

Lewiston-Porter Central School District
Regular Board of Education Meeting 05.05.2020
Transcript via Zoom Meeting

Board President:

Well, welcome everyone to our May 5th Board of Education Regular/Work Session
I would like to call this meeting to order we'll begin with the Pledge of Allegiance.
Start the meeting with a moment of silence honoring everyone, all of those who have lost their lives and those who have lost their loved ones in this. Thank you, we also send our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who is on the front lines working to get us through.

I would like to now move to accept tonight's agenda for May 5th, 2020, If I may have a second.

Warrick: Second

President Riordan: All in favor yes, any opposed no, so carried. (7-0)

Tonight, it looks like our agenda is pretty light, but the topics are going to get a little heavy. We're going to start with our policy committee review and for that I'm going to turn it over to Colonel Lance Dickinson.

VP Dickinson:

All right we had a policy meeting at five o'clock, this afternoon just prior to this. We have some first reads coming up ones for privacy and security for student data and teacher and principal data, we're going to delete there was one that was called student data breaches which is now incorporated in here along with protecting the personal information for teachers and principals it also talks about the training to protect all of that information, how we deal with it with third-party contractors, make sure we inform the public and the parents about it and uh the training that's required for it and, we also have to publish a parent's bill of rights so you will all see that for the first read. We're also going to identify a data protection officer which will be our Director of Technology and Data in this case Nick Hill will be it for the time, but we in the regulation we'll just say the Director so if there's ever a change it will belong to the position. Then as I said we will have a first reading to delete 7243 which was the student data breaches which is now contained in this policy. Then we also did our we're continuing on with our annual review for the 8 000's which is the instructional materials and again we had reviewed these when we went over our procedures and we made some minor changes to it some of them maybe a major change because one of them just talks about the selection of instructional materials and it used to be in there that the board would select the material but we have changed that that we were going to approve instructional material on the recommendation of the Superintendent and some of the other ones like deal with controversial issues copyright material, religious expression, in the instructional program including making sure that we look at that when we're doing our calendar which we do and then animals in the school for instructional purposes so again minor changes to that that we looked at very carefully also when we did our procedures and that is it for policy questions anyone.

President Riordan:

All right thank you Lance

VP Dickinson:

You're welcome.

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President Riordan:

All right I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Casseri for a closure update

Mr. Casseri:

As you all know the Governor has closed schools for the remainder of the academic year the 2019-20 school year and we had anticipated that and had worked very diligently to be ready for that in terms of bringing our school community up to speed on technology and with the use of technology and remote learning and the development of teacher packets and creating a schedule for teachers to come to school. Because we had spent some time and really allowed that to occur from March 16th right up through these last few days of last week. I think it put us in a good spot to close out the school year in the best fashion that we can with new learning moving into closing out a third marking period and moving into a fourth marking period for the secondary program and establishing new learning for the third trimester. The elementary program, you know obviously, it's not been out without its bumps, there are some families out there that still are having some difficulty and remain disconnected. We have been making home visits and things like that of course every decision that we make it's not always met with total agreement by an individual family in relation to let's say the secondary program how grades are being established and how work is being accounted for and those kinds of things so we're trying to work through those uh difficulties with individual families. But overall based on our survey we know that generally we're doing a very positive job and you know in in a very difficult circumstance. I think it's worked relatively well, I'm very pleased and happy and proud the way that our faculty has stepped up and by and large has embraced both synchronous and asynchronous approach to learning I think that you know that has gone relatively well. We had an excellent packet delivery system last Thursday we had many more packets largely the entire kindergarten the entire second grade significantly more from the high school as well. We had many more families come in to pick those things up. So, I think there's an understanding of the responsibility that and the partnership between the home and the school, but even though we had many more packets we had a much smaller mailing the next day so ultimately all the packets were sent out and delivered and we're now working that process a little bit and dealing with the blips in the radar as they come up so. We don't anticipate another packet development experience all the work from this point forward will be done remotely; either in a synchronous or asynchronous fashion either through google hangouts google classroom, zoom or seesaw. That's kind of where we're at in terms of the end of the school year. It'll be interesting to see how the Governor plays out the end of the school year you know our teachers are required by contract to work 188 days and of course the students the 180-day requirement. So, I took a very hard look at the calendar today and for our students at the secondary level the 180th day would be on June 11th and for the elementary level the 180th day would be on June 12th and for our teachers their 188th workday would be on Monday, June 11th, no, I'm sorry it would be June 15th. We're still waiting for guidance from the State Education Department in terms of when the school year will officially end and will we will we be required to continue to function with the remote learning through June 25 or which would have been the last day of school June 26 being what we call a teacher rating day or the teacher close out day. So, we're still waiting for some guidance there from our from State Ed in terms of how that's going to look.

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BOE Warrick:

And the reason why Paul just to clarify because they work through spring break.

Mr. Casseri:

The kids in the teachers correct we're and we worked through and that included good Friday which is not considered a holiday that that eliminates the Friday of Memorial Day which is not considered a holiday we're required to work through so taking into account taking into the November 1st electric day where we had electric outage and taken into the February 27th snow day that we had and I know looked at everything and looking at those two half days and that's those are that's where the numbers shake down so we'll have to see if the Governor requires us to teach beyond 180 days or you know beyond the teacher's contractual work year we'll have to see how that all plays out.

I had a zoom meeting with my Orleans Niagara Superintendents group at 2 pm today and Dan Stapleton the Niagara County Health Commissioner was on that. I had some very discouraging news from Dan, unfortunately, he does not anticipate an opening in mid-May we're very much whereas say Orleans County is linked with the Finger lakes economic development zone Niagara County is linked to obviously very closely with Erie County and so the testing that is that is being that is that is occurring is still very limited the numbers are still not coming down in a dramatic fashion and so he doesn't anticipate much opening up this month following what the Governor has put out if you look at the phases arts entertainment and school openings are in phase four of this whole process, so he doesn't anticipate allowing as the Niagara County Health Commissioner large group gatherings he said that he would not and that he said it certainly remains to be seen and certainly they'll be making updates through may but he does not anticipate us being allowed to have any sort of a graduation ceremony. He would certainly not a prom he is not recommending any sort of gatherings whatsoever so I asked him about July or into early August he said well yeah certainly we could look at those if things start to improve but at least through the end of June. It does not look promising now we'll certainly going to hold all our decision making, but it does not look promising at all in terms of end-of-year activities. So, we have some other you know we're working on a couple of other options for students uh our seniors specifically I'll give you for an example so you've heard of the scenario of the drive in and transit drive in and they've offered this facility to schools. I can tell you that the Williamsville Schools have looked into that, Grand Island schools have looked into that, Sweet Home and many others, we have to we have currently held a date July the 9th, and so we were having that conversation with Dan Stapleton. Dan said you got you guys, I'm glad to have you hold the date but you know we don't know if they're going to be open we're not planning on letting the drive-in open anytime soon he said they fall into that entertainment category and you know that would be one of the last places to open. I don't know how this is all going to play out we're going to continue to have conversations in terms of those activities and what we can do, but it would appear that we we're going to need to start to be more aggressive around this whole idea of a virtual graduation I know that many of the other Orleans Niagara schools are looking at it very dramatically, I'm not a fan of it. I would wish or hope that we could bring in some fashion you know the community together in a social distancing way in a very limited gathering type of way, but I don't know if that's going to be possible so I guess I'm going to need to start to brace our community for that and as you all know there are members of our community who are you know on the other side of the coin in terms of how this thing

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should be opened up and you know that's going to be a difficult pill to swallow for many of the senior families and other members of our school community that feel that you know this whole thing is needs to be opened up sooner so we'll continue to do the very best we can to make those decisions and you know obviously we're still going to be looking into the summer to try to do some things with our Class to 2020. But, I did want to kind of brace the board for some of these decisions that are going to be made and I did want to brace the board for the very discouraging conversation that I had was part of with Dan Stapleton the Niagara County Health Commissioner in terms of the closure.

Patti is doing a great job managing the foodservice and an excellent job managing the daycare. We don't know if we are going to be required to continue the foodservice through the summer, if we do that's going to be a cost that will need to be incurred with the personal touch, which you know obviously, we don't run our own foodservice so we would have to that would expand their contract because we don't run summer lunches and you know the essential worker day care. We don't know if that's going to be required to run through this summer. Patti learned some difficult news today that we're probably have a difficult time gaining reimbursement for the current daycare not that it's a huge it's certainly not a huge cost first the first goal around the first month was about a thousand dollars so it's not like an absolute killer for us but you know if we have to continue to run that through the summer it will be a cost on us and it doesn't seem to be able to be reimbursed through the FEMA requirements we'll have to see how that all plays out. Patti, Dr. Grupka anything you wanted to add to my closure update. Nick can you unmute Patti.

Dr. Grupka:

I've already reached out to Personal Touch and they said that they're going to run the program through June. I sent out a new list for volunteers so we're good really for the most part through the month of June. We're doing again two meals a day seven days a week we're delivering three days a week and handing out three days a week. I still have donations coming in from the Western New York food bank so we're delivering a packet a week. In addition, we are going to do a flex schedule Memorial weekend because even though Mr. Casseri and I will be here our child nutrition helpers really do need a break this is a high burnout for them, a lot of lunches for three people to be pushing out.

We're trying to gather the cost for FEMA and every day the guidance on that is getting changed and updated because they've never done one that impacted schools like this before in this kind of way so a lot of us are having similar questions FEMA's feeling is if the State mandated it then the State should pay for it. But there are some arguments around well the State mandated it, but they didn't say how to do it so I'm going to be claiming some things that you know I think we aren't necessarily part of the instructional program but are things that we did for like delivery such as postage. Even the mailing of paychecks if we had our staff here we would just hand and deliver them. These are additional costs that we never consider the cost of voting this year is going to be much different than it has been in the past because we have to mail to everybody, envelopes plus pre-postage paid envelope there's going to be some additional costs.

Mr. Casseri:

I do want you to know that we've already started a group with Brad Rowles is kind of taking the lead on that but certainly John and the counselors, the class advisors and myself we're all heavily involved in that and we are constantly looking at things to support and celebrate our Class of 2020 we're also looking at celebrating our class of 2024 our eighth graders, current

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eighth graders our class of 2027, our current fifth graders trying to do some things there and so I know Tina's working on some virtual stuff for the fifth graders, Andy is working on some virtual stuff for the eighth graders and we've got a variety of irons in the fire in terms of what we're doing with our senior

Class, so we'll keep you posted and updated on that. But you know as you start to, I just want you to be kind of open and aware that you know we're probably going to get a little pushback on some of the decisions that we have to make into the future but we'll have to deal with that.

President Riordan:

I think that the community understands and appreciates what the school is doing; educating children, we are feeding our families, we are providing child care for essential workers and while some of these celebrations aren't going to look like they traditionally do the world doesn't look like it traditionally does. If anyone in our community wants to give anybody a hard time about this they can call me directly. As far as the Board of Education we have four members of the Class of 2020 our children and you know what we honor them, we honor the advisors, we celebrate them, any anyone out there right now who is feeling outraged you're upset at how this is going to look like. They need to take a great big step back and get some perspective and that's my comment.

We're going to do the absolute best that we can we love every one of these seniors to understand how upsetting this is but at the same time there's a lot going on right now and that's what we're doing is we're keeping the faith and we're keeping them healthy and we'll get them through this the best that we can

BOE Warrick:

One question, I did have because somebody asked me is there a plan in place to distribute the caps and gowns because I know the people have already paid for them and they're going to want them to at least get photos in their own front yard or whatever.

Mr. Casseri:

Yes, we have them and we're planning on a distribution, we would like to at the school, if we have to do something virtual we're going to try to maybe come up with a scenario to get a minute get each kid in at a certain interval have them just so we can have put the cap and gown on walk across the stage at the high school and then bring another kid in so we can film kind of a walk so to speak just in case we need to go to virtual graduation.

President Riordan:

Has always charged each senior parent a significant amount for shipping and handling even though they deliver them just directly to the school so as far as handout I mean it might be something they can just deliver them at home well we already have them we already have them okay and they have their yearbooks and stuff.

Mr. Casseri:

They have already been delivered to the school.

BOE Mullen:

I have a question about the new learning is it possible that we could resurvey families like perhaps maybe next week, because I think some of their feelings have changed about the workload and the new learning.

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Mr. Casseri:

Can you speak more directly to that Danielle, what are some of the feelings that you're hearing.

BOE Mullen:

I think it was one thing when it was just reinforcement and you know providing review of things that have been learned, I have gotten some feedback that the new learning is overwhelming for some families for especially the young kids and the amount of work that they're required to do independently. I just wonder if the feedback from the community will shift now that we've shifted into this new learning direction more from the elementary level. I would say personally, yes, I'm hearing it more from the elementary level but that's not to say that high school kids aren't coming and telling me it. I'm hearing from parents.

Mr. Casseri:

I'm glad you stated it because you know certainly, is the topic of conversation, but I wanted you know you know Tina and Tamara are both on here and they certainly heard that so they'll be cognizant of it and we'll make sure it's part of our conversations with peer coordinators and as they're checking in with teachers. We can look at resurveying for sure that was easy to do. I think a lot of people responded to the surveys and new learning just started yesterday so yes absolutely.

BOE Mullen:

I have gotten some feedback and I think it varies from the teacher like what the teachers are putting out and what the kids are expected to do independently and not.

Mr. Casseri:

We know that there's a continuum of contact; whether it's more direct contact some teachers are more comfortable with that as opposed to indirect contact. Some are still struggling with the technology and Nick puts out a ton of stuff on that but it's just it's been difficult for some of them. We'll certainly keep that in the back of our minds as we're having conversations. I was hoping to get this week under our belt to see how things are going, we have our scheduled next Tuesday, we were going to have a conversation about how it went for the first week. I'm hearing what you're saying and we'll make sure we're addressing it thank you. I can't promise that it's going to get any easier. I think the heart of the issue is if there's really new learning happening for a young child an adult is involved usually in person I mean these kids don't work in solitude in school, so it just it becomes a lot on the parents. I even heard the Governor today about how well it's going. No parent signed up for home schooling. I mean I have kids at home everybody has kids at home and it's difficult for sure, my wife is struggling keeping my guys focused. I will take all of that into consideration and we'll look at the opportunities that we have to try to make better connections. It's definitely a learning curve and the scary part is Danielle is the fact that it's part of my conversation with Dan Stapleton, if this ends up in the Fall surging we might be back to square one. There's still conversation about what school is going to look like if we have to cut our school populations in half and go to and every other day. We'll have to see how it all plays out.

BOE Warrick:

The bottom line is that at 20 years from now it's not going to matter if kids are a little bit behind right now this year or if they fall behind next year. It's going to matter that they're healthy and

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that they're here with us and we'll get through it and we'll catch up. It's going to be part of this process, figuring out how much we really need to try to push this instruction and how much we just have to relax and say well we'll get caught up eventually.

Mr. Casseri:

You know what Betty that's it you're exactly right the teachers the principals we're all trying to learn what that balance is. What that balance looks like and recognizing that it's basically the parents at home.
didn't appreciate teachers already

President Riordan:

All right let's move on to our budget discussion, Dr. Grupka.

Dr. Grupka:

We have a balanced budget with what we know so far, some analysts are saying that we should have new numbers or new estimates somewhere between the 7th and the 15th so that gives me a couple days to work on the budget. We will be voting on the budget on May 19th, but at least we have some dates now.

May 11th is the deadline for candidates to file for nomination, our legal notice, Marisa we're going to vote on some stuff today.

We'll vote on a budget on the 19th and hopefully it will be what we have in in the in our budget now because that would be the best case scenario would be they give us more but I don't think that's going to happen with what they're talking about so we'll be adopting a budget hopefully on May 19th on the 22nd I will be submitting a property tax cap report card our public hearing will be June 2nd you know budget notice goes out June 3rd or at the vote is June 9th that's our calendar.

In terms of the budget I've never felt so lost because it is very late in the year to not have budget numbers. I mean what they're doing is asking us to do about a month's worth of work in four days and hand out lunches and run a daycare. This is not regular times I guess.

Mr. Casseri:

Just a couple of points on my on my call today with the other superintendents you know we're talking about and we're all I can assure you everybody's in the same boat. We are all just walking on eggshells with regards to this budget.

Several points there is strong hope that there were some conversations today with that you know folks had had with Congressman Higgins and others. I mean there is strong hope that in the next 10 days that we would see some support for the State and local governments which need some funding for the schools. I should say that you know we at least we have prepared ourselves for at least a three hundred thousand dollar decrease so we're already anticipating three hundred thousand dollars less than what is currently in our aid revenue package. If we're not cut we we're building a little bit of a fund balance. Let's all keep our fingers crossed that the federal government can get its act together and you know support States and ultimately school districts.

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Marisa did a she did a magnificent job today pulling together, I would like to commend her and pulling together the revised annual notice, she worked very closely with Jeff Stone and Marnie Smith at Webster Szanyi to make sure that that wording was correct and more importantly you know we've been working with this company NTS through a cross contract downstate. We are in much better spot than some other school districts, I can tell you that they're trying to manage this on their own and quite frankly and Betty made the, I saw in her email when I initially forgot that we had we had passed that resolution regarding an eligible voter only those that are recognized by a Niagara County Board of Elections that are registered are eligible. Many school districts you know they still have their own process and we actually we put ourselves in a really good spot by doing that. Marisa if you want to comment on that.

District Clerk:

So, I had a webinar with NTS this Monday, they had reached out to me prior to all of this knowing when the vote, that they could assist us with the vote. We had a really good webinar they're prepared to send out the postcards which will be household bound which means you'll get one postcard per household.

They work closely with the board of elections to do their elections so for the last couple years they've done our ballots so we have a really good working relationship with them and they're ready and set to go to send our ballots out. They would be stuffing our ballots, they'd do them all at their location and the cost would be 1.75 per ballot, which is a very reasonable price because that's the ballot three envelopes.

I've worked with them since I've been here. They're a great company and very dedicated people. I will send out the information in the webinar when it is forwarded to me.

Mr. Casseri:

How many registered did they mention how many registers.

BOE Warrick:

It's over 20 000 isn't it.

District Clerk:

It's everyone listed in the poll book, they do updates prior to printing the ballots and if someone doesn't get a ballot I will work the board of elections to get them registered and then send them a ballot.

We are in a good spot.

Mr. Casseri:

It will cost us about forty thousand dollars, significant number, formerly the election cost us about ten or twelve thousand and we're probably going to have some costs then of people opening them and counting them correct that's only going to be Kevin Szanyi, Marisa and the woman we will be appointed today, Barbara Carter.

District Clerk:

I have contacted her and she is going to oversee that with me and Kevin. To open those ballots and we're waiting for determination of when that can happen can that happen

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sooner than 6 pm or do we have to wait until that vote is over at 6 00 pm like we do with our absentee ballots at a normal election so we're waiting to hear that determination.

Mr. Casseri:

I will assume so the hope is Betty that we could start to count the ballots you know let's say we you know three days before the election we got a bulk of them we could start to count those and then you know anything that we get so we could start. We'll wait to see for that determination.

District Clerk:

I think we're going to be at a good spot, we'll get it done like we always do so and every school district is in the same situation as we are.

Dr. Grupka:

I saw that FEMA document is that is that part of the FEMA opportunity really there's a lot of gray area and it has anything that you apply for through FEMA has to meet three criteria and I believe that this will meet the criteria because it's really about the wellness of the community in public health and by keeping people, where they would congregate by giving everybody a fair opportunity to vote whether they're compromised or I think I could argue that that should be a valuable cost and if what it will be is the difference be so FEMA, it's 70 reimbursement and it would be the difference between what we would normally pay versus what we did pay so we would write off. I hope for 70 percent of the difference, I'm going to apply for it, I'm putting everything down we'll see what they say.

President Riordan:

Any questions on budget vote or election.

BOE Warrick:

What's the date that we should have the ballots out do you know.

District Clerk: uh

NTS is trying to do those for May 22nd 23rd. They're prepared to get those out the only thing is that we're going to vote on a budget number on May 19th, so I'm going to work with them to say we have it already and we're just going to plug in this number.

BOE Warrick:

Can you do that?

District Clerk:

They answered a question on the webinar that they would be able to do that, so I'm hoping that they can do that for us.

Mr. Casseri:

I was even listening in on that one and they said that they could drop that number in very quickly and get those out so they would have prepared.

District Clerk:

I am going to be moving that May 26th meeting to the 19th is that correct.

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Mr. Casseri:

Yes, we need to do that.

VP Dickinson:

Do we have any way of notifying the public for those interested in running for the board of education, seeing that it's coming up so quickly that they have to have their names in by Monday? Just to show that we are transparent we want everybody to be aware of it.

District Clerk:

I could certainly put something out in the Gazette this week for Thursday. We have two people that have submitted Danielle and Jennifer Klemick today so I'm hopeful that we'll get another one. But I can certainly do that if you'd like me to do a small ad in the Gazette. It's on our website and I've updated all of the new information on the website. I certainly can do that if everybody's in agreeance.

President Riordan:

Maybe a social media blitz Nick. I mean it's been it's been on our website we've been you know reaching out to the community as far as you know the needing you know people to step up and run for months.

VP Dickinson:

Paul maybe just in your letter to the community that you put out every Thursday you might want to just put one line that if you're interested in running names have to be in by Monday. I mean just keep it simple I just don't want anybody coming back to make it seem like we were who could apply.

BOE Orr:

Have we contacted the folks that were involved in the appointment, weren't there like three or four when Danielle was appointed to find out if they're still interested?

District Clerk:

The ones that Danielle sent me over they personally emailed me and called me and one of them submitted their petition the other one is working on submitting it.

Mr. Casseri:

No, the ones that submitted letters last year is the ones Anne is talking about. I think we have a good group. I will put it out there.

President Riordan:

I have put it out there to the community, it has been on our website and I will put it out there and give it one more push. Teacher appreciation week we will discuss the recognition. Now on to new business.

Mr. Casseri:

Well I was going to put out an e-card tomorrow from the Superintendent and the board of Education. We can discuss tomorrow in terms of a little gift of some sort.

President Riordan:

Hopefully celebrate with them when we get back or something I don't know we usually do donuts or something.

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All right anyone have any further questions about the budget vote or the election.

Riordan: Okay let's move on to new business, I would like to move to approve NA1 approval of the change order with Frey Electric as written, If I may have a second

Dickinson: Second

Riordan: All in favor, yes, any opposed, no, so carried (7-0)
I would like to move to approve NA2, approval of the chief election and assistant chief election officer, may have a second

Orr: Second

Riordan: All in favor, yes, any opposed no, so carried (7-0)
I would like to move to approve NA3 Approval of the revised annual notice, let me have a second

Dickinson: Second

Riordan: All in favor, yes, any opposed no, so carried (7-0)
I would like to move to adjourn, If I may have a second

Dickinson: Second

Riordan: All in favor, yes, any opposed no, so carried (7-0)

President Riordan:

All right thank you all right bye everybody thank you for everything.