

June 22, 2020 Board of Education Meeting Transcription

Uhteg: I hereby call this meeting of the Lancaster Central School District to order. Please rise for the pledge to the flag. Please remain standing for a moment of silent reflection. Thank you everyone.

Okay we'll go to 4.0 presentations. We have no presentations for this evening.

5.0 correspondence, 5.1, we received a letter from Tyler Sojka on June 8. 5.2, an email from Joey Swerdlin on June 11. 5.3, an email received from Jessica Hoffman on June 11. 5.4, an email from Stephanie Nemmer on June 11. 5.5, an email from Christopher Hoffman on June 11. 5.6, an email from Veronica McCoy on June 11. 5.7, an email from Kaitlin Swaine on June 11. 5.8, an email from Erin Lakomski received on June 12. 5.9, a letter from Beth Cerminara on June 12. And 5.10, an email from Jessica Banaszak received on June 18. Anyone from the board have any other correspondence that they've received? Okay, and not to elaborate too much but the correspondence that we received these past couple of weeks, some of them had to do with some sensitive issues and making some requests of the district. What I'd like to see, and I think all board members would like to see, are correspondence from community members or perhaps past students - we have some Lancaster students in here who sent us emails - and what I'd like to see as a board member, or what I would like to have seen and I'm sure my board members would agree with me, is, you know, a look to have a conversation with the board or with the administration rather than a confrontation. Many times I think, you know, people see something wrong, either in the world or in their community, and right away they want to fix it. So I think a quick reactive resort is to attack your school district or point out deficiencies rather than asking questions or starting conversations. And I find that, you know, somewhat disappointing, you know, in my years, that we've had many people come at us, you know, with their teeth showing rather than coming, you know, humbly with respect and asking to start a conversation. And I think as all of us know in any human interaction, you know, when you come ready for a fight I mean you don't really get many places right especially with a, you know, such an outstanding school district, you know. That's just my two cents and I, you know, reading through the emails, several of them were sort of cut and pasted, which for me lacks any, you know, originality. Several good points were made throughout but again, some of the language was just too strong. And I know that I've never met any of these people and they were making demands of the school board or the school district and, you know, without having met them and without knowing their background and I'm assured that they don't know our background, we're not going to get very far. So that's just my two cents on this meeting day. Any other board member care to contribute? Thank you.

6.0 approval of minutes. 6.1, could I have a motion to approve the special session minutes from June 16, 2020? Davenport so moved. Talarico seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

6.2, could I have a motion to accept the special session minutes from June 17, 2020? Cohen so moved. Davenport seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

7.0, items from staff organizations. Is there anyone from the Lancaster Administrative and Supervisory Association here? Yes, please. Hi, it's Terry Adamec. How are you doing? Good. Thank you, Terry.

Adamec: First, we'd like to thank all the board members who handed out diplomas at our graduation ceremony. Your presence helped to make the six-day event a success, and we're grateful for your time and efforts. Also, on behalf of LASA we would like to thank Mr. Uhteg for his many years of service to the students of Lancaster School District. We have witnessed you make the difficult decisions with the students of our district in mind at all times. You have supported education at every turn and Lancaster is considered a destination school district in part because of your service and leadership. We want to wish you well in all your future endeavors. Thank you.

Uhteg: Thank you, Mrs. Adamec. It's very kind of you. Anyone from the Lancaster Central Teachers Association?

Abraham: Good evening. The LCTA would like to congratulate the district and the board and thank the taxpayers for their continued support by passing the budget last week overwhelmingly. And to echo Mrs. Adamec's comments, the LCTA also wishes to thank Mr. Uhteg for his years of service to the district. Is it nine years you've been on the board? Yeah, hard to believe it's been that long ago since you and I first met, when you first were interested in running. So we want to wish you luck in any future endeavors and, you know, being a board member, you know, I spent ten years in the elected office myself, you know, the big difference between what I did and what you folks are doing is volunteer, one of the last bastions of volunteer service. So it's a great commitment and nine years a long time. So thank you, Mr. Uhteg. We'd also like to congratulate our 2020 graduates on achieving graduation under such adverse circumstances this year. Lastly, the LCTA would like to commend our six retirees: Donna Aquino, Karen Berger, Marlene Bumbalo, Kathy Majeski, John Rechtenwald, and Donna Weiland as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. We would also like to congratulate Mr. Peter Kruszynski on his retirement. Thank you.

Uhteg: Thank you, Mr. Abraham. Anyone from the Lancaster Association of Service Personnel? And anyone from the Lancaster Association of Substitute Teachers?

8.0, board reports. Anyone on the board care to report?

Just flipping through my screen here I've seen if there's anybody?

Talarico: Actually I just want to chime in real quick just an echo what Terry said. I thought that the graduation ceremony was very well done, very well put together. It was a lot of fun being

there and, you know, although we got to play a small role as board members handing out diplomas and whatnot, it was truly a lot of fun to see so many parents and so many families that got to experience that, and it was really unique and really, really well done. So kudos to everybody involved.

Uhteg: Anyone else from the board? Okay, I agree and thank you to all of the board members who were able to come out. I know it was difficult. Some of us had to fit it into our schedule and some of us just could not, but it was special to be there. And as the father of a 2020 graduate, you know, I was very pleased that my whole family was there too. You know, there were a lot of bright spots, and I'm sure I see Mrs. Cohen shaking her head. There're many things that were able to be done at the virtual, sort of virtual ceremony over the six days that weren't able to be done at Kleinhaus. So, you know, I'm one to be thankful for all the blessings that we have and that was truly a blessing, to have our whole family there. And the Lancaster teachers and administrators and everyone showed their enthusiasm for every last graduate, which was fantastic, you know, the same cheering, the same, you know, bullhorn the same Mrs. Ruda going on "hold it up, hold it up, open it up." Right, I mean I heard that over and over and over again, that was enthusiasm, that was caring. and that was cool. So I look forward to seeing everything put together in a nice graduation ceremony. And again, well done to the district.

Cohen: I would also echo that I heard nothing but positive comments from parents, from grandparents. They absolutely loved it. And I can't say enough about the district and what you guys accomplished over those six days. It was an incredible feat, and you all deserve just enormous kudos.

Uhteg: And to be thanked for that as a board member, you know, for once again riding the coattails of a great district. It's humbling, right? I think as board members we each agree we're lucky to be part of this district in some small way, so thank you very much to everyone who was involved in that.

8.1, we have the review of our 2019-2020 board goals, and what I'd like to do is go through the goals and then some reflections upon those goals, because there was a lot of work done by district personnel, teachers, and administrators to address these goals to the benefit of our students. So if you'll bear with me, it's a little bit of reading, but I would like to get this on the record for posterity and also for the acknowledgement of the great work that was done by those in the district.

So our first goal was communication, developing an understanding of the ESSA, or Every Student Succeeds Act, throughout the district, including an understanding of the new accountability measures, strengths and weaknesses of our subgroups. Examples: students with disabilities or the economically disadvantaged and the impact of test refusals on New York state tests in grades 3-8. Upon reflection in November 2019, the district administrative team conducted a series of workshops in each of the seven Lancaster schools around ESSA specifically focusing on the seven measures of student success and accountability. Each student, each school student data is compared to each measure of success and three how test

refusals impacting school in the district. Overall, the district in each place is considered by NYSED as in good standing or under ESSA. In fact, Lancaster High School was considered a recognition school, which is the highest honor. However, student test refusals have a wider impact on our overall accountability which caused concern. Additionally, the district office administrators presented information to the Board of Education during a regular public board meeting. This was done to build capacity within the Board of Education and to educate the community on the implications of ESSA and our accountability status as a school district. The district and school administration have worked with the teachers to implement several interventions, including increasing parent awareness to help increase participation in New York State tests. The COVID-19 pandemic has put some of those efforts on hold, of course. Our goal of student achievement was to develop the next 2020-2025 Lancaster Central School District Comprehensive District Education Plan, or CDEP, to maintain a focus on the continuous improvement of student achievement and a comprehensive education program for all students. Upon reflection, we're at a pivotal time in our district. Over the last five, ten, fifteen years we have built the foundation and infrastructure of one of the best school districts in Western New York. The creation of our long-range Comprehensive District Education Plan will take us to one of the best school districts in all of New York State over the next 5-10 years. The CDEP creation process was planned to occur in three phases: 1) A survey which was completed in December to gather big-picture feedback from all LCSD faculty and administration. 2) Focus groups at each building which were completed in January-February and allowed a smaller group of stakeholders to delve deeper into the survey responses and to begin to look at shaping our goals. 3) The core team, which was scheduled to occur in April-May to complete the goal-setting process within the district-wide group. Faculty and administrator participation was fantastic. We had nearly 300 responses from the LCSD CDEP survey, and close to 80 individuals participated in the focus groups. The completion of the CDEP will occur over the summer due to the pandemic. The review of our K-12 Response to Intervention, or RTI, processes to improve alignment between buildings while providing professional development to support efficacy around multi-tiered instructional and interventions was also a goal. Reflection, and a review of the RTI process was initiated via a survey that was sent to all members of the RTI teams at all schools as well as through ongoing discussion with administration. Overall our staff at all buildings had a very good focus on student needs and intervened regularly to help struggling students. However, the results of the survey indicate the need to educate all staff on the RTI process, streamline the functioning of the RTI teams, incorporate data into all decisions, and develop a common library of resources to use for interventions. Future work in this area will involve the creation of a district-wide RTI task force offering training to all staff and reviewing RTI processes for consistency in each building. Another sub goal to augment the use of the K-12 professional learning communities, or PLCs, to increase collective teacher efficacy and to improve student achievement, thus providing direction for future steps, the district's professional development plan. Upon reflection this past year we built internal capacity around PLCs within our district and building administrators and to some extent with our K-12 data coaches. Dr. Anthony Mohammed, a PLC guru, is scheduled to begin work with the LCSD on August 7 with administration and teacher leaders. Dr. Mohammed was also scheduled to conduct workshops during opening days in September with the entire LCSD faculty and administration. Both dates have been postponed, however, and we will continue to build

internal capacity through study groups and further implementation of the PLC philosophy. We plan to bring Dr. Mohammed to Lancaster in the summer of 2021.

In the category of Health and Safety, we had a goal to implement the PreK-12 recommendations of nationally recognized safety expert and consultant Don Shomette with regard to on-site procedures, practices, protocols, and infrastructure improvements to further enhance the safety and security of all students and staff. Upon reflection the buildings continue to adjust existing practices and procedures and implement new methods based on Don Shomette's recommendations. At each building, arrival and dismissal procedures were updated for the start of the school year, including changes in access and increased exterior and interior supervision. A new rapid response lockdown drill was implemented across the district in November, with drills occurring at least once a month at each building. The board has approved Mr. Shomette's return to the district on the third conference day in September. His training will be for all faculty and staff to reinforce the role everyone plays in school safety and to heighten their awareness of student behaviors, building safety plans, and committees are meeting regularly and their roles and involvement are ever-evolving.

Upon reflection over the course of the past 18 months, the district's mental health committee has worked on auditing our current practices when it comes to meeting the state standards and mental health curriculum. After the completion of the audit, we had grade-level teams K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12 map where those practices live within our current program structures across content areas. The maps, along with resources, are available to teachers to use in their classroom instruction. We will be looking at creating protocols for implementation into classroom practice in the future.

In finance and operations, we were looking to move the December 2018 \$77.1 million dollar bond issue forward from planning and design of all phases to approval by SED culminating with the start of the first construction phase in summer 2020. Upon reflection, phase one work at Como Park, Hillview, John A. Sciole, William Street, the middle school, and the high school is underway. Bids were awarded by the board in March and April, the schedule was set and reworked a couple of times to adapt for COVID school closures in New York Pause directives on construction. Phase one work this summer includes high school lead abatement and a new concrete floor in the rifle range and basement, tennis court replacement, and floor tile abatement and replacement in a handful of classrooms. The middle school, renovations to a section of the library, chimney reconstruction, the second phase of the auditorium renovation, which is the ceiling walls and stage floor, ceiling and lighting replacements in several hallways and classrooms, abatement of certain floors and ceilings, and installation of a wireless clock system throughout the whole building. William Street School driveway parking lot, curb, and sidewalk redesign and replacement, and some roof work. At Como Park every exterior window will be replaced and repointing of the masonry will be done. At Hillview the C-wing hallway, and classroom floor and door replacements will be done. And at John A. Sciole a replacement of the front parking lot and the curbing. Bi-weekly OACM meetings and daily communication with the architects and construction managers occur, including weekly updates to the board and work accomplished and accompanying photographs.

Phase 2, which is in the summer of 2020 construction - designs are being finalized and will be submitted to NYSED for approval in July. Another sub goal: implement New York State Education Law of 36 14 from chapter 59 of the laws of 2018 and the US Department of Education's ESSA requirements which entails the building level per pupil budget and expenditure reporting and make the necessary required adjustments to future budgeting procedures. Upon reflection, the business office has successfully submitted and complied with both of these requirements. The New York State reporting of the 2019-2020 budget by school building was completed for the first time in August, and the federal ESSA reporting through New York State on 2018-19 actual expenditures per building was completed this March. Adjustments to internal practices to make the reporting more streamlined are ongoing. Districts have not received any comments or seen any output reports from New York State to know how the data is being used from either report or whether there will be an initiative to change the way spending occurs in each building. So thank you for your patience. There's some updates on our goals and the reporting of involved parties.

We'll move on to 8.2, which is board member recognition.

Sage: So Patrick I really want to congratulate you on a legendary career. You've always been a smart, articulate, well-thought-out speaker, and I think that has been very well received, you know, throughout the years. Let's be honest. You've led this board through some of the most important decisions this school district has ever made. My favorite memory of you, Patrick, is at a PTO meeting. You were, you know, talking to some of the PTO parents and, you know, before you articulated, you know, what you wanted to do on the board, you sat down with them and you showed them pictures of your kids. So that memory is, you know, it really stuck with me. Many of you know that Patrick's also a teacher in Depew, and you can tell because every time a kid presents at a Lancaster school board meeting he shakes their hand. He asks them questions like, you know, how an adult asks another adult questions. He really engages with the kids. Patrick, you've been instrumental in bringing peace and calm to these school board meetings. You truly value, you know, the separation between the board and the district, you know, the duties that we do, and that's something I hope we champion in the next chapter of the board. Patrick, I wish you only the best in retirement from the board. And keeping with tradition, it's only fair because you've worked on the board for nine years, that your family take you out for some ice cream after! [Laughter]

Uhteg: Thank you Michael, that's nice and I hope to - yeah that'd be good, thank you. Those are very kind words, and, you know.

Sage: I don't know if it's there in front of you but I'm sure you know it's just something.

Uhteg: Yeah, yeah. Thank you, Michael, I appreciate that. With that I just like to share my last sort of speech, and I of course have some things prepared tonight. I'll be brief. After 9 years on the school board I did imagine giving a speech in the board room or at the high school, surrounded by my family and my friends, and maybe with a little gathering planned afterwards

at our house or some Lancaster restaurant, you know, but I heard someone say one time if you want to make God laugh just tell him your plans, right? So this zoom meeting speech will do, because sometime in the near future we'll all get together again and hopefully this crisis that we're experiencing will help us to appreciate one another even more than we do, and we'll appreciate those gatherings even more in the future.

In the past nine years I've learned a great many lessons, made a great many friends, and have hopefully contributed a little to the evolution of this outstanding school district. I'd like to thank all the board members I've served with throughout the years, and I wish them all well in their future endeavors. Thank you, Dr. Vallely, Sandy Janik, Jamie Phillips, and the entire administrative staff for being such great teachers to me, showing great patience with me, and always offering caring support, and of course I consider each of them dear friends. I'd like to thank my wife's side of the family, the Jansma's, many of whom live in or around Lancaster. They have always had my back and have shown gratitude and offered encouragement throughout my time on the board. And thank you to my brothers and sisters – I have five of them – Cindy, Kelly, Rob, Jason, and Melissa and to my parents, Patricia and Robert Uhteg, for helping me to become who I am through their unconditional love and support. And to my family, I've always said that we have served on the school board together. My son Patrick has been coming regularly to meetings with me since he was in sixth grade. My daughter Vanessa and my wife Melissa came whenever I needed them, and they knew when I needed them and they were always cheering me on. And every speech I ever gave on the board was a product of our family dinner conversations. We would hear everyone's perspective on an issue and then I would put them into one voice. I'm so thankful to them and I'm so proud to have such a family. My daughter Vanessa, a 2020 grad, goes off to SUNY Binghamton in the fall, and while I'll miss her like crazy I am so proud and excited for her to start this next phase of her life. Having a daughter like Vanessa who is so hard-working and so intelligent and so compassionate, the time comes in your life as a parent where you learn from them, and she helps to make me better just by watching her example. So I thank Vanessa for all she has and will continue to teach me. And what better way to leave than to make room for my son to start his journey as a school board member! A senior at Canisius College, Patrick is a very capable young man and will make his own contributions to this school board in this school district through his knowledge, his experience, his background as a student, and of course his principles, and I'll be cheering him on and supporting him the entire way. And then to my wife Melissa, who has always served right alongside me. You know, I always say we are one and many times I forget if I've told her something because I think everything I experience she experiences as well, but she was right alongside me during those tough board meetings and when we did have tough ones I'd look out in the crowd and I'd see her and I'd know everything was gonna be just fine. And then I'd go home and have her waiting for me to talk things out. So I am indeed a very lucky man.

To my fellow board members and to those who will run and be elected in the future, remember that your principles are the only things that will help you succeed as a board member - things like responsibility, integrity, compassion, and honesty. If you bring what I call an attempt to live by principles - I call it an attempt because we can't always live up to our principles – but if you bring an attempt to live by your principles and use those principles to make your decisions,

then you will have done your best to serve the children and families of this district. So I say good luck to all of you, thank you, and of course, go Legends!

9.0 Superintendent's Administrative Report, Dr. Vallely?

Vallely: Yeah, I have two things. First of all, you know, to the Lancaster community, thank you again for your support. I was worried like I am every single year, and I wear the same suit every single year to bring a little luck, but we didn't need luck because as usual, the Lancaster community came out in droves and supported our budget 66, 68 percent, whatever. I think it was right around there, so thank you, thank you, thank you! To Patrick, Patrick and I had the opportunity to speak one-on-one today and at that time I expressed my emotions, my feelings, and my gratitude to him. I'll keep that conversation and those words to ourselves. Suffice it to say I'm both disappointed to see him go but I'm also so, so, so thankful for his nine years of service. Make no mistake, folks, Lancaster Central School District will be different, much different, and not nearly as good if Patrick Uhteg didn't volunteer to be a board member and take on the presidency, in a tumultuous and difficult time in this school district's history. I say good for him and good for our kids. I try to avoid foxholes, I try to avoid holes in general, stepping into them, tripping on them, and falling into them, but what I can say with 100% certainty is that if I did fall into a foxhole and the chips were down, you know, the moments you've all had them when you know you need a wingman, and if that in that moment I looked and saw Patrick Uhteg was with me in that foxhole I'd say oh good. Thank you, Patrick, for all you've done and given to the school district and to its children. Thanks so much, I appreciate it.

Uhteg: Thank you, Michael, and thank you everyone for your kind words and thoughts. I appreciate it.

10.0 Old Business. Anyone from the board have any old business they'd like to report upon? Okay, and I did get a text from Mr. Jackson that he was finishing up at work and he'll be joining us shortly.

11.0 New Business.

11.1 Personnel Items, 11.1. Could I have a motion to approve the superintendent's contract employment contract? Sage so moved. Cohen seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

11.1.2. Could I have a motion to accept the personnel changes? Cohen so moved. Fecher seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

11.2 Education Items, 11.2.1. Could I have a motion to accept the committee on special education report? Davenport so moved. Fecher seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

11.2.2. Could I have a motion to approve the committee on preschool special education report? Cohen so moved. Talarico seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

12.0. Business and Financial Items. 12.1. Could I have a motion to accept the financial items? Fecher so moved. Sage seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

12.2 Could I have a motion to accept the surplus equipment rider? Cohen so moved. Fecher seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 7 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

12.3 and 12.4 are bid extensions for Waste Removal and Recycling and Agenda Planners. Could I have a motion to accept those bid extensions? Davenport so moved. Cohen seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 7 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

12.5 and 12.6 are proposals from Young + Wright and Buffalo Construction Corporation. Could I have a motion to accept those proposals? Cohen so moved. Fecher seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 7 Ayes. 0 Nays. Those opposed? So moved.

12.7 is our employee benefit accrued liability reserve fund transfer. Could I have a motion to accept the transfer? Fecher so moved. Sage seconded. Any questions or comments? All those in favor? 7 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays. So moved.

13.0 is our public hearing. We have no one signed up to speak for this evening.

14.0. Could I have a motion to go into executive session to discuss the employment of a particular individual? Cohen so moved. Sage seconded. All those in favor? 6 Ayes. Those opposed? 0 Nays.

All right, so this will effectively end the public portion of our meeting. Our next meeting is scheduled, the reorganization meeting, will be July 13, 2020 via videoconference, so for all of those who are not in the executive session, thank you for coming this evening and good luck to all.