

PENN
BOARD REPORT
CAMBRIA

Volume 44 No. 10 April 2023

This report summarizes the actions taken by the Penn Cambria Board of Education at its regular meeting, April 18, 2023. Routine business, such as approval of minutes, treasurer's report, payment of bills, and financial reports was accomplished. The Board also took the following actions:

- I. HEARING OF VISITORS - Questions, concerns, comments, related to school business.
- A. George Pyo, Board President, stated the rules for public comment: *During this portion of the meeting, this is an opportunity for only residents, taxpayers, employees, and students of the district to provide information that you would like the Board to consider regarding a decision. We ask you to limit your comments to 5 minutes. If you share a common topic with others, we encourage the use of a single spokesperson for the group. Out of respect for our staff and students, we request that your public comments focus on issues or policies and not people. The intention of the audience of citizens is for the Board to listen to you. We will carefully weigh your comments, but may not engage in dialog, which is not the intended purpose of this opportunity. Should the comments be personally directed, or derogatory remarks made against District Board Members, District Officials, or District employees, or profanity used, the individuals remaining time will be forfeited. Please state your name and community in which you reside within Penn Cambria School District.*
- B. Melissa Tomaselli, community member, taxpayer, wife of a teacher, alumni, and future panther mom, expressed her concerns with Board member actions on social media that transpired last week. "After making a post on social media, that was short and simple, I said I have three family members running for school board, please vote. I emphasized the three, because I am really proud of that. Not once did I say don't vote for this person, I didn't even specify who the three people were that were running. It was prompted by my simple statement that enabled a rant from a current Board member, that didn't make sense and insinuated that there were three people from one single family attempting to take over the Board. Much to my dismay, the posts have kept coming since then, including this morning. I just want to be clear when I say that I am the only person in this family situation, the only person that has three family members running for school board. There are not three people from one single family running. There are three people that have ties to me and me only. Furthermore, it is not important who is and who is not related, what is important is the integrity and the ability to make sound decisions, and wanting what is best for the future of our area and the students of Penn Cambria School District. The bickering that is prompted by my innocent statement was not only disgusting, but inaccurate.

I will keep this short and sweet because I could go on for days about why my family deserves recognition and votes. Mike Sheehan is up for reelection for his third term, his reputation speaks for itself. He is a lifelong resident, alumni, and father of two teenage daughters. He has proven himself to make Penn Cambria the best it can be time and time again. He is my cousin, and at times like a big brother.

Cindy Sheehan-Westrick is also running this year. She has worked countless hours in education, especially in Special Education. She is educated, well spoken, and has worked with children across the state. She also has three young daughters, two that already attend Penn Cambria, and one will start in a few years. With her extensive professional experience, she would be an amazing addition to the Board. Does she happen to be my cousin? She sure does.

Tony Tomaselli is a write-in vote this year. For thirty plus years, Tony was and still is one of the most beloved teachers and coaches to ever walk the halls of Penn Cambria. This thought was long before he

was my father in-law. I and pretty much everyone right now had him as a teacher for Psychology or History. You can't go anywhere without someone yelling "hey coach". Tony raised four successful children, who all attended Penn Cambria. I just so happen to be lucky enough to marry one of his sons. Tony is more than qualified to be on the Board.

With the three individuals, they have a couple of master's degrees, hours and hours dedicated to education, decades of success in their careers and loving families. Since when is family considered a bad thing? Are we not all supposed to be one big family?

With this being said, as a community member, I do not appreciate being drug into inappropriate behavior, by so called grown men. I would never reduce myself to fighting with anyone on social media, but I will speak my piece and I will let you know that I will not allow my family to be passive aggressively bad mouthed. I understand that technically, this is considered political, because members of this Board are elected officials. However, there is no room for smearing School Board elections. What kind of example are you setting for young kids, that are supposed to be looking up to you for guidance and in the long run, making good decisions for their future. I think that every School Board should be comprised of well-respected individuals that have one plan, make the School District that they work for the most beneficial it can be to students, employees, and the families of this community. I also expect these individuals to represent themselves professionally and tactfully. Mr. Pyo, the entire Board, and everyone here, I thank you for your time."

- C. Cindy Sheehan-Westrick, community member, also expressed concerns for the way that current Board members conduct themselves. "Last week I reposted an announcement that I am running for School Board. I did this through social media and Facebook because it is simple and quickly reaches people. In my post I tried to focus on the skills that I feel would contribute to this Board and also thanked a sitting Board member for his kind words and wishes. Looking back on this, no one can take my post as passive aggressive or a declaration of my lack of support towards any other person or my support towards another person. This, with a post from another community member, was the start of a public display of unprofessional behavior from sitting Board members that ended with the community being provided false statements. I would really like to implore the Board today to have future discussions of what is and is not tolerated from sitting Board members.

In a time of uncertainty in our School District, when we are looking at options, to repair or rebuild our school, increase enrollment, better our educational programs, as well as our athletic programs, it is imperative that members do not conduct themselves that way. We want to attract future families to come here and enroll their children. This type of campaigning is embarrassing. If I was a prospective family, I would not feel encouraged to align my family with a small district that conducts itself this way or a School Board that allows or condones this behavior. This is not a competition; it is a School Board election in a small community. No one should be fighting for seats, mudslinging, or attempting to lure prospective voters. We are here because we feel that we can do good for Penn Cambria, and all obviously have ties to want to see success. Why else would anyone be here? In my opinion, the community should review each person's skills, their qualifications, character, follow the things that they claim that they will and will not do, ask questions, do not assume. If you want to review our current Board members, I implore the community to review the minutes from each meeting. They will tell you more information about what's occurring than any Facebook post.

This is how I plan to vote, this is how I plan to continue to conduct myself, and I hope that every member of the Board can do the same in front of my kids, my family, and everyone else as well. Thank you for your time."

- D. Matthew Kearney, Board Member, thanked the community members for coming. "On behalf of myself and seven other members of the Board and the entire administration, I want to apologize for the behavior of one sitting Board member. The Tomaselli name is very esteemed in this District, put aside that he is running for office, he was a coach and a teacher for decades, his son is following in his footsteps, and of course Mrs. Tomaselli who was a teacher as well. So, to attack that family is kind of a disgrace and I think that should be condemned. There are six candidates that are running on ideas,

issues, and their own personal platforms. It is a very diverse set of candidates, I mean all nine members are men and we have women and a nineteen-year-old running for the seat, which I think is awesome. But there is one candidate that instead of running on issues and ideas is running on attacking others and I think that it is disgraceful, it should be condemned, and sadly it discourages others from participating in the democratic process and I think that we need to take a real serious look, do we want our School Board to become like school board that we see on TV? If a particular member keeps going down that path, we may very well be. Once again, I would just like to apologize on behalf of the Board, you didn't deserve that and I think everybody knows that you have two great families full of wonderful people and it sad that a Board member has lowered themselves to attacking you guys."

II. SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- A. Holly Smith, Forensics Coach, highlighted the accomplishments of the Forensics Team this year, who were District champions out of twelve schools, Regional Champions out of twenty-three schools, and have seventeen students that have qualified for Nationals.

Mrs. Smith also introduced members of the Forensic Team: Andre Marinak, Joseph Hite, Julia Gil, Jelana Boldizar, Haley Gray, Austin Gray, Sydney Lee, Arika Duclos, Jordyn Farabaugh, and Jesse Skura. Each student described their category and thanked Mrs. Smith for helping them to succeed.

Jordyn Farabaugh and Jesse Skura performed Duo Drama for the Board.

William Marshall congratulated all the students and acknowledged Mrs. Smith for an outstanding job.

The Forensics Team competed at the regional tournament. Individual winners were as follows:

Extemporaneous: 2nd place - Joseph Hite, 1st place - Ethan Kunowsky
Commentary: 2nd place - Gwendalyn Bretz, 1st place - Andre Marinak
Informative: 3rd place - Jelana Boldizar, 2nd place - Madison Cavalet
Persuasive: 2nd place - Julia Gil
Poetry: 3rd place - Arika Duclos, 1st place - Anna Lill
Humorous Interpretation: 3rd place - Austin Gray, 2nd place - Sydney Lee
Dramatic Interpretation: 3rd place - Haley Gray
Duo Drama: 1st place - Jordyn Farabaugh and Jessie Skura
Public Forum Debate: 2nd place - Lauren Farabaugh and Cody Farabaugh
Oratorical Declamation: 1st place - Addyson Ehredt

- B. Congratulations to the Penn Cambria Reading Competition Teams.

High School placed 2nd on March 30th: Avery Cavalet, Arika Duclos, Austin Gray, Matyson Hufford, Gabrielle Lynch, Jaden Riley, Lauren Riley, Alyssa Ropp, Kalonie Trexler, and Samuel Wirfel.

7th & 8th grade placed 3rd on March 30th: Isabella Bianconi, Makayla Bianconi, Rachel Fisher, Charles Golden, Benjamin Gorba, Lily Kay, Madelyn Kittell, Evelyn Lassak, Kendyl Lawrence, Adyson Lloyd, Kaylee Ream, Anelaine Scott, and Taylor Williams.

5th & 6th grade placed 2nd on March 28th: Isaiah Askins, Ian Baugus, Cole Conrad, Lauren Giraud, Avery Hanlon, Joseph Lloyd, Isaac Mento, Parker Mullen, Claire Myers, Athena Oklamchak, Teagan Oswald, Eli Stevens, and Kendal Wessel.

- C. Students who were named into the Laurel Highlands Athletic Conference: boys' basketball - Garrett Harrold, girls' basketball - Emily Hite, and wrestling - Trent Hoover.

- D. Penn Cambria Band students that represented Penn Cambria at the PMEA Region Band Festival: Leah Partner 2nd chair - flute, Aliyah Golden 4th chair - trumpet, Jada Nagle 5th chair - trumpet, Emma Hazlett 2nd chair - French horn, and Mya Weisinger 1st chair - oboe. Mya will also be advancing to the PMEA All-State Wind Ensemble.

III. Approved the Superintendent's recommendations as follows:

- A. PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Accept Resignations

Katie Cimino, Lilly, Substitute Teacher, effective March 29, 2023

Erika Strittmatter, Ebensburg, Volunteer Girls Basketball Coach, effective March 30, 2023

Approve Leave

Employee #013927 Primary School Teacher, effective on August 22, 2023 through on or about November 10, 2023

Approve Appointments, pending documentation

Dustin Hartline, Lilly, IU08 Substitute Teacher

Katelyn Seese, Ashville, High School Aide

Jeramie Yeoman, Lilly, Head Golf Coach, at a stipend of \$3,166.40

Approve Substitute Teacher

Alexis Eckenrode, Lilly, effective May 12, 2023

Approve McIlwain School Bus Lines, Inc. Drivers, effective pending documentation

Robert Beebout, Johnstown

Matthew Fontana, Johnstown

B. SET GRADUATION LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME

Graduation will be held at the Maurice Stokes Athletic Center/DeGol Arena on the campus of Saint Francis University on Saturday, June 3rd at 1:00 PM.

C. APPROVE THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL CALENDAR

- IV. Renewed lease for classroom space for the Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8 (IU08) Preschool Class at Penn Cambria Pre-Primary for the 2023-2024 school year at the annual sum of \$4,500.
- V. Approved Penn Cambria School District participation with the Appalachia Intermediate Unit 08 to provide emergency substitute services to the Penn Cambria School District for a fee of \$500 for the 2023-2024 school year.
- VI. Approved a three-year contract with *Drayer Physical Therapy* for athletic trainer services effective July 1, 2023 at an annual cost of \$30,000 for the 2023-2024 school year, \$31,500 for the 2024-2025 school year, and \$33,075 for the 2025-2026 school year.
- VII. Entered into a lease agreement with Gallitzin Youth League for use of the baseball field at Penn Cambria Middle School, effective April 18, 2023 through June 30, 2033 at the annual sum of \$1.00.
- VIII. Approved offering The Blues Program facilitated by The Learning Lamp at Penn Cambria High School for interested students at no cost to the district.
- IX. Approved Ms. Holly Smith, 17 qualified students, and 3 chaperones to attend National Forensics Competition in Louisville, Kentucky on May 25, 2023.
- X. Approved Bonnie Hite, Amanda Farabaugh, and Heidi Skura as volunteer chaperones to accompany qualifying students to the 2023 National Forensics Competition.
- XI. Approved the Flexible Instructional Day application for the 2023-2024 school year.
- XII. Authorized the District to enter into an Attorney-Client Fee Contract with the Frantz Law Group, ALPC, 402 West Broadway, Suite 860, San Diego, California, 92101, and Dillon, McCandless, King, Coulter, & Graham, LLP, 128 West Cunningham Street, Butler, Pennsylvania, 16601, for the commencement of a legal action against the Social Media Companies (Meta, Tik Tok, YouTube, etc.) Said action shall be for the purpose of claiming money damages.

The Attorney-Client Fee Contract shall provide for a contingent fee of twenty-five percent (25%) of any recovery. Expenses needed to fund the litigation shall be advanced by Frantz Law Group, APLC, and deducted

from any recovery. The district shall not be responsible for any fee or cost reimbursement in the event that there is no recovery in the action.

The School Board President and/or District Superintendent are authorized to sign the Attorney-Client Fee Contract.

XIII. Approved the second reading and adoption of the following policies:

- 202 - Eligibility of Nonresident Students
- 218 - Student Discipline
- 233 - Suspension and Expulsion
- 247 - Hazing
- 249 - Bullying/Cyberbullying
- 913 - Non-school Organization/Groups/Individuals

XIV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

First Reading of the Following New, Revised, or Board Policies for Review:

- 626 Attachment - Cash Management
- 626 Attachment - Allowability of Costs
- 626 Attachment - Time and Effort

XV. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph Smorto, Elementary Principal, highlighted the Multi-Tiered System of Supports or MTSS, which is new to the elementary schools this year. "MTSS is a framework to promote academic and social-emotional success for all students.

After researching best practices in MTSS implementation, I had to first ensure that we had an infrastructure to begin this framework. I mapped out what the elementary school currently offers to all students regarding reading, math, and social-emotional learning. Next, I looked at how we are assessing student progress in these areas. We know that assessment data is necessary but is only effective and worth it if we are using it to make informed decisions. Lastly, I analyzed the interventions that we offer in these areas.

When I became elementary principal, Mrs. Black, Mrs. Conrad, and I started to look at our interventions for students who were having difficulties and how to get the students what they needed. Through the years we have begun offering several new interventions and now provide the most support for students who are experiencing difficulties.

At the beginning of this school year, I formed two core MTSS teams. The academic team is comprised of the reading specialists - Mrs. Madison, Mrs. Kuntz, and Miss Bono; Dean of Students - Mrs. Gibbons; Special Education Director - Mrs. Conrad; and myself. The social-emotional team is comprised of the School Social Worker - Mrs. Galebach, Guidance Counselor - Miss. Dodson, Dean of Students - Mrs. Gibbons, Special Education Director - Mrs. Conrad, and myself. These meetings are held every six weeks. During these team meetings we analyze the data from our DIBELs (Dynamic Indicators for Early Literacy Skills) assessments, Student Risk Screening Scales, and any classroom teacher referral. After we identify if a student is in need of an intervention, we identify which intervention is the most appropriate and inform the parents and classroom teacher. Once a student receives intervention, we progress monitor them on a bi-weekly basis so that we can see if they are responding to the intervention or if the student is in need of something else. This could be a more intensive intervention or a recommendation for an evaluation for special education services. If progress is made, then they could be exited from the intervention. The process is very systematic and is driven by the assessment data.

Another major component of the MTSS framework is analyzing the Tier I instruction, which is the instruction that all students are receiving. We talk about what works and what might need refinement. Even though this might be a longer process, MTSS really opens the discussion for continuous improvement. I am proud of the students who are making progress with our Tier I instruction, but equally as proud of the students who are receiving the support they need to make progress not only academically, but in the areas of social and emotional learning.

After a couple months of implementing the MTSS framework, I met with MTSS experts from our Intermediate Unit to see if we were on the right track, and we are! I attribute this success to our team approach at the elementary schools. If there is a student who is experiencing difficulties, there are 2 or more teachers or staff members ready to problem solve to get the student what he/she needs. Our MTSS team allows this support to occur in a systematic way. At the elementary schools we are constantly evolving by refining our Tier I instruction along with our interventions – we only settle for the best. This mindset and commitment is a direct result of our amazing teachers and staff who work diligently to ensure that all students are achieving success.”