

JOHNSBURG CENTRAL SCHOOL
January 24, 2022
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
MINUTES

Board Members Present:

Rachel DeGroat
Tara Sears
Erwin Morris
Tom Ordway
Sarah Williams
Mike Sharp

Board Member Absent:

Jake Sauer-Jones

Call to Order: Rachel DeGroat opened the meeting at 7:00 with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes: Tara Sears made a MOTION to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2022 Board of Education Meeting. seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

CSE/CPSE/504: Tom Ordway made a MOTION to accept the CSE/CPSE/504 reports, second by Tara Sears and carried.

Financial: Larry Ringer reported that we had received the check for the State land. Mike Markwica stated he would speak to the Town Supervisor, Andrea Hogan, about getting our check earlier as required.

Discussion/Motions: **Presentation:** John Rathbun presented as our Industrial Arts teacher. He provided a handout as well as samples of the students' work first quarter. He also explained his schedule and how his teaching assistant Jennifer Glode has helped him with seatwork on days he is not in school. He spoke of his safety measures and what lessons he teaches the middle school students and high school students.

Tom Ordway expressed his pleasure in seeing all the projects the students did so far and stated this class was exactly what he was

looking for.

Rachel DeGroat asked Mr. Rathbun what his numbers were in each class, and John Rathbun told the group.

Erwin Morris asked if teaching the students for only two days hurt his curriculum, and Mr. Rathbun said it did not. He reported that his Teaching Assistant, Jennifer Glode, did bookwork with the students on days he was not able to teach, so when he did come in he spent all that time creating projects with the students.

Presentation: David Pede presented as the STEM teacher, and he demonstrated the new website that will launch next week.

David Pede showed a PowerPoint presentation on his classes, which included videos of students working with robots. He spoke of the newest equipment.

Then David Pede opened the newest website and did a tutorial on accessing it. He spoke of his class and Mrs. Homer's work to create it.

Rachel DeGroat asked what our plan was to launch the new website and Mike Markwica stated that a One Call Now was going to be sent out.

Mike Sharp suggested the website have a “how to use” video for people.

Motion: Tom Ordway made a MOTION to appoint Tanya Sawn as a Teaching Assistant Level 1 as stated in the CSEA contract beginning January 25, 2022, seconded by Tara Sears and carried.

Presentation: Three members of the Student Council spoke on the benefits of allowing students in grades 7-12 the opportunity to have backpacks throughout the day. Zachary Morehouse, Aiden Millington and Gage Morse presented a handout with statistics and a PowerPoint presentation. The students also asked if the school would purchase clear backpacks for every student so safety would not be a concern.

Tara Sears asked if the students were willing to sign an agreement if they used a school-owned backpack.

Gage Morris spoke of the backpack policy his club has created.

Sarah Williams wanted to know if Administration would be allowed to search the students' backpacks.

Mike Markwica stated he could send a letter home asking parents

permission because the school could only be able to check backpacks with probable cause.

Tom Ordway asked if students outside of the Student Council were polled for the survey, and Gage Morris stated he did not know who responded since it was anonymous.

Erwin Morris stated that if the school did not purchase the packs, then some students without the funds would not be able to have a clear pack.

Tom Ordway stated the price quoted seemed low, and the bags maybe poor quality, which would not last.

Mike Sharp stated he did not understand the presented chart. He offered his congratulations to the club. He also wanted to know the drive behind this push.

Gage Morris said that two minutes was not enough time to get to class on time, and students were getting detentions for being late. Heather Flanagan stated that the master schedule would give three minutes between classes starting in September 2022.

Erwin Morris stated that the NYS Department of Health wants students to carry backpacks. Tom Ordway asked Erwin Morris to share that informational link with him.

Rachel DeGroat stated that the number one issue was safety and asked the Administration if they asked our SRO, Rob Gould, for his opinion. Heather Flanagan said she did, and he is not in favor of any type of backpacks, including transparent. Heather Flanagan also spoke of the survey she had with teachers reporting that more teachers favored allowing backpacks during the day than teachers who did not want students to carry backpacks.

Rachel DeGroat stated that changing the time between periods to three minutes was a direct outcome of the Student Council's request.

Tom Ordway told the students he appreciated them coming but wanted more information. He also stated that he would feel terrible if something happened because he voted yes. He would support clear, but the club would need to look into the pricing.

Sarah Williams said she favors allowing backpacks since we do not have any other security measures when the students arrive in the morning with their personal bags. There isn't much difference with a weapon in a locker or in a bag. She stated she does not feel the school should purchase clear packs.

Tara Sears said she is not in favor but asked if students lockers

could be spaced out more by using lockers on the second floor. Heather Flanagan stated the lockers on the second floor are already being used.

Rachel DeGroat stated she is concerned with safety but likes the compromise of extending the bell between periods. She does not favor the school purchasing clear packs but would support clear if students provided them.

Erwin Morris asked why we weren't going to listen to the two groups that were most impacted by allowing backpacks, the students and the teachers. Both groups are in favor of having them.

Mike Sharp stated that our Safety Officer is not in favor of allowing backpack throughout the day, and we should value his opinion too.

Motion: Sarah Williams made a MOTION to change the Student Handbook to allow students in grades 7-12 to carry backpacks throughout the day, seconded by Erwin Morris.

The motion did not carry with a vote of 2-4. Sarah Williams and Erwin Morris for, Rachel DeGroat, Tara Sears, Tom Ordway, and Mike Sharp opposed.

Rachel DeGroat commended the students for bringing their concerns in the manner that they did - through the proper channels.

Erwin Morris asked why this issue (backpacks) was praised and allowed when remote learning was not permitted to be discussed. Rachel DeGroat stated the request was to give a letter to the BOE members, and the letter was given to each member. There was not a request to have a motion at a meeting. Rachel DeGroat stated that tutoring was a compromise for remote learning. She also told the Student Council that if they wanted the issue of remote learning brought up again, they would let the Administration know.

As far as she knew, Student Council never spoke with Administration asking for a motion. Student Council wants the quarantine issue of attending virtual learning on the agenda; they need to tell the Administration.

Mike Sharp said that the Student Council should bring it to the Administration to put to the agenda. The discussion last meeting was only in visitors' comments, and there are no discussions during visitors' comments.

Erwin Morris said there was a request, and it was ignored. Rachel DeGroat said she understood the request was for the letter to be given to the Board, and that request was granted. If the Student Council would like to raise the issue of remote learning or tutoring at the next meeting; they will need to let Administration know.

MOTION: Sarah Williams made a MOTION to approve Johnsburg Central School becoming a part of the Town of Johnsburg's sewer district, seconded by Erwin Morris. A discussion was held.

Mike Markwica shared information with the Board regarding our septic system. He also noted that the Building and Grounds Committee as a majority, voted in favor of this proposal. Rachel DeGroat stated that we need to look at the long-term and the bigger picture. This could also increase our tax base for our school. She went on to say that all the consultants who were asked recommended we join.

Mike Sharp said he did not believe we would have to spend millions if our system failed and he feels the cost to stay outweighs the cost to switch over.

Erwin Morris thinks the cost is only one piece of the bigger picture. The sewer system will allow future development for our town.

Rachel DeGroat stated that she is in favor of joining even though it is risky on both sides; the bigger picture/long-term outweigh staying with the septic system we have and all the people we have consulted with having recommended we do this.

Tara Sears said she was concerned about the information's inconsistency and does not want to pay for something we do not need. Tara Sears also stated that local businesses would be given tax breaks, so we would not benefit at all. She doesn't like the idea of spending money we do not need to pay.

MOTION: Sarah Williams made a MOTION to approve Johnsburg Central School becoming a part of the Town of Johnsburg's sewer district, seconded by Erwin Morris. Vote was 3-3. In favor: Rachel DeGroat, Erwin Morris, Sarah Williams. Opposed: Tom Ordway, Mike Sharp, and Tara Sears. Because of a tie, the MOTION is defeated.

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee: Mike Markwica reported that the NYS Governor has given a 3% increase for Foundation Aid. More information on our budget still to come.

Curriculum Committee: Rachel DeGroat reported that the curriculum committee discussed culinary ideas, a new CTE plan for next year, and college virus AP courses. The committee believes that we should offer more college-level courses than AP level. The next step is to talk to the teachers of AP classes.

Legislature Breakfast: Rachel DeGroat reported that she attended virtual breakfast with Mike Markwica where legislatures came and spoke about the 2022-2023 school fund and capitol projects.

Updates:

Mike Markwica reported that the Administration interviewed a Spanish teacher.

Mike Sharp asked why we needed to continue to pay Elevate K-12 if we hire a teacher. Mike Markwica reminded the Board that he did mention this when he proposed hiring Elevate K-12. He did explain that we are paying for a long-term sub for that classroom now, and our electronic program does not cover 9A Spanish. The new teacher will teach that class and possibly an elective course. Mike Markwica also reported that the committee for Dollars for Scholars came to him to notify the school that they would disband at the end of this year. Mike Markwica explained the reasons why and there is a plan to disperse the funds in the future.

Mike Sharp asked if we could let people know that it is going to dissolve, so maybe people would sign up. Mike Markwica said he would put a notice in the February newsletter.

Other Business:

Mike Sharp asked where we were with hiring a head custodian and why this was taking so long.

Mike Markwica stated that we are still looking, and he has a potential candidate, but they have not met yet. He also explained that the CSEA contract is still in negotiations, so salary is an issue.

Erwin Morris asked if we still needed a head custodian, cleaners, and bus drivers. Mike Markwica said we do not have any

custodian or cleaner vacancies, but we still need bus drivers. We interviewed substitutes.

Mike Markwica reported that Jim Dexter from our WSWHE BOCES will be speaking at our next BOE meeting.

Visitor's Comments:

Matt Parabelk asked the BOE if they could send a letter to the town stating we did not accept the sewer proposal. Mike Markwica said Cindy Homer would send a letter to the Town of Johnsbury Supervisor, Andrea Hogan.

Julia Morris stated she was confused on why the proposal of allowing students into a Google Meet during quarantine was not put on the agenda.

She then said that students should be allowed to watch the class but not participate during quarantine. Students would be non-active. She also stated that we have all the equipment that the school spent a great deal of money on, but we are not allowed to use it.

Adjournment:

Tara Sears made a **MOTION** to adjourn at 9:16 seconded by Tom Ordway and carried.

District Clerk: Cindy Homer

Date: _____