



POTTSGROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Meeting Held January 14, 2014

Summary of Key Discussion and Actions Taken:

The Pottsgrove School District Board of Directors held its twice monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 14, 2014 at West Pottsgrove Elementary School.

During the **Education Report**, the following was presented/discussed:

Primary Writing Pilot – Mrs. Koehler, principal at West Pottsgrove and Mrs. Minotto, first grade teacher, presented the Primary Writing Pilot. Several students shared what they have learned about writing since the start of the school year and read two original stories.

Retiree Recognition –Maryann Johnson, Elementary Assistant Principal, was recognized for her years of dedicated service to the district.

High School Renovation Update – Representatives from KCBA Architects presented the most recent cost estimate for the Pottsgrove High School renovation project. The projected cost has risen by approximately \$2 million to \$32.9 million due to rising construction costs and additional improvements identified through the design process. The project as presented can still be financed without raising property taxes, but the loan payback period would need to be extended. The Board agreed to continue with the development of bid documents for this project.

The representatives from KCBA Architects also introduced the concept of applying for an Alternative and Clean Energy (ACE) Grant to defray some of the costs of the project. The District would be eligible to receive a grant of \$2 million if it can achieve LEED Gold status for the High School building. Qualifying for this grant will require significant effort and the investment of additional funds for the project. However, it is anticipated that the grant amount will exceed the additional costs.

After hearing the presentation, the Board adopted a resolution authorizing the District to apply for the grant. In addition, they authorized the District to expend not more than \$65,000 to obtain a variety of services required to start the process.

Budget Presentation – Mr. Nester presented the first look at the 2014-2015 district budget. This is the start of a very lengthy budget process that will culminate with the passage of a budget in June. Budgeted expenses are expected to rise approximately 3.65%. This includes an increase in the District's retirement contributions of over 27%. Unfortunately, revenues are not projected to increase substantially causing a budget shortfall.

Each year the Commonwealth issues an index that defines the maximum property tax increase districts can adopt without seeking exceptions. For Pottsgrove School District, that represents a 2.7% increase. Currently, the budget reflects a shortfall of approximately \$800,000 if taxes are raised by this amount. The Board has a choice to pass a resolution to stay within the index or to advertise the preliminary budget and seek exceptions. The Board chose to advertise the budget and seek exceptions to maintain flexibility in the budgeting process.

In addition to the regular monthly reports and business, the **Board took action on the following:**

Delinquent Property Taxes - Effective January 1, 2013, Montgomery County began assessing a 5%



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commission on all delinquent property taxes collected even if they weren't performing this service. Pottsgrove School District uses Portnoff Law Associates to collect these taxes.

So that taxpayers who pay promptly are not burdened with this cost, the Board adopted a resolution stating that this commission will be assessed to the delinquent taxpayers. The Board also approved and addendum to the District's contract with Portnoff Law Associates setting forth the responsibilities of each party should any litigation arise in connection with this issue.

Construction Invoice - The Board approved payment of the final invoice in the amount of \$11,293.00 for the High School Gym/Auditorium Roof Replacement project that took place over the summer.

Elementary Emotional Support Classroom - The Board approved a contract for two aides to service the newly formed elementary emotional support classroom. The cost of this contract is \$32/hour.

Memorandum of Understanding – The Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding with PGEA regarding a group leader trip stipend for the spring trip to Paris/London.

The personnel report included approval of a number of professional and support personnel actions.

In addition to the regular monthly reports and business the Board discussed the following new business:

1. **Community Connection Meeting** - The second Community Connection Meeting for the 2013-14 school year will be held on January 21, 2014 @ 7:00 PM. at Ringing Rocks Elementary School. The topic for this evening will be Bullying, Cyber Bullying, Sexting and Internet Safety and will be resented by Montgomery County Detectives.
2. **Board Policies 003 and 005** – The Board approved revisions to two policies spelling out rules of governance of the school district and the Board's committee structure with the intent to improve the efficiency of operations and promote community involvement. Please see Board President Valentine's statement regarding these revisions below.
3. **Lower Pottsgrove Zoning Relief- Zoning Hearing** – In connection with the Pottsgrove High School renovation project, the Lower Pottsgrove Zoning Hearing Board scheduled the District's Zoning Hearing for January 28, 2014 at 6:00 PM. Due to the conflict with the Pottsgrove Board Meeting scheduled for the same evening, the board decided to delay the start of the Board Meeting by 30 minutes. The Board Meeting will begin at 8:00 PM on Tuesday, January 28.

Upcoming Dates:

- 1/21/14 – District Community Connection Meeting - @ 7:00 PM. – Ringing Rocks
1/28/14 – School Board Meeting @ 8:00 PM. – District Office

Statement from Justin Valentine, President, Board of School Directors

I would like to thank everyone for being here tonight. In November I consulted with Ms. Feola regarding board member orientation. As a result of the election our senior member of the board has but 3 years of experience. After our reorganization meeting on the 3rd we conducted an orientation meeting December 7th with the new board and myself and the vice president. Another training was held for all newly elected board members at the IU on December 15. Because of the composition of the new board also felt the need for more training for all of us new and returning on the board. In November the board approved a PSBA workshop held here at the district office. On January 7th the board met for our first of a series of workshops that are to be continued on January 15 and another meeting to be determined. I would like to thank all the board members for their participation over this very busy holiday season and report back to the people of Pottsgrove the hard work and dedication of their board and the administration, we have a team of people who are dedicated to our students achievement, increasing opportunity for our students and maintaining fiscal responsibility.

That being said, upon becoming president of the board I made several requests of the administration to help us with communicating with the community and promoting community involvement with the processes of the board and administration. First, I asked that all of the board members direct email addresses be placed on the districts website so that the public knows how to get in touch with their elected officials. Also, I have asked for board members to have business card-like handout to give to parents and community members while out and about. I also have asked that each board member have a district ID that identifies who they are while on school campus. I have also asked that all sub-committee meeting dates, times and locations be posted on the districts website. In addition to the posting of the meeting we have also asked that the agenda for that meeting be posted as well.

When I looked at our board committees and meeting times there was a need to expand the amount of committees and cover more topics at the committee level then were previously being covered. Tonight, I ask the rest of the board to approve Board Policies 003 and 005. Policy 003 or the *functions policy* of the board is a necessary tool in conducting the business of the district. Policy 003 spells out the rules of governance for us as a board and maintains the integrity of the district. It does not undermine the authority of the superintendent nor does it negate the role of the board. Policy 003 encourages communication through proper channels and promotes an open door policy between the staff, board, community, and the administration. There is a minor change to 003 that is in your board packet after consultation with the solicitor

Policy 005 changes the makeup of board committees. Taking into account the fact that we are all volunteers, we have increased the number of committees while decreasing the amount of board members required for a quorum. Again, the goal of our committee restructuring is to have more work done in committee. Policy 005 has the rules of engagement for our committees and encourages public participation. It is my goal that topics like restructuring our grading scale would go through the committee process.

If an idea or concern is raised by a parent or board member or questions are raised through public comment those items will be submitted to the superintendent for follow up. If there is something that warrants a more in depth discussion, these items would go through one of our newly formed committees. I ask the board to consider also adding to our agenda “a response to prior questions” section so that we are addressing the concerns of the community.

So, It is with great anticipation and excitement that I make a motion to approve these policy revisions and I would like to thank Ms. Feola for her hard work over past month. I look forward to these changes making us a more effective board.