

**Northwest Area School District  
School Board Meeting  
August 23, 2023**

The Northwest Area Board of Education held a Regular Board Meeting on August 23, 2023 in the library of the Middle/High School. Mr. LeValley, School Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

The following members were present during the meeting: Mr. LeValley, Mr. Benson, Mr. Beleski, Mr. Pierontoni, Mr. Sutliff, Mrs. Biller, Dr. Yarnell, Dr. Brunn, and Mr. Lanza. Attorney Angela Evans, Mr. Long, Mr. Miner, Mr. Yarnell, Mr. Mills, Mr. Shoemaker, Mrs. Straub, Mrs. Kratz, Mr. Sorber, and Ms. Hurst were also present.

Mr. LeValley reported that there was an Executive Session held from 6:00-6:30 PM to discuss personnel, safety, and litigation.

1. Approve of Minutes

Mr. Lanza made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Biller to accept the minutes of the following previous meetings:

- a. Regular School Board Meeting/Executive Session -July 26, 2023
- b. Special School Board Meeting for Personnel Purposes - August 9, 2023

Upon voice vote, all present voted yes, motion passes.

2. Comments: No Comments

3. Reports

Mr. Lanza made a motion, seconded by Mr. Benson to approve the following reports:

- a. Treasurer's Report - July 2023
- b. Cash Flow - July 2023
- c. Cafeteria - July 2023

Upon voice vote, all present voted yes, motion passes.

4. Payment of Bills

Mr. Lanza made a motion, seconded by Mr. Beleski to approve the payment of the following bills:

- a. General Account list of bills for August 2023 - \$430,076.53
- b. Prepaids - July 2023 - \$266,867.78

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes.

5. Superintendent's Comments – Mr. Long announced that the district's expenses are higher than the income, and we have made up the difference by raising our real estate taxes and supplementing through our fund balance. Our fund balance is now at a point where it can be depleted in a year or two. Mr. Long noted that he has serious budget concerns in which the district is taking steps to address. The State Senate is returning on Wednesday to finalize the school code bill and the final budget numbers. On the docket, which would benefit Northwest, there are three bills in which Mr. Long would like everyone to reach out to Senator Baker's Office in support of: 1. Cyber Reform - Northwest gets charged over a half of a million taxpayer dollars to places like Agora and CCA, which is in addition to what the state funds us. The state gives us about \$8,000 per student, but cyberschools charge us anywhere between \$14,000 - \$38,000 per student for special education. If we don't pay, it is deducted from our state subsidy. The reform bill would level it down to \$8,000 per student. This bill would save us a half of a million dollars in our budget. Mr. Long said this would be a game changer for the district. 2. PA Solar Grant for all schools - This would be free to our district. 3. PlanCon -The district could apply for grants up to \$5 million for Buildings, Renovations, and New Construction. Mr. Long noted that there are questions about transportation and bus routes. We have a decreasing enrollment, and have directed Mr. Sorber to come up with new bus routes. Mr. Long encouraged anyone who has a transportation concern, to reach out to Mr. Sorber. Mr. Long reported that our district is looking at every single thing we do to save money. Because we are a small district, our goal is to have kindergarten students who enroll this year to be able to graduate from here. We are looking to be in a position in which we don't have to cut programs. Mr. Long spoke about the following safety items recommended by the Pennsylvania State Police: The fence around the Intermediate School has been completed, the single door alarms have been installed, and the double door alarms are on backorder, expansion of video surveillance (outside and inside of buildings). Mr Long spoke about the following curriculum items: There is a new math and ELA curriculum which is aligned to the state standards and has supplied us with more online resources. With the addition of chrome books, more companies are moving toward online technology, and getting away from workbooks. Everything is online. Mr. Long recognized Mr. Shoemaker and his Building and Grounds employees for doing a great job in preparing for the new school year. Mr. Long asked everyone to take notice of the entrance way and steps which used to be red brick and dark, and now it is painted with Northwest colors.

6. Administrative Reports – Elementary Principal, Mr. Yarnell reported that he is excited for the start of a new school year. Mr. Yarnell commended the custodial staff and secretarial staff for their work in preparing for a new year. Athletic Director/Assistant Principal, Mr. Mills reported

that the regular season for fall athletics is opening this coming weekend. Mr. Mills thanked Mr. Shoemaker and the maintenance staff for the preparation of the athletic fields, equipment and the new changing area near the locker room. Mrs. Kratz, Acting Special Education Director, noted that it has been a busy summer getting ready for school and the upcoming audit. Mrs. Kratz noted that there was a correction to her report. CPR training for paraprofessionals was done yesterday, however, due to a medical emergency, the functional part of the training will be rescheduled. Secondary Principal, Mr. Miner reported that there was a New Teacher/Paraprofessional Orientation on Tuesday. Some of the topics covered were: code of conduct, special education philosophies, safety and emergency response, and teacher evaluation. Also, today was the first in-service day in which two of the mandatory state trainings for Act 55 were held - Safety and Act 71- suicide awareness. Tomorrow will be the second in-service day, and we are ready to go for Day 1 of school.

7. Policy/Procedures

Mr. Pierontoni made a motion, seconded by Dr. Brunn for the following:

- a. Approved the review of the Wellness Policy with no changes.
- b. Approved to appoint Joseph Long, representing management to the Health Trust and Kristy Straub as the alternate representing management to the Health Trust for the 2023-24 school year.

Upon roll call vote, all present voted yes, motion passes

8. Personnel

Mr. Benson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Beleski for the following:

- a. Approved to rescind motion 9.25 from the July 26, 2023 agenda, which stated, “ Recommend and move to appoint Katelyn Kalie as an Art Teacher, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year, as per the Northwest Area Education Association CBA.”
- b. Approved to rescind motion 9.26 from the July 26, 2023 agenda, which stated, “Recommend and move to approve to post for a mentor to Katelyn Kalie, Art Teacher for the 2023-24 school year.
- c. Approved to rescind motion 9.29.2 from the July 26, 2023 agenda, which stated, “ Recommend and move to appoint Janet Stone as part time Elementary Building Aide, as per the Northwest Area Educational Support Personnel CBA, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year, pending receipt of required paperwork.”
- d. Approved to rescind motion 9.29.6 from the August 26, 2023 agenda, which

stated, “Recommend and move to appoint Brandon Whitmire as Long Term

Approved to rescind motion 9.29.7 from the August 26, 2023 agenda, which

stated, “Recommend and move to post for a mentor to Brandon Whitmire, Long Term Chemistry Substitute Teacher for the first half of the 2023-24 school year.

- e. Appointed Shani Boberick as Mentor to Megan May, Guidance Substitute for the first half of the 2023-24 school year.
- f. Appointed Lisa Cooke as mentor to Sidney Mistysyn for the 2023-24 school year.
- g. Appointed Mary Herbert as mentor to Madison Goodrich, Elementary Life Skills Teacher, for the 2023-24 school year.
- h. Approved the anticipated FMLA of employee #9458, anticipated dates of 08/23/23 through approximately December, contingent upon the receipt of finalized paperwork.
- i. Appointed Leah Kubasek as Long Term Chemistry Substitute Teacher for the first half of the 2023-24 school year.
- j. Approved to post for a mentor to the Long Term Chemistry Teacher for the first half of the 2023-24 school year.
- k. Appointed Ashley Cragle as high school Art Teacher, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year.
- l. Approved to post for a mentor to the high school Art Teacher for the 2023-24 school year.
- m. Accepted, with regret, the resignation of Jennifer Hermany, Elementary LPN, effective immediately.
- n. Approved the interim permission to post and advertise for an Elementary Nurse.
- o. Appointed Corenna Wagner as Elementary Nurse, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year, pending receipt of required paperwork, as per the Northwest Area Educational Support Personnel Association CBA.
- p. Accepted, with regret, the resignation of Denise Farver, full time cafeteria, effective immediately.
- q. Accepted, with regret, the resignation of Kim Rodney, part time cafeteria, effective immediately.
- r. Approved interim permission to post and advertise for a full time cafeteria employee, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year.
- s. Appointed Erica Daniels, part time cafeteria, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year, pending receipt of required paperwork, as per the Northwest Area Educational Support Personnel Association CBA.
- t. Appointed Marie Adams, part time cafeteria, effective with the start of the

2023-24 school year, pending required paperwork, as per the Northwest Area Educational Support Personnel Association CBA.

- u. Appointed Grace McMurtrie as full time cafeteria, effective with the start of the 2023-24 school year.
- v. Appointed the following Northwest Virtual Academy Monitors for the 2023-24 school year:
  - 1. Amy Carle
  - 2. Megan May
  - 3. Patricia Axtell
  - 4. Casey Coombe
  - 5. Wendy Lukowski
  - 6. Andrew Hanadel
  - 7. Jason May
- w. Appointed the following Northwest Virtual Academy Tutors for the 2023-24 school year:
  - 1. Amy Carle
  - 2. Megan May
  - 3. Patricia Axtell
  - 4. Casey Coombe
  - 5. Andrew Hanadel
  - 6. Jason May
- x. Appointed Megan May as the Northwest Virtual Academy Coordinator for the 2023-24 school year.
- y. Appointed Shannon Mizikoski as Long Term Special Education Substitute Teacher for the first half of the 2023-24 school year.
- z. Approved to post for a Mentor to the Long Term Special Education Substitute Teacher for the first half of the 2023-24 school year.
- aa. Accepted, with regret, the resignation of Daniel Yarnell, Elementary Principal, effective on or about October 13, 2023.
- bb. Approved the interim permission to post and advertise for an Elementary Principal.

- cc. Approved an independent contractor agreement with Peggy Snyder for speech and language supervisory and related services for the 23-24 school year not to exceed 80 hours at a rate of \$65/hour.
- dd. Appointed Jennifer West as part time Building Aide, effective with the receipt of required paperwork, as per the Northwest Area Educational Support Personnel Association CBA.

Upon roll call vote, all present voted yes, motion passes.

9. Finance –

Dr. Brunn made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Biller for the following:

- a. Approved the agreement with New Story Tuition Agreement for the 2023-24 school year, pending solicitor's review and approval.
- b. Approved the Intergovernmental Agreement with the Luzerne Intermediate Unit for the 2023-24 school year in the amount of \$151,430.
- c. Approved H&K to supply propane for the 2023-24 school year. (no increase from 2022-23)
- d. Approved Casella Waste for the 2023-24 school year, at a cost of \$14,880.
- e. Approved the Guest Teacher Agreement with the Luzerne Intermediate Unit for the 2023-24 school year, at an annual membership of \$325.

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes.

10. Buildings & Grounds/Safety -

Mrs. Biller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Benson for the following:

- a. Appointed Joseph Long as the interim Act 44 Coordinator for the 2023-24 school year.

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes.

11. Education/Curriculum –

Dr. Yarnell made a motion, seconded by Mr. Pierontoni for the following:

- a. Approved the revisions to the following handbooks for the 2023-24 school year: **Attachments**
  - Student Handbook - (junior high/high school)
  - Student Handbook - (elementary)

- Faculty Handbook
  - Staff Handbook
- b. Approved the interim permission to approve the Foster Grandparent MOU for the 2023-24 school year. **Attachment**
- c. Approved the following Title I Plans:
- a. Intermediate School
  - b. Primary School

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes.

12. Co-Curricular –

Mr. Benson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Biller for the following:

- a. Appointed the following Head Varsity Coaches for the following sports for the 2023-24 school year/season:
- a. Baseball (\$4,500) - Joseph Zelinske
  - b. Softball (\$4,500) - Kevin Harvey
  - c. Track and Field (\$4,500) - Todd Culver
- b. Approved to post for Assistant Varsity Coaches for the following sports for the 2023-24 school year/season:
- a. Baseball - (1 @ \$3,800)
  - b. Softball - (1 @ \$3,800)
  - c. Track and Field - (3 @\$3,800)
- c. Approved to post for Assistant Junior High Coaches for the following sports for the 2023-24 school year/season:
- a. Baseball - (1 @ \$3,800)
  - b. Softball - (1 @ \$3,800)
  - c. Track and Field - (3 @\$3,800)
- d. Appointed Samantha Davenport as a Volunteer Color Guard Instructor, at no cost to the district for the 2023-24 school year.
- e. Approved the Athletic Handbook for the 2023-24 school year. **Attachment**
- f. Appointed Matthew Correll as an Assistant Girls Varsity Basketball Coach for the 2023-24 school year/season, pending required paperwork. (\$4,400)
- g. Appointed Ryan Miner as the Junior High Girls Basketball Coach for the 2023-24 school year/season. (\$4,400)

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes

13. Transportation:

Dr. Brunn made a motion, seconded by Mr. Beleski for the following:

- a. Approved the Northwest Area Bus Drivers for the 2023-24 school year, pending required clearances.
- b. Approve the Northwest Area Route Numbers List for the 2023-24 school year.
- c. Approved the transportation agreement with April Bonham and the Northwest Area School District for the 2023-24 school year. Reimbursement for mileage to and from school will be calculated from student attendance records, at a rate per mile, as established by the IRS.

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes

14. Additions to the Substitute List -

Mrs. Biller made a motion, seconded by Dr. Yarnell for the following:

- a. Approved to appoint the following substitutes for the 2023-24 school district, pending receipt of required paperwork:
  1. Breann Kingsbury (pending Act 91 approval)
  2. Jennifer Hermany - Nurse
  3. Tracie Noss - Paraprofessional
  4. Heidi Stempien - Nurse
  5. Alison Talanca - Nurse
  6. Corenna Wagner - Nurse
  7. Guest Teacher Substitutes - IU

Upon roll call, all present voted yes, motion passes.

15. Tabled Items - No Tabled Items

16. Legislative – No Report.

17. West Side CTC - Next meeting is next week.

18. LIU Update -Mr. Lanza reported that minutes are available upon request.

19. New Business – No New Business.

20. Solicitor's Report – No Report.

21. Comments Two Representatives of NY Life spoke about two programs which would be free to the district. Information regarding both programs was left for review. Shannon Thomas spoke about using grant money to do “Stop the Bleed” classes for the bus drivers. Mr. Long noted that it would be excellent. Secondly Shannon Thomas spoke about the changes in bus routes, and encouraged everyone to be patient, and noted that the times of pickup and drop off may be different. Mrs. Thomas also expressed her concern regarding the transportation app message that was sent out to families. Mr. Sorber, Transportation Director, clarified the message regarding transfer buses. Mrs. Biller suggested that parents should call Mr. Sorber. Mr. Long noted that an app message will go out before school starts to remind parents that buses may be a few minutes off. Several bus drivers attended the meeting to express their concerns over new bus routes. Mr. Long and Attorney Evans encouraged any of the bus drivers to stay after the meeting



to speak with Mr. Sorber. Carrie Edwards, parent of a Northwest student, expressed her concerns about not accepting alternative transportation. Mr. Sorber told Ms. Edwards that her request has been approved via email.

22. Adjourn – Mr. Pierontoni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Biller and unanimously by the Board to adjourn the meeting at 7:39PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pete Lanza, Board Secretary