

COCALICO SCHOOL DISTRICT

Denver, PA

A special meeting of the Cocalico School Board was called to order at 7:00pm on Monday, November 8, 2021 by the President, Rev. Kevin Eshleman, who welcomed all those in attendance. A moment of silence was held, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present

Richard Brenner	Lin Sensenig	Desiree Wagner
Pamela Blickle	Randell Renninger	Douglas Graybill
Juanita Fox	Brett Buckwalter	Rev. Kevin Eshleman

Administrators Present

Dr. Ella Musser	Dr. Stephen Melnyk	Dr. Beth Haldeman
Sherrri Stull	Dr. Andria Weaver	Bradley Kafferlin
Andrew Price	Samantha Bensing	Dr. Susan Snyder
Rebecca Culbert	Sherry Luttrell	

Guests Present

Meredith Ely	Nicole Cradic	John Hibshman
Linford Hurst	James Griest	Amy Maier
Stephanie Noll	Tara Griest	Jason Lutz
Vince Weaver	Amy Weber	Mike Price
Crystal Weaver	Cornel Weber	Theodore Price
Patty Gentry	Liz Ackerman	Jennifer Dirks
Buddy Gentry	Dan Burton	Josh Benton
Kim Fasnacht	Tom McCurdy	Briana Fultz
Michelle Hohl	Shannon McCurdy	James Gehman
Sherry Brunick	Brian Gossert	Suelda Hurst
Courtney Hall	Falin Gossert	
Leah Shenk	Jeremiah Weber	

Virtual Attendees

Jaime Reid	Valentina Rebristy	Robin Boyer
Lauren Musser	John Esser	Nicole Kirste
Michelle Colon	Matt Landis	Matt Noll
Julie Hirst	Kelly Youndt	Matthew Behney
Wendi Miller	Shana Lutz	Kristin Burkholder
Tom Webster	Mark Leidich	Jessica Campbell
Claudia Hambright	Stephanie Cooper	Nathan Hanna
Tonia Burton	Aubree Fahringer	Heather Griest
Brenda Strausser	Diane Hurst	Renelle Martin
Elijah Swangren	Gary Hambright	Michelle Weber
Donna Moran	Brian Cerullo	Tori Mello
Danette Harman	Julie Zaorski	Jessica Colon
Liz Lockman	Jim Cage	Joshua Benton

Lauren Kemler
Amanda Henne
James Gehman

Dustin Eberly
Stephanie Miller
Heather Hibshman

Becky Grimwood

Rev. Eshleman provided a mask mandate update, referencing Governor Wolf's announcement that he will lift the state's school mask mandate on Jan. 17, 2022. He added that on that date, Wolf's administration plans to turn over decisions regarding masking to local school officials. Rev. Eshleman then turned the meeting over to Dr. Ella Musser, Superintendent, who in turn introduced the District's Business Manager, Mrs. Sherri Stull.

Mrs. Stull provided a brief description of the annual process leading up to the local audits of the District's various funds and its federal programs. She then introduced Mr. Sean Post and Ms. Nicole Cradic of Trout CPA. Mr. Post explained the audit process and testing procedures, and reported that the firm had issued an unmodified opinion, stating the financial statements of Cocalico School District present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the District as of June 30, 2021. He also indicated that no material weaknesses in internal controls were discovered during the audit, however, the firm did make IT focused recommendations related to the District's continuity plan. Mr. Lin Sensenig, board member, questioned what IT protocols the District employed to protect itself from cyber-attacks. In response, Mr. Brad Kafferlin, Director of Technology, reviewed procedures currently utilized by his department. Mrs. Stull verified that the District does subscribe to Positive Pay as well.

Mr. Post continued with a PowerPoint presentation. He shared that the two programs audited under Federal Programs this year were Title I and Corona Virus Relief Fund, both with no findings. On the governmental side, Mr. Post spoke about the financial impact of the pandemic, pay-off of debt service, continuation of capital projects plan, decrease of \$1.168 million in net position, implementation of GASB 84, state portion of the pension liability, and the District's OPEB liability. He also displayed pie charts illustrating the 2021 General Fund revenue sources and an analysis of its expenditures, before completing the presentation with a summary of the District's fund balance. Ms. Cradic added that Committed Funds for future PSERS obligations were reduced by \$4,000,000 to \$7,000,000, with half the decrease assigned to future capital projects. She also emphasized the need to continue to plan for future capital requirements to ensure funds are available for those purposes.

Dr. Beth Haldeman, Mrs. Rebecca Culbert, Mrs. Cheryl Frost, and Dr. Susan Snyder reported on the proposed new elementary math program for K-5. The need for a new mathematics package is due to the current *Math Expressions* technology components being discontinued and its consumables and online resources becoming unavailable for the 2022-2023 school year. The team shared their process for choosing the textbook *Ready Classroom Mathematics*, citing the various criteria utilized in its selection. All involved in the selection process agreed that the program is child-friendly, readable, age-appropriate, PA standards aligned, and enjoyed by the students. A pilot team of 19 teachers like its use of manipulatives, abundance of technology resources, opportunities for conversations among the students, digital access, and ample materials for differentiated instruction. Approximately 1,620 textbooks are required at a cost of \$189.00 each. On-going professional development is also provided for

\$15,000, making the total cost \$321,180 for a five-year period. The instructional materials for this program are available for preview at the Central Office.

Mrs. Karen Fedder presented information on the high school science book, *Forensic Science Fundamentals & Investigations*, proposed for the elective science course. She shared that Mrs. Mary Kling would serve as instructor for the class. The science department prefers this text because it is broader in scope than any online course that is available, offering a balanced approach to the study of forensic science with highly engaging activities. The price of \$4,339.50 includes 30 student textbooks, teacher's guide, online resources, and digital access for both students and the instructor.

Mrs. Beth Cerullo, Denver Elementary Librarian, shared information on the processes and criteria for the selection, recommendation and maintenance of library materials, citing Board Policy 109. She stated that the policy affirms the District's responsibility to provide resource materials that enrich and support curriculum, taking into account the varied interests, abilities and maturity levels of the students served, as well as providing materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that students may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical analysis of all media. Mrs. Cerullo stressed that the District libraries strive to provide an inventory of resource materials that is well rounded in coverage of subject, types of materials, and variety of content, placing principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials. She also described the criteria and process for weeding materials, mentioning items that are in poor condition, antiquated, no longer needed, receiving little or no use, or containing inaccurate information are all candidates for disposal. Mrs. Cerullo indicated that approximately 800 to 1,000 books are weeded districtwide each year. As an example, she provided a list of some of the books that were weeded from the high school library's Graphic Novels section in recent weeks, based on the weeding criteria. Regarding any concerns over controversial materials, she reminded everyone that the first step is to contact the student's teacher or principal.

Dr. Haldeman provided an update on ESSER Funds, federal monies allocated to the District for one-time expenditures. She stated that the funds come with a lot of tracking, monitoring, performance reporting and accountability, and require the District to share the plan with stakeholders, allowing for input, before submitting an application by November 29, 2021 outlining the budget for each program/activity and the benefits of each. Dr. Haldeman shared that ESSER I (Cares Act - \$343,513) funds are one-time emergency funds received in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and were utilized by the District to fund the cost of one school psychologist and one home school visitor, Student Assistance Program, extended learning, and transportation for math/reading camps and tutoring. ESSER II (CRRSA Act - \$1,312,740) funds can be used for 31 different purposes including addressing short-term and long-term student learning gaps stemming from COVID 19, the purchase of PPE equipment, mental health supports, providing training to staff, or a number of other activities to address the needs of students. Cocalico will be utilizing the funds during the 2021-2022 school year to pay salaries for 7 of the 8 school counselors and 3 school psychologists, all of whom support student needs, mental health, and vulnerable populations. The District would thereby meet the criteria of "other activities necessary to maintain the operation of a continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the local education agency." As for ESSER

III (American Rescue Plan - \$2,655,293) funds, the District plans to fulfill the 20% requirement for academic recovery by offering bussing for extended learning, Extended School Year, and after school tutoring, providing supplies for after school tutoring, and maintaining two ESL teachers. The remaining 80% would be spent on the hiring of a new first grade teacher, a new fifth grade teacher, and a new kindergarten/special education teacher; maintaining an elementary home school visitor on staff, and the hiring of new School Psychologist and/or contracting with the IU for School Psychologist services. ESSER III "Set Aside" (\$147,411) funds required to address learning loss are earmarked to provide mental health, social and emotional supports; professional development for staff to address these needs; reading remediation and improvements; and to address learning loss.

Regarding the District's plan to address learning loss and provide continuity of instruction, Dr. Musser reported that the District is experiencing difficulty in filling teacher absences with contracted substitute teachers through Substitute Teacher Service (STS). She spoke of the many teachers who are flexing their schedules to assist with classes that are not covered, and the time principals are spending trying to fill these vacancies, including teaching classes themselves. She then introduced Mrs. Sherry Luttrell, Director of Human Resources, to share the District's proposal to help alleviate the situation. Mrs. Luttrell shared a plan to contract with STS for three district substitutes to work every school day, beginning November 30, 2021. The proposed sub rate is \$210.00, with the District paying a 30% markup on that amount, bringing the daily charge to \$273 per day for each sub. The proposed rate is in between the daily sub rate and the long-term sub rate. The District is hopeful that the \$210 rate will attract more subs to be here on a daily basis.

Mrs. Stull provided information regarding the high school renovations project, specifically addressing two proposals received for seating and partitions in the auditorium. She explained that on bid day for the High School Renovations Project, the lowest qualified bid received did not include a complete solution for the operable walls in the auditorium and included voluntary alternative manufacturers for the auditorium seating which is prohibited in the instructions to bidders. In order to provide the necessary complete project solution, the District considered various avenues that could be pursued for purchasing goods and services. By contracting directly with Essjay and Modernfold, the district would be able to ensure a complete, consistent solution that would meet the design intent. An additional benefit is some modest savings due to the direct purchase. She explained that by working through state-approved purchasing systems that the District is already part of, the District would be able to choose vendors that are preferred in order to maintain a higher level of quality in the project. The proposals presented are part of the High School Renovations project plan and were included under Option C, which was recommended by AEM Architects.

Mrs. Stull shared that the Irwin seating proposal is offered through OMNIA, a cooperative purchasing service, and includes both the furnishing and installation of auditorium seating. There are 546 chairs for fixed audience seating and 374 chairs for the two LGI areas in the back of the auditorium. The auditorium will lose some current seating in the back due to the new sound and lighting boards design, and some of the seating closer up front for handicap areas. The cost is \$292,710.51, which is slightly over the \$290,000 estimate included in Option C.

Mrs. Stull went on to describe the two Modernfold proposals (Skyfold & Modernfold) for two operable walls in the auditorium to separate the large group instructional areas from the general audience seating:

- **SKYFOLD** is a 81'0" wide x 19'6" high, electrically-operated, vertically-folding operable wall that stacks/is stored in the ceiling... when deployed/lowered it will separate the LGI area from the Auditorium. There are two choices of finish types... "Dune" is standard; "Xorel" is the premium finish... included with either finish choice are 2 rows of white Marker Board across the entire width of the LGI side of the wall. The wall is operated by passcode protected touch pads. Proposed cost with the better finish is \$417,600.
- **MODERNFOLD** is a 17'3" wide x 22'4" high, electrically-operated, horizontally-folding operable wall that stacks/is stored in a pocket at the back of the LGI area... when deployed it will meet the lowered Skyfold forming a "T" and separate the LGI area into two spaces. This wall is operated by key-switch and push-buttons. Proposed cost is \$48,400.

Modernfold of Reading proposes to provide, deliver, unload, and install both the Skyfold and Modernfold operable partitions. Total cost for the two walls is \$466,000, which is lower than the initial estimate of \$483,650 as shown under Option C.

Dr. Musser shared communication from Penn DOT that had been shared with West Cocalico Township. They in turn shared with the District and other municipality leaders that due to limited Penn DOT staff, roadways will be prioritized by use in regards to when each will be cleared during inclement weather this winter. As a result, the District may be impacted in its ability to get students to their school buildings, thereby necessitating more delays or even virtual instruction. She explained that a request was made to Penn DOT for a written description of the concern so that the District and municipality leaders could work together to adequately understand and address the situation.

Dr. Musser announced that the District has begun posting the school board meeting agendas 24 hours in advance and plans to also begin posting the pertinent supplemental documents that have previously been shared in hard copy upon request to those who attended the meetings.

Under the Superintendent's Report, Mrs. Luttrell clarified that although OSHA announced a vaccine mandate or weekly COVID testing mandate for private employers with 100 or more workers, the District does not fall under that requirement. Dr Musser shared that the individuals affiliated with the District will be offering a one-time scholarship in memory of former teacher Phil Fassnacht. She added that Millersville University would also be offering a scholarship in Mr. Fassnacht's memory. Dr. Musser reminded everyone about the parent-teacher conferences slated for November 23rd and 24th. She also pointed out the copies of the District newsletter that were shared with the Board.

Under General Comments, Board member Mr. Richard Brenner commended the Business Office for another clean audit and shared his appreciation for all they do in support of the District. A number of District residents also spoke. Mr. Linford Hurst stated that he had a stack

of emails dated from September 4th through September 8th stating that masks were optional, then announcing a mask mandate, and finally communicating that a 504 plan was necessary for an exemption. He wanted to know what transpired in between to cause these changes. Michelle Hohl shared that her daughter is in an elementary math class utilizing the math pilot, and she likes it. She asked where she could find the District's master plan for construction and wondered if the District would consider including a parent group for such projects. Mrs. Hohl said she didn't understand why the District had recently cancelled some school events and expressed a desire that students would all be given a break from the masks when outside. District teacher Courtney Hall thanked the Board for all the time they dedicate to the District and expressed concern about the negative statements that have been made to the Board. She shared a number of positive things she sees happening in the District's schools and commented that a lot of "normalcy" has come back: thriving students, field trips, assemblies, volunteers in the buildings, band and chorus, and kids working collaboratively. Mr. Burton expressed appreciation for the open communication he has had recently with most of the Board members and then questioned why policies were not always being followed with regard to how books got on the library shelves and why certain people were not stopped from making public comment to the audience at the last Board meeting. Mr. Burton asked the Board to consider adding an agenda item for next month requiring the recording of public meetings and the posting of them the next day, as well as posting addendums with the meeting agendas 24 hours in advance of the public meetings. He also stated that the minutes did not reflect that an additional meeting was to take place, although the meeting was later cancelled. Mrs. Meredith Ely thanked the Board and Administration and shared that coming to Cocalico was one of the best decisions she's made for her son; that every teacher, paraprofessional, and staff member has fulfilled the mission of the Cocalico School District. As for the negativity the Board has recently been put through, she stated that it did not represent every parent in the District, nor her or her husband.

Time was given for questions and answers after each presentation. There being no more business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Sensenig and a second by Mr. Buckwalter, with all Board members voting yes.

Sherry L. Stull
Secretary