

From the EAWR #14 Board ... Regular Board Meeting

June 9, 2020

What follows is an unofficial summary of the East Alton - Wood River Community High School District #14 Board of Education Regular Meeting of June 9, 2020.

Authorize Superintendent to Pursue Tech Lease-Purchase Agreement for Freshmen Chromebooks for 2020-21

Dr. Pearson recommended that the Board authorize him to begin discussions and negotiations with a lender, in case the plans to pay for these Chromebooks via the new ESSER grant is rejected by ISBE. This allows the process to be initiated without necessarily waiting for the next Board meeting on July 14, 2020. This is a routine motion that the Board makes every June.

After some brief discussion, the Board approved a motion to authorize the superintendent to pursue a tech lease-purchase agreement for freshmen Chromebooks for 2020-21.

On a related note, Mr. Mattix-Wand reported that he was researching Chromebooks for a recommendation for 2020-21's purchase. He was not satisfied with the machines purchased for last year's freshmen and noted that he would like devices a little more service-friendly. He anticipates that the unit cost of the devices will be a little higher than in 2019 - perhaps \$230 per device (instead of the \$200 unit cost frequently seen). This increase is market-driven, with all of the schools last year that purchased Chromebooks this spring in response to the remote learning environment.

He also announced that the new Internet router has been installed recently. This router was a part of the Strategic Plan for 2020 and will give a faster connection to the fiber-optic main connection.

Hear 2nd Reading and Adopt Board Policies

Dr. Pearson presented a summary of the policy revisions, as follows:

2.125 (Board Member Expenses)

The Illinois GATA (Grant Accountability and Transparency Act) has been a cumbersome burden for most school districts. The rules under GATA have certainly forced dozens of extra hours of work on administrators every year, in terms of reporting, calculations, and its rules - particularly with our Federal grants and our audit / annual financial report.

This policy is updated with the myriad of rules regarding conference travel expenses and accountability for them. Even though Board members at EAWR rarely attend conferences and certainly do not charge them off to any Federal grants, this Board policy needs to be adopted. We are expecting ISBE to crank up its grant monitoring activities of local districts, since the US Dept. of Ed. is turning up its regulatory heat on the state board for its Federal grant programs.

2.125-E (Expense Reimbursement Caps) - Overhauled

As the superintendent reminded the Board, we were required to set expense caps for employee and board member travel back in 2017. These caps regulated hotel, mileage, airfare, train fare, meals and incidentals (parking, cab and/or Uber rides, etc.).

However, with GATA's caps trumping the former policy, our entire reimbursement caps list had to be changed. Under GATA, only fast food meals (or something close to it, in terms of price) will be reimbursed under Federal and state grants. Or, an employee can use the per diem amount for supper or lunch, and not be reimbursed for the other meals.

The good news is that the GATA policy rules (as seen in the revised Board Policy 5.60) do allow some exceptions. Essentially, one can exceed the hotel and per diem amounts if: 1) The hotel is a part of the conference's group rate or the hotel is adjacent to a conference hotel or the venue, itself. 2) Meals can be reimbursed on a per diem rate (as noted above), so that an employee could eat something other than fast food but would sacrifice having one or both other meals reimbursed.

The other caveat in the new policy is that with meals / per diem and lodging, the employee would only be reimbursed the lesser of the Federal vs. State rates. In practicality, the state rates would be lower, most of the time.

So, our employees and board members are going to have to expect reduced expectations of reimbursement for accommodations and meals, if paid for grants covered by GATA. The overwhelming majority of our employees' conferences and travel costs are indeed covered by those grants.

2.160E (Board Attorney Selection Checklist)

The Board should adopt this checklist in case it ever wishes to seek out other law firms or attorneys in the future. The checklist provides steps any school board could use in seeking to make a change in its law firm representation. Given that the superintendent may be retiring in the next couple of years, it would behoove the Board and his successor to have this checklist/policy at their disposal.

5.60 (Employee Expense Procedures)

See above discussion of Policy 2.125 and 2.125-E.

5.280 (Educational Support Personnel)

Only the legal references and some heading changes were made to update vis a vis rules for licensure of ESP's.

7.70 (Student Attendance and Truancy)

Valid reasons for a student to be absent have now been expanded to include a student's "mental, emotional, physical" health or "safety." The "safety" exception may be invoked by some parents over COVID-19, possibly. The other change is that a student who is eligible to vote may receive an excused absence from school to go vote.

8.30 (Visitors' Conduct on School Property)

The major change in this policy revolves around an expansion allowing union representatives to meet with employees during the workday, without loss of pay or leave time, for certain reasons. The Ill. Educational Labor Relations Act, amended by P.A. 101-620, expanded the rights of access by bargaining representatives to also include meeting with employees during the employee work day if the meeting: (1) is to investigate and discuss grievances and workplace-related complaints (no time limit is specified) or (2) is with a newly hired employee within the first two weeks of employment (or on a later date if mutually agreed upon by the employee and bargaining representative) for one hour or less. In those circumstances, the district may not dock employee pay or charge leave time. 115 ILCS 5/3(c). However, the access must be reasonable and "shall at all times be conducted in a manner so as not to impede normal operations."

8.110 (Public Suggestions and Concerns)

This policy is new and combines an old policy from 1993 (Policy 8.111 - Public Comments) with a new law (P.A. 101-620) that requires districts to establish email policies and procedures in an effort to prohibit the use of their email systems by third parties. The district's network, which includes its email system, is not a public forum for general use. Further, acceptable uses of the network by any party are limited to uses in support of education and/or research or for legitimate school business purposes. Including this statement also discourages school community members from engaging in the disruptive practice of mass cc'ing district staff who have no involvement in a particular issue.

The Board adopted the above policy revisions on their second reading.

MISSVIC Term Extension

The Board approved a resolution to continue the Mississippi Valley Insurance Cooperative (MISSVIC) through June 2023. MISSVIC is where the District purchases all of its insurance lines with the exception of health insurance. The Board also appointed Dr. Pearson as the representative on the MISSVIC Board with Asst. Principal Gockel as the alternate.

Discuss and Approve Membership in the Schools of Illinois Purchasing Cooperative (SIPC)

Supt. Pearson recommended that the Board join the SIPC, which is a statewide cooperative, primarily for the purchasing of green cleaning products and, now, PPE supplies. Membership is free and the District can withdraw at any time.

The Board approved the District's membership in the SIPC.

Discuss and Approve Change Order #3 and HLS Amendment with Unterbrink Construction

Dr. Pearson recommended that the Board approve a change order and a Health Life Safety Amendment for some widespread brick repair and/or replacement and tuckpointing work on the South Building - work that was not a part of the scope of work in the original architect inspection and plans.

The deficiencies were first uncovered and reported by Unterbrink employees during exterior work as a part of its current scope of work and included numerous cracked bricks and crumbling mortar. Architect Tim Downen reviewed the numerous photos of the deficiencies and, after speaking with the contractor, Maintenance Director Foxall, and the superintendent, recommended the work be performed. Damage to the South Building would likely result from water infiltration if the brick repairs and tuckpointing were not completed. Mr. Downen submitted a Life Safety Amendment for ISBE and Board approval for this work, which is proposed by Unterbrink at \$50,329.16 as Change Order #3. Western Specialty Contractors of St. Louis would be the sub-contractor for this masonry work.

After some discussion, the Board approved Change Order #3 as presented by the Architect in the amount of \$50,329.16, with this work to be completed by August 2020.

Principal's Report

Mrs. Robinson gave an oral report, which highlighted the following:

I. Upcoming dates to remember

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------|
| June 1 | Start of Remote Summer School |
| July 2 | End of Remote Summer School |

II. Committees

No report

III. *Miscellaneous*

The student/parent handbook/Title I committee met on Friday, May 22nd. Dr Pearson, 2 parents, 3 students, and I attended via Google Meet. The committee reviewed the discipline and bullying polices, as well as, discussed how next year will be impacted due to COVID. Dr Pearson presented the Title I information.

There will need to be many considerations for next year in terms of handbook changes but two possible ones will be changing semester exemption criteria and the community service requirement.

Diploma Pick-Up/Parade—I would like to give a huge thank you to everyone who helped make both events possible: Ms. Bense, Mrs. Guthrie, Mr. Gockel, Mr. Beatty, Mr. Mattix-Wand, Dr Pearson, Mrs. Murray, Mr. Redman, and the faculty volunteers. Also, a thank you to the custodial staff, Mrs. Hayes, and Mr. Maendele for getting things prepared for graduation. .





Superintendent's Report

In lieu of the superintendent's report, Mr. Beatty discussed the draft plan for the IHSA Phase I of the re-opening of athletics, statewide. Essentially, coaches have to limit students in groups of 9 or fewer (10 counting the coach), as well as keeping athletes socially distant. The activities are conditioning, only, with a ban on any drills, scrimmages, games, leagues, etc. that are sport-specific. Also, the plan will include recommended disinfecting of interior areas and equipment on a frequent schedule.

Coaches and athletes around Illinois will have to wait for further direction from the IHSA as to more sport-specific and team oriented workouts and scrimmages.

Following Executive Session

The Board employed Jenna Wiedman of rural Bethalto as Freshmen Volleyball Coach. Ms. Wiedman has several years of experience in the Alton schools as a volleyball coach and is the recommendation of Head Coach Ferguson.

The Board also approved a new 5-year performance-based employment contract for Kevin Gockel as Asst. Principal, beginning on July 1, 2020.

Also, the approved a five-year performance-based employment contract for Mark Beatty as Dean / Athletic Director, beginning on July 1, 2020.

Lastly, the school board issued 2% salary and wage increases to all of the non-union and administrative staff, effective with the 2020-21 fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2020).