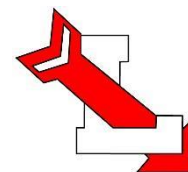


Board Briefs



Regular Meeting of December 9, 2024

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT

Conner Casarez stated that students are looking forward to the upcoming two-week break. The recent snow day is making the wait bearable. Students are hoping for more snow days. He reminded parents to talk with their new drivers about being careful on the snowy/icy roads. He congratulated the basketball team on their win and the cast and crew of the holiday play. The Toys of Tots drive as well as a bake sale, put on by Youth Advisory Council, is going on now at the high school. These opportunities help students get into the giving part of the season while also helping children in need. He wished everyone a merry Christmas, happy holidays and a wonderful new year.

APPROVED ITEMS

November minutes, payment of bills, Superintendent's evaluation, Second reading of revised/new bylaws/policies, Omnia consortium, band uniforms, overnight student trips and high school track.

REPORTS

High School Peer to Peer Program and the Superintendent's Evaluation

HUMAN RESOURCE UPDATE

Dustin Cichocki stated he is continuing to review applicant recruitment and tracking systems. He is currently reviewing Red Rover, Frontline, PowerSchool and Skyward. Hoping to have the new system in place by April. Cichocki is currently hiring for mid-year retirements and drivers. He stated that, so far this year, no bus routes have been shut down due to staffing. At an upcoming Work Session, the district nurses will do a presentation on what their job entails and their work with the Medical Emergency Response Teams (MERT).

CURRICULUM UPDATE

Dan VanderMeulen stated that the administrative team met to talk about communication, the Strategic Action Plan, staff feedback and school improvement. The team reviewed the Strategic Action plan and areas that may be missing or changed for better clarification. They also talked about improving staff input and communication (staff to administration and administration to staff). They also completed a mid-year review of their work to identify areas for improvement. Mr. VanderMeulen thanked Mr. Gough and students for their Peer to Peer Program presentation and the correlation to one of the school improvement goals of belonging and inclusion. Everyone wants to feel included, no matter how old we are, what our walk of life is or our successes and failures.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Fowler stated there is a lot of excitement in the buildings for the upcoming holiday. Buses looked great in the Santa parade last week. The Luminary hike at the Wittenbach Center will take place December 13-15. Lowell had Academic All-State athletes in volleyball, cross country, soccer, golf and football. Nicholas Binns was one of two athletes in Division 2 who received Academic All-State in football. Fowler stated that this was Tom Kaywoods last meeting on the Board. He thanked Tom for his enthusiasm, advocacy and 13 years on the Board of Education. He is going to miss his excitement during student-led presentations. He wished him the best of luck.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

One audience member made a public comment. No action taken.

Lowell Area Schools Board of Education

Brian Krajewski, President Lauria Kuna, Vice President Pat Nugent, Secretary Tom Kaywood, Treasurer
Jennifer Dougherty, Trustee Jared Blough, Trustee Jessica Curtis, Trustee

BUDGET UPDATE

Sonia Hodge stated that Skyward is up and running. Payroll was difficult at first, but things are currently running smoothly. She presented two documents to the Board (attached) that will assist the Board with budgeting. One lists changes to Section 147 of School Aid Act and the other lists the monthly state aid. She stated that the legislature has a bill before them to make changes to health insurance (PA152) which dictates how much a school district can pay towards health insurance for employees, if passed. Highlights of this bill include:

- Year one - increase the amount districts can pay by 7%. This would be an additional cost to the district of \$300,000 for 2025.
- Year two and beyond - increase the cap by 3% or use medical CPI (whichever is higher). This would be an additional cost to the district of \$150,000 per year.
- Realigning the 2-person amount that districts can pay. Currently if someone is on a 2-person plan they may be paying more than someone on a family plan.
- Allow districts to bargain a certain percentage above the statutory hard cap. Hodge is not sure how this would work in negotiations.
- Change to the 80/20% alternative. If a district chose the 80% ceiling, this would change to 80% floor. They cannot elect to pay less than 80%. Lowell uses the hard cap, not the 80/20% option.

The district was awarded a Filter First grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) for \$18,855. This grant assists districts with the new requirement of filtered water in schools. Requiring one filtering station per 100 students in each building. Will have to add and/or replace a few stations to meet the requirement. The ongoing costs of this requirement (testing, replacing filters) will be a new ongoing cost to the district. Kitchens will have other requirements for water filtering. Further details and grants for the kitchens will be released later.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Pat Nugent echoed Mr. Fowler's comments regarding Tom Kaywood.
- Jessica Curtis thanked Tom Kaywood for his service and wished everyone a happy and safe holiday.
- Jennifer Dougherty commented on the Superintendent's Evaluation. The Board is very fortunate to have a superintendent and administrative team that is getting things done. She stated that the Peer to Peer Program was a beautiful presentation, she is proud of the students the way they look out for each other and the Board couldn't ask for anything more.
- Laurie Kuna stated she would miss Tom Kaywood on the Board.
- Jared Blough stated he appreciated the Peer to Peer presentation and congratulated Tom Kaywood on his time on the Board.
- Tom Kaywood thanked the Board and community for all the support. It's been easy and it's been difficult. The good and bad comments are welcome as it challenges the Board to evaluate principles and how we work together. He thanked his family for being supportive during a lot of late-night Mondays. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year.
- Brian Krajewski wished everyone a happy holiday and happy new year.