

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting on January 22, 2019.

Present: Susan Pack, Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Vice-Chairperson; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary; , Board Member; Faith McLaughlin, Board Member; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Vacant, ASB Parent Representative; Harry Pompeo, ASD Parent Representative; Beth Smith and Will Gorum, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community, Hillcrest Residents

Ms. Pack called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm. The February meeting was scheduled for February 19th. The scheduled March meeting would fall during Spring Break so it was decided to have the meeting on March 12th.

19-J-001 Motion to Approve Minutes

Ms. Pack asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December meeting. Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the December minutes and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Action Items

19-J-002 Approve Board Stipend Amount, Up to \$85

Let the minutes reflect that the board members were made aware of the Board Stipend Amount, Up to \$85. Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the Board Stipend and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion.

19-J-003 Approve 2019 Superintendent Residency Expenditures (ASB/ASD)

Ms. Pack asked for a motion to approve 2019 Superintendent Residency Expenditures for both schools (ASB/ASD). Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the 2019 Superintendent Residency Expenditures for both schools. Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion Items
ASD Parent Representative – Harry Pompeo

Mr. Pompeo reported that Christmas at ASD was awesome and included a luncheon, ASD Museum Open House and the children's annual Christmas program.

ASD welcomed Alabama School for the Deaf and Mississippi School for the Deaf for Homecoming weekend. He said they were proud of the teams and coaches. He congratulated David and Faith for being named King and Queen.

The Singing Fingers had a busy Christmas season. They performed 3 shows including one at the State Capitol. They were featured in Governor Hutchinson's December address.

Middle and High Schools received a special presentation from RIT, Brittany Comegna. She provided information about the college and its programs.

Early Childhood Center parents were invited to look at the department after the Christmas party. Briarwood Nursing and Rehab Center helped to make the party extra special for the ECC students.

Middle School students have already read 463 books. They celebrated with s'mores and hot chocolate.

Basketball girls Varsity won 15, lost 2; Jr. Varsity 0-3; Boys Varsity 3-13 and JV boys 0-3. Mr. Pompeo said they would be competing at the Southwest campus tonight. In three weeks they are going to Minnesota for GPSD. There will be 8 schools participating.

ASB Parent Representative – Vacant

Mr. Caton reported January started strong. ASB ended December with a fantastic Christmas program from the music department. He encouraged the members to try to make it to one of the performances this year. The students are developing their talents under the direction of Mr. Algis Staskevicius and Ms. Alicia Reddick.

The wrestling team has hit it in full force. They have participated in tournaments at Conway and Pulaski Academy. ASB held a wrestling dual also. The team and cheerleader squad will travel to Illinois over the weekend for a wrestling/cheer conference for schools for the blind.

Through a grant from the Black Hall of Fame, students in grades 4-12 will attend 5 visits to the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub this semester. The students will be able to delve into their chosen subject. The goal is they will be able to experience some things they wouldn't have been able to before and have the opportunity to develop more of their expanded core curriculum skills as well as learn/practice very valuable career skills such as collaboration, sticking with projects and seeing them through. Their first visit was this past week. Some students are learning about flight, some doing video game design, some doing ceramics and others learning screen printing.

EAST is going well. A group of students went back to Briarwood Nursing Home to work with residents, teaching them braille. A few months ago, some of the EAST students contact him about some playground updates telling him of their desire to learn how to write a grant to help with this need. Mr. Caton is having the students present their first proposal to the Arkansas School for the Blind Foundation Board in February.

Mr. Caton said the decision has been made to not get a group together to go to Close UP in Washington this year. He said this will give the students more time to plan and raise money for next year.

There being no further business of Joint nature, the agenda moved to the Arkansas School for the Deaf.



Susan Pack, Chair

Dr. 

~~Dr. Sam Atcherson, Secretary~~
Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair

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Present: Susan Pack, Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chairperson; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary; , Board Member; , Board Member; Vacant, ASB Parent Representative; Harry Pompeo, ASD Parent Representative; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Beth Smith and Will Gorum, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community, Hillcrest Residents

19-D-001 Motion to Approve Consent Items

Ms. Pack asked for a motion to approve the consent items to include the minutes, financial statement and personnel items. Dr. Atcherson made a motion to approve the consent items and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

None

Discussion Items

ASD Facilities Rental Agreement

Dr. Dickinson said she thought it was her first or second board meeting that the topic came up about the facilities rental agreement. She said the board felt very strongly at that time and now we are revisiting it because:

1) They have had a struggle with hiring caps. That is the new requirement they have to work with now. They have a budget position but can't hire because of the hiring cap. She said they have 3 cleaning positions for the entire campus and they are struggling to keep up. ASD has many organizations wanting to use the facilities and often are asked to do the set-up and clean up afterward. 2) Liability issues are another concern – making sure ASD is covered correctly. She said she was asked why hearing people had to pay and deaf people do not pay. She said it seemed discriminatory. She said maybe ASD needed to rethink how to approach that situation. She said they have a list of requests all the time wanting to use the gym or tornado shelter. She said it was more than they can manage with their limited resources. She asked Ernie to work with facilities and as part of his responsibilities to work on a rental agreement that would be fair. She wanted to see if the board had any input or feedback/suggestions to incorporate into their plan.

Ms. Pack said this is not a new problem-it has been an age old problem for many years. She said there are definitely things that had to be looked at and input legally that they need to get. She said the legal ramifications scare her to death. One of the things they found out at one time and did require was that no one could use anything if they did not fill out a form and it was preapproved. The second thing was that if it was a big meeting that they get liability insurance – there is such a thing as a one-time insurance policy that groups can get for an event. Ms. Pack’s suggestion was whatever you work on that you get an attorney to look at it as well. She said 99% of the time there is no problem but it just takes one time. Ms. McLaughlin said she thought that there should be a required fee from anyone using the facilities. She said if you are allowing outsiders to come in and use the facilities and they leave it a mess there should be consequences. Ms. Pack asked Ernie if he had anything to add. Ernie said they have a \$100 deposit and it is based on the size of the group. He said they hold the deposit until the event is over and it is refunded when everything checks out, otherwise the deposit is kept to cover cleaning. He said they do not have enough people to set up for every event that is happening on campus. Ms. Pack said she thought the main thing particularly for now is that no one uses anything if they have not completed a form. Dr. Atcherson asked if students involved in the setting up and breaking down and can they be paid. Dr. Dickinson said they had talked about asking the students to get involved. She said students can be paid for some jobs but it has to be in their career plan. Mr. Krenn said they were not charging enough for cleanup, lights, water, etc. He said they are short staffed across the board. He said in his opinion they should not allow anyone to use any facilities until they know what is happening with the school with the transformation. He said it was costing more to rent out the facility than it was worth.

ASD Superintendent Report

Dr. Dickinson said she attended the Governor’s Inauguration. The gold doors were closed and were opened for Mrs. Hutchinson to walk out.

Dr. Dickinson said they are working hard on accreditation. She thank Michelle for working late and so many hours to get ready for the accreditation team from AdvancED to visit on February 12 & 13.

Parnell Hall update: ASD received a grant for \$800,000 to install two elevators. They had architects come in and analyze the building. The bids came back much higher than expected so they went back to NCRC and explained the situation. It looks like NCRC will allow ASD to come back to modify the project. It will be rebid. It is possible that only one elevator will be put in. The timeline is important as the Middle School students have moved out of Parnell and are supposed to be moved back this summer.

Dr. Dickinson said ASD had an audit by Child Nutrition Department. She thanked Michael and said he has learned everything he could about Child Nutrition since they haven't had a director. She introduced their new Child Nutrition Director, Seth. He came on board the same week the audit started. He did a wonderful job working with the auditors.

Dr. Dickinson said they had some sad news – they lost a deaf artist at the school, Robert Walker. He had been working with the art students the last couple of years. He was at Silent Sunday. He died unexpectedly Christmas Day.

Dr. Dickinson said Michael has resigned. Friday is his last day and he will be missed. She thanked him for all his hard work.

She said she recently received a message that there is a moratorium on hiring anyone that works directly for the Director. She said she would be trying her best to convince the Governor's office that she needs to replace Michael. Part of the reason for the moratorium is the transformation process is getting close. She said today they received a call from the Governor's office to pick up their packet. She said they have until Thursday to provide feedback. It is 479 pages. She said what they think is going to happen is that the Department of Education will be renamed as the Division of Primary and Secondary Education. The new Department of Education will be the umbrella agency.

She said she appreciated the board so much and thanked them for their support.

Ms. Pack said she wanted to mention the enrollments at both schools going up and they are happy to see that.

There being no further business for the Arkansas School for the Deaf, the agenda moved to the Arkansas School for the Blind.



Susan Pack, Chair



Dr. John McAllister, ~~Secretary~~ Vice Chair

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19-B-001 Motion to Approve Consent Items

Ms. Pack asked for a motion to approve the consent items to include the minutes, financial statement and personnel items. Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the consent items and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

None

Discussion

None

Ms. Pack said before they move on she would like to know if anyone had made any contact with the electrical company. She said it was discussed last month and just wanted to know if anything new had happened.

Mr. Caton said he pulled all the communication regarding that so he could get a better understanding of the history and where it is to this point. He said by the February meeting he hopes to have gone through all the correspondence (there is quite a few of them).

Ms. Pack asked Dr. Dickinson if there was anything new on the ASD side. Dr. Dickinson asked Michael to speak on it. Michael said not much of any progress. He said he had reached out to Sarah Farris in the AG's office. The last time she had any communication was the end of 2017. She asked if ASB had contacted them and he told her he didn't know. She is trying to figure out if Entergy is trying to split the schools versus one bill.

Mr. Caton said they had actually reached out to them and told them ASB wanted to move forward. That is when ASB heard from them that they would need something from ASD saying whether they had any interest in the lines, etc. He said he thought it was a legal clarification so that ASB could move forward. That was the last communication ASB had from Mr. Breuster, who has been the primary contact for ASB. Mindy Terry had many communications with him but when ASB lost Mindy there seems to have been a disconnection. Ms. Pack said her suggestion is to sit down together with Sarah and try to put all the pieces together.

Superintendent Report

Mr. Caton said he had one item that was required to do at the board meeting and it is to report on the school board training hours for the past year to be reflected in the minutes. He said Susan has 12 hours, Faith no hours at this point but she is checking on her records, John 6.75 hours, Everett 23 hours, and Sam 15.75 hours. Mr. Caton said if there are hours not recorded, please let Betty know and they will be put into the system. Ms. Pack said she thought it would be on the accreditation report. Mr. Caton said it is on the School Report Card.

He said Janet had already mentioned the draft Bill that was received today for establishing a cabinet level of Department of Education and transferring the agencies over to them. He said they would be going over that for the next few days trying to catch anything that changed that might be important to the schools. It looks like a lot of name changes in it. Mr. Caton found one part where it referred to ASD but did not refer to ASB. It is a section that would have applied to both schools. He doesn't think it will be the last opportunity to respond. When the bill is filed there will be a public comment period on the bill and this will give another opportunity to respond as well as anyone else that wants to comment.

He said Entergy had been mentioned and he will have that ready at the February meeting. He said ASB has been experiencing some recent electrical issues especially with some of the servers and internet equipment. He thinks the storm Friday night did things that are just now being discovered.

He said there were some Board appointments in Saturday's paper but did not include any of the schools and we are still waiting on that. Ms. McLaughlin asked if he knew for sure that names/applications have been submitted to the governor. He said he knew some and the last communication he had was they were going to take to the next meeting with the governor. Whether that happened or not is not known. He said the next step he is going to take is to write a letter to the governor's office and list the openings the board has.

Ms. Pack said it would be good if both superintendents wrote a letter to the governor. Ms. McLaughlin asked Mr. Caton if he would share why he may not be appointing anyone. Mr. Caton said he thought possibly the Governor is waiting for the transformation plan to be approved by the Legislature and goes into effect. Mr. Caton said that was just a guess on his part. Ms. Pack said she knows the person that handles the appointments has been very ill battling cancer and has been out a great deal.

Mr. Caton said that the Special Education Unit came today and they reviewed the binders for the students doing the alternate testing for state testing this year. He thanked Mr. Williams and Ms. Doan for their assistance. He said everything went well with the visit.

Mr. Caton said he recently gave a tour to the Arkansas Disabilities Rights Office. They were interested in the school and the programs. They wanted to learn more about ASB so they could offer the school to parents that make inquiries through their department.

Mr. Caton reminded the board members to be sure to send in their Statement of Financial Interest by January 31st.

One of ASB's students received a 31 on the ACT. Everyone was very excited and pleased with the score.

Mr. Caton said ASB has been working on an MOU with Pulaski Tech for students to do some programming there.

Mr. Caton said the tuition reimbursement program has changed that is with the Department of Education. This is the MOU that governs the reimbursement for teachers that get their vision certification. It has been they would get their reimbursement after completing each semester but now they have to complete the entire program, it has to show up on their license and they have to work a year in a public school before the tuition will be reimbursed. This will present some challenges when interviewing teachers. Ms. Pack asked if the year could be retroactive. Mr. Caton said it did not appear that it could be retro. Ms. Doan said they had a phone conference with them and a three year commitment has to be made in the field of blindness.

Mr. Caton said this is Board Appreciation Month. He said he and Janet had a small token of appreciation along with a reception after the meeting. Everyone is invited to stay. He thanked the board for their service to the school and the students. Ms. Pack said she would like to say thanks to Faith for staying on until a replacement is appointed. Ms. McLaughlin said it had been a privilege to be on the board.

There being no further business for the Arkansas School for the Blind, the meeting adjourned at 5:00.



Susan Pack, Chair



Dr. John McAllister, ~~Secretary~~, Vice Chair