

The Lowellville Board of Education met in special session on Tuesday, November 24, 2020 Via Virtual Zoom for BOE and Public; President Michael Palumbo presiding. Mr. Palumbo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Stephanie Yon - Present Gerald Dubos- Present
Michael Palumbo – Present Joseph Sturm - Present
Brian Wharry - Present

Dr. Thomas introduced Ryan Tekac. Mr. Tekac is the Health Commissioner with Mahoning County Public Health Department and joined the meeting to go over a few points regarding COVID-19 and schools. Mr. Tekac noted that the Mahoning County Public Health Department has been working with schools for months and is continuing to provide guidance and instruction. Unfortunately, the Department has continued to see an uptick in cases and there is a major concern regarding community spread as it has increased 300% since Halloween. Mr. Tekac noted that individuals attending events and parties are the main cause of this spread and with the holidays approaching and gatherings continuing there is a need to mitigate those activities to slow the spread. Mr. Tekac added that schools have done a great job of mitigating health risks and the spread is typically coming from outside of the schools. Mr. Tekac along with the rest of the Mahoning County Public Health Department will continue to support school districts and are always willing to meet and provide assistance. Mr. Tekac asked for everyone to continue being a champion of public health and to mitigate gatherings, wear a mask, and wash your hands.

Dr. Thomas thanked Mr. Tekac for his hard work throughout the pandemic and for his continued help with the Lowellville School District and the Lowellville community.

Mrs. Yon asked about the methods used for contact tracing. Mr. Tekac went through the process of tracing which starts with a positive case being reported to the Health Department. A live spreadsheet list is maintained between the Health Department, the school districts, and the positive case. The CDC and Ohio Department of Health guidance is followed for contact tracing, meaning being within 6 feet for over 15 minutes during a 24-hour period results in a person being a close contact. Close contacts then have to quarantine for 14 days. Schools are assisting the Health Department with contact tracing by using the live spreadsheet.

Mr. Dubos asked if the 6 feet rule still applies if people are wearing a mask. Mr. Tekac clarified that there is no variance in the 6 feet rule and that person will still be a close contact, but the mask mitigates the risk of the virus spreading. Mr. Tekac also noted that many children are not contracting it (the virus) when public health measures are in place.

Dr. Thomas thanked Mr. Tekac for taking the time to address the Board and the community members.

Minutes:

(20-11-7760)

1. It is recommended that the Board approve the minutes from the regular Board meeting on October 28, 2020:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Brian Wharry seconded by Gerald Dubos.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

Treasurer's Report:

1. Review October financial reports and agenda items for approval. Mr. Schiraldi explained that the Five-Year Forecast had been completed and would be voted on in a few minutes. There was a financial committee meeting where he went through the Forecast in more detail, but the important thing to note is that the Forecast is an estimate of what might happen throughout the year. The numbers are always subject to change and he will continue to monitor the Forecast and adjust it for changes that do occur. Mr. Schiraldi noted that the night before he was informed that the District's Public Utility valuation was significantly higher than what was originally expected. He is working to confirm those numbers and find out if more increases are expected or if the change is the result of a completed project.

Treasurer's Recommendations:

(20-11-7761)

1. It is recommended that the Board approve the financial reports, bills and payroll for October 2020, as submitted by the Treasurer:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Michael Palumbo seconded Joseph Sturm.

Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.

(20-11-7762)

2. It is recommended that the Board approve the five-year forecast as submitted by the Treasurer:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Michael Palumbo seconded Gerald Dubos.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.

Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

(20-11-7763)

3. It is recommended that the Board maintain employment of staff in the betterment of the District and community and the willingness to assign staff and pay them to perform duties outside of their regular position if the opportunity exists:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Michael Palumbo seconded Joseph Sturm.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.

Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

Principal's Report:

Mrs. Parry updated the Board that the District is now One to One district wide as of December 1, 2020. The original Chromebooks order is still backdated and not expected to come in until the spring or summer, but we found new Chromebooks and Fred Schriener is preparing them to give out to students. Kindergarten will have touch screen Chromebooks which is something we were attempting to accomplish even though the touch screen Chromebooks are the ones that have been very difficult to come by. Mrs. Parry also noted that we have enough computer carts to store some of the Chromebooks for younger kids when they are in the building. Also, now that we are One to One district wide, we can swap some of the lab computers with the teacher computers as the teachers computers are fairly outdated and the lab ones are newer and will function better for the teachers. Mrs. Parry added that we currently have 66 students on VLA, and it is going well.

Mrs. Parry also informed the Board that At-Risk services are continuing even while we are remote, and those services have also been going well.

Dr. Thomas noted that the District is ensuring that student and parent needs are met, and parents should call the school with any questions, concerns, or needs.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Thomas informed the Board that the new SendIt App is up and running. This app will consolidate communication and All-Calls into one platform. He also informed everyone that the school has a new Lowellville School District app. The design is still being updated, but it is live and can be downloaded by anyone. Just go to the app store and search "Lowellville Local Schools" and download the app. Essentially it is a mobile version of our district website so people will have easier access to it.

Dr. Thomas also talked to the Board about how important communication is between the school and community and informed the Board that the District will be posting a "Who to call, When to call" informational sheet on the school website to help expedite communication with the school. This sheet explains who to contact and the process communication will go through.

Mr. Sturm asked if the SendIt app is just for the administration. Dr. Thomas said yes, instead of the All-Call system he can now send notifications, such as a snow day, easier through the SendIt app. Mrs. Yon asked for further clarification on the different apps and Mr. Schriener stepped in to explain the differences between the apps.

Mr. Dubos introduced discussion about social media. He noted that there has been a lot of negativity and speculation in the comments of the school's social media. He also stated that people are posting negative things without even contacting the school and people need to be more cognizant that the school's social media should be positive and more uplifting for the kids. Dr. Thomas informed the Board that the school's Facebook account can be turned into a "page" to get rid of comments. He added that the District does not use social media for questions. It is purely informational and if people have questions, they should contact the school instead of trying to ask over social media. Mr. Dubos asked that people try to mitigate the negativity and arguments on the school's social media. Try to be positive and do not use it to bash the District or spread rumors. Dr. Thomas added that people need to keep in mind that the school's social media class works on the District's social media account too. Mr. Sammartino stated that students do ninety percent (90%) of the work and he just posts the information to Facebook and Instagram for them. Mr. Sammartino also said that if needed, he can monitor comments more closely or create a page to limit comments. Mrs. Yon agreed that the accounts should stay positive.

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee – Mr. Palumbo and Mr. Dubos informed the Board that there was a financial committee meeting and asked Mr. Schiraldi to go over some of the details. Mr. Schiraldi started by reiterating information regarding the Five-Year Forecast. These forecasts are estimates of what might happen and the numbers will continue to change as more information comes out and actual numbers are received instead of the estimates used.

Mr. Schiraldi then transitioned to talk about expenditures related to COVID-19, CARES Act funds, and other budgetary matters. Mr. Schiraldi started by noting that the State had budget reductions of approximately \$48,000 for both Fiscal Year 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021. The State Foundation payments are the District's largest source of revenue, so losing almost \$100,000 over two years from those payments will have an impact moving forward. The District did receive two different rounds of CARES Act money. The first round was the ESSER fund in which the district received about \$48,000 in funding. However, it is important to note that this money did not replace the money cut from the budget. Although it was a similar

amount, this ESSER fund money is being used for COVID related expenses that the District did not budget for and was not planning on spending. The ESSER funds were used to purchase additional Chromebooks and webcams for the district along with some PPE and sanitation supplies so the building would be equipped with safety measures to mitigate the risk of COVID spread. These items were not budgeted and the ESSER funds did not cover all the necessary expenses for these items. The next round of CARES Act funding came from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. In total, the District received \$44,613.94 of which, \$21,600 was from the Broadband Ohio Connectivity Grant the District applied for. That grant was used to purchase hotspots for students so they can have internet access while learning remotely. Again, these funds were spent on items that were not budgeted for and the District otherwise would not have purchased if not for COVID-19. The remaining CRF Funds were used to purchase additional Chromebooks, PPE, and sanitation supplies.

Mr. Schiraldi then transitioned to talking about what the total costs have been and are estimated to be because of COVID related expenditures. Mr. Schiraldi reiterated that the District has spent \$46,840.35 out of the ESSER Cares Act funds and \$44,613.94 out of the CRF and Broadband funds. As mentioned previously, these funds did not cover all the COVID related expenditures, so the District has also spent, to date, \$26,307.85 out of the General Fund for additional PPE and sanitation supplies. There was an additional \$9,560.15 that was spent out of miscellaneous funds for COVID related items, such as the cafeteria needing to purchase coolers to adjust how they gave out meals to the students. Mr. Schiraldi stated that the District also needed to hire full-time substitutes and aides to ensure the school had sufficient staffing for when the students returned to the building. Mr. Schiraldi estimated that the annual expense for this additional staff would be over \$188,000 for the school year. Combined, the District will end up spending at least \$315,925.79 on COVID related expenses that were not budgeted and would not have been spent if it were not for COVID. This number is likely to increase due to the need for additional supplies to maintain a safe environment for students and staff. Mr. Dubos noted that this was almost a \$600,000 swing in funds for the District as they had to spend it unexpectedly and the COVID expenses took money away from what the District originally intended it for and still had to find the money for. Mr. Schiraldi agreed.

Mr. Schiraldi also added that there were additional expenses not included in these numbers that were the result of a lawsuit over the decision to start the year remote. To date, the District has spent \$31,350.75 on attorney fees to defend a lawsuit. Mr. Schiraldi noted that the District recently purchased additional Chromebooks so they would be One to One with every student in the District and the sum of the attorney fees would have paid for most, if not all, of those Chromebooks if it did not have to be used for attorney fees. Instead, Mr. Schiraldi noted that since the Chromebooks were needed, he had to find the funds elsewhere and it is unfortunate that a significant amount of money had been taken away from students and staff during a period when their needs are rising. Instead of using the funds to create a safer environment or for additional technology for the betterment of the students the funds had to go to attorney fees. Mr. Schiraldi noted that although costs are rising, the District is being very cognizant of what they are purchasing and when they are purchasing the items. Some purchase requests have been put on hold until the District is certain that the purchase is needed for immediate use.

Mr. Schiraldi then transitioned into a conversation relating to a levy proposal he would be recommending soon. The Construction Bond and Facilities Maintenance Bond that were passed to build the "new" (current) school would be expiring and Mr. Schiraldi announced that he will be proposing a continuing Permanent Improvement Levy. This PI Levy would create no additional taxes for the taxpayers and the funds can only be used on items with a useful life of five years or more. Mr. Schiraldi informed the Board that this means the PI funds could not be used for operational costs such as salaries but could be used to improve and maintain assets. With an aging school building it is important to have funds to maintain the building and grounds. Mr. Schiraldi stated that these funds could be used for new computers for teachers whose computers are outdated, now that the District is One to One it will need to replace Chromebooks every year or two which can be paid for with these funds, these funds could be used for HVAC updates that the Board has been discussing, busses, updating security, and other maintenance of the school's assets. Mr. Schiraldi reiterated that the new Levy would not create additional taxes so it would be a win-win for the taxpayers and the District.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Mr. Dubos tried to recall an item for new business and asked Dr. Thomas if he could recall. Dr. Thomas informed the Board that it was regarding the school's volunteer policy and if it could be updated. Dr. Thomas said he planned on forming an ad hoc committee to review some policies that might be outdated and make a recommendation for any necessary changes or updates to them. Mr. Dubos added that he would recommend doing this so the policies could be up to date and relevant and it does not cost the school anything to do this and he would be a part of the committee. Mrs. Yon asked for clarification on what volunteers they were referring to whether it be coaches or general school volunteers. Dr. Thomas clarified that it would be for all volunteers. Mr. Palumbo volunteered to be on the ad hoc committee. Dr. Thomas informed the Board that suggestions were welcomed from all Board Members even if they were not on the committee.

President's Report:

None.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

(20-11-7764)

1. It is recommended that the Board accept the resignation of Sherry Novak (Cafeteria Aide) retroactive to November 3, 2020:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Michael Palumbo seconded Brian Wharry.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

(20-11-7765)

2. It is recommended that the Board accept the resignation of Charles Harris (Van Driver, Custodial Aide & Grounds Maintenance retroactive to November 18, 2020:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Michael Palumbo seconded Gerald Dubos.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

Dr. Thomas took a moment to thank Sherry Novak and Chuck Harris for their dedication to Lowellville Schools and the community. Typically, he would have invited them to the meeting for acknowledgement, but due to COVID and the Zoom meeting setting, he plans on sending out an invitation when Board Meetings are able to return to in-person. Dr. Thomas noted that both individuals were always very passionate about the school and did so much for so many years to help the District and the student body. Their efforts will be greatly missed. Mrs. Yon agreed with Dr. Thomas and agreed to forward them an invitation to be acknowledged at a future Board Meeting.

(20-11-7766)

3. It is recommended that the Board approve the following classified staff for the 2020-2021 school year per the correct salary steps in the classified agreement:

Glen Wilson (retroactive to November 2, 2020)
Ronald Purtee (getting licensed)

Custodial Aide (As Needed)
Bus Driver (Sub & As Needed)

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Michael Palumbo seconded Brian Wharry.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Sturm asked for a status update on Paul Mihaly. Dr. Thomas informed him that he is currently unavailable and not on staff.

(20-11-7767)

4. It is recommended that the Board accept the resignation of Robert Slaven, Basketball - Boys Varsity Assistant (10%) retroactive to November 18, 2020:

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Brian Wharry seconded Gerald Dubos.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

(20-11-7768)

5. It is recommended that the Board move into Executive Session. Moved by Gerald Dubos, seconded by Joseph Sturm, resolved that the Board of Education of the Lowellville School District adjourn to Executive Session at 8:00 p.m. to discuss:

- Personnel matters (individuals need not be named)
- Appointment and/or employment
- Dismissal
- Discipline
- Promotion or demotion
- Compensation
- Investigation of charges and/or complaints
- Purchase or sale of property
- Conferences with legal counsel related to pending or imminent court action
- Negotiations
- Security arrangements
- Economic Development
- Matters required to be kept confidential by state or federal law

Action will be taken

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

(20-11-7769)

6. It is recommended that the Board return from Executive Session and resume Special Meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Mr. Palumbo called for a motion to approve. Moved by Brian Wharry seconded Stephanie Yon.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.

(20-11-7770)

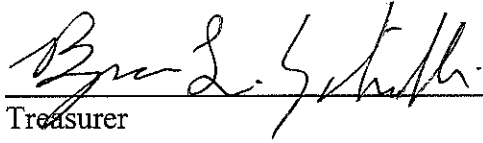
7. Adjournment:

Joseph Sturm moved to adjourn at 9:08 pm. Seconded by Gerald Dubos.

ROLL CALL: Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - Wharry - All Aye.
Michael Palumbo declared motion carried 5-0.



President



Treasurer