

Trail board learns of AD Powell's resignation

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The Lackawanna Trail School Board held its first work session of the New Year on Monday (Jan. 7) and addressed next week's meeting agenda, which is expected to include the retirement of longtime athletic director Harry Powell as well as an Act I resolution to hold the line on taxes.

The board expects to accept the retirement request of Powell at the end of the 2018-19 school year, and notes there will be many shoes to fill as he was also chair of the language arts department, extra-curricular equipment manager and extra-curricular golf coach.

He has been with the Trail school district since 1985, and since 2006 has served as athletic director.

The board also discussed a move to approve a resolution in accordance with Act I of 2001. The Department of Education established an index of 3.0 percent for Lackawanna Trail, so the school district will not be allowed to raise the rate of property tax support of its public schools for the 2019-20 fiscal year beyond that index, although there are some special exceptions.

During the work session, one person in attendance from the public reminded the board "it's our money that you're spending" and mentioned that his health insurance recently increased \$200 per month. Having to pay higher school taxes would cause more difficulties, he noted.

"You need to know the reality of the way people live," he said.

David Thorne, the school board's president, said he would love to see no tax increase whatsoever, and that the district has moved in a positive direction going forward.

The district is back to the same funding level from 2011, said Keith Glynn, business manager.

While Gov. Tom Wolf restored funding cuts from those imposed when former Gov. Tom Corbett was in office, he only restored them to what they were and nothing more, Thorne said.

Board treasurer Michael Mould mentioned valid state evidence indicates that about 45 states fund public education to a greater degree than Pennsylvania.

"We're on our own more than citizens of other states," Mould said.

Another person in attendance from the public asked if contracts for newer teachers are the same as older teachers. While the state sets the pension costs, newer teachers are on the lower end of the scale and work their way up, the board assured him.

The board also discussed how costs from charter schools negatively impact the district's finances, as they have to pay for students within the district to attend them. Another issue that came up is how students who attend charter schools and eventually return to the district are not always up to par with other students.

Glynn encouraged people to talk to their state legislators about this issue and the possibility of changing the funding formula.

The board next Monday will also make a move to approve teacher Mary Belle Gilroy's field trip request to take her art classes to the Brandywine River Museum of Art in Chadds Ford and the Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square on Thursday, May 9. This trip would be at no expense to the district.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board will meet again on Monday, Jan. 14 in the First National Bank auditorium at Lackawanna Trail High School instead of the elementary school.

A presentation on the district's test scores, including PSSAs, Keystone Exams and a school performance profile, will also be given at the meeting. There will also be some recognitions of the state finalist football team.