 measured categories. In fact, every single building in this district has seen growth. The district does still fall below the state average, however on an individual basis, every single student in the value-added system has shown academic growth in this district. Barrett noted that he had presented this data when it was released in October.
 - Potsko replied that he was at that meeting which presented data from last year, and questioned where we are now. Barrett replied that we won't have that student data until next school year. He noted that any data from this year would be analyzed over summer months and plans put into place for next school year. Barrett offered to sit down with Mr. Potsko and explain in detail, how the district addresses these issues to promote student academic growth.

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- Board member Dr. Vic Kopko, offered that anyone can access the site PA Future Ready to see our district data and how we compare with others. He noted that when looking at this data, it was important to compare us with similarly situated districts. He pointed out that as our district is growing, so is our Economically Disadvantaged and Special Education rates, which are both costly.
- Potosko reiterated that he doesn't see the money being spent to improve the academic state of our students, but more so on the mental health care, which he opines appears wasteful.
- Dr. Kopko commented that he believed that although there is still a lot to do, he believed the district and our students are moving in the right direction. He noted that if he thought otherwise, he would say so in a public meeting. He recognized that there is a long road ahead and that we would attack that.

The Board Chairman asked for any additional public input and there was none.

Brian C. McDermott, Board Chairman, made a statement regarding future meetings and seating the Board on the stage of the auditorium, to better hear the motions of and votes of fellow board members as well as the members of the public who approach to address the Board. The Chairman noted that the move to the stage was in no way a message of "being better or above anyone" but to simply be able to "hear everyone better because the microphones stink".

Board Member Matthew Redick responded to the Chairman that sitting on the auditorium stage was worse for hearing surrounding speakers.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Redick replying that he didn't know that and stated that we would have to work on that issue.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS:

None

FUTURE MEETINGS:

May Work Session:

Tuesday May 7, 2024

May Regular Meeting:

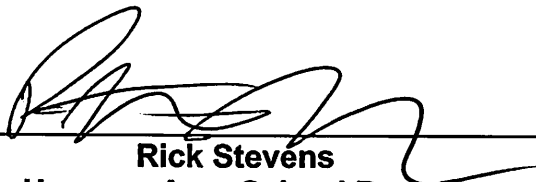
Tuesday May 7, 2024

President McDermott then called for Adjournment.

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ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved by, seconded by to adjourn the Regular School Board Meeting at 7:28PM.

ATTEST:  _____, Secretary
Rick Stevens
Hanover Area School Board