

FINNEYTOWN LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Special Meeting

Zoom Remote Meeting

May 13, 2020

7:30pm

The Finneytown Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, via video conference from remote locations, while under the declared COVID-19 pandemic health emergency, as authorized by Ohio House Bill 197. Mr. Gast, Mr. Engleman, Mrs. Rebman, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Stuhlreyer were present. The President called the meeting to order at 7:35pm.

37-20 Mrs. Rebman moved, seconded by Mr. Stuhlreyer, that the Board dispense with the opening ceremony and approval of minutes from the April 20, 2020. The President declared the motion passed.

38-20 Mr. Engleman moved, seconded by Mr. Stuhlreyer, that the Board open discussion on items listed in the agenda. The President declared the motion passed.

Discussion

Superintendent, Mrs. Noe, led the following discussion:

- State Budget Cuts – The state announced cuts to the state’s K-12 public schools payments for this fiscal year to cope with a budget crunch brought on by the coronavirus crisis. Finneytown Schools will lose \$255,000. More cuts are expected next year
- Past Due Lunch Balances – Milford Schools, with whom the school district contracts for its school lunch program, is reporting over \$9,400 past due on our students’ accounts (\$8,400 at the Secondary Campus). By contract, Finneytown Schools is responsible for any unpaid balances at year end. Past due balances in prior years have been minor in comparison. This is perplexing for several reasons. District procedures place limits on charge accumulation. Milford is obligated to institute collection procedures and provide alternative meals. This is a pandemic shortened year. Is this because of a new food service manager? Did Milford’s electronic only Free and Reduced Lunch application process contribute to this problem? The district will be investigating with Milford where the procedural breakdown occurred.
- Past Due student Fees – District policy requires payment of outstanding student fees to graduate. It is not unusual for some sizable outstanding balances to accumulate for some students, who leave fees unpaid year after year. However, they always seem to come up with the money in time to get their diploma. This year, with the coronavirus pandemic, we are being told it is harder for families to come up with these funds.
- Board Member Resignation – Mr. Steve Stuhlreyer announced his intention to resign from the Board of Education effective 5/31/20. This action is the result of extra demands on his time and scheduling conflicts with board responsibilities, which have arisen from: 1) significant recent growth of his private practice; 2) his enrollment in a Ph.D. program. He expressed his sincere appreciation for the opportunity to work and serve with this Board for the past two and one-half years.

Mr. Stuhlreyer left the meeting at 7:52pm, due to a schedule conflict.

- Board consensus on unpaid lunch balances and past due fees is that every effort to collect must still be made. Concessions could possibly be made in cases where non-payment is the result of sustained financial hardship. But, have they shown a good faith effort? Have they taken advantage of payment plan options? More investigation will be done by Mrs. Noe. Perhaps some of our generous support organizations would be willing to help out with the lunch charges, if the need were made known. Yet, it seems wrong to ask support organizations to help out when there appears to be mismanagement on some level.
- Five Year Forecast – The forecast was strong going into the pandemic, but how will it come out? The district has tried to operate within its means, on balanced budgets, year-in and year-out with good success. Administration feels the only way to weather the cost and loss of this pandemic is to seek a balanced budget during the pandemic. Cash reserves can be wiped out over night. Case in point, Ohio’s rainy day fund of \$2.7 billion. Some sources have reported the state’s loss from the economic shutdown to date, is already twice that amount. Rather than exhaust its rainy day fund, Ohio is reducing expenditures, trying to preserve it, without an end to the pandemic in sight.
- Budget Reduction – In like manner, the Finneytown school district is seeking a \$1,000,000 budget reduction for FY20-21, to offset what it expects could be a million dollar district state funding cut next year. New pandemic related expenditures can hopefully be paid with new federal CARES Act funding.
- COVID Financial Task Force - To make the hard decisions necessary to cut \$1,000,000 from our budget, the administration is recommending the formation of a COVID financial task force. This committee will address strictly financial issues related to the pandemic and its economic impact. The committee will need to act fast, providing recommendations to the Board for implementation in the 2020-21 school year. Recommended composition would include: board, administrative, certified, classified, parent, student and community representation.
- District Revenue Threats –
 - State budget reduction funding cuts from lost state revenue
 - Enrollment decline during and following the pandemic - in terms of lost per pupil funding. There are many scenarios in which students might not return – health risk to themselves or a family member, preference for remote learning, dislike of a blended learning model, fear, won’t wear a mask, social anxiety, paradigm shift (discovering new options), schedule flexibility for a job, etc.
 - Property tax delinquencies, foreclosures, tax duplicate value losses.
- District Expenditure Threats –
 - Staff absenteeism cost increases – medically fragile staff or family members, childcare challenges, children on a different blended schedule in other districts and fear. The increased cost of FMLA sick leave salary continuation could be devastating, as sick leave is used at a much greater clip than ever before; long term absences for staff with stockpiled sick leave

- (up to 230 days) in particular could double staff salary and benefit cost for each position affected.
 - Operational Costs cost increases – pandemic supplies and equipment, extra staff for extra duties, smaller class sizes, capacity issues with limitations on the number of students transported on a bus or allowed in a classroom.
- District Expenditure Reductions –
 - Depends upon our state’s school learning model mandate or the local decision made from a list of approved options - What adjustments should be considered if remote learning continues into next school year? What adjustments should be considered if blended learning is implemented for next school year?
 - What reductions should be considered if K-12 funding is substantially cut?
 - What reductions should be considered if there is a sustained decrease in district student enrollment in response to the pandemic?
 - K-12 public education is very labor intensive. The big dollars are tied up in the services provide by staff and outsourced to vendors. Vendor contracts (i.e. transportation), staff utilization, right sizing, attrition, supplemental contracts, class room size, student teacher ratios, wage or step freezes may all need to be considered to stay financially afloat.
- District Financial Concern Communication is Critical –
 - The district needs to let everyone know that this pandemic has significant economic impacts, the state has already begun significant funding reductions, the district is calling a COVID financial task force together, short-term and long-term financial response recommendations are being requested, hard choices will have to be made by the Board of Education.
- Transportation
 - Should the district pro-rate payment in lieu of transportation this year?
 - Should the district consider a 2-mile transportation limit for future years, for student safety, social distancing requirements or reduced capacity, if we can only put 10 students on a bus? Will payment in lieu of transportation expand if the pandemic continues into next school year?
 - Specialized transportation (special education) cannot be eliminated.
 - Should we reconsider procedures to bus students that need to cross Winton Road, at any distance?
 - Note: Ohio law states that transportation cannot be reduced after the beginning of the school year.
 - Can a multi-year contract be suspended?
- Bond Construction Project Update
 - Emersion Design has determined, based upon aerial photographic studies, that there is no way to fit a full-size baseball field onto the Secondary Campus, while keeping the gym and the Performing Arts Center, because of space and grade elevations.
 - A baseball field cannot fit on the Cottonwood site.
 - A baseball field might fit on Whitaker but it wouldn’t be full size
 - Emersion has told us that we get a better elementary facility, better traffic flow, better separation (safety) from Winton Road, if we can use the whole

Brent site (baseball and softball fields) instead of only the softball field. Development on just the softball field doesn't allow for any possible future development for enrollment increases. We need to make our decision pretty soon to keep the design process moving. We don't want a new elementary shoehorned onto the softball field at the Brent site.


- Helwig Park has been offered by the township for use by the district for baseball and softball team use during construction. What if we continued using it after construction? The field is fine. Parking isn't the greatest. What is the cost of renting? How do players get to the fields for practice and games? If baseball is off campus, should softball also be off campus, so we have extra money for the new elementary? We would want to build dugouts at Helwig for both baseball and softball. Need to ask Mr. Warmack to consider the costs of using a baseball and softball fields off school property post construction.
- Title IX – If we aren't building a baseball field, are we allowed to build a softball field under Title IX?
- Centralized media center versus a Maker Space – This decision is being considered. Lara Walker has some information she has put together.
- Our new building will be 20% less space than we have now. Should be better, more efficient, more functional but not bigger under OFCC design standards.
- Other items
 - Monday regular meeting agenda items – splitting Mr. Stuhlreyer's duties until a replacement has been appointed can be decided on Monday.
 - Building Project - Education specifications have been taking place for the various grades, areas, and departments. The old Brent is not to be used for educational spaces.
 - School Bus Replacement Grant – The district is receiving a \$48,620 grant from the state to defray the purchase of a new school bus.
 - Clorox Cleaning Machine – all the rage for cleaning post pandemic; \$4,000 equipment cost. S&G said it would split the cost if the district is interested.
 - Out-of-town band camp cancelled due to the pandemic; an on-campus band camp is being considered, if allowed.

39-20 There being no further business, Mr. Engleman moved, seconded by Ms. Johnson, that the meeting be adjourned. The president declared the meeting adjourned at 9:27pm.



Tony Gast, President

ATTEST:



David Oliverio, Treasurer