

Avonworth School District
258 Josephs Lane
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
Avonworth Board of School Directors
Minutes – Work Session/General Purpose Meeting – March 1, 2021
Avonworth School District – LGI Room & Virtually
7:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT IN THE BOARD ROOM (Roll Call Taken):

Mr. Beau Blaser, Mr. John Brandt, Ms. Vicki Carlson, Ms. Kristin Thompson

MEMBERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY (Roll Call Taken & Verified by Voices & Video):

Ms. Sandra Bolain, Ms. Yu-Ling Cheng, Ms. Kathryn Monti, Mr. Patrick Stewart,
Ms. Danielle White

OTHERS PRESENT IN THE BOARD ROOM:

Dr. Thomas Ralston, Superintendent
Mr. Brad Waters, Director, Fiscal Mgmt.

Dr. Jeff Hadley, Asst. Superintendent
Ms. Cindy Donovan, Board Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY:

Ms. Tracy Smallwood, Parent	Ms. Emily Zupancic, Parent
Ms. Melissa Nelson, Parent	Ms. Michele Kline, Parent
Ms. Julie Brown, Parent	Ms. Carrie Brady, Parent
Ms. Katelyn Shearer, Parent	Ms. Jennifer Lindell, Parent
Ms. Jessica Jackson, Parent	Ms. Kelli Sommers, Parent
Mr. Jared Quinn, Parent	Ms. Elizabeth Dugan, Parent
Ms. Carla Zimmerly, Parent	Ms. Brittany Covalt, Teacher
Ms. Rachael MacKenzie, Parent	Ms. Suzanne Basista, Parent
Mr. Jason Smith, Teacher	Ms. Joyce Raymond, Paraprofessional
Mr. Jon Kuretich, Parent	Mr. Robert Harvey, Parent
Ms. Jodi Buzzard, Parent	Ms. Kristin Schleis, Parent
Ms. Beth Hendrickson, Parent	Ms. Valery Ciarimboli, Parent
Ms. Carrie Jane Novosel, Parent	Ms. Valerie Clarke, Parent
Ms. Briana Watts, Parent	Ms. Julie Kolenda, Parent
Ms. Monica O'Neil, Parent	Ms. Kate Campbell, Parent
Ms. Laurie Mathie, Parent	Ms. Caroline Boughton, Parent
Ms. Pam Homol, Parent	Ms. Karen Baker, Parent
Ms. Leah Plaks, Parent	Ms. Lea Ann Lope, Parent
Ms. Andrea Jacobs, Parent	Mr. Christian Calabro, Parent
Ms. Bobbie Farrah, Parent	Ms. Carol Loutzenhiser, Parent
Mr. James Loutzenhiser, Parent	Ms. Lynn Hartle, Parent
Ms. Maureen O'Connor, Parent	Ms. Marijane Antkiewicz, Parent
Ms. Heather O'Brien, Parent	Mr. Michael Klum, Parent
Ms. Beth Zelinko, Parent	Ms. Melanie Neal, Parent
Ms. Courtney Kuzma, Parent	Mr. Brant Colamarino, Blgs./Grounds Supvsr.
Ms. Julie Tullar, Teacher	Mr. Michael Hetcko, Parent
Ms. Jeanette Davis, Parent	Mr. Michael Hall, Middle School Principal
Ms. Nicole Hahna, Parent	Ms. Jackie Karwoski, Parent
Ms. Stephanie Sapolsky, Parent	Mr. Robb Pfeil, Parent

Others Present Virtually, continued

Mr. Ronald Antkiewicz, Parent
Mr. Ronnie Ziccardi, Teacher
Ms. Amy Kantenwein, Paraprofessional
Dr. Scott Miller, Primary Ctr. Principal
Ms. Sherah Rothman, Teacher
Ms. Christine Matthews, Parent
Ms. Jessica Johnston, Parent
Ms. Keera Dwulit, High School Principal
Dr. Bill Battistone, Elementary Principal
Mr. Randy Vulakovich, Parent
Ms. Hannah Valeriano, Parent
Mr. Michael Hebor, Parent
Ms. Sara Studt, Teacher
Ms. Kelly Hansen, Teacher/AEA President

Ms. Beth Schuster, Parent
Ms. Becky Marszalek, Paraprofessional/AESPA President
Mr. Oscar Matous, *The Citizen*
Ms. Pharlan Ives, Elementary Vice Principal
Ms. Lisa Simmons, Parent/Paraprofessional
Ms. Mallory Accamando, Teacher
Ms. Kaitlin Remensky, Middle/High School Asst. Principal
Mr. Bill White, Teacher
Ms. Rachael Latore, Parent
Ms. Julie Gardner, Parent
Mr. Chad Osborn, Parent
Mr. Karim Alshurafa, Parent
Ms. Colleen Barcaskey, School Nurse

Call to Order

Board President, Ms. Vicki Carlson, called the Work Session/General Purpose Meeting to order at 7:37 P.M.

Dr. Ralston and Dr. Hadley provided an update from the COVID-19 working group and from the Allegheny County Dept. of Health. The Board discussed if it was better to maintain 6 ft. distancing or bring back students with less than 6 ft. distancing and considered bringing students back April 5 which is the start of the last 9 weeks. Mr. Brandt said guidance from the medical professionals and the CDC still suggests and recommends 6 ft. distancing. Discussed how close are we with our three buildings and certain percentage of students if they are fully remote or in hybrid models. Dr. Ralston referred to the Attestation the District signed a few months ago and the adjustments made by the Board of Education shortly after. We could adjust those days. The Attestation form and chart we were using is now void because we have been in the moderate range for two weeks. The Principals discussed seeing fatigue in students both in-person and virtual, a struggle with attendance when students are not in the buildings, and stress within families. Mrs. White feels that based on the new CDC guidelines she feels we could get 7-12 grade students back to in-person instruction. She feels if we could do contact tracing and clean the buildings at night we could have the kids back. Dr. Ralston said the change in guidance is subjective and on a case-by-case basis. His concern is if we move beyond 6 ft. quarantining will increase because they would be considered a close contact. Ms. Cheng discussed the risk tolerance and asked how close would students be in less than 6 ft. Mr. Hall said 3 ft. and Dr. Hadley said the elementary averages 24-26 students per class which would be just inside 3 ft. Mrs. Dwulit said the high school could not guarantee students would be 1-2 ft. apart during lunches. Contact tracing is hard to do outside of school. Dr. Battistone said if grades 4-6 come back he has marked off 6 ft. and can seat 49 students over three lunch periods.

Mrs. Carlson recognized virtual visitor, Ms. Lisa Dugan. Ms. Dugan said she feels 6 ft. distancing and relying on science has been critical and does not agree with students coming back with less than 6 ft. distancing. She asked how asynchronous would work when middle schoolers are going back Dr. Ralston said students would alternate with A-K attending Wednesday in person one week and L-Z the next week.

Mrs. Carlson recognized virtual visitor, Ms. Monica O'Neil, who asked if the Board had considered surveying parents who are still in current hybrid about going to less than 6 ft. Dr. Ralston said we would survey parents about their risk tolerance. Dr. Battistone said he has a plan in place to provide 6 ft. distancing during lunches. 49 students can fit 6 ft. apart in the cafeteria and 70 students could be seated in the gym 6 ft. apart. He cannot provide classroom space at 6 ft. distancing and would need time to clean between lunches. Mrs. Thompson said for her, 6 ft. is still the marker and feels seniors coming back is good. She asked if it was possible, moving forward, to bring seniors back if staff gets vaccinated? Dr. Ralston said we can create a plan for what the Board feels is most appropriate. He is concerned about what is put on the principals' plate for contact tracing but that this group of administrators has risen to the challenge. Discussed bringing students back April 6, the beginning of the last nine weeks, especially seniors. Mr. Blaser feels the best place is to be in school and we need to strive to get them back in the classroom. Mrs. Carlson said is this Board going to follow the PDE guidelines or the CDC recommendations. Are we going to adhere to 6 ft. or allow for under 6 ft. and bring all students back. Dr. Ralston said the Dept. of Education, Dept. of Health, and the Governor all have the mask order still in place with limitations on social gatherings. The Dept. of Education would make recommendations and honor school board decisions. The School Board makes the decisions and the Administrators implement the Board decisions.

Mrs. Carlson recognized virtual visitor, Mr. Mike Hebor, who feels we need to find a way to get normalcy back in children's lives.

Mrs. Carlson recognized virtual visitor, Ms. Kristin Schleis, who feels it's important to get kids back to school. She will locate an article she read about ventilation and opening windows and send it to the Board. Dr. Ralston said we will take advantage of the increased ventilation by cracking windows open.

Mrs. Monti is interested in trying to move forward as much as we can safely and is concerned about the health vs. mental risks.

Mrs. Bolain would like to see us stay on track. She feels lunches are critical and we need to follow the science when we have more exposure. She thinks we should survey teachers also.

Mrs. Carlson said the Board would come back next week and answer Dr. Ralston's question 1) PDE vs. CDC; 2) Weigh the risks and benefits of 6 ft. distancing; 3) wait until teachers are vaccinated to bring kids back. She would like administrators to answer questions and come up with recommendations at next week's meeting. Dr. Ralston would like everyone to digest the information and have a brief conversation at next week's meeting and motions could be made after the discussion.

Visitors' Comments

No visitor comments.

Mrs. Carlson said the Athletic Committee met virtually and in the LGI Room this evening at 6:30 P.M. to discuss athletic matters and the Buildings & Grounds Committee met virtually and in the LGI Room this evening at 7:00 P.M. to discuss buildings and grounds matters.

FOR VOTE THIS EVENING

PERSONNEL – K. Monti/Y. Cheng, Co-Chairs

Motion: K. Monti; **Second:** J. Brandt; **Motion Carried:** Unanimous voice vote to approve item 1:

1. To approve **Mr. Eugene Heath Buchholz** as a full-time custodian effective March 1, 2021, with salary and benefits according to the current AESPA contract, pending requirements of the District. *Custodial Hire*

The following items were discussed for placement on the agenda of the Regular Meeting to be held Monday, March 8, 2021:

Approval of the Minutes of the February 8, 2021 Work Session/General Purpose Meeting and the Minutes of the February 15, 2021 Regular Meeting. (Voice Vote)

FINANCE – D. White/P. Stewart, Co-Chairs

- 1.1 Ratify payment of General Fund bills for February, 2021, beginning with Check #50646 and ending with Check #____ in the total amount of \$_____. *(See web folder)*
- 1.2 Ratify the February, 2021 payroll in the amount of \$1,413,225.77. *(See web folder)*
- 1.3 Treasurer’s Report for January, 2021. *(See web folder)*
- 1.4 Ratify payment of Food Service Fund checks for February, 2021, beginning with Check #2786 and ending with Check #___ in the total amount of \$_____. *(See web folder)*
- 1.5 Ratify payment of Athletic Fund checks for February, 2021, beginning with Check #9218 and ending with Check #___ in the total amount of \$_____. *(See web folder)*
2. To approve the Agreement with The Meadows Psychiatric Center for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 School Years. *(See web folder)*
3. To approve the solicitation of bids (if necessary) for General Supplies, Arts, and Athletics, for the 2021-2022 School Year.

PERSONNEL – K. Monti/Y. Cheng, Co-Chairs

1. To approve _____ as mentor for Mr. Michael Shoats, 9th Grade Long Term Substitute Biology teacher effective March 1, 2021.
2. To approve the request of _____ for FMLA from August 18, 2021 through October 29, 2021.
3. To accept the resignation of _____, with Intent to Retire.

Personnel, continued

4. To change the status of _____ from Interim Buildings & Grounds Supervisor to Buildings & Grounds Supervisor.
5. To approve the renewal of **Dr. Thomas Ralston**, Superintendent’s contract for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025.

CURRICULUM – Y. Cheng/J. Brandt, Co-Chairs

1. To approve the adoption of Wit & Wisdom by Great Minds for Grade 6 beginning with the 2021-2022 School Year at a cost not to exceed \$15,000.00. *(See web folder)*
2. To approve the 2021-2022 High School Course Guide. *(See web folder)*

ATHLETICS & ACTIVITIES – J. Brandt/B. Blaser, Co-Chairs

1. To accept the resignation of _____ as Head Varsity Cheerleading Coach effective March 1, 2021.
2. The Administration recommends approval of the following Spring coaches for the 2020-2021 School Year, pending requirements of the District. In the event that an athletic season or other activity is shortened or cancelled in its entirety, payment for the affected supplemental positions(s) shall be reduced on a pro rata basis. This appointment does not guarantee any of the persons listed below that his/her position will be needed and in place or that it will continue uninterrupted during the 2020-2021 School Year. *(See web folder)*

Assistant Varsity Track Coach _____
Assistant Varsity Track Coach _____
Volunteer Assistant Track Coach _____

POLICY – S. Bolain/K. Monti, Co-Chairs

1. To remove the provisional status of the Steel City Codes Club and approve it as an Avonworth Co-curricular club/organization commencing with the 2020-2021 School Year. The sponsor for this club is **Ms. Jill Shumaker** with a stipend according to the AEA contract.
2. To remove the provisional status of the eSports Club and approve it as an Avonworth Co-curricular club/organization commencing with the 2020-2021 School Year. The sponsor for this club is **Ms. Jill Shumaker** with a stipend according to the AEA contract.

Policy, continued

3. To remove the provisional status of the Social Justice Club and approve it as an Avonworth Co-curricular club/organization commencing with the 2020-2021 School Year. The Co-sponsors for this club are **Ms. Sonia Ewell, Ms. Michelle George,** and **Ms. Jill Shumaker** with a stipend according to the AEA contract.
4. To approve _____ as a school bus driver who has qualified under the laws and regulations as required by PA State Regulations.

Old Business

Mr. Waters will present projected 2020-2021 expenses to budget comparison next week. Will show variances whether positive or negative. Mrs. Carlson asked if there was room in the budget to buy or rent tents and chairs for outside lunches. Mr. Waters said there is and we had done this for the first three months of the school year.

Mr. Blaser said he felt compelled to make a motion to get students back in school.

Motion: B. Blaser: To reopen schools for five days in-person with social distancing starting two weeks from today.

Discussion followed with Mr. Stewart stating he felt administrators need time to answer the questions presented by the Board and Mrs. Carlson stating she couldn't support the motion because at the beginning of the meeting she had said the Board would not vote on anything tonight.

The Motion was not seconded and did not pass.

New Business

Ms. Cheng noted the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, March 18 at 7:00 PM with guest speaker Ms. Candi Castleberry Singleton. There is a link to sign up for the meeting in the Newsletter Dr. Hadley just sent out.

Adjournment

Motion: J. Brandt; **Second:** K. Thompson; **Motion Carried:** Unanimous Voice Vote to adjourn the Work Session/General Purpose Meeting at 10:20 P.M. to an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy S. F. Donovan,
Board Secretary