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Board receives update on construction projects

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Updates on the construction project of both the Lackawanna Trail Elementary Center and the Lackawanna Trail Jr, Sr. High School were offered at the school board meeting, July 13. Director of Transportation Rick Kordish told board members that the McClure Company is struggling with the high school's roof from the 1976 section.

"It's a coal and tar roof, and that's what it is. coal and tar," Kordish said. They (McClure Company) have to cut it (roof) in two-foot sections to remove it, and it's coming up hard."

Kordish also reported that the ventilators for both schools would, hopefully, be delivered the next day (July 14) and be installed.

"I'm hoping to have the maintenance crew here (elementary center) to start cleaning this building because we have nothing done down here," he stated. "The high school, we're ahead on, The first floor is almost done. The second floor needs to be done, so we're in good shape there."

Board member Michael Mould asked if McClure Company will be finished on time.

Kordish replied, "McClure assured me they will be ready by the 21st (of August), whatever it takes."

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas then commented, "They (McClure Company) are working some Saturdays. They worked the Saturday two days ago for the first time, and I believe they're scheduled to work this Saturday.

"They may work this Sunday, too, if they get decent weather."

Kordish also said the stone on the roof will be removed and replaced with insulation, offering a large energy savings. "It's going to be a big plus for the Trail district," he said. "The kids are going to be warm, safe and dry and we're going to save money."

Kordish also mentioned that the gyms of both schools will have LED lights.

"You're going from 400 watts to 130 watts," he told the board. "It's substantial savings in electricity."

He also said the parking lot lights will be 200 watts, compared to their current 1,000 watts, emphasizing that the lights will last much longer,

Board vice president Ned Clarke, who filled in for president David Thorne, thanked Kordish for the update. He also thanked new business manager Keith S. Glynn for his hard work on the upcoming budget and for working hand-in-hand with former business manager David Homish.

"I believe, personally, that you are going to be a valuable asset to this school district and community, too," said Clarke. Glynn then reported the board is in the final stages of the general operating budget and said, that after approval, it will have 15 days to submit the budget to the state.

"The bond has closed, so we can begin paying McClure for their project and the hard work that they've been doing," he said.

Glynn also thanked elementary principal Brian Kelly, high school principal Mark Murphy, special education director Stephanie Russell and Kordish for working with him on the budget details.

Field trips

In other business, board member Joseph Ross asked if there is a hidden cost for the board if it approves high school field trips, including Kevin Dikeman's (marching band director) request to take approximately 90 students to Lehigh University in Bethlehem on May 13, 2016, and Denise Collins' (French teacher) request to take 12 students to the Student Council State Conference in Harrisburg on Nov. 14-16, 2015.

"In the last three months, we've been fighting the budget," Ross said. "We made some tough decisions, I think every penny needs to be looked at."

Murphy explained there will be a cost of transportation and costs for Dikeman, Collins and an adult chaperone for each trip.

"I think it will be prudent for me to approach not just Mr. Dikeman or Ms. Collins, but other groups this year to say if they are going to take these trips, they literally must factor in those costs, and pass those costs on the students," he said.

Murphy then said he has denied several requests for field trips which he believed were not at the same education level as these two trips.

"These are two trips that I feel certainly have value and high priorities," he said. "But I agree with Mr. Ross that we're saying that there is no cost to the district in the motion, but I should go back and pass that cost to the group in some way, shape, or form."

Murphy explained that Dikeman is planning to take a bus with the students for the field trip, and if the trip is approved, money will have to be raised for the school buses.

In Mr. Dikeman's case, I know that there is a Friends of Music group that they can approach and ask about that," he said. "In Ms. Collins' case, there is money in the student council fund to cover those costs."

Board member Carol Selwood asked if the board could wait until next meeting when it sees the costs.

Ross added, "I think every penny has to be watched. When you look at the bill listings, there are bus and transportation costs in here. It's not our school bus. We're paying a contractor for that bus."

Kordish said the bus costs \$3 a mile, plus a retention time on the driver. Murphy said he could calculate the substitute rate and transportation costs.

The board agreed to table the field trips, including three elementary field trips, until it gets financial information.

In other business, Clarke reported that high school learning support algebra teacher Wendy Cathrall will be conferred tenure on Aug. 25, 2015. Rakauskas elaborated that Cathrall has been teaching for three years at Lackawanna Trail and after three years of satisfactory service, a teacher picks up his or her tenure on the first school day of the fourth year.

"I will like to congratulate Wendy Cathrall," Rakauskas said. "She's going into her fourth year with all satisfactory ratings, and she has achieved tenure in Pennsylvania."