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Lackawanna Trail Board of Education approves contract with VLN Partners

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FACTORYVILLE — Members of the Lackawanna Trail Board of Education voted 9-0 to approve the contract between VLN Partners, a Pittsburgh-based charter school, and the Lackawanna Trail School District, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, during a regular meeting March 11.

“They’ve been successful where they’ve been,” Lackawanna Trail Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said of VLN Partners.

Rakauskas pointed to the nearby Susquehanna Community School District, which hired VLN before the start of the current school year and experienced a savings in costs when VLN was able to draw students away from Commonwealth Connections.

Board Secretary Kevin Mulhern voiced his displeasure regarding the lack of a response from several elected officials regarding cyber school concerns.

“About a month ago, I wrote a letter to our two State Senators — Lisa Baker and John Blake — and State Representative Karen Boback in regard to questions this board and the general public have about their positions on charter/cyber schools,” Mulhern said. “I received a quasi response back from Lisa Baker’s office and that’s it. This board is nine elected officials and we’re asking three other elected officials to at least give us the common courtesy of a response. I think it’s very disappointing to the public that they can’t at least give us a call back.”

Members of the board voted to approve the request for proposal for Lackawanna Trail Elementary Center’s Wireless Access Point Upgrade to ePlus at a pre-eRate cost of \$40,727.40. Per Business Manger Keith Glynn, the district will only be required to pay approximately \$16,000 for the upgrade through the e-Rate program.

“The network will have faster speeds, better connectivity and less drops,” Glynn said.

Members of the board voted 8-1 to approve Kelly Hopkins as the English department Cchair at a stipend of \$2,470 beginning in the 2019-2020 school year. Debby Naylor voted against the hiring.

Members of the board voted 8-1 to approve Jim Becchetti as equipment manager at a stipend of \$2,600 beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.

Members of the board voted 8-1 to approve Joel Nietz as head golf coach at a stipend of \$3,460 beginning in the 2019-2020 school year. Joseph Strauch voted against the hiring of Becchetti and Nietz.

Charlie Cobb, Mark June and Jeffrey Edwards were approved as volunteer assistant baseball coaches.

Mary Smarkusky was approved as a volunteer track and field coach.

Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Rick Kordish announced that school bus emergency evacuation drills are scheduled for this month

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