

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Meeting
Board Minutes

Slatington, PA
September 12, 2022

Civility and Decorum – District officials and members of the public are expected to conduct themselves with civility and to afford each other a measure of dignity and respect. Shouting, personal insults, and attacks or any conduct that disrupts the flow of business is considered to be out of order. Members of the public are to direct their comments to the Board in its entirety, cannot single out Board Members for response, nor can a member of the public address specific issues with other members of the community who may be present at the meeting or who are virtually present if it is a virtual or hybrid meeting. In addition, members of the community shall not bring signs or placards to the meeting and shall not applaud or engage in any actions that would impede another community member's right to make comments at the meeting. At the discretion of the Board/Board President, individuals who are disruptive shall be subject to removal from the venue of the Board meeting, unless the disruptive individual agrees to maintain civility and decorum.

PURPOSE The special meeting of the Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors was called to order by the President, Mr. Mathias J. Green, Jr., at 6:01 p.m. on Monday, September 12, 2022, in the Northern Lehigh Administration Building Board Room..

ROLL CALL Members present: Mr. Chad Christman, Mr. Robin T. Distler, Mr. Gary S. Fedorcha, Mr. Mathias Green, Jr., Mrs. Michelle M. Heckman, Mrs. Gale N. Husack, Mr. Robert L. Kern, Jr., and Mrs. Donna M. Kulp (8)

Members absent: None (0)

Non-members present: Mr. Matthew Link, Dr. Tania Stoker, Mr. Todd Breiner, Mr. Greg Derr, Mrs. Michele Dotta, Mrs. Nichole Fink, Mr. Bryan Geist, Mr. Frank Gnas, Mr. David Hauser, Mr. Eric Hill, Mrs. Sherri Molitoris, Atty. Kristine Roddick, Mr. James Schnyderite and Mr. Terry Ahner (Press).

VISITORS Approximately 9 visitors attended the meeting and ninety-four visitors viewed the meeting.

INTERVIEWS OF CANDIDATES TO FILL SCHOOL BOARD VACANCY Mr. Green commented just a couple of things before we go into the agenda, a couple of quick little changes and I think we can do this. Several board members have asked me if they could ask questions also, instead of just the ones that are listed. The answer to that is, yes if you really want to, you can. The only thing that I would ask is if you ask it of one person that you ask everyone else the same question. Just so you have consistency there and so everyone is on the same page. So, yes you can but try and ask the same question to everyone. Assuming time allows, we will try and swear that person in this evening assuming that person is present at that time then that person can participate in the executive session which is scheduled to start at or about 6:30.

The other thing I want to announce if one of the candidate, Ms. Ganser, has dropped out so we only have three candidates tonight. I understand her rationale which is that she is a district 11 official who from time to time does Northern Lehigh events and she thought that would be kind of crossing the line if she was an official and then did a Northern Lehigh track meet either home or away, so she's not here. Having said all of that, we're down to three. I would at this time turn it over to Mr. Link who will be asking the questions this evening. You should have received copies of those, does everyone have that copy? Everyone at the table, it should be in front of you.

Mr. Link commented thank you Mr. Green. Good evening, everyone. I'd like to thank our three candidates for putting their name in for consideration. So, this evening we are going to ask the two candidates that are not responding at that time to please wait in the lobby and then when the person is done responding they can join the audience and then we'll invite the next person in. We're simply going to go in alphabetical order. So, the order the evening will be Mrs. Rhonda Frantz, Mr. Justin Jachowicz, and Mrs. Natalie Snyder. If the second person has asked a question or the third person was asked a question that previous person was not, we're going to have to ask that person to come back up and then respond again. We're also going to ask that each respondent spends no more than three minutes on each answer. So, you'll have three minutes to respond to each answer. Mrs. Molitoris will be keeping time and she'll be our timekeeper this evening. Are there any questions on kind of the logistics? Okay, Mr. Green if it's okay with you, I'm going to ask Mr. Jachowicz and Mrs. Snyder to step

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out - thank you. And, Mrs. Frantz if you want to come on up. Okay, Mrs. Frantz so the first question we have is why are you interested in being on the school board?

Mrs. Rhonda Frantz commented well, you all know I worked for the district for a very long time and when I retired, I took a step back and I truly miss being involved in the school district side of things. When this seat opened up, I just thought it was the perfect opportunity to get back involved. Not to the extent I was before, but back involved in district business.

Mr. Link asked what do you feel you can offer the school board?

Mrs. Frantz commented well, after working for the school district for so long I do have a working knowledge of a lot of things that go on as far as the budgeting process, how things work with the government, different aspects that we, as a school, need to work on. I know where the problem areas are. I just think I have an overall working knowledge of how everything works.

Mr. Link commented and our third question is what do you feel is the biggest challenge to public education now?

Mrs. Frantz answered that fair funding I think is the biggest challenge. There has to be a better way to disperse funds. I know Northern Lehigh has high special education costs which they are not nearly reimbursed anywhere near that they want and need is not a burden. Charter schools is an issue. Funding for charters is something that needs to be addressed. I don't think of that as a bad thing, it just needs to be tweaked to make it fair - the funding fair for that. Because right now it is not. As far as Northern Lehigh goes, the issue is we don't have any businesses in the district, so you know whether it's you know with the borough or whatever to make it more appealing for businesses to come to Northern Lehigh. We definitely don't need another smoke shop, but I think we need to make it more attractive for businesses to come here which would offset the tax burden on the local taxpayers.

Mr. Green commented I'm just going through my mind here, I'm trying to figure out what might be the best way to do that and what I might suggest is, if you have any other questions for Rhonda while she's here and while she's on the seat, instead of having her go out and then come back in and then go through that, if you have any questions for Rhonda, maybe this would be the time to ask it if you choose to do so.

Mr. Christman commented I do have a couple of general questions I typed up for everyone, but I'm going to ask this one since you had it in your answer for number two. You said you know where the problems are and you just went on to label a couple of them just now, are there any others that you know off the top of your head that you'd like to spearhead if you were given the opportunity?

Mrs. Frantz commented I think opening up more opportunities to the students, which I know Bulldog Academy does offer as far as if a student wants to take a course that we don't offer, they can access that through Bulldog Academy. So, I know there have been strides there. Off the top of my head, I can't think of anything else aside from those.

Mr. Christman commented I have one more question then if that's okay?

Mr. Green commented sure.

Mr. Christman commented so this is a general one I had typed up prior to today. Do you personally have any biological kids enrolled in the district currently or do you have any relationship with kids in the district?

Mrs. Frantz commented I have two grandchildren that live with me, they would be in first grade and fourth grade.

Mr. Christman asked how do they like it so far?

INTERVIEWS Mrs. Frantz commented so far so good. First day was a little shaky, but so far so good. .

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(cont.)

Mr. Green commented okay, anyone else? If not, thank you Mrs. Frantz, would you send in the next person.

Mr. Link commented again thank you for coming in this evening. Mr. Jachowicz our first question is why are you interested in being on the school board?

Mr. Jachowicz answered well first and foremost, it's my 15th year in education. I work at a cyber school. So, I have a background in education. I am a coach, a coach at the youth level, at the high school level. I feel like I have a good understanding of education in general being in the field, understanding how schools work and I think I can help with my experiences and expertise and provide some oversight with the school board over the school district.

Mr. Link commented thank you. Okay, our next question this evening is what do you feel you can offer to the school district?

Mr. Jachowicz commented yeah just having an education experience and understanding. I have children in the district too, I have four. So, Peters, Slatington and the High School, we're just missing the middle school right now, but our fifth grader will be moving up soon to the Middle School. So again having children that have gone through the school district, just being involved in the community you know through NLYAA and coaching softball and stuff, you know, getting to know the kids and just the overall school and how things work. Like I said, my educational background I think can help making some decisions whether it's just fiscally or oversight and just providing my guidance as being in education for that long and understanding the whole community.

Mr. Link commented thank you, our next question is what do you feel is the biggest challenge to public education?

Mr. Jachowicz commented I think right now, well I work for a cyber school so I know that side of it and I just think there's a loss in confidence overall in the public school district. Not just with COVID, I think coming out of that you know there's a you know, I saw with my school grew over 12,000 students throughout the COVID period, so it's not just that it's there's a loss of confidence in the public school district so I would like to renew confidence in the district and hopefully sit on the board and help make some good decisions to say yeah you want to keep your kid in the Northern Lehigh School District instead of going somewhere else, a charter school, cyber school.

Mr. Green commented okay, all done with that, anyone have any extra questions?

Mr. Christman commented so since I asked the first candidate these two questions I will ask the next two. Without me having to ask, I asked the last one, do you have any children in the district and you already answered that one. You already identified the question number two partially, would you be able to identify off the top of your head any problem areas within the district?

Mr. Jachowicz answered yeah I think especially fiscally I know obviously with inflation and everything going on, raising taxes, even though it was not a full raise in taxes and what it would have been, I know that being around the community that was not well received. I know there was a fund balance and so I think this kind of fiscal oversight, I teach social studies as my background, so I understand the process of the school board and everything, economics as well too. That's all part of the social studies education, so I understand that part. I also sell real estate too, so I see that side of it and how it impacts people. So when you know that 2.5 percent may not seem like it's a big deal, especially for seniors it's a huge deal, so again just using my experience to help drive decisions I think would be why I would be an asset to the school board.

Mr. Green commented, anyone else? I am assuming not, but just in case. Okay, thank you for your time.

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(cont.)

Mr. Link commented again Mrs. Snyder, thank you for putting your name in for consideration. We have three questions this evening, the first of which is why are you interested in being on the school board?

Mrs. Snyder answered I am interested in being on the school board because I want to be able to serve my community. I want to be able to use my life experiences and my business experience to help guide and direct the school district in making good, sound decisions. I want to be a conduit for the concerns of our residents in the community who have concerns and need somebody who can speak for them and offer a voice. I have a passion to help kids. I helped kids as a certified occupational therapy assistant.

Mr. Link commented thank you. What do you feel you can offer to the school board?

Mrs. Snyder answered I feel I have experience sitting on a board as I was the president of the NLYA Association, as Gale can attest. I understand how boards are governed. I understand the rules of the board. I have business experience. I have experience in financial management. I have the ability to work well with others and support group decisions. I have a desire to work toward a stronger relationship with the public it serves. I have a poise demeanor and I am respectful to others. I can respect diverse points of view. I have the commitment, time and energy it takes to be a board member.

Mr. Link commented okay our third question is what do you feel is the biggest challenge to public education now?

Mrs. Snyder commented oh boy, there's a lot. I think that public education is facing a lot of difficulties in a lot of areas. One is low school performance, attendance, declining enrollment numbers, employee retention, fighting and bullying, drug use, teacher burnout, little to no parental involvement, lack of good teachers, constantly changing technology, student attitudes and behaviors, testing and regulations, lack of discipline, school safety, and of course lack of financial support.

Mr. Link commented thank you.

Mr. Green commented, does anyone on the board have any questions? I will look right again.

Mr. Christman commented I asked the previous two, so I have to ask the third one here. One of the questions that I had was you did identify some other problem areas, but you just rattled off about 20 of them so unless you have other ones you'd like to add to there?

Mrs. Snyder answered not at the moment.

Mr. Christman commented okay. My other second question I asked the other two candidates as well were do you currently have your own kids currently enrolled in the Northern Lehigh School District?

Mrs. Snyder answered I currently have one child enrolled in the Northern Lehigh School District. My oldest child graduated from Northern Lehigh School District. She is going to Bloomsburg University. She's studying to become a secondary English teacher. She is a substitute teacher for the district. Oh and my son, did I mention my son? My son is in 11th grade and he attends the LCTI program, the welding program.

Mr. Christman commented how is he liking that so far?

Mrs. Snyder answered he loves it. He absolutely loves it. That's what gets him up every day and gets him to school.

Mr. Green commented, anyone else? Any questions? I am assuming no. Thank you for your responses.

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATE TO FILL SCHOOL BOARD VACANCY

Okay, going back to the agenda now. Normally, at this point in time we would adjourn for an executive session and discuss the candidates. I've been informed by our solicitor that we can no longer do that, she slapped my fingers that some of those rules have changed and that it is specifically prohibited. So, if there is any discussion that anyone wants to have on the candidates, it needs to be done in public. I would be open for that discussion. Looking left, looking right. No? Okay. If not, then we will go to the actual election and the way we'll work this is if someone wants to make a nomination, you can nominate any one of the three individuals. We don't need a second, we just need a nomination because it's a personnel item. I will ask if there are any other nominations and I'll probably ask that two or three times and if not, someone can make a motion to close nominations. We will then vote on the candidates based on the way they were nominated. We'll vote on the first one, if that person gets five votes then the show is over so to speak. Okay? If not, we'll go to the second person and so on. If we go through the list and it comes up four-four, two-two, any other way, then we'll just kind of keep working through it until we hopefully can get five. We do need five votes to confirm. So, having said that, I will open the floor for nominations.

Mr. Fedorcha commented excuse me, Mr. Green, I'd like to nominate Mrs. Frantz.

Mr. Green commented Mrs. Frantz has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Christman commented yes, I'd like to nominate Natalie Snyder.

Mr. Green commented Mrs. Snyder has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Christman commented yes, I'd like to nominate Justin Jachowicz.

Mr. Green commented okay. May be a bit ambiguous, but having seen all that, is there a motion to close nominations? I think you still have to do that.

Mrs. Kulp made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Distler for the closing of nominations.

YEA: Mr. Christman, Mr. Distler, Mr. Fedorcha, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp and Mr. Green (8)

NAY: None (0)

Motion carried.

Mr. Green commented okay, so as a procedure, the first person is Mrs. Rhonda Frantz, I would ask the secretary to call a roll on that please.

Mrs. Husack for roll call:

YES: Mr. Distler, Mr. Fedorcha, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mr. Green.

NO: Mrs. Heckman, Mr. Christman

Mrs. Husack commented six yes's and two no's.

Mr. Green commented six yes's and two no's, that would conclude that you have been elected Mrs. Frantz, so thank you very much and thanks to the two of you for attending the meeting and thanks for applying. For me and as a board, we appreciate it. Thank you very much, I want to say that, thank you.

Mr. Link commented thank you also.

Mr. Green commented having done all of that, if Mrs. Nehmeh would like to swear Mrs. Frantz in at this point in time.

Mr. Link commented we are going to have our school district public notary, Mrs. Elivonne Nehmeh, swear in our new school board member, Mrs. Rhonda Frantz.

Mrs. Nehmeh states oath and Mrs. Frantz repeats for swearing in.

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATE TO FILL SCHOOL BOARD VACANCY (cont.)

Mrs. Frantz states I, Rhonda Frantz do solemnly swear that I will support, obey, and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this Commonwealth, and that I shall fulfill the duties of my position as a School Board Director for the Northern Lehigh School District, with fidelity.

Mrs. Nehmeh commented congratulations.

Mr. Green commented having been here for a while, I can only give you one piece of advice and that is for the first two years just don't say a whole lot. Now, I gave that same advice to Mr. Christman and it didn't work at all. Good work, didn't even work at the first meeting.

Mrs. Kulp commented thank you for your interest in the board. Please don't think just because you didn't get on this time that you don't have a chance in the future because things change, people move out. I didn't get on the first time I tried to get on either. So, I just wanted to share that with you.

Mrs. Snyder commented but we also didn't have the public to elect us either.

Mrs. Kulp commented well, but I went through this same situation here and I did not get chosen.

Mrs. Snyder commented I mean a lot people have been elected by the community, so it's just the difference.

Mr. Fedorcha commented some of us have gone through that.

Mrs. Snyder commented I respect that so, it is what it is.

Mrs. Kulp commented it's when there's an opening on the board that we do that.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Fedorcha made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Heckman that the special meeting of the Northern Lehigh School District Board of School Directors adjourned.

YEA: Mr. Christman, Mr. Distler, Mr. Fedorcha, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp and Mr. Green (8)

NAY: None (0)

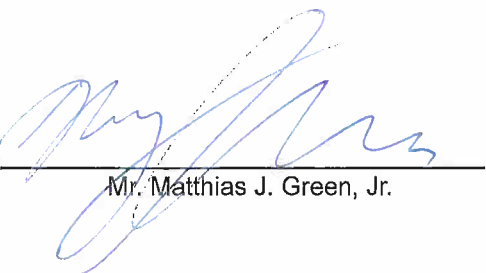
Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Gale N. Husack
Secretary

ATTEST:



President

Mr. Matthias J. Green, Jr.

BOARD APPROVED

OCT 10 2022

Northern Lehigh
School District