



Mountain Lakes Board of Education meeting, 9-6-22

Comments from MLEA President, Michael Alves

Mr. Alves introduced himself as the new co-president with Ms Rose Dunn. He welcomed everyone back to school, expressed great and sincere thanks to his predecessor, Ms Gigi Lax. He gave great and sincere thanks to the 12-month district employees who make a smooth school opening feasible: facilities, technology, and secretarial staff. He looks forward to an honest and collaborative relationship with the administration.

BOE President's Report

Mrs. Joanne Barkauskas, BOE president, is happy to be back for a new school year.

Superintendent Update

Ms Ivonne Ciresi is the new Assistant Superintendent, replacing Ms Sumit Bangia. A slide show on the key initiatives was presented by Mr. Fetherman:

- There are 30 new faculty /staff. Please let us know how they are doing if your kids come in contact.
- There are 20 newly tenured staff
- The Strategic Plan developed last year will be used at the Sept 8 BOE retreat to drive the 5-year plan as well as the 2022-23 board and district goals. Board and district goals from 2021-22 are linked to this slide show presentation and can be seen online.
- Technology updates: PowerSchool was replaced by Genesis, for which the staff had PD on August 29. Sharp Boards were installed in 18 classrooms (these are next generation Smart Boards). More will be purchased. Four wireless access points at Lake Drive school have been updated. The district purchased 220 new Chromebooks. A district-wide IT committee is being formed. Copiers were replaced with a new tech print management solution.
- "Start Strong" standardized testing is required in the fall. ELA for grades 4-10, Math for grades 4-8, Science for grades 6,9,12. Testing window is 9/12-9/23. The tests take less than one hour and assess competency with material from last year. Results are available on-demand to teachers and guides their instruction.
- "LinkIt Form A" is another assessment. Also a one-hour test. Provides a predictive baseline of student performance related to standards that are to be taught during the upcoming year. Guides teachers in differentiating instruction and pacing. ELA/Math in grades 3-10.
- Oct 12 is National PSAT Day. This will be a half day. Seniors will have their picnic since they won't be testing. Scores will come out 12/5 and 12/6.

Ms Lewis of the Board asked about the ability to access student transcripts and see that information with the transition from PowerSchool to Genesis. Students will need transcripts for college applications and sports recruiting and this is not visible on Genesis. Mr. Fetherman does not know when that



information will be available to users. Genesis and Canvas don't talk now and have not done so in any other districts. We are the beta test for that connection. Until that happens, teachers will have to live with entry into both systems.

BA Update

Mr. Alex Ferreira stated that he has finalized routes and procedures for subscription bussing, as well as bussing for sports teams. He is working on transitioning the district health care plan to a private carrier. Minutes were approved for June 6 and June 20, 2022.

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

A community member asked why there is a gap of 10-12 weeks between meetings and the approval of minutes for those meetings. The most recent minutes available to the public are from May 2022 and there have been 9 meetings since then. It is not transparent or in accordance with the state's Sunshine Laws. *Ms Barkauskas replied that they need to do a better job with this process.*

A community member asked what were the board and district goals for 2021-22 where do we stand in reaching them? What are the goals for 2022-23? Last year a marketing firm was hired to increase non-resident tuition. What was the result? Did the marketing plan work? How many did we have last year, this year, next year? Same question for LD students for numbers. For Lake Drive enrollment, what was the total enrollment for September 2021, June 2022 and September 2022? What are itinerant student numbers this year? Are there plans to continue to market the district to grow the non-resident tuition enrollment? *Mr. Fetherman replied that the district and board goals for last year should be posted on website. They are linked on the powerpoint he just presented. The board has requested that he do a better job of identifying achievement of those goals. Progress was made on all the goals from last year. This year he will do better in tracking the progress on these goals in public and reporting out. New goals will be set at board retreat on Thursday. Enrollment numbers will be compiled. They are increased over last year. "Enrollhand" is the vendor. There is no definitive proof that the dramatic increase is due to Enrollhand, but MLSD may renew with them for 7 months because he thinks we didn't use them during the right time of year to capture those families looking. He believes that we can capture that audience best in fall/ winter. They will review in March to assess the return on investment. Currently there are 21 non-resident non-faculty tuition students over 16 last year, \$326K vs \$190K in tuition.*

Committee Updates

Policy Committee: Ms Parker stated that at the next regular board meeting, they will be reading mandated policies. The Policy Committee gave feedback to HS team on the Student Code of Conduct, specifically dress code, and will continue to work with them.

Curriculum Committee: Dr. Hirschfeld reported that they met in July 28 and reviewed AP scores. Biology, Calc, French scores went up. Comp Sci, Econ, Physics went down. The administration promised improvements in those areas. Discussed final exams for seniors. Very few seniors took them. Should they be eliminated? Will continue to discuss with new Assistant Superintendent, Ms Ciresi. 6th grade math rubric yielded groupings similar in size to prior years. The new math supervisor will review.



Facilities Committee: Ms Tucker gave an update on summer projects. **WW:** bathrooms from referendum will be finished in late Sept, playground blacktop should be completed end of September, gym floor needs to be refinished, timing TBD. **Briarcliff:** boiler repair is pending, the property line shared with a residential lot will be reinforced with boulders, gym floor was refinished. **HS:** auditorium seats are arriving soon and will be installed at the end of Sept, the auditorium carpet will be installed mid – Oct, sewage station late fall, courtyard has been re-finished for outdoor lunch, basketball hoops on order and we hope to install by the start of the season, gym floors will be refinished over teachers convention. **LD:** Improved security in entrance vestibule.

Liaison Reports

HSA: Dr. McIntyre reported that the bake sale is underway, ordering link is on HSA social media. Portraits by the Lake is open for signup, see HSA social media. Snacks were provided for the teachers for the first day of school. \$10K was awarded to each school for the “Principal Wish List.” Membership drive is open.

MLEF: Ms Tucker reported MLEF is holding a tennis social at Park Lakes as a fundraiser. Check website for details. Their fundraising focus this year is classroom libraries.

Alumni Association: Ms Tucker reported that there will be alumni events around Homecoming weekend, Sept 23/24. Golf outing fundraiser Friday, Herd game v HP Saturday at 7pm, yoga on the beach and alumni party hosted by the classes of 1997 and 2002.

BA Recommendations

Motion 9 concerning the removal of obsolete library books, the location should be WW and BC, not BC, as is stated on the agenda.

The Board discussed the culling of library books – one member expressed concern about this in light of recent instances of book banning in other places in the country. BOE wants to know that the books are being removed for good reason. The board expressed confidence in the teacher who did the culling, but some members would like more information before voting. Dr McIntyre warns against BOE overreach and potentially setting a dangerous precedent by getting too involved in the culling process. Assistant SI stated that it is School Library Association Best Practice and is done to ensure that the book catalog is relevant to student interest, and free of damaged items. Ms Leininger asked if many librarians could consult in this process but was informed that Mr Posner is the district’s only full-time librarian. Dr Driscoll asks that they be informed of the criteria used in culling. The motion was tabled until Sept 19 so the criteria used to cull has been made available to the Board.

Ms Tucker expressed best wishes for Mr Brunner upon his resignation and commented on his collection of successes as our AD, especially keeping our teams on the fields during the pandemic. Ms Parker thanked Nurse Renna for her excellent service and wished her well on her retirement.

Unfinished Business

Dr Driscoll requested the administration provide a review of the Lore Entrepreneurship program created from the Lore grant, specifically participation, accomplishments, sustainability.



Dr Don asked about the student activity fees at Briarcliff. Parents pay \$75 per activity max \$225. Please explain the allocation of those funds, how is it managed, and rationale behind that allocation. Mr. Ferreira replied that the pay-to-play program was set by the Finance Committee and the BOE about 2 years ago to fund Girls and Boys soccer, softball and baseball. The plan was that BC Sports Club would make an annual donation and it, coupled with activity fee, would be revenue to the district to support the district wide budget and these sports would be sustained. BC continues to support the programs with faculty, supplies, etc. The plan is to continue this structure. Dr. Don asked if a more popular club is seeing support concomitant to the fees that club brings in. Ms Parker commented that the fees go into one account and the BA and school leaders manage it. There is a minimum number of participants required to justify the expense of the faculty advisor for any club.

New Business

Ms Joanne Barkauskas gave out supplies for the ice-breaker she has planned for the BOE Retreat on Thursday.

Public Comment

Community member commented on Motion 9, stating that Board members should want to see the list of books being removed before voting on it. There is a Notice of Exceedance letter posted on the school website in an obscure location. It states that six water output locations in the district are being remediated for lead content. BC kitchen sink is one of them. Why wasn't this letter sent to the community? It is not prominently posted and the community should be notified. Mr Fetherman is not familiar with the letter and will talk to his team.

Community member is concerned that he doesn't see the list of books that are being banned. Would like a list of the ones that are not checked out in 5 years, 10 years and those that are damaged. The criteria should be published to the community as well. Contends that the BOE is elected to make sure that teachers don't make independent decisions. Ms Barkauskas corrected him and stated that he is totally wrong to characterize any of this process as "banning books."

Same community member commented again on the book disposition – content unintelligible. Dr Driscoll commented that the Board will review the criteria and will not blindly do what all other boards do. Ms Tucker commented that a damaged book that is circulated a lot will be replaced.

Community Member offered to share with the Board the information she had about the books being removed.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 pm

All presentations can be found at

<https://www.mlschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=192132&pageId=498548>