

**UPPER PERKIOMEN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**2229 East Buck Road**  
**Pennsburg PA 18073**

**BOARD WORKSHOP**  
**January 28, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Board Workshop of the Board of School Directors of the Upper Perkiomen School District was called to order by President Melanie Cunningham, at 7:00 p.m. as a virtual meeting.

The following Board members attended: Melanie Cunningham, Stephen Cunningham, Dr. Kerry Drake, Mike Elliott, Dana Hipszer, Judy Maginnis, Keith McCarrick, and Peg Pennepacker. Absent member was: Raeann Hofkin. Administration in attendance were: Allyn Roche, EdD., Andrea Farina, EdD., Sandra Kassel, Kimberly Bast and Georgiann Fisher. Others in attendance were: Kyle Somers, Jamie Doyle, Jonathan Cox, Doug Kenwood, Jen Moran, Gene Dolloff, Lisa Trimbur, Mary Cannon, Jennifer Hartzel, Christine Henry, Stacia Hang, Christian Fowkes, Hope Manion, Deb Burns, Gabriella Licoppoli, Carol Elias, Levi Parson, J.P. Prego, Isabelle Zimmerman, Annette Gerhart, Jennifer Eisenberger, Phil Detwiler, and J.R. Wrenna.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Keith McCarrick, seconded by Kerry Drake, to approve the **October 22, 2020 Board Workshop Minutes** (Attachment A). Motion carried; all voted aye.

**BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT**

President Cunningham stated that the district or the Board does not condone hate or tolerate discrimination in any form. Mrs. Cunningham said the Board has important work to do and they work diligently to provide a quality education and safe environment for their students and always have the best interest of the students, administrators, faculty and community in mind and work with all those groups as a team to move the district forward. Mrs. Cunningham said how the members are elected officials by their community to serve to make this district the best it can be. Members of the community have expressed outrage about one member and may think that the balance of the Board can vote an individual off, but that is not the case, that is not a provision or right that is granted in the law to the members. Mrs. Cunningham implored everyone attending the meeting tonight as well as the entire district community to focus on spreading kindness and positivity instead of nastiness and hate and said that sharing the content in question does not solve the root of the problem but rather leads to more hate. She said the board is disappointed and disheartened not only with the posts but the ensuing hateful conversations within the community and that this type of activity undermines the rest of the members and the district as a whole.

Mrs. Cunningham announced that the Board would like to publicly state that they do not condone the poor decisions made by one member, effective immediately Ms. Hofkin has been removed from all Board Committees. They believe these injunctive measures will send a clear message to Ms. Hofkin that they will not tolerate this type of behavior. She said at this time this is the mechanism available to them as a board as far as a manner of reproach, and as you may recall in June this Board censured Ms. Hofkin and removed her as President to the Board. Mrs. Cunningham stated that they feel this district under the great guidance and leadership of the administration have made inclusion and acceptance a top priority. She said that furthermore the Board would like to acknowledge that they have personally and collectively used their powers in trying to rein in what we agree is the bad behavior of one of our Board members.

Mrs. Cunningham stated how the Board and the administration have important school district business to attend to while navigating a global pandemic and asked for everyone to let them get back to focusing on all of that. She asked for everyone's comments this evening to be with the spirit of learning and kindness in your heart and not personal attacks.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **a. 2020 Superintendent Goals**

Dr. Roche stated that the district does not comment on social media activity of their Board members and the administration does not have jurisdiction or oversight as it pertains to the personal social media posts and activity of Board members, with that being said and as a follow up to Mrs. Cunningham's statement, in this public meeting, as a proud Superintendent he felt he wanted to offer at least an apology to not only Dr. Levine but to everyone negatively impacted by this situation. He said this is not what Upper Perk is about, the district happens to be in the middle of the Great Kindness Challenge Week where we are trying to collectively empower everyone to create a culture of kindness. Dr. Roche said the goal is to develop students who are able to be respectful and function as a supportive community as well as to support one another. He thanked everyone for their commitment and continued support in moving the district forward.

Dr. Roche shared his 2020-2021 Superintendent Goals, these will be on the district website after this evening's meeting. Dr. Roche's talked about the many aspects of his duties including, COVID-19, developing communication plans, curriculum development, budgeting/finances, human resources and technology and improving communications with employees and parents/community. Dr. Roche informed everyone that the Comprehensive Planning Process will begin in the Fall of 2021 for the next Comprehensive Plan which will replace the current one that was dated 7/1/19 – 6/30/22.

### **b. Bond Counsel Presentation – Jonathan Cox, Bond Consultant with Eckert Seamans, and Jamie Doyle, Financial Advisor with PFM Financial Advisors, LLC**

Jamie Doyle talked about interest rates being at an all-time low and how this is a great time to move forward with this opportunity. She discussed the savings the district will receive from this. This General Obligation Note will provide funds to be used towards the refunding of the School District's General Obligation Bonds, Series of 2013, and a portion of its outstanding bonds, Series of 2016 and pay related costs.

Jamie wanted to thank Sandy Kassel publicly for all the work she has done behind the scenes in getting the district to this successful answer. Jamie also thanked Sandy for all of the work she has done in the past and said it has truly always been a pleasure working with Sandy for the 24 years that she has been with PFM and wished Sandy well on her future endeavors.

Jonathan Cox, reviewed the resolution and explained it has been advertised as required. He said the only action the Board would need to do is pass the motion. Jonathan also thanked Sandy for all of her hard work and said it has been a pleasure working with her and wished her well.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

None

## **PERSONNEL**

Motion by Stephen Cunningham, seconded by Keith McCarrick, to approve **Item a. Retirements**, of the **Personnel Report**:

### **a. RETIREMENTS**

- i. **Sandra M. Kassel**, Business Administrator submitted her intent to retire from the District, effective July 30, 2021. Motion carried; all voted aye.

Melanie Cunningham thanked Sandy for her years of service and said she will be missed.

Keith McCarrick thanked Sandy and said he remembers working with Sandy on the vo-tech through another district and that she has always been an exceptional advisor for the district.

Dana Hipszer talked about how this should be a time of celebration of Sandy's 38 years with the district and thanked her for her stewardship in so many areas of the district. He commented that just about every project that gets done in the district has Sandy's seal of approval. He encouraged Sandy to take the time to enjoy the many things and opportunities in her life that she has put on hold while serving the district with her countless hours of time.

Mike Elliott said Sandy will truly be missed, he said he remembers when he got on the Board and Sandy took the time to go over things with him and will still do that. Mike said she works so hard and will be missed.

Kerry Drake commented that it has been a pleasure to work with Sandy and admires her attention to detail. He said he was always amazed how Sandy could remember what happened in 1998 or page 36 of a 50 page report. He thanked Sandy for leaving the district in a good financial position and that she has left a good impression for others to follow.

Peg Pennepacker said how she can remember when Sandy was hired and that she is really leaving behind a legacy and thanked her for everything.

Stephen Cunningham said it will be sad not working with Sandy and how he enjoys conversations with her and that Sandy's breadth of knowledge of so many areas of the district will be missed.

Motion by Keith McCarrick, seconded by Stephen Cunningham, to approve **the remainder of the Personnel Report as presented:**

**b. RESIGNATIONS**

- i. **Rose Radcliff**, Food Service Worker, resigned her position with the District, effective January 8, 2021.
- ii. **Rebecca McIntosh**, Paraprofessional, resigned her position with the District effective, January 11, 2021.
- iii. **Melissa Yaroschak**, Paraprofessional, resigned her position with the District, effective January 22, 2021.
- iv. **Monica Oswald**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, resigned her position with the District, effective January 18 2021.
- v. **Ryan Cummings**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, resigned his position with the District, effective January 7, 2021.
- vi. **Megan Rupell**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, resigned her position with the District, effective January 7, 2021.

**c. APPOINTMENTS**

**i. SUPPORT STAFF**

1. **Zina Parillo**, full time Custodian, to be hired subject to review of employment history and required credentials at \$12.50/hour, effective date to be determined.
2. **Anya Delli Gatti**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, to be hired subject to review of employment history and required credentials at \$10.50/hour, effective date to be determined.
3. **Kaila Dutko**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, to be hired subject to review of employment history and required credentials at \$10.50/hour, effective date to be determined.
4. **Carissa Snyder**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, to be hired subject to review of employment history and required credentials at \$10.50/hour, effective date to be determined.
5. **Darrius Smith**, Cafeteria/Playground Aide, to be hired subject to review of employment history and required credentials at \$10.50/hour, effective date to be determined.

ii. **CURRICULUM ASSISTANTS** for the 2020-2021 school year:

<b>Building</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Salary Schedule</b>	<b>Cost</b>
MS	Melissa Swope	B	\$1,020.00*
4/5 Grade Center	Kate Stallings	B (50%)	\$510.00*
Hereford	Amber Anderson	B (50%)	\$510.00*
Marlborough	Dana Rosenberger	A (prorated- 128 days)	\$429.50*

*\*Previously approved – Revised costs*

c. **LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

- i. **Bob Haas**, approve Medical Sabbatical, effective January 27, 2021 through June 15, 2021.
- ii. **Kimberly Bast**, approve Family and Medical Leave, effective February 8, 2021 through March 22, 2021.

Motion carried; all voted aye.

**ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Motion by Stephen Cunningham, seconded by Keith McCarrick, to approve **the adoption of the Resolution as presented by Bond Counsel, authorizing the issuance of the General Obligation Note, Series of 2021**, to provide funds to be used towards the refunding of the School District’s General Obligation Bonds, Series of 2013, and a portion of its outstanding bonds, Series of 2016 and pay related costs. Motion carried; all voted aye.

Motion by Stephen Cunningham, seconded by Mike Elliott, to approve **Action Items b, and c:**

- b. Motion to approve **participation in the PJM Interconnection Emergency Load Response Program** effective June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2024 through ENELX. (*Attachment – Board Only*)
- c. Motion to approve **Change Order GC-003 with Donald E. Reisinger, Inc. in the amount of \$775.05** to reconfigure the downspout of the security entrance canopy at Marlborough Elementary School in accordance with DER. (Attachment B)

Motion carried; all voted aye.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a. Special Education & Pupil Services Committee – Judy Maginnis  
 Judy Maginnis welcomed new member Mike Elliott to the committee, and reported that at the last meeting, Carol Giblin and Amy Coyle attended. They presented the state of special education and plans for moving forward and the committee had a great question and answer session. The next meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2021.
- b. Curriculum & Instruction Committee – Dr. Kerry Drake  
 Kerry Drake welcomed Dana Hipszer and Peg Pennepacker to the committee. He reported that they reviewed the mission and vision and reviewed the overall budget. The next meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2021 and they would like to discuss Full-Day Kindergarten.

- c. Extracurricular Committee – Peg Pennepacker  
Peg Pennepacker reported that Robin Holman, Margaret Lerch and Amanda Maldonado attended the last meeting, and shared updates on their events and programs. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2021.
- d. Facilities Committee – Melanie Cunningham  
Melanie Cunningham reported that they covered a lot of topics at the last meeting, including the GESA project, drainage issues, the High School varsity softball field, Marlborough's new playground, and a cistern in front of the high school. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2021.
- e. Finance Committee – Melanie Cunningham  
Melanie Cunningham reported that the committee discussed the refinancing of the bonds and the savings, the tax collection program and the 2019-20 audit report. The next meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2021.
- f. Policy Committee – Peg Pennepacker  
Peg Pennepacker reported that the committee is continuing to go through the 200 series of policies. Dr. Farina asked the Board to pay close attention to Policy 233, Suspension and Expulsion. The next meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2021.
- g. Western Montgomery Career & Technology Center – Stephen Cunningham  
Stephen Cunningham reported that the last meeting was a Reorganization meeting and Dr. Roche was welcomed as the Superintendent of Record, new officers were appointed, Mr. Cunningham had to step down as President when Dr. Roche became the Superintendent of Record. Dana Hipszer was welcomed as a new member from Upper Perkiomen. Stephen talked about two grants that they are waiting to hear about and that the Western Center is going to hold a webinar for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students as an Open House. Dr. Roche asked the Board if they would be interested in having Mr. Moritzen come to a meeting to talk about the program, the budget, or answer any questions as he has done in the past.
- h. Montgomery County Intermediate Unit – Judy Maginnis  
Judy Maginnis reported that at the last Intermediate Unit meeting they discussed the 2019-20 audit report and the 2020-21 membership services budget.
- i. Legislative Liaison Report – Peg Pennepacker  
Peg Pennepacker reported on many happenings at the Legislative level. She shared that January was School Board recognition month. She talked about Governor Wolf's state budget proposal, March 22<sup>nd</sup> is Virtual Advocacy Day, and Guidelines for Act 136. Ms. Pennepacker said that COVID and Charter School Reform continue to dominate discussions across the state.
- j. Upper Perkiomen Education Foundation – Mike Elliott  
Mike Elliott reported that the Education Foundation is partnering with High School students to benefit this year's prom. Mr. Elliott said by searching for Upper Perkiomen Education Foundation on Amazon Smile, a portion of what you purchase will be donated to the organization to help with the prom. Mr. Elliott thanked Luanne Stauffer for taking a lead with the Foundation.

- k. Regional Planning Commission Representative – Dr. Kerry Drake

Kerry Drake reported that at the meeting they talked about green way parks, the paved entrance at the Perkiomen in Green Lane and new housing developments.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mrs. Cunningham announced that the Board will hear comments pertaining to the hybrid instructional model first and any other topics after that. Kyle Somers read a statement reminding people that this is a time to express concerns and not a time for debate. He also reminded everyone to state their name and municipality and that public comments are available to residents and taxpayers of the Upper Perkiomen School District.

Jen Moran, Upper Hanover Township, commented about the virtual students needing some attention.

Gene Dolloff, Upper Hanover Township, commented on the educational programs and would like for everyone to be in person.

Lisa Trimbur, Upper Hanover Township, thanked everyone for having schools open but two days in not enough.

Mary Cannon, Hereford Township, also had questions on the virtual program and issues with reaching teachers.

Jennifer Hartzel, East Greenville, asked for more attention to the virtual students and had questions later in the meeting about Special Education policies and procedures.

Christine Henry, Red Hill, is a teacher in another district and teaching hybrid. She asked to give teachers a break this is a new situation for everyone.

Mary Cannon, Hereford Township, had issues on when students are being marked absent.

Stacia Hang, Pennsburg

Christian Fowkes, Upper Perkiomen Middle School Teacher

Hope Manion, Hereford Township

Gabriella Liccopoli, Upper Hanover Township

Carol Elias, Red Hill

Jen Moran, Upper Hanover Township

J.P. Prego, Red Hill

Isabelle Zimmerman, UPHS Sophomore Class President

Jennifer Eisenberger, Marlborough Township

Phil Detwiler, Vice-President of the UPEA

J.R. Wrenna, Pennsburg

All expressed their thoughts and concerns about Mrs. Hofkin's social media posts and thanked the Board and Dr. Roche for recognizing the issue. Many asked for Mrs. Hofkin to be removed from the Upper Perkiomen School Board.

Levi Parson, Red Hill, expressed support for Mrs. Hofkin and her freedom of speech.

Deb Burns, Upper Perkiomen High School Teacher, thanked Sandy Kassel for her years of dedication. Deb talked about her involvement with Sandy and SEPaST and how she is going to be missed. Ms. Burns asked the community to be patient with the teachers, she said they are trying.

Annette Gerhart, Hereford Township, thanked Sandy Kassel, and said how Sandy always took the time to answers any questions and wished her well on her retirement.

### **BOARD COMMENTS**

Judy Maginnis, read a statement she prepared sharing her thoughts of how upset she was about Mrs. Hofkin's social media posts and asked for Mrs. Hofkin to resign from the Board.

Keith McCarrick, said the community should be one of acceptance and inclusivity regardless of our differences. He said they should be discussing issues and problems with the educational system and not berating people for their differences.

Peg Pennepacker, shared her thoughts about Mrs. Hofkin's posts. She said a school board member should not use their First Amendment Rights to attack groups that they owe a duty to protect in their schools and that it exemplifies what they oppose in their schools. Ms. Pennepacker asked Mrs. Hofkin to do herself a favor and resign from the Board.

Stephen Cunningham, agreed with the thoughts and appreciated the students who spoke and the parents who sent letters and said the rest of the Board agrees with them.

Mike Elliott, stated that seven months ago they went through this same situation but are here again. He said how every student matters and how it already hard to be a kid and do not need any added pressures. Mr. Elliott talked about the community not being about hate and asked Mrs. Hofkin to step aside and resign from the Board.

Kyle Somers spoke to the questions of if a Board could remove a member for neglect of duty, or failure to not attend meetings.

Kerry Drake, stated that it upsets him that students had to stand up and defend their co-students and that the Superintendent had to apologize for a Board member's behavior. He said he thought we were moving forward and healing but now they are in the same situation again. Dr. Drake asked for Mrs. Hofkin to do the right thing and resign from the Board.

Dana Hipszer, said that he wished Mrs. Hofkin would avoid social media altogether since it has become a distraction to her duties on the Board and since she cannot limit her presence on social media she should resign.

Keith McCarrick, said that he does not condone or support what was said and now that they have heard from the entire Board he hopes Mrs. Hofkin will do the right thing.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Mike Elliott, seconded by Kerry Drake, to **adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m.** Motion carried; all voted aye.

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Sandra M. Kassel, Board Secretary