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Lackawanna Trail School Board votes ‘no’ on proposed soccer program

By Ben Freda - For Abington Journal

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FACTORYVILLE —Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas announced March 14 the Lackawanna Trail School District will not pursue a soccer program.

Rakauskas said he weighed the pros and cons of starting a Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association soccer program at Lackawanna Trail. The school board ultimately decided not to start a soccer program due to the following issues: obtaining a policy, teachers obtaining athletic eligibility, the availability of soccer fields, and commitment.

High school assistant principal Brian Kearney said although there are school districts, such as Valley View and Lakeland, willing to help Trail with soccer practice, they are limited to 18 regular season games and two exhibition games.

“Even though we schedule what we call practice, that would still be considered a scrimmage because it’s two schools going against,” he said. “Even though it’s (soccer) a club sport, those schools are bound by PIAA rules and parameters.”

Rakauskas said he appreciates the students’ enthusiasm for soccer.

“There’s simply too many negatives to outweigh the positives at this time, although I do feel for the students,” he said.

In other business, Lynn Stevenson, retired teacher of the Lackawanna Trail School District, said that she talked to Rep. Karen Boback and Sen. John Blake about what will be the best option on getting a cap on the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School tuition. Since Lackawanna Trail is part of Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19, the district can give the students an option of either coming to the district’s cyber charter school with no tuition or paying tuition at another.

“I’m waiting for their (Boback and Blake) legislative aids to get back to me,” she said. “I would just like direction from the board. I’ve already been in touch with the parents. They’re more than willing to help.”

Thorne said that he will help her obtain petitions. He asked her to set a meeting with the legislative aids.

Rakauskas mentioned that when a student is considering leaving Lackawanna Trail to attend a cyber charting school, Kearney, high school principal Mark Murphy, and elementary principal Brian Kelly work individually with the students and parents to keep them in Lackawanna Trail.

“For the students who absolutely want to go to a cyber school, we much prefer they go to the NEIU’s program called NOLA, (Northeast Online Learning Academy) in lieu of another place,” he said.

Rakauskas said that Bob McTiernan, executive director of NEIU 19, wants more students to go to the NOLA program. He said that the NOLA programs are starting in the Carbondale Area School District. He said that the Lackawanna Trail School District is next to speak with the representatives of the NOLA program.

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