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Youth coach makes plea to school board for soccer program at Lackawanna Trail

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FACTORYVILLE — Jayson Prutzman, soccer coach of the Trail Youth Recreation League urged the school board to consider starting a soccer program in the district at a recent meeting.

Prutzman presented a petition to the school board Oct. 13 with 100 signatures from parents of Lackawanna Trail students to start a soccer program in the district. Trail Youth is not affiliated with the district.

“We have 160 kids playing soccer for Trail Youth right now,” he said. “And every year, that number seems to grow and grow.”

Prutzman said his son, who is a sixth grade student at Lackawanna Trail, has been playing soccer for Trail Youth since it started seven years ago. He said playing soccer teaches children life lessons, such as teamwork and communication. He also said there are many scholarships for soccer.

“We’re one of the few school districts around here that doesn’t have soccer,” he said.

Prutzman also said that according to athletic directors from other schools, college coaches, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education website, soccer is the least expensive sport to start up.

He said that he doesn’t expect Lackawanna Trail to shoulder the burden of the whole amount. He suggested that Trail to do fundraisers or obtain grants.

High school principal Mark Murphy thanked Prutzman for recognizing and understanding Trail’s budget situation. He also commended him for researching the prices of soccer programs from other schools.

“You mentioned the financial aspect of it,” he said. “It seems like you’ve done a lot of research.”

Murphy asked Prutzman to someday go over the information he researched from the Pennsylvania Department of Education website. Prutzman agreed to Murphy’s proposition.

Todd Wescott, president of Trail Youth Rec League mentioned that the league built a small budget with seed money donated by the Factoryville Men’s Civic League.

“I think there’s opportunities for us to generate funds,” he said.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said that the biggest obstacle would be the cost of the program. He said that hiring coaches alone will most likely cost about \$10,000. Board member Kevin Mulhern suggested for the high school to get a list of students who would be interested in playing varsity soccer.

Board president David Thorne said that the board can’t currently make a decision because there needs to be research completed, including the budget. He said that he’s going with Mulhern’s idea of getting a survey to see which students are still interested in playing soccer.

Prutzman said he would be willing to help with the research.

In other news, high school student Grace Gallagher, member of Pink Paws for a Cause, read aloud a letter honoring the late elementary teacher Lois Foley, who lost her battle with breast cancer in January.

“Beyond being an amazing teacher, she (Foley) was a friend to every single student, always being caring, kind, and oh-so-simply fabulous,” said Gallagher.

Gallagher announced that this year Pink Paws for a Cause raised \$6,425, and throughout the eight years, raised \$60,651. She thanked the whole school district for their support.

“Going on from here, we are continuing not as Pink Paws for a Cause, but as Foley’s Fighters,” she said. “Lois was much more than ‘pink,’ but rather a true fighter,” she said.

Gallagher said that she talked with Foley’s husband, sister, and members of the community, who agreed that the money for years to come to be used for something big for the community and/or district. She said that the future money will be used to update the elementary school’s playground.

“Lois loved to see children laughing, playing, and being the silly kids they are,” she said. “With the money raised staying with the community or district, her memory can live on in a place she loved.”

In other business, the board voted to approve:

- Ethan Johnson’s resignation as junior high wrestling coach and appointment as an assistant wrestling coach at a stipend of \$3,900.
- Lori Swanchak as a volunteer girls’ basketball coach.
- Nancy Brown’s appointment as yearbook advisor at a stipend of \$2,800.