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Parents suggest instructors for driver's ed classes

By Ben Freda For The Abington Journal

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At the Lackawanna Trail school board meeting Nov. 10, Cathy Rist Strauch, treasurer of Friends of Music and parent of a Trail student, asked the board to allow driving school teachers Randy Miller of M&S Driving School and Mark Beach of Mark's Driving School to test the driver's education students. She said that they are able to test if they are associated with Lackawanna Trail.

"They have clearances," she told the board. "They're good for all these other schools. Talk to them. Find out more about it because it's the parents and the children that are affected, not them. We want to be able to have the choice of not going to the state police barracks to have a state trooper be the one to test our child. We would like to have a friendly face with our child if that be the case."

School director Joseph Strauch asked the board if they can incur liability, and asked Miller and Beach if they are applying to become employees of the school.

"We are neutral, independent businesses that have liability, our clearances, and everything on file with the Department of Education," said Beach. "We provide services to people who come with us. If the school district's requests are assistance in testing the students, then we can give them the driving tests and give them their licenses but it has to come as a request from the school district."

Parent Christy Clarke asked the board if anyone would like to comment on why the reluctance of allowing this to the school district.

"As I understand it, by not affiliating, we're not precluding students from being educated by them (Miller and Beach)," Board member Dr. Michael Mould said.

"We're not asking you to tell people they have to do this. All we want is the opportunity to be able to do it," said Clarke.

Mould replied that the school offers billboards, in which they (Miller and Beach) can purchase advertising, in the gymnasium.

"We're looking at the parents that are paying for the services. We should be given that extra ability to use them (Miller and Beach) for testing, which we can't do until you let them decide to let them be associated," Strauch said.

Board member Carol Selwood brought up the fact that students have to pay \$400 for six out of 50 hours required for driving lessons. She also said that the board is not stopping anybody from looking in the Yellow Pages and using their services.

Clarke replied that Lackawanna Trail used to pay for driver's education when they offered it for the high school and did not include all the lessons required for a driver's license.

"Those (parents), that care enough to have their child get a special lesson, should be given the opportunity to have that person test them," said Strauch.

Clarke asked board member Kevin Mulhern why Lackawanna Trail shouldn't use Miller and Beach to test the students.

"I feel that a student should go to the state police barracks and get tested," Mulhern replied. "Those guys have been doing this for a hundred years and they're experts at it."

In other business, superintendent Matthew Rakauskas announced in his report that the Bring Your Own Device Program, which began on Nov. 3, is off to a nice start. He said that last week, students got to use their own device. He also announced that beginning next week, elementary students will be able to use a smart device to look for a book at the library.

"Mrs. Kelly (Hopkins), our elementary librarian, has taken a number of books and gave them QR codes, so as students decide which book they might want to check out, they can literally take their smart device, scan the code, and watch a trailer of the book," he announced. "So, that's up and coming next week."

High school principal Dr. Mark Murphy, in his secondary report, commented that the high school is taking baby steps in the BYOD program.

"I've been able to observe several classes and seeing how the BYOD initiative is being fleshed out in classes," he said.

Murphy said that in teacher Thomas Lengel's science class, he was using a slow motion camera app during a lab to capture the rate and speed of a ball dropping into a cylinder. He said that the students were using two different apps for that function and comparing which one more accurate. He also said that teacher Claire L. Signorello was using charting and graphing apps with her statistics class, taking data, and compiling it into spreadsheets.

Murphy also announced that Kristen Kurpis, instructional technology specialist, will be presenting the top 100 apps, which could be integrated into the curriculum on Nov. 19.

In other news, the board made a motion to appoint Leslie Grega full-time secretarial position at the probation rate of \$15.20 per hour, as stipulated in the collective bargaining. School director Joseph Strauch abstained because only a superintendent can appoint a secretary. Motion was still carried.

In other business, the board approved to appoint Judy Kwiatkowski as a volunteer girls' basketball coach for the 2014-15 school year, all clearances on file.

In other business, the board approved to accept with regret business manager Dave Homish's resignation to be effective June 30, 2015. Joseph Strauch abstained saying that the resignations are unilateral decisions, not requiring acceptance. Motion was still carried.