



# Trail roof projects behind schedule

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FACTORYVILLE— Lackawanna Trail School Board got an update Monday night on numerous renovations and capital improvements taking place at both the high school and elementary center this summer.

According to Transportation Director Rick Kordish, the roofing projects at both schools are “behind schedule.” He said that due to the high amount of rain in June the new roofs at the high school are only 25 percent done, while the roofs at the elementary center are about 35 percent done.

Contractors will begin working weekends to catch up on lost time, and have assured Kordish that the project will be done when teachers report for their first day on August 21.

There are no financial implications for Trail if contractors work weekends.

Kordish also announced that Lackawanna Trail’s new ventilators arrived recently and will be installed next week. New security cameras and energy efficient lights have also been installed.

“We should see significant energy savings in the coming years,” said Kordish, “and the students will be warm, safe, and dry.”

In other business Monday, the school board considered the “hidden costs” associated with both high school and elementary field trips, and received an update concerning the progress of numerous capital improvements at both schools.

When the board convened on Monday the initial agenda indicated that they would vote on whether or not to approve five respective requests for field trips (two high school trips and three elementary trips) that were billed as being of “no cost to the district.”

Board Member Kevin Mulhern made the motion to approve the first of these requests, which was for a high school trip to Lehigh University next May, and that motion was seconded by Board Member Adrian Bianchi.

However, before a roll-call vote was taken on the motion, board member Joseph Ross asked, “What is the true definition of ‘no cost to the district? Are we paying for transportation and substitute teachers? If there are hidden costs involved here I think it would be prudent for us to consider our options.”

High School Principal Mark Murphy verified that the district does, in some cases, finance the transportation costs associated with field trips and, in all cases, the pay of substitute teachers who fill in for field trip chaperones.

“These are the ‘hidden costs’ associated with trips that are said to be of no cost to the district,” Murphy said.

This discussion comes less than a month after the board passed what was by all accounts an extremely tight budget, and during a time in which they are looking for any funds possible to potentially hire an elementary music teacher.

“If there truly are these hidden costs,” Ross continued, “how many field trips are going to equal one teacher’s salary?”

Transportation alone can cost the district roughly \$800 per bus per trip, not including the retention cost for the driver. Nonetheless, Lackawanna Trail’s Business Manager Keith Glynn reported that “field trip costs have been less than \$10,000 in the last 2 years.” While that won’t equal a teacher’s salary, it certainly isn’t a negligible amount of money during a period of economic belt-tightening.

After much discussion the board voted unanimously to table the original motion made by Mulhern, as well as any field trip requests, until all ‘hidden costs’ are calculated and considered. Board Member Carol Selwood made the motion to table the requests, which was seconded by Board Member Michael Mould. Board members Joseph Strauch and David Thorne were both absent from the meeting.

This is not to say that any of the field trip requests will be denied, but only that these so-called ‘hidden costs’ will be factored into the price the students pay to participate.

“I can go back and factor in these costs,” Murphy said, “and then approach the teachers and advisors and explain to them that this money needs to be replaced in the general fund in some way, shape, or form.”

“Just to be clear,” said board member Philip Stark, “we are not saying that they can’t take these trips. We are only saying that they have to factor everything into the total cost.”

The board also voted to appoint Lindsay Kulenich as “long term special education substitute” for the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year at a pro-rated salary of \$54,000.

The board voted unanimously to table Board Policy #115 entitled “Career and Technical Education,” which was not yet ready to be approved.

Board member Bianchi made the motion to approve Board Policy #819 entitled “Suicide, Awareness, Prevention & Response” for a second reading. Mould seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Board member Ned Clarke motioned to table Kelley Buck’s resignation as assistant field hockey coach, which was seconded by Adrian Bianchi and passed unanimously. A motion to approve Buck as a volunteer field hockey coach was also tabled.

Mould made the motion to appoint Carlee Lauback as assistant girls volleyball coach at a salary of \$3550. Clarke seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas congratulated Wendy Cathrall, who teaches learning support algebra, on having achieved tenure. Teachers achieve tenure on the first school day of their fourth year.

Superintendent Rakauskas also reported that individual PSSA test scores arrived at the district this week. A formal report on both PSSA and Keystone Exam test scores will be given during a public meeting on August 10. Both exams were taken in the spring.

The school will also respond to a recent Scranton Times-Tribune “Grading Our Schools” report with a Powerpoint presentation at that time.

Prior to adjourning the board heard from district resident Stephen Swanchak who inquired as to whether or not Trail has an official policy on accepting foreign exchange students.

Superintendent Rakauskas said that the board does not have an official policy, but did have some legal problems during the 2006-2007 school year when the school was given misinformation about an exchange student they hosted.

Swanchak had applied to host a foreign exchange student last year and was denied, and he said he plans on applying again. Rakauskas agreed to sit down and discuss the issue with Swanchak at a later date.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board will meet again on August 3. They met in executive session from 6:30-7:32 prior to Monday night’s meeting.