

Board Abates \$140,000 from Construction Bonds

The Mount Pulaski Board of Education met October 19th to conduct their regular meeting at 6:00 PM with all members in attendance.

One visitor requested to address the Board. Jeff Beccue disseminated past tax extension information to the Board as he reiterated his message from the previous month; that message reflected past Boards commitment to reduce the district's property tax burden.

The Board began the meeting by approving the Consent Agenda which included payment of bills, approval of minutes from the last month. The Board passed the Consent Agenda 7-0.

Under Reports, Tim Custis from Gorenz and Associates reviewed his work in completing the Annual Financial Review (AFR). Mr. Custis reported that the district finances and practices are in order, as he offered praise for the district office and bookkeeper Kathy Tschantz.

Next, Superintendent Lamkey informed the Board the high school renovation/construction was substantially completed with CORE handing over the locker room space on Thursday, October 15th. Contractors will continue to be on site completing items on the final punch list, but the bulk of the work is completed. Mr. Lamkey's report informed the Board on the high school principal search which was proceeding on time. The interview committees were being selected and a survey is being prepared for the last week of October so that the public has an opportunity to express their perspective in the application process. Interviews are expected to take place in December with the Board approving a candidate at the January Board Meeting.

The meeting then progressed to Unfinished Business, where the Building and Grounds Committee explained their progress in seeking to complete the agreement with the Mt. Pulaski Park District for use of Veterans Park. Mr. Cowan and Mr. Martin have submitted a proposed agreement to the park district for their consideration. The Building and Grounds Committee desires to sign the agreement at the November School Board Meeting.

Superintendent Lamkey then began a discussion with the Board about amending the Hilltop Return to School Plan. This plan was approved on August 21st and laid the foundation for how our schools would operate during the pandemic. After experiencing five successful weeks of instruction, the building leadership teams are once again convening to determine what further steps each building may take in extending instructional opportunities to students.

Considerations include longer school days, adjusted schedules and timelines for completion. Principal Morgan and Principal Lora both described their work to date, highlighting both success and barriers in the process.

Board members expressed their wishes to extend the school day and asked teachers and administrators to describe the obstacles. Obvious factors include food services and mask fatigue, but more concerning is the limited movement of grade school students, restricted instructional strategies due to social distancing and the development of new best practices to

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try to fill instructional voids. On the bright side, Mr. Lamkey explained that we are slowly improving. We started the school year in a much better place than we finished last year. We have made great strides in our instruction to date compared to where we started the year. We are continuing to improve and make adjustments in our practices that are leading the district to additional opportunities for students and staff. Building Leadership Teams will have finalized amendments to the Hilltop Return to School Plan and timelines later this month.

The Board then entered Executive Session at 7:46 PM to discuss personnel items and returned to open session at 8:13PM.

Under New Business, the Board approved the Annual Financial Report 7-0, commenting on the MPCUSD 23 improved Financial Profile Score to 3.9 on a scale of 4.0 leaving the district with the Illinois State Board of Education's highest profile designation of Recognition.

In the next two items, the Board approved anticipated fund transfers from the Education Fund and Working Cash Fund to make payments on high school renovation/construction. The transfer of monies from the Education Fund is permanent in nature while the Working Cash Fund transfer acts as a loan within the district financial structure that the district has three years to make payments. Both motions passed 7-0.

Next, in New Business, the Board adopted a resolution to abate FY2021 \$936,200 construction bond payment by \$140,000. This reduced tax payer's payment on the construction bond to \$796,200, which results in a 15% savings in tax payer payments on the construction bond during the upcoming tax year. It is the Board's goal to continue abating the construction bond in upcoming years to provide tax relief for constituents. The upcoming levy process will reveal the overall tax savings.

Superintendent Lamkey then discussed the unexpected repair work being conducted on the grade school boilers. Mr. Lamkey filed resolution to use Health Life Safety funds to pay for the repair or possible replacement. The Board adopted the resolution, 7-0.

The Board then offered Superintendent Lamkey directions on the potential of an athletic co-operative agreement with Hartsburg-Emden. In previous years, the two districts participated in a co-op for girls' basketball and softball. Since that time, Hartem has been in a co-op agreement with Delavan, which has become less attractive to the Hartsburg-Emden school district. Hartem is seeking to co-op softball, track and golf for the upcoming year. It should be noted as well that Hartem is also considering Illini Central as a possible co-op partner. The Board directed Mr. Lamkey to begin discussions researching the potential for an agreement.

Mr. Lamkey then presented food service job descriptions for Food Service Manager, Lead Cook and Cook to the Board for consideration. The new descriptions open opportunity for the

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district to redesign the hierarchal structure of the distric'ts food services program. The job descriptions were approved 7-0.

Next the Board approved the Personnel report 7-0. The following actions were approved by the Board:

- Dianne Birge retired as the grade school Head Cook.
- Jay Haigh was designated Food Service Manager.
- Angie Cross hired as Part-Time Cook
- Tanker Wade hired as Volunteer High School Basketball Coach
- Michael Lowery hired as Volunteer High School Baseball Coach

The Board postponed a vote on raising the hourly wage for a paraprofessional. The Board asked Mr. Lamkey to conduct research and present his work at the November regular meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.