

**NORTH HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION
LEGISLATIVE MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2020 – 7:15 P.M.
VIDEO BOARD MEETING VIA ZOOM
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Call to Order

The meeting, which was held via Zoom Webinar, was called to order at 7:20 p.m. Mrs. Mathis opened the meeting with a moment of silence and salute to the flag. Mrs. Mathis took attendance via roll call.

Board Members Present

Sandra Kozera, Phil Little, Allison Mathis, Annette Giovengo Nolish, Deanna Philpott, Katie Poniatowski, Rachael Rennebeck, and Helen Spade.

Board Members Not Present

Kathy Reid

Also Present

Dr. Patrick J. Mannarino, Dr. Beth Williams, Amy Mathieu, Jerry Muth, Michael Witherel, Esq., Heather Pelat, Kris Kaufmann, and student representatives Ellie Fleischer and Hannah Sciulli.

Persons Signing the Register

None

Board Member Comments

Mrs. Mathis informed the audience that due to the digital nature of this meeting, there will be a few procedural adjustments made. She will be working with 2 monitors so that she can run the meeting on 1 monitor, and 1 monitor to navigate the agenda. She stated that Mrs. Pelat will link the agenda to Facebook. In order to streamline the agenda, the Board will address all new business in 1 category.

Also, on behalf of all members of the Board, Mrs. Mathis thanked the students, parents, teachers and administrators for their hard work during our transition to online learning during this unprecedented time.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

None

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mrs. Mathis seconded by Mrs. Spade, and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of March 5, 2020 Committee Meeting with Action and the March 12, 2020 Legislative Meeting.

Superintendent's Report

“It has now been five weeks since our students were last in the classroom. I could’ve never imagined when we made the decision to close schools for two weeks on March 14 that schools would remain closed for the remainder of the school year.

There was still so much scheduled in the days ahead, so much to look forward to... the spring musical and spring concerts, the entire spring sports season, field trips, field days, traditional end-of-year activities and celebrations.... So much that was cut short for us all.

This is not how any of us wanted to spend the last few weeks and the weeks going forward. It’s not how any of us wanted to end the school year, especially our seniors who are celebrating a tremendous accomplishment and saying goodbye to North Hills High School. Our eighth-graders who will be high school freshmen in just a few short months, and our fifth- and sixth-graders who are leaving elementary school and headed to middle school next year.

But this is the reality. The new normal. And North Hills, WE are doing a remarkable job adjusting; YOU are doing a remarkable job adapting in these challenging and uncertain times.

And for that, I thank you.

Thank you to our teachers for building our virtual platform in just days, and continuing to deliver the high-quality education North Hills is accustomed to. Although the format is not traditional, the quality of education and access to the district curriculum is truly extraordinary.

Thank you to our students and their families for taking virtual learning in stride; adjusting to the platform and working as hard online as you do in the classroom. I am proud of you and the way you have adapted in this extremely difficult time.

Thank you to my administration team for your hard work and the countless hours you’ve dedicated to this district. We would not be where we are today without your leadership and guidance.

- To Dr. Williams, Mrs. Mathieu and Dr. Bezila for supporting our staff in every way possible, and ensuring a successful transition to virtual learning and beyond.

- To Mrs. Pelat for keeping our families informed of our plans and response throughout this crisis with her communications.
- To Mr. Charles and his technology team for not only springing into action and loaning more than 700 iPads to students in need, but for keeping us all connected when it has mattered most.
- To Mrs. Radvzin and our food service employees at West View who continue to prepare food every school day for families in need.
- To Mr. Swindell, Mrs. Freedman and the custodial staff at West View for ensuring our food service operation has been able to safely continue for our families.

And last but certainly not least, thank you to Mrs. Mathis. Our team could not have accomplished all we have during this unprecedented time without your support, leadership and guidance.

This has been difficult for us all. But we are North Hills, and we will come out of this stronger than we were before.

Tonight, the board will be ratifying our continuity of education plan and modified school calendar for the remainder of the school year.

This plan was a monumental task and I want to thank Dr. Williams, Mrs. Mathieu, Dr. Bezila, and our building principals for working countless hours to ensure that our plan was developed in the best interest of all North Hills students and parents.

This evening, Mr. Muth will be discussing the components of the 2020-21 budget, the major categories that make up the district's revenues and expenses, and how we are working to produce a proposed final budget for the April 30th board meeting.

Tonight, I am announcing that the North Hills School District is committed to delivering a budget with a zero tax increase and no teacher furloughs.

We knew going into this budget year it was going to be a difficult one. And this pandemic certainly doesn't make it any easier. But we understand the impact that this crisis has placed on our community, and now is not the time to raise taxes and place an additional burden on our community. There are a lot of pieces to our budget that are essential but we will do more with less. We will find a way and we will be okay.

You've heard us talk many times about cyber and charter school payments and their impact on the district expenses. I have commented countless times that the North Hills School District has an online program as a component of the curriculum, and that our teachers and students have been engaged in online learning for well over a decade.

As we are working to control costs, I believe now is the time for the state government to get serious about cyber school funding reform and provide relief to districts like ours with an online option for students. We have proven with our learning solution during this pandemic that we are fully capable of offering online learning to any student at any time. Enrolling your students in cyber-school in this era is a private choice and should be funded by the parent making that choice; not the public school district in which they reside. We moved our entire operation online in less than a week (less than a week!), and I truly hope it's something our state leaders take notice of and consider when discussing cyber school funding reform.

As I have already stated, the North Hills School District is committed to delivering a budget with a zero tax increase and no teacher furloughs.

Update on the Proposed Final Budget for 2020-2021

Dr. Mannarino provided a brief overview of the expenditure and revenue components of the Proposed Final Budget for 2020-2021. He stated that this item will be on the April 30, 2020 Board Agenda for Board approval.

Mrs. Mathis stated that the Proposed Final Budget will be available for public view for 30 days before the Board votes to adopt the Final Budget on June 4th. The district also plans to have a virtual Public Budget Committee Meeting sometime in May. That date will be announced when plans are finalized.

NEW BUSINESS

A motion was made by Mrs. Mathis, seconded by Mrs. Spade and unanimously passed by a roll call vote of 8-0, to approve the following items, as recommended by the Superintendent:

1. Continuity of Education Plan and Revised 2019-2020 School Calendar – The Pennsylvania Department of Education required districts to submit their Continuity of Education Plan related to school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan includes Expectations for teaching and learning, Assessment and Grading for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, and the Adjusted school calendar for the 2019-20 school year.
2. Temporarily Suspend Board Policy #213 – Grading Procedures – This action is being taken due to the changes in grading procedures required as part of the Continuity of Education Plan submitted to the PA Department of Education.
3. Collective Bargaining Agreement between North Hills School District and Local 32BJ Service Employees International Union – Effective July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025. (This agreement will be in effect once it is ratified by the members of the bargaining unit.)

4. General Fund Bills – The board ratified general fund bills including checks numbered; 59438 through 59449; 59451 through 59503; 59509 through 59619; 59627 through 59645; 59650 through 59652; 59655 through 59679.
5. Capital Project Fund Bills – The board ratified capital project fund bills including checks numbered: 59450; 59504 through 59506; 59646 through 59649; 59653 and 59654.
6. Food Service Fund Bills – The board ratified food service fund bills including checks numbered: 59507; 50508; and 59613 through 59626.
7. Budget Transfers – The board approved budget transfers.
8. Payroll for the Month of March 2020 in the amount of \$3,074,944.12
9. Bid Rejection – Calculators – The board rejected the bids for 300 calculators that were to be used in the secondary schools. Subsequent to the bid opening, a determination was made not to proceed with this contemplated purchase.
10. PlanCon Part K – The board approved PlanCon Part K for debt refinanced in October 2019 (Series 2010B Debt Obligations). The District may be entitled to reimbursement of a portion of each principal and interest payment against this debt, if approved.

ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Kozera stated that she participated as a Board representative in the negotiations with the SEIU 32BJ and it was a pleasure to work with the members of this bargaining unit. It was great to meet people she had not met before and it was very evident how much these employees care about the district and the pride they take in their jobs. She was very happy that the District and the Union could come together and finalize this agreement.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Toni Reed, 208 Oakwood Avenue, West View, PA

Mrs. Reed asked if 8th graders will have an opportunity to change their schedules. Dr. Mannarino informed her that students will have an opportunity to do so.

She also asked why some teachers are teaching live and others are not during the online learning. Dr. Williams stated that some teachers are very comfortable teaching live, and others are more comfortable having prepared lessons. Teachers were delivering the same curriculum but are able to provide that instruction in a style that works best for them, much as they do in a face-to-face classroom. Dr. Williams also encouraged Mrs. Reed to call her to discuss any other issues and she would be most happy to assist.

Mrs. Reed thanked Dr. Mannarino, the administration and teaching staff for providing parents and the community with updated information and trying to stay ahead of this ever changing situation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Loretta J. Rieger
School Board Secretary