

Trail deal adds \$1.9M

Posted by wceditor on 12/18/13 • Categorized as

News

BY ROBERT L. BAKER Wyoming County Press Examiner

Lackawanna Trail School Board voted Thursday night to approve a Memorandum of Agreement that will bring the district \$1.9 million in revenue over the next decade.

The special meeting was called, board president Mark Lombardi said, because a previous agreement to enter into a Keystone Opportunity Zone arrangement did not meet state requirements.

He called an executive committee meeting Monday and the Thursday meeting grew out of a concern about having a signed memorandum by Dec. 31.

For awhile, board member Joe Strauch challenged the concept of KOZ's and particularly felt that a property located between State Rts. 107 and 438 near I-81 actually looked like it might be a great spot for a pipeline.

He said he felt the district would be giving up too much if it entered into a 10-year agreement with limited partners Greystone Benton I and Greystone Benton II.

"Hopefully, it will help in rehabilitating an existing structure and provide for a corporate park," Strauch said, "but we're prohibited from calling it in for reassessment if it becomes lucrative.

Board member David Thorn said he would "take a bird in the hand over two in the bush and we don't have the ability to raise a wage tax if we wanted."

Board member Michael Mould said he was willing to hear Strauch out.

"Based on interests, give us an alternative scenario so we can weigh this out. Tell me what you think is the best assessment out there," he said.

Strauch said he didn't believe in the KOZ concept, period, but couldn't give out an alternative scenario at this time.

Board president Lombardi said that "due diligence had been addressed and these folks have provided \$100,000 a year in recent years.

Board member Carol Selwood said, "It's not against the law to speculate, but we can't base our decisions on what might or might not happen. I'd rather know that we have the money."

Board member Kevin Mulhern said the document needed to be signed by Dec. 31, if the arrangement with the district was to move forward.

With that Lombardi called for a vote, which passed 8-1, with Strauch voting against.

The board also gave its okay to the resignation of nurse long-term substitute Kirsten McIntyre by a 9-0 vote and also by the same vote moved that Storm Talluto be appointed to the position.

In his superintendent's report, Matt Rakauskas noted that the district had expended two "snow days" and school would now be in session on January 20 and April 17 as make-up days.