

*\*An executive session was held beginning at 6:00 pm to discuss legal matters and to receive information.*

## **RIVERVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **Study Session of the Board of School Directors MINUTES**

**January 9, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.**

### **Tenth Street Auditorium - 7:00 p.m.**

#### **AGENDA**

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

In attendance: M. Pallone, M. McClure, J. Miller, A. Paris, B. Hawk, J. Chaparro, S. Garibay, N. English, D. Zolkowski, C. Monroe, E. Hewitt, D. Turk, R. Rizzo, A. Toland, N. Paradise, J. Hurt-Robinson (teleconference)

#### **I. Pledge of Allegiance**

Opening Remarks – Dr. English welcomed everyone to the first board meeting of 2023! He mentioned that moving forward in study session we will begin with the pledge of allegiance, as we do in voting meetings. He mentioned that we have had some great winter concerts, and more to come, as well as great success with our winter sports teams. The girls' basketball team has been winning their way up the rankings, the boys basketball team won a holiday tournament, and some individual accolades for some wrestlers. We continue to pack the gym as we face our Springdale rivals and other section play. Students in our History Club/Model UN team working towards their Global Service certification will once again be offering a Spanish experience to elementary students, and Riverview has officially been approved by the Department of Education for our strategic plan! This has been a massive undertaking, and a lot of hours by the Board, administration, teachers, parents, and community members and we are more than grateful for a truly collaborative effort in helping to make the District the very best it can be! The staff is excited to roll up our sleeves for what we believe will be an awesome 2023!

#### **I. Presentation(s)**

##### **a. 2023 – 2024 Proposed School Calendar –**

Presentations began with the proposed 2023-2024 school calendar. Generally speaking, parents and teachers expressed their support of the current calendar structure in terms of the holidays and the breaks associated with them. Therefore, we have planned a similar calendar in 2023-2024. The only real changes are the following: In light of a discussion we had regarding Martin Luther King day, most district employees will now have the day off in the 23-24 schedule. We hope to encourage the community and staff to engage in community service, as Dr. King would have encouraged. In addition to that change, and as a result of the discussion at our last board meeting, we know there was a contingency of parents that expressed the wish for inclement weather days to be made up, as was tradition prior to Covid-19. As promised, we surveyed the parents and approximately 353 parents responded. Approximately 60% of parents expressed interest in a traditional snow day, and 40% in virtual days. We also surveyed the staff and 123

responded. Of those that responded, 80% of teachers claimed they wanted virtual days, and 20% expressed interest in traditional snow days. Upon combining both sets of stakeholders, 51% want virtual days and 49% want traditional. Therefore, the recommendation will be to offer a floating traditional snow day (safety and weather dependent) to occur once a year starting in the 2023-2024 school year. The day that will be made up will always be on the Thursday before the Easter break. This will allow space for a traditional snow day while still utilizing our training and resources to engage in virtual learning. You will see that slight change in the proposed schedule.

This first hearing of citizens is devoted to items on the agenda only. Please keep in mind that all of the items will be discussed by the Board this evening and there is a second hearing of citizens later in the meeting for all school-related topics as well. Lastly, a reminder that the hearing of citizens is for residents to express issues or concerns. The Board's responsibility is to take comments into consideration only. The hearing of citizens is not designed to be a discussion. We have one hearing from a citizen that could not be here. They expressed that they wanted me to read it. I will start with that, and then if anyone else would like to speak on agenda items, please come to the microphone, state your name and address, and keep responses under the 3-minute limit threshold.

## II. Hearing of Citizens

Our first comment this evening is from **Seth Wermager**.

"Hello, my name is Seth Wermager. I am a resident of 313 3rd Street. Since I cannot be in attendance for tonight's board meeting, I wanted to be sure to have an opportunity to have my comments read publicly concerning the proposed revisions to the student discipline policy. Currently, the Riverview student discipline policy states that "students shall not be subject to disciplinary action because of race, sex, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or handicap/disability." During the December board meeting, a board member suggested adding to this policy that students should not be subject to discipline on the basis of "gender / gender identity / gender expression." I understand that our board members have good intentions of protecting students from being discriminated against on the basis of students' personal views of themselves and their sexuality. However, I am recommending that the board not adopt this change to the student discipline policy. For one, the addition of this terminology will make room for problematic scenarios. For example, if a male student decides to identify as a female and insists on dressing in the girls' locker room during gym class, the addition of this terminology to the student discipline policy would in fact protect this student from being prohibited from doing that. Are you aware that this is what the addition of this language to the policy can allow for? I would assume that this is not the motive or the intention behind this revision, but it is certainly a scenario you will have to deal with if you do make this revision. If a scenario like this were to occur, how do you think the community will respond? Do you think female students, and their parents, would be OK with a biological male dressing in a girls' locker room? Overall, I don't believe the addition of this terminology is necessary. The teachers and staff at Riverview are professionals who love and serve our students in their education; they understand, as professionals, how to navigate issues regarding student identity. The current discipline policy, as

it is currently worded, will suffice to protect our students from discrimination. I would recommend tabling the vote to this particular revision, if necessary, to further consider the ramifications of the change. Thank you all for your diligence in serving our community and our students, and thank you for an honest consideration of my remarks."

**Amy Toland**, of 388 Maryland Ave, in Oakmont, provided additional comments regarding traditional snow days, citing an article sent by another resident, Ms. Anne Bauer, stating that virtual learning was not an effective way of instructing students, and hoping for all days to made up as in person days. She also asked why there are make-up days shown in this year's calendar, but the District is not using them.

**Nick Paradise**, of 416 5<sup>th</sup> St., in Oakmont, provided commentary regarding the survey given to parents, claiming that the parent feedback should have been given higher priority than the teacher data. He also discussed his wish to remove the additional language in the student discipline policy, removing the language regarding gender identity.

Final call was made for first hearing of citizens.

Discussion and review of potential motions for approval at the regular voting meeting. In order to have the study session agendas and voting meeting agendas follow the same progression, we have slightly reorganized topics and will start this evening with the business and finance section, presented by our esteemed Business Manager, Ms. Joan Wehner.

### III. Discussion/Review of Potential Motions for Approval for Regular Voting Meeting

#### A. Business/Finance

- Pay App. #4, Merit Electrical Group, In the amount of \$17,105.53
- Moret Construction in the amount of \$14,440.50
- Allegheny County Southeast Tax Collection Committee (ACSTCC) - Delegate and Alternate Appointments:
  1. Mrs. Wehner explained that this committee was developed during the Statewide law that required countywide tax collection of EIT. The District needs to designate someone to attend the meetings to voice our vote.
- Keystone Collection EIT Comparison
  1. Ms. Wehner provided Year to Date comparison of December 2022 and Year to Date December 2021 Earned Income Tax Collections.
- Tax Installment Resolution
  1. Ms. Wehner explained this program is allowable under Act 1 of 2006. It is an annual election to offer this program. The board historically approved this resolution in January so that PA Municipal Service has time to get the packets together.
- PSERS Rate 2023-2024 announcement/budget update
  1. Mrs. Wehner explained the Employer Contribution Rate for FY 2023-24 will be 34.00%. This is the first year-to-year decline in the rate in more than a decade. The rate applies to salary and

wages earned from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Keep in mind just 10 years ago the Employer Contribution Rate for FY 2013-14 was 16.93%.

B. Agreements/Contracts/Resolutions:

- ACT 80 Automated
  - Mrs. Wehner explained that the District used this service last year. The service allows the District to upload the tax-payer list provided by the state to begin automatic validation for each taxpayer for any current or previous year. Validation review and approval of 1329 taxpayer information online.
- UPMC Athletic Training Service Agreement - Final
- Possible additional prior to voting meeting

Additionally, approval is needed of the UPMC Athletic Training Service Amendment. This was tabled from November. Inquiry was needed to see if language could be changed to guarantee a physician at the games. After further discussion with our UPMC partners, UPMC is not comfortable in changing language as their staff members do sometimes become ill or have emergencies that may prevent them from assigning a representative for the football games. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, they should be able to staff all games and scrimmages. Service was provided at every game this last year.

C. Board Governance/Regulations

- Board Policies –TABLED at third reading: Policy 218, Student Discipline; Policy 236, Threat Assessment;
- Board Policies: First Reading, Policy 907.1 School Visits by Board Members; Policy 249 Bullying/Cyberbullying
- 2022-2023 Student Clubs & Budgetary Outlines – Design Club, Inclusive Leaders
- Mrs. Loraine Zatawski as Riverview Board Treasurer for 2022-2023 as required by Section 404 of the Public School Code

Moving onto board governance, you will find the budgetary outlines for design club and inclusive leaders, as is customary with student clubs. We will also be asking your approval to appoint Mrs. Loraine Zatawski as Riverview Board Treasurer for 2022-2023 as required by Section 404 of the Public School Code.

The third reading of the threat assessment policy which was tabled from December, as well as an additional discussion on the student discipline policy, as was highlighted in the first hearing of citizens, will begin. You will have the first reading of policy 907.1, which is the policy for school visits by board members. Finally, we will hold our first reading of the bullying/cyberbullying policy, which Mr. Paris had suggested changes to. The board has been briefed on this topic, but if there are additional items that should be discussed in the public forum, now is the time. Our administration is also in attendance to answer any questions as needed. If there are additional questions or discussion, please opine.

The first board discussion was in regard to policy 218, student discipline. The board seemed to agree to take out the additional language, with legal counsel from the solicitor saying that the current language would cover the concerns previously raised. They then discussed the threat assessment policy, and one board member wanted clarification on who made up the teams. There was discussion about whether or not more detail would be needed on that subsection. There was then a long discussion about the bullying policy. The solicitor weighed in on the proposed changes in terms of its legality and protection to the district. The superintendent and administrators weighed in on its effects to the system.

#### D. Personnel

- New Hires: Paraprofessionals, Academic Coach
- Sabbatical Replacements: Grade 2, Guidance
- Resignations
- Emergency Certification
- Precision Substitute(s)
- Allegheny Transportation: Bus/Van/Aides
- Central Office: Demonstration Period
- Athletic Coach Volunteers: Wrestling/Jr. High Baseball
- Gate Event Workers
- Musical Volunteers

Final discussion tonight will be for personnel. We will be asking for a number of approvals in personnel at the January 23<sup>rd</sup> voting meeting. We are happy to report that we have a number of paraprofessionals on the docket for your approval. This will fully staff us at the elementary schools and replace the two paraprofessionals that have taken the open administrative assistant roles. We still need a couple at the high school, so please spread the word about this and our need for substitute custodians. We will be asking for your approval of the two sabbatical long term substitutes that we have for Grade 2 and guidance at Verner elementary school for the second semester. We will be asking you to approve a half time building sub and para at Verner elementary as well. We have our usual Precision and Allegheny transportation employees for your consideration, and Mrs. Zatawski has completed her demonstration period and we will be asking for your approval for permanent status. As an update, she is working extremely hard to get up to speed and has done a wonderful job thus far. We will also be asking for your approval of a number of volunteers for the musical and for volunteer coaches for wrestling and junior high baseball. Finally, we will be asking for your approval of a number of gate workers. None of these approvals are atypical, but with a short agenda for December's reorganization meeting, we will be clearing the deck this month.

Hearing none, let's now move to the second hearing of the citizens. This hearing is open to any school-related issue. Please remember, once again, that the hearing of citizens is for residents to express issues or concerns, and the Board's responsibility is take comments into consideration. The hearing of citizens is not designed to be a discussion. That said, if any resident would like to

speak, please come to the microphone, state your name and address, and try to keep responses under the 3minute limit threshold. Thank you.

#### IV. Hearing of Citizens

Dr. English wished all those in attendance and virtual a happy new year. Emphasized the excitement the district has for the 2023 year as well as always, appreciative of the support of the Riverview School District. Board members, thank you for your service and have a great week. For those on the call, thank you for attending from home, even though you're under the weather. We appreciate you.

#### V. Adjournment