

Trail board taps into recognitions

Brooke Williams/ Published: January 16, 2019

The Lackawanna Trail School Board had a regular meeting Monday night, where students, the Factoryville Fire Company and the school board itself was honored.

Board president David Thorne began the meeting by recognizing the high school football team, who were state silver medalists in Hershey on Dec. 5.

“But there’s more to it in my opinion,” Thorne said, noting that the team members fought through adverse weather conditions and played their hearts out. He also mentioned how it was the first team from Lackawanna Trail to represent the area down there.

“They brought a community together,” Thorne said. “I saw more community pride this past year than I’ve seen in many years.”

Thorne also recognized the cheerleaders and marching band members for their contributions and support and presented members of the football team with a plaque.

The board also presented another plaque to representatives from the Factoryville Fire Company.

Thorne commented on how the fire company has always been supportive of Lackawanna Trail events, from graduations to football games, and how they do Fire Prevention Week at the elementary school.

Most recently, the fire company organized a parade to bring the kids home after the championship game.

“They’re kind of the unsung heroes around here, and they have done so much to support Trail and support this community,” Thorne said.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said every January, the Pennsylvania School Board Association recognizes school board members for their service.

Brian Kearney, principal of the elementary center, thanked the board members for their dedication. In years past, students have donated books to the school library in honor of board members, but they decided to mix it up this year.

Instead, they created posters during their library period with quotes representing the dedication of the board, Kearney said. He noted that he wanted students to understand also what a board of education does.

The sixth grade students stood in a line with their posters and took turns reading a speech they prepared. The framed posters will be on display in the elementary center library.

In continuation of board recognition, high school principal Mark Murphy invited the board members to visit the school on Thursday, Feb. 7, for School Board Appreciation Day to talk to students about public service or their professional lives, eat a meal from the family and consumer science class and receive a building tour from the student council.

They are also going to dedicate the boy’s basketball game against Montrose on Tuesday, Feb. 5, to the school board.

During the meeting, the board unanimously passed a resolution that the district would not raise the tax rate for the 2018-19 school year by more than a state imposed index of 3.0 percent.

The board also unanimously acknowledged the retirement of English teacher Harry Powell at the conclusion of this school year, as well as his resignation as language arts department chair, athletic director, equipment manager and golf coach, all of which are effective June 30.

Board member Kevin Mulhern said he was in Powell's second year class as a senior, and at that time, he had big shoes to fill when another longtime teacher before him retired.

"Whoever replaces Harry Powell has some very big shoes to fill as well. He filled that role with dignity and pride," Mulhern said.

The board also approved Ray Oswald as a bus driver.

A field trip request from Mary Belle Gilroy to take her art classes to the Brandywine River Museum of Art in Chadds Ford and Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square in May, which would be at no cost to the district, was also approved.

The board held an executive session beforehand to discuss a solicitor's report and personnel issues, Thorne said.

Before adjourning, Kearney and Murphy presented school performance profiles for their respective schools.

Kearney presented PSSA scores from third through sixth grade.

Third graders performed 3.2 percent above the state average in English language arts and 3.4 percent below the state average in math.

Fourth graders performed 9.3 percent above the state average for English language arts, 3.6 percent above the state average for math and 14.2 percent above the state average for science.

Fifth graders performed 2.3 percent below the state average in English language arts and 5.9 percent below the state average in math.

Sixth graders performed 6.9 percent above the state average for English language arts and 9.7 percent below the state average in math.

Murphy presented PSSA and Keystone scores for the upper level students.

In 2018, 52.9 percent of seventh graders scored proficient or advanced on the math PSSA, which is above the state average of 38.9.

For English language arts, 71.4 percent of seventh graders scored advanced or proficient, which is above the state average of 61.9 percent.

In the eighth grade, 36.3 percent of students scored advanced or proficient in math, which is above the state average of 31.1.

In English language arts, 65.2 percent of eighth graders scored proficient or advanced in math, which is above the state average of 61.5 percent.

In science, 68.1 of eighth graders scored proficient or advanced, which is above the state average of 53.9.

Murphy also announced Keystone scores for all testers.

In algebra I, 34 percent of test takers scored advanced or proficient, below the state average of 40.9. In literature, 57.3 percent of test takers scored advanced or proficient, below the state average of 58.1. In biology, 51.3 percent of test takers scored advanced or proficient, above the state average of 48.9.

They also took a quick look at the new Future Ready Index, which can be viewed on futureready.pa.gov.

In the 2019-20 school year, Murphy said the high school will begin offering the PSAT to tenth graders in addition to eleventh graders and also offer the SAT in both the fall and spring. There will be a continued focus on college prep and the district will focus on improving the issue of "chronically absent" students.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board will meet again for a work session on Monday, Feb. 4, at 7:30 p.m.