



Lower Merion School District
301 East Montgomery Avenue ♦ Ardmore, PA 19003-3399
www.lmsd.org

LMSD Board of School Directors Business Meeting Highlights

Dec. 16, 2019, Business Meeting

For a complete agenda, visit the [BoardDocs section](#) of the District website.

PRESENTATION

Lower Merion High School Principal Sean Hughes shared information about programs in the art department. Two art teachers and four students spoke about the Makerspace, learning walls and digital portfolios and how extra-curricular clubs are tying into the curriculum. Students Ursula and Sofia spoke about their wooden spoon project, using woodworking equipment in their art class. Willa and Maia spoke about their club, “InsideOut,” a site where students can share art from their digital portfolios along with their thoughts and experiences. The club also runs a charity event, including last year’s coffeehouse where they raised money to donate art supplies to schools in need. The learning screens allow students to share and manipulate their artworks.

Dr. Gilbert thanked the students and teachers for their presentation and spoke about how their projects align with the Student-Driven Schools Pathway of the Strategic Plan, “All Forward.”

AUDIENCE RECOGNITION ON ACTION ITEMS

There were no speakers at this time.

SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE

Supt. Copeland noted that in this season of giving, our Lower Merion School District community embodies the spirit of generosity.

Students from Belmont Hills Elementary School donated the change from their Book Fair purchases to buy 30 books that were donated to the library of Cassidy Elementary School in Philadelphia.

Students from Penn Valley Elementary School raised more than \$15,000 for the American Heart Association by jumping rope at their annual Kids Heart Challenge.

Students from Ms. Peterson's 7th grade social studies class at Welsh Valley Middle School were featured on Action News, for raising nearly \$8000, which they donated to a family that moved to Philadelphia after their home and business in the Bahamas were destroyed by Hurricane Dorian.

And, the Lower Merion High School Class of 1979 raised more than \$12,000 at their 40th reunion for a scholarship through the Lower Merion Township Scholarship Fund.

He also urged participation in the MLK Afternoon of Service on Friday, January 17, 2020, at Harriton High School.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Board approved personnel actions across the District, including staff hires, re-hires and reclassifications for the 2019-2020 school year.

The Board noted the passings of John Copeland, who taught at the Wynnewood Road School and Bala Cynwyd Middle School from 1970 to 1996; and Michelle Florian, who was a 5th grade teacher at Belmont Hills Elementary School from 1999 until her death.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Finger reported on the Dec. 3, 2019, meeting of the Curriculum Committee, where the Keystone Achievement and Growth data was presented. Ms. Finger explained that the District uses the data to create learning plans. She added that there are now other paths to graduation, in addition to the Keystone exams. She also explained that all of the secondary schools met or exceeded standards and targets to close the achievement gap.

The Board approved the Lower Merion High School's baseball team's overnight trip to Myrtle Beach, SC, in April 2020.

The Board approved the renewal of an agreement with LanguageLine Solutions to translate elementary report cards into Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

STUDENT SERVICES

The Board approved Educational Service Agreements for students receiving non-District Educational Services.

BUSINESS OFFICE AND FINANCE

Ms. Robinson gave a report on the Dec. 13, 2019, Finance Committee Meeting, where the focus was on the draft financial statements and audit report. The reports were "clean reports" and the various factors rated were "healthy" according to the auditors. There were no issues of non-compliance.

Future budget-related meetings will be recorded and posted on the website. The TENTATIVE dates for the 8:30 a.m. meetings are:

March 25, 2020: Operations

April 29, 2020: Staffing and IS

April 22, 2020: Student Services

May 13, 2020: Curriculum

Confirmed dates will be posted on the District website.

Mr. Driscoll gave a report on the Dec. 12, 2019, Facilities/Purchasing Committee Meeting reviewing the items that were recommended for tonight's agenda. The committee heard an update on the new middle school. Final plans have been submitted to the Township and the District is hoping for approval in January.

Mr. Copeland commented that there is some good financial news in that labor contracts are set for the next four years, the pension obligation rate is slightly down, and the interim taxes are slightly up. However, there are challenges, as well. The District cannot charge fees, doesn't levy an Earned Income Tax and investments aren't yielding a lot of income. The District is budgeting in anticipation of the possibility of changing start times in addition to budgeting for the challenges of increasing enrollment, which necessitates additional personnel costs and the additional use of modulars until the new Middle School is built.

The Board:

- Approved the List of Bills reviewed through the Facilities and Purchasing Committee as well as the Nov. 2019 LMSD Financial Report
- Accepted with gratitude the following donations:
 - \$10,000 for the STEM initiative in the Cynwyd ES library from Michael Katsnelson
 - \$1,200 poster printer for Belmont Hills ES from the BHES HSA
- Accepted the Audit Report and Financial Statements by Rainer and Co.
- Adopted a resolution not to raise any tax rate for the 2020-2021 fiscal year by more than 2.6% (the Pa. Dept. of Education Index).

FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

The Board approved the following items:

- Contracts for Operations vehicles and a Ventrac tractor
- License agreements with AT&T and T-Mobile for 1860 Montgomery Ave.
- License agreements with St. Joseph's University for the HHS and LMHS graduations
- Independent consultant contract for freelance photography services
- Proposal from Goldhorn Electric for wiring and hardware at 1860 Montgomery Ave.
- Work Orders for traffic planning and design at Arnold Field and Merion ES
- Work Orders for Snyder Hoffman Assoc. for stadium lighting at HHS and LMHS
- Quote from Presidio for Cisco Smartnet renewal
- Quote from ePlus for VMware renewal
- List of contracted transportation drivers

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Actman gave a report on the Dec. 6, 2019, Policy Committee Meeting where the following Policies had second readings:

- Policy 603 Budget Preparation
- Policy 604 Tax Waiver Requests
- Policy 609 Investments

NEW BUSINESS

First Readings:

- Policy 618 Student Activity Funds

Dr. Gilbert added that she has asked Supt. Copeland to propose a plan for students to be represented on the School Board.

OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Finger gave a report on the Nov. 21, 2019, Communications Committee Meeting, where the School Start Time communications were reviewed. Communications were also reviewed for the new middle school construction and transition. The Raptor Volunteer Management System has more than 1300 volunteers and will be expanded to members of the larger community early in 2020. The Residency partnerships were also reviewed.

AUDIENCE RECOGNITION

A PWES 5th grade parent spoke out against the idea of children transitioning between two middle schools. She is concerned her daughter won't have the same extracurricular opportunities and confidence if she has to attend a different middle school for 8th grade.

A parent of PWES and BCMS students also spoke about her concerns about her 5th grader possibly transitioning to a second middle school for 8th grade. She is worried that her 5th grader won't adjust as quickly to a new school.

A parent of PWES and LMHS students, who is an LMHS alumna, is also concerned about her current 4th grader not having the same extra-curricular and sports experience if they have to switch middle schools and extra-curriculars and fields aren't fully operational. She's also concerned about taking children away from their peers. She also commented on the issue of School Start Times and thinks that middle school should start first.

Mr. Copeland explained that no decision has been made about the possible MS transition for PWES and GES's current 4th and 5th graders.

A parent of a 5th grader at PWES expressed her concern about her child having to transition to a second middle school. She said studies show that transitions affect academic achievement. She objects because there won't be adequate playing fields and children would have to be bused back to their old schools and miss class. She added that she looked at the numbers from the Montgomery County Planning

Commission and she doesn't think that the modulars would need to be used at middle schools and that crowding at elementary schools could be met with modulars.

A Penn Valley resident with three children in the District, who has been active on the issue of school start times requested the District further study a two-tier bus model and wants the District to substantiate its claim that 53 additional buses would be needed to switch to two tiers of busing. She asked the District to find a way for elementary schools to start after 8:00 a.m. and for secondary schools to start at 8:30 a.m. or later.

A parent of a Harriton HS student said the Board shouldn't rely on the research cited in the petition of Elementary parents who are opposed to the earlier start time for Elementary students. She is a Wharton professor who says some of the research is not reliable and other evidence – which supports earlier times for Elementary students -- is not included.

A Narberth resident discussed the Princeton Prize in Race Relations. Lower Merion has had winners and certificate of merit winners. Applications are due Jan. 31, 2020. He encouraged the District to nominate students to participate.

A Wynnewood resident said there was minimal discussion of creating additional impervious surfaces at PWES. He stated many people use the fields at PWES. And PWES will have fewer students after the new middle school is completed, so he feels green space should be preserved and that additional parking could be added elsewhere.

SUNSHINE ACT

Mr. Roos, Solicitor from Wisler Pearlstine, reported when the Board of School Directors met in an Executive Session and the topics discussed.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Board Meetings: (at 8:00 p.m. in the Board Room, unless otherwise noted)

Monday, Jan. 13, 2020 – Education Committee and Supplemental Regular Board Meeting

Monday, Jan. 27, 2020 – Regular Business Board Meeting

Committee Meetings: (at 8:30 a.m. in the Board Room, unless otherwise noted)

Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2020 – Curriculum Committee

Friday, Jan. 17, 2020 – Policy Committee

Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020 – Communications Committee (7:00 p.m.)

Thursday, Jan. 23, 2020 – Facilities and Purchasing Committee

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