

MUHLENBERG SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
February 14, 2024  
Lecture Hall, Muhlenberg High School  
[www.muhsdk12.org](http://www.muhsdk12.org)

**Call to Order**

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District was called to order on Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at 6:31 PM by Board President, Mrs. Garret E. Hyneman.

**Members Present**

President – Mr. Garrett E. Hyneman  
Vice President – Mrs. Kristyna Eagle  
Treasurer – Mr. Miguel Vasquez  
Secretary – Mrs. Cindy L. Mengle  
Assistant Secretary – Ms. Janet Howard  
Member – Mr. Ronald J. Haas, Sr.  
Member – Mr. S. Wayne Hardy  
Member – Mr. Otto W. Voit, III  
Solicitor – Mr. Brian F. Boland, Esq.  
Recording Secretary – Mrs. Tara L. Flowers

**Members Absent**

Member – Mr. Andrew L. Eaton, Sr.

**Administration Present**

Superintendent – Dr. Joseph E. Macharola  
Assistant Superintendent - Dr. Alan S. Futrick  
Business Manager- Shane M. Mathias, CPA  
Director of Physical Plant – Mr. Ken Patterson  
Director of Federal Programs - Dr. Cathy Shappell  
Director of Special Education - Ms. Nicole Huntbach  
Supervisor of Special Education - Ms. Lori Morris  
Supervisor of Special Education - Dr. Janet Heilman  
Director of Human Resources - Dr. Jessica Heffner  
Licensed Behavior Specialist - Mr. Zachariah Milch  
Director of Technology - Mr. Daniel Houck  
Director of Food Services - Mr. Carey Kline  
Community & Family Outreach Coord. & Distr. Interpreter – Ms. Elizabeth Laviena  
High School Assistant Principal - Ms. Julianna Ciccarelli  
High School Assistant Principal - Mr. Aaron Kopetsky  
Junior High School Assistant Principal - Mr. Daniel Kramer  
Junior High School Assistant Principal - Ms. Jennifer Doyle  
C.E. Cole Intermediate Assistant Principal - Ms. Jaclyn Bellanca  
C.E. Cole Intermediate Assistant Principal - Mr. Joseph Scoboria  
Elementary Principal - Mr. Kyle Crater  
Elementary Assistant Principal - Ms. Leila McGill

Social Worker - Ms. Lauren Heydt  
Social Worker - Ms. Liliana Moore  
Social Worker - Ms. Emily Carmichael  
Social Worker - Ms. Amanda Foulds

### **Visitors**

Diane Benson	Wendy Hromiak
Linda Roebuck	Jesse Todero
Melissa Carroll	Marc Wolfe
Savanna Flowers	Nick Gehringer
Harry Hollenbach	Rebecca Torres
Shawn Hollenbach	Isabella Torres
Karen Flowers	Matthew DeAngelis
Gabrielle Gonzalez	Emily DeAngelis
Cheryl Auchenbach	Kamila DeAngelis
Addison DeAngelis	

### **Educational Presentations**

- A. Muhlenberg Elementary Center Student Council - Ms. Isabella Torres, Ms. Savanna Flowers, Ms. Emily DeAngelis, Ms. Wendy Hromiak and Ms. Jesse Todero

Ms. DeAngelis, Ms. Torres, and Ms. Flowers introduced themselves as members of the MEC student council. Ms. DeAngelis advised that tonight they would like to talk about the great programs at MEC to recognize students and classes who are doing an amazing things.

Ms. Torres reported:

First of all, MEC has a Golden Tray award. Every day at lunch her class sits at two cafeteria tables. Each table has a green, yellow, and red cup at the end of it. If her class is doing a great job at using manners and following the High Five rules, the green cup stays on the top. If one of the cafeteria workers has to speak to anyone in the class about inappropriate behavior, the yellow cup moves to the top. She bets everyone can guess what happens to have the red cup moved to the top.

Ms. Flowers reported:

When the teacher picks the class up from lunch, he/she takes a look at the cup color at the end of the table. When the class gets back to the classroom the students fill out the cup tracker. Every few weeks the students turn in the paper to the principals and a Golden Tray winner is picked from the classes who have had all green cups for that time. Her class won the golden tray 2 times. The class usually has it hanging outside of the classroom so everyone can see it. If they win the Golden Tray twice, the class gets to have an ice cream party.

Ms. DeAngelis reported:

Another honor the students have is the chance to be a Cool Muhl. Each month the teachers choose one student from his or her class who has done an excellent job following the High Five rules and being a role model for other students in the class. These students are announced during lunch time and receive a special lanyard and a certificate recognizing the student as the Cool Muhl. The student's picture is then displayed on the special Cool Muhl wall near the cafeteria. She was lucky enough to be the Cool Muhl for her class in October this year.

Ms. Torres reported:

Finally, the student council wants to talk about the School Store. At MEC they start every day by saying the Pledge of Allegiance just like everyone did tonight. After that, the students all say the High Five Pledge: "I am a Muhlenberg Elementary Center Student, I am responsible, respectful, and ready to work. I follow directions, I use self control." These are the five rules the students all try to follow every day. If a student is "caught" following these rules, a teacher may give a High Five. The school High Five has two pages, one that is given to take home to show family and the yellow page goes in a holder in the classroom.

Ms. Flowers reported:

Every month the classes get the chance to go shopping at the school store, but instead of buying things with money, the students get to buy things with the High Five slips earned. Mrs. Hromiak and Miss Todero pick out about twelve items to sell and the students get to make a video showing these items to all of the students in school. Then classes go to the school store and students can choose to buy one item that costs between one and twenty High Fives. The students are truly lucky enough to have great volunteers like Mr. Crater's parents and Mr. and Mrs. Hyneman to run our store during the school day.

Ms. DeAngelis reported:

As everyone can see, the students are doing a lot of great things at MEC and advised the board members to stop in at any time to see for themselves.

Questions/Comments/Concerns:

*Dr. Macharola thanked the students for their wonderful presentations and discussed how this is a wonderful example of the tremendous kids that the District has.*

*Mrs. Eagle talked about the students bringing visuals as they spoke, she wanted to applaud them for this. She talked about being in a leadership role and as they move through school to "hold" to that leadership role. Mrs. Eagles talked about the students being leaders to their classmates; it will help the school be a better place and thanked them for what they are doing.*

Mr. Hyneman spoke about him and his wife being in the elementary school about three days a week. He talked about this being an example of what's in the school; tons of wonderful kids. He spoke about when he and his wife run the school store, including others, the kids are so well behaved and courteous that almost every class they give a "Class High Five." He joked about enjoying helping more than the kids do.

Mrs. Eagle talked to the board members about possibly donating prizes to the school store.

Mr. Voit talked about being super proud of the student council students and the fact that they know the Pledge of Allegiance and the High Five Pledge and asked each of them how and why they became involved in student council. Ms. Flowers responded that she wanted to help other people do what they needed to do and help the school. Ms. DeAngelis responded that she also really wanted to help the school. Ms. Torres advised she wanted to be the leader and to make the school better.

Ms. Howard asked the student council students what their flavor of ice cream was, each member took a turn answering.

Ms. Carroll also invited the student council students to the library to pick out a free book.

Dr. Macharola thanked everyone again and wanted to discuss the board's discussion regarding a virtual board meeting. He discussed the proposal obtained by the Director of Technology regarding the best package possible in consideration of the security measures necessary and professional quality. Dr. Macharola advised the price would be around \$47,000 plus an additional \$1,000 for annual maintenance. Mr. Haas responded this was a lot of money and is in favor of not doing it. Ms. Howard questioned the difference between having virtual meetings over COVID. Dr. Macharola advised that no one could see anyone during the meetings over COVID, the scope was panoramic and didn't have the control that was necessary. He discussed that this new option does not allow the ability to speak since there is no way to "vet" and security is a big issue today. Dr. Macharola discussed doing this the correct way and having the ability to see who is talking and being able to broadcast so everyone is heard when speaking. Mr. Voit agreed with Mr. Haas that it is a lot of money, however as elected officials the board has the responsibility of the community in quorum; and since the newspaper does not show up at meetings now to communicate effectively with the community. He spoke about with today's technology, the ability to watch it live or later on to see what is going on in their community is incumbent upon them as elected officials to do everything they can to inform the community what is going on. Mrs. Eagle advised that she agreed with Mr. Voit. Mrs. Mengle asked if there was a way to do a trial period to see how it works before getting it. Dr. Macharola advised that there was no trial period, and explained this is the best option for a public meeting. Mr. Haas questioned if there was a way to track how many "views." Dr. Macharola explained that all that data

*is part of the package. Mr. Voit discussed communicating that there will be virtual meetings via the newsletter and other avenues to get the word out to the community and to get the views up.*

B. Physical Plant Update - Mr. Ken Patterson

Mr. Patterson reported:

- Maintenance and Custodial Staff update - Maintenance crews both inside and outside took advantage of the mild weather these past couple weeks and cleaned the coils, all the rooftop HVAC units to get them ready for the upcoming cooling season. Outside crews have also been getting the mowing equipment ready for spring which is fast approaching. In addition, both maintenance and custodial crews cleared two snow events these last four weeks, including the one yesterday. Inside maintenance crews continue to take care of staff requests through the work order system and custodial crews continue to play their part in helping orchestrate winter sports, spring sports indoor practices and community activities as well as continuing to do a great job keeping the District's buildings clean and safe.
- Muhlenberg Township Zoning Hearing Update - The District was supposed to have a zoning hearing meeting on Wednesday, February 7th to present the District's case for three zoning variances related to proposed new 5th and 6th grade building. Unfortunately the hearing was postponed and rescheduled for Wednesday, March 6th at 7pm.
- Football Stadium Turf Acceptance of Bid - Phase one of the MSD capital campaign consists of four projects staged in a manner that allow for continued use of the campus facilities while the projects are being completed. The first project is the installation of turf on the stadium football field. Proposals for that project were opened on February 1st and before the board is a resolution to accept the lowest proposal received from Schlouch Incorporated. Funds to pay for this project would come from the bond issue back in November of 2023.
- Additional 4th Grade Learning Lab - The board also has the resolution to add an additional modular unit on to the current modular configuration outside of C.E. Cole Intermediate. This unit is needed to service those students in 4th grade that require special education and ESL support. The funds to pay for this project would be used from the remaining ESSER III funds.
- Mobile Modular and Richey Athletics Capital Reserve Request - Lastly, before the board tonight are two capital reserve requests, one is for athletics to replace the pole vault pits up on the track and the other one is to authorize final payment to Mobile Modular for the modular installation that took place this past summer.

Questions/Comments/Concerns:

*Dr. Macharola took a moment to thank Governor Shapiro as he is extremely grateful and happy to see this Governor invest in public education. Dr. Macharola talked about the budget information is still very "grapefruit" and preliminary numbers have been presented. He spoke about the District having a plan to go to the highest level so that the District can pay into the District's debt service and still operate; putting the District's money wisely where it needs to be to pay for the 180 million dollar project and to do that the District needs to continue following the plan.*

C. Preliminary Budget Review: Governor Shapiro/MSD - Mr. Shane M. Mathias, CPA

Mr. Mathias reported:

This is the preliminary budget from the Governor and probably not going to be what the District sees in the finish line. He discussed this being the origin of opinion of the Governor's budget; obviously pro public education but also the fair funding lawsuit. The decision came out about a year ago and they formed a basic education funding commission because of this, to look into what the state can do about funding to make it more equal and to fix the problem. That's been a year in the process. They have been doing a lot of hearings, and now they have made a recommendation to Governor Shapiro. He is using this recommendation and that is why everyone is seeing substantial increases. He agrees he is pro public education but he is taking that recommendation from the basic ed funding commission and putting it into his budget. The fair funding commission is saying that public education is under funded by 7 billion dollars. Their plan is to put 1.1 billion dollars into public education every year for the next six years; that's the plan that the Governor is following. The Republicans in both the Senate and the House do not agree with that proposal. This is where some of these numbers are coming from. It is 1.1 billion and it's 900 million dollars in the adequacy investment; that's the BFC's new formula piece and 200 million into the formula distribution in which the current formula exists. For Muhlenberg, this means 5.5 million dollars additional money in basic ed funding; that is 55% increase over the District's current allocation. That is the second highest in the entire state of Pennsylvania in terms of increases and percentage of the District's current allocation. How it plays out will be interesting, however it is a big number. With the special education funding there are 3 components. There is a \$118, 000 increase which is a reasonable number and he feels comfortable budgeting this. In terms of the Ready to Learn Block Grant they amended the school code related to the grant and are giving the District \$500,000 more this year in additional funding; and this is a future amendment carried forward for all future subsequent years. This will come off the table in terms of negotiations and will be in the budget. This is a very restricted funding source for specific target programs, some of which is definitely needed here in Muhlenberg, however this money cannot be used for general operations. Overall it is a 6.2 million dollar increase based on the Governor's budget; that's about 4.79 mils in a year which is huge. This isn't the only money that the District received from the state; the District also receives retirement subsidy, social security subsidy, transportation subsidy and some other funding sources however these are not up for debate and can be calculated easily. If the eight years were added up with basic ed increases, the total is 5.1 million dollars. The Governor's proposal for

this one year is greater than the increases the District received over the last eight years.

Questions/Comments/Concerns:

*Dr. Macharola thanked Mr. Mathias for his presentation and his appreciation of what those numbers from the budget mean for the District as he sends the board almost daily updates. Mrs. Eagle discussed one of the things the schools need are teachers. She explained within the budget they are putting out a stipend for student teachers and mentors and this is very important to her. She talked about showing teachers that they are valued right from the start. Dr. Macharola agreed.*

*Dr. Macharola talked about the Muhlenberg boys basketball team playing Reading tonight for playoffs at the Santander. He also wanted to speak about the current AFJROTC program and since coming out of COVID the numbers have subsided. Dr. Macharola talked about the program receiving a warning, just after receiving a distinguished unit award. He advised that he will not let this program go as they are currently down to 80 students. He discussed the students needing to continue to follow protocol. He is working with administration in promoting the values of the AFJROTC and to get the students involved. Dr. Macahrola talked about this not just being the AFJROTC program, they are trying to get every student involved in something as these activities are important for the students, the District has a short period of time to get the AFJROTC program back to the level where it needs to be or the District wont have it. He discussed knowing the difficulties that the District has now, things have changed, however the District cannot lose this program. He asked everyone present to "put a plug in" to the kids when seeing them. Dr. Macharola spoke about the values of the program and the wonderful instructors running it, urging the board members and administrators to continue to support this program. Mr. Voit asked how many cadets were necessary. Dr. Macharola responded that the District needed 100 by October this year. Dr. Futrick spoke about one of the things the District's JROTC does is to take people up into the airplane for flights; they are looking for people willing to fly and some of our administrators including Dr. Macharola has done this. Dr. Macharola advised this is a wonderful experience.*

**Hearing of Visitors** - Muhlenberg School District taxpayers and residents have an opportunity, at this time, to comment on matters of concern, official action, or deliberation which are or may be before the Muhlenberg School Board. ***This period of time is for comments only; it is not a time to engage in a question and answer or debate with the board. Comments from the Board are at the option of the Board.*** The Board retains the option to accept all public comment at this time. Presentations ***will*** be limited to two minutes per person. In the event that the Board determines that there is not sufficient time for residents or taxpayers of the School District to comment, the Board may defer the comment period to the next regular meeting.

Melissa Carroll- Muhlenberg Community Library

Ms. Carroll introduced herself as the Director of the Muhlenberg Community Library. She discussed having one of the District's JROTC students in one of their teen programs and the teen had nothing to say but wonderful things about the AFJROTC program and how it gets her through her personal life problems she was going through and how it was a "rock" for her. Ms. Carroll advised if the District needed the library to post anything they would be willing to help. She spoke about the library's end of the year statistics; total circulation last year was 60,703, there were 38,558 visits to the library with 5,792 people attending their programs, 216 programs offered, 399 new registered users which she would like to get higher this year and other key statistics to look at. She discussed the prototype of their Spring Giving Newsletter; this will show everyone all of the things that the library has going on in the spring including a ton of new fundraisers and awesome programs. She advised they received a new grant for their teens, a teen technology grant being awarded 10 iPads and all of the components for the teens to put together their own computer. The teens put it together, keep it in the library and they get to use it; it was amazing to watch them all work together and do this. They are starting at the beginning of this year and/or hopefully next year a complete renovation of their youth services area. The youth services are very important to the library and they want the library to help support the students of the District. Being on the campus, one of the biggest reasons she took the director role was to work together to service the community and the children. She wanted all of the high school students to have library cards to help them with research, support and all kinds of things. Another goal is for the library to broaden their Spanish language adult books, there is a good amount of elementary and juvenile Spanish however their adult collection is not what it needs to be to serve the Muhlenberg community. She discussed being excited about next year working together and invited everyone to stop in.

Questions/Comments/Concerns:

*Dr. Macharola linked Ms. Lavienna, the District's Community and Family Outreach Engagement Coordinator and District Translator as she will be a valuable resource for the library.*

*Mr. Voit asked about the app for public libraries and is the Muhlenberg Community Library part of this. Ms. Carroll advised that anyone who has a library card in Berks County can be on this app; juveniles, adults, the offer many different services on the library cards including Access PA, Libby services, OverDrive services and numerous different heritage searches that they allow the patrons to use. She explained even if they are a teacher or student that does not live in Berks County, because going to school in Muhlenberg they can have all of the amenities that come with the library card.*

*Dr. Macharola pointed out that since Ms. Carroll has been the director at the library, the numbers have been going up and discussed having wonderful people working at the library.*



*Mr. Hyneman wanted to take a moment to talk about the experience he witnessed at the high school of such positive student interaction with the School Police Officer and Mr. Wolfe; and how this is such a great thing and having great conversation.*

## **Board Business**

### **Personnel**

#### **1. Classified Appointments**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following classified appointments:

- a. Ms. Gisselle Valencia-Diaz, Cafeteria Worker (A. Cline), C.E. Cole Intermediate, effective February 2, 2024, at a pay rate of \$19.79 per hour.
- b. Mr. Gregory Johnson, Special Education Paraprofessional (M. Schaeffer), Muhlenberg High School, effective February 15, 2024, at a pay rate of \$19.71 per hour.
- c. Ms. Joanne Pyott, Special Education Paraprofessional (B. Buckland), Muhlenberg Elementary Center, effective February 12, 2024, at a pay rate of \$19.71 per hour.

#### **2. Acceptance of Resignation**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District accept the following resignation:

- a. Ms. Kimberly Deibert, Reading Specialist, C.E. Cole Intermediate, resignation for the purpose of retirement, effective at the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

#### **3. Co-Curricular Appointments**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following co-curricular appointments:

- a. Ms. Kristina Antonellos, Grade Level Leader for Kindergarten, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, effective January 17, 2024, for the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year, at a salary of \$750, prorated for days worked.
- b. Mr. Stephen Collella, MHS Boys Lacrosse Head Coach, effective January 23, 2024, at a salary of \$4,350 (year 1).
- c. Mr. Tyler Seisler, MHS Spring Musical Stage Design, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$2,852 (year 7).
- d. Ms. Megan Dietrich, MHS Spring Musical Choreographer, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$2,987 (year 3).
- e. Mr. Rick Dietrich, MHS Spring Musical Sound Director, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$1,494 (year 3).

- f. Mr. Nathan Mohler, MHS Spring Musical Inst. Director, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$1,792 (year 4).
- g. Mr. Matthew Watson, MHS Spring Musical Lighting, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$1,584 (year 8).
- h. Mr. William Snelling, MHS Spring Musical Vocal Director, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$2,017 (year 13).
- i. Ms. Katie DiStefano, MHS Spring Musical Make-up, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$1,632 (year 9).
- j. Mr. William Snelling, MHS Spring Musical Co-Producer, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$1,885 (year 2).
- k. Ms. Amy Sharp, MHS Spring Musical Co-Producer, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$1,885 (year 2).
- l. Ms. Francine Galuska, MHS Spring Musical Costume, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$2,610 (year 1).
- m. Ms. Andrea Hart, MHS Spring Musical Director, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$5,675 (year 4).
- n. Mr. Marc Wolfe, MHS Spring Musical Business Manager, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$2,938 (year 10).
- o. Mr. Tyler Seisler, MHS Spring Musical Stage Manager, effective January 3, 2024, at a salary of \$2,900 (year 2).

#### **4. Completion of Probation**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the completion of probation for the following classified employees:

- a. Ms. Clavel Calletano, Special Education Paraprofessional, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, completion of forty-five (45) day probation as of January 11, 2024 and recommended for permanent employment as of January 12, 2024.
- b. Ms. Jessica Quintero, Cafeteria Worker, Muhlenberg High School, completion of forty-five (45) day probation as of January 17, 2024 and recommended for permanent employment as of January 18, 2024.
- c. Ms. Brenda Torres, Second Shift Custodian, Muhlenberg Junior High School, completion of thirty (30) day probation as of February 13, 2024 and recommended for permanent employment as of February 14, 2024.
- d. Ms. Alison Sherk, Class A Secretary, Muhlenberg Junior High School, completion of forty-five (45) day probation as of February 8, 2024 and recommended for permanent employment as of February 9, 2024.

#### **5. Mentor Assignments**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following mentor assignments at the professional rate of \$30.00 per hour for the 2023-2024 school year:

- a. Ms. Jennifer Pacharis, mentor for Ms. Carolina Ramos, Spanish Teacher, Muhlenberg Junior High School, for thirty (30) hours.
- b. Ms. Erika Watson, mentor for Ms. Katherine Gillen, Music Teacher, Muhlenberg Junior High School, for thirty (30) hours.
- c. Ms. Tara Clemens, mentor for Ms. Francine Galuska, Special Education Teacher, Muhlenberg Junior High School, for sixty (60) hours.
- d. Ms. Marci Harr, mentor for Ms. Jessica Heintzman, Elementary Teacher, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, for thirty (30) hours.
- e. Ms. Penny Vojtasek, mentor for Mr. Michael Granat, School Counselor, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, for thirty (30) hours.
- f. Ms. Cristina Lillis, mentor for Ms. Madison Wolf, Special Education Teacher, C.E. Cole Intermediate, for sixty (60) hours.
- g. Ms. Lyn Lapp, mentor for Ms. Ashley Roth, Special Education Teacher, C.E. Cole Intermediate, for sixty (60) hours.
- h. Ms. Alison Wallace, mentor for Mr. Benjamin Reifsnnyder, Elementary Teacher, C.E. Cole Intermediate, for thirty (30) hours.
- i. Ms. Julia Purcell, mentor for Mr. Kevin Maier II, Speech and Language Pathologist, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, for thirty (30) hours.

#### **6. Request for Leave of Absence/FMLA Leave**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the request for a Leave of Absence/FMLA leave for the following employees:

- a. Employee No. 2353, Class A Secretary, Leave of Absence/FMLA, effective on or about January 15, 2024 through on or about March 1, 2024.
- b. Employee No. 1024, Teacher, Leave of Absence/FMLA, effective on or about January 24, 2024 through on or about March 7, 2024.
- c. Employee No. 3172, Teacher, Leave of Absence/FMLA, effective on or about March 15, 2024 through on or about April 1, 2024.
- d. Employee No. 2513, Teacher, Intermittent FMLA, effective January 29, 2024.
- e. Employee No. 2191, Class A Secretary, Intermittent FMLA, effective January 18, 2024.

#### **7. Professional Appointments**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following professional appointments:

- a. Ms. Erin Gazzillo, Elementary Teacher (E. Wentzel), C.E. Cole Intermediate, effective February 9, 2024, at a salary of \$49,186 (B, 17 Steps from the Top), prorated for days worked.
- b. Ms. Stefanie Cerroni, Special Education Teacher (T. Adam), Muhlenberg High School, pending release from current employer, at a salary of \$69,609 (M, 10 Steps from the Top), prorated for days worked.

**8. Homebound Instruction Assignment**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following homebound instruction assignment at the professional rate of \$30.00 per hour for the 2023-2024 school year:

- a. Ms. Demi James, Homebound Instruction for student #38632, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, for up to 5 hours per week.

**Management**

**1. Adoption of Policies**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District adopt the following district policies:

200 Pupils

Policy No. 200, Enrollment of Students

Policy No. 202, Eligibility of Nonresident Students

Policy No. 217, Graduation

Policy No. 254, Educational Opportunity for Military Children

600 Finances

Policy No. 610, Purchases Subject to Bid/Quotation

800 Operations

Policy No. 810, Transportation

Policy No. 815, Use of Internet, Computers and Network Resources

**2. Emergency Disaster Relocation Agreement**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the emergency disaster relocation agreement for My First Steps Child Care Center to use the Muhlenberg Elementary Center, 610 Sharp Avenue, Reading, PA 19605.

**3. School Calendar for the 2024-2025 School Year**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the School Calendar for the 2024-2025 school year as presented.

Questions/Comments/Concerns:

*Mr. Haas asked if the District is still doing the half days for mental health. Dr. Macharola advised that they are there, however they are reduced drastically. Mr. Haas*

is questioning that with this current proposed calendar it comes to an extra week off. Dr. Macharola responded no, not even close and explained that it is a couple of hours. Mr. Haas advised he thought it was a half day, Dr. Macharola advised it is just a couple of hours and explained how each school has to have enough instructional time each year as well as 180 days. Dr. Macharola explained that the District is also using days for professional development, this year coming up the District looking at some days that may have to be adjusted and this is the need for the revision. Mr. Haas spoke about listening to how good it is to be in school; with mental health, their environment, their learning and then was questioning why the District was sending them home. Dr. Macharola explained that it is not just the students, the District has 480 employees and the number of these employees going to the Employee Assistance Programs are astounding. He advised the District is not just dealing with the students; if the District doesn't have a healthy staff and faculty the District cannot help the students. Dr. Macharola spoke about the District's Licensed Behavior Specialist, Mr. Milch, has been offering services for the staff and the staff finds this to be beneficial for them. He stated a healthy staff related to a healthy student body. Mr. Haas advised this was a question asked to him and he wanted to bring it to the Board.

Mr. Voit questioned the virtual learning days and asked if these are part of the proposed six snow days. Dr. Macharola advised that this is not and he explained that the District using virtual days has been beneficial in not taking away from the spring break; which is much needed for staff as well as students. Dr. Macharola discussed being questioned about his previous statements regarding nothing is better than in person learning; he advised that yes this is the case. He also explained that he understands the Muhlenberg School District, he recognizes that the District is an urban school district and he is running this school in the "trenches" working with the 4,366 students and the 480 employees. He spoke about the District not doing well when there is no spring break; and it does not do well when adding time at the end of the school year. He explained the attendance rates drop drastically; and to understand the culture in which everyone lives. He spoke about being a seasoned veteran when running a school district, he does get "nastygrams" and he just helped another Superintendent in the state who is accustomed to dealing with parents being upset about what a Superintendent does. He explained that they have never had any issues before and questioned him about snow days. He discussed that if anyone wanted to get up at 3:30AM to get on the road with him, they could certainly do it; and then being responsible for the welfare of everyone that comes to school that day. He explained that 35% of the students in the District are walkers and they cannot be out in the street because people do not shovel the walkways and he will never jeopardize anyone's safety here and will make the right decisions when it comes to this. Dr. Macharola spoke about everyone that is upset with the District about virtual days or traditional snow days, he advised he just had an email that was sent to him from a mother who advised their son was out in the snow for 15 minutes and came inside glad the school had a virtual day. He advised it was the same mother who was upset with him about a month ago because she wanted her son out in the snow all day, but now it is okay. He talked about having "his fill of it," so next year he will divide the days between virtual learning days and traditional snow days. He explained that the District may revise to add another snow day for the next school year, that the District needs for professional development. He explained that yesterday the

*District needed to be virtual or the District would have lost professional development and this is necessary. Dr. Macharola reiterated that next school year there will be a divide on snow days, the District will not lose spring break as it is unhealthy and infraction rates increase. Dr. Macharola also discussed that since the District came down on the staff to deliver, the amount of instruction during virtual days is at an all time high; the data is telling him that virtual days have their place and the District is going to use them. He advised he also recognizes that maybe everyone does need a snow day here and there, however he does not know how many there will need to be called. Dr. Macharola spoke about the two hour delay today being for two reasons; one reason is many of the students would be out in the streets because the sidewalks were not done which is a hazard, that's 1800 students. He advised the second reason is the minute the Reading School District went into a two hour delay for the major driver shortage, there is no way that either Reading or Muhlenberg school districts would have had sufficient buses out on the streets on their routes to deliver the kids to school; this is the reality in which the District works in. Dr. Macharola spoke about his message to the new superintendent to do what is right, don't do what is popular and do it with integrity.*

*Mr. Voit talked about agreeing that virtual education is not as good as in person instruction and he also discussed it not being a popularity contest and taking a poll regarding virtual or traditional snow days. He advised his position during COVID and it still is now, that in school there has to be a way to "give and take" regarding spring break as the quality of education requires the student to be in school. Mr Voit talked about this being a reasonable compromise; having so many snow days, if when using them all then the District would go virtual. Dr. Macharola advised he is in agreement, however he will be the one who makes the decision. Mr. Voit agreed. He also advised that if there is a plan in place where snow days are being utilized first and then virtual days, then he will be in support; however if this is not the case then he will not support the calendar. Dr. Macharola asked to support the fact that he will make the call when it's necessary because it would have an effect on other days that would jeopardize professional development; and much needed items. He explained the District does not want to be restricted to do things on specific days as no one can predict the weather and snow days. Mr. Voit talked about giving credit to the board members present as the discussion is based upon in-person instruction and not about just snow days. He advised that whenever the snow days come, at the superintendent's discretion, that the first "x amount of snow days" that are required off for safety measures should be a traditional snow day then using the virtual days once snow days are used; whatever those days the superintendent chooses. Mr. Voit talked about the priority being traditional snow day first, then virtual day can be utilized because nothing is compared to in classroom instruction as Dr. Macharola has always indicated. Mr. Voit advised he is supporting Dr. Macharola on this. He went to advise if this calendar is supporting snow day first, then virtual day he will support it. Dr. Macharola advised that this calendar does not say this, he explained that the calendar says there are snow days.*

*Ms. Howard questioned a scenario where there are two allotted snow days and then after that there are two days to do virtual. Her scenario was if a snow storm occurs on January 15th would this automatically be a traditional snow day because it is the first day allocated as a snow day and then another snow day occurs on February 27th does*

*this also become a traditional snow day; and then a snow storm occurs on March 13th to March 15th these would then be virtual instruction days. Ms. Howard questioned if Dr. Macharola is saying that the first day in January when it snows it should be his discretion whether that would be a virtual or traditional snow day. Dr. Macharola agreed with Ms. Howard and advised it should be his discretion. Ms. Howard asked another question as she indicated that she was unaware, does it matter if the January 15th date is the first day it snows and using that as a traditional snow day can this potentially be impacted if the District is already allotted two snow days, how teacher service is done. Dr. Macharola responded yes and explained there is no "crystal ball" and it is difficult to be locked into delineating specific traditional and virtual days. Mr. Haas questioned whether the District had to put snow make-up day on the calendar. Dr. Macharola responded yes. Mr. Haas spoke about making the decision on that day to be traditional snow day or virtual, especially if there is an ice storm the kids nor anyone would want to be outside in this and could benefit from a virtual day. Dr. Macharola agreed with Mr. Haas. Dr. Macharola advised that he will make sure there are traditional snow days next school year which would require a snow make-up day, however he will use virtual days so that it does not affect the overall operation of the District. Mr. Voit advised he would support this.*

#### **4. Approval of Memorandum for MESPA and MEA**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the Muhlenberg School District and Muhlenberg Education Support Professionals Association; and the Memorandum of Understanding between Muhlenberg School District and the Muhlenberg Education Association as presented.

#### **5. Amended Muhlenberg Act 93 Agreement I**

Resolved, by the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District that the Muhlenberg Act 93 Agreement I is hereby amended to include the position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction K-12 to Article I as a recognized position, as presented.

### **Physical Plant and Transportation**

#### **1. Sunday Facility Use Request**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following Sunday Facility Use Request:

- a. Age Group Swimming Program, use of the Muhlenberg High School swimming pool on Sunday, January 28, 2024 to hold a diving meet.

#### **2. Final Invoicing for Fourth Grade Modular Classroom Installation**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the final invoicing for the fourth grade modular classroom installation at C.E. Cole

Intermediate at a total cost of \$48,646 (funded through Capital Reserve Fund) as presented.

### **3. New Pole Vault Pits for Athletics**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the purchase of replacement pole vault pits for athletics at a total cost of \$24,480 (funded through Capital Reserve Fund) as presented.

#### Questions/Comments/Concerns

*Mr. Haas questioned if the District was removing track surface, are the pits going into the existing space where the pole vault is located, and if this is the correct cost. Mr. Patterson responded yes. Mr. Haas questioned if this was put out as a co-star and not a bid. Mr. Patterson responded yes. Mr. Haas asked why and with the new boxes are lids also part of it. Mr. Patterson responded that the District is getting the entire assembly and went with a co-star due to the time. Mr. Patterson explained that the boxes were well over 20 years old and everything needed to be replaced. Mr. Haas stated that he helped install the boxes as all it is is concrete and questioned the price. Mr. Patterson responded that this is for the entire assembly. Mr. Wolfe advised that it is not just for the box and is for the entire "kit." Dr. Macharola also reiterated that the cost was for everything.*

### **4. Installation of Turf Surface on Football Stadium**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the installation of turf surface on the football stadium field at a total cost of \$1,431,490 (funded through Bond Issue Funds) as presented.

### **5. Approval of Additional Modular Unit at C.E. Cole Intermediate**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the additional modular unit at C.E. Cole Intermediate at a total cost of \$180,274 (funded through ESSER III Funds) as presented.

## **Budget and Finance**

### **1. Approval of Financial Reports**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following financial reports and that they become part of the permanent record of the meeting:



<b>Fund</b>	<b>Treasurer's Report</b>	<b>Financial Report</b>	<b>Bills Paid Month</b>	<b>Investments</b>	<b>Budget Transfers</b>
General	Dec 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024 Ck#55921-56127 V#27893-27912	Dec 2023	
Cafeteria	Dec 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024 Ck# 8116-8148 V#3043-3046	Dec 2023	
Capital Reserve (Fund 32)	Jan 2024	Jan 2024	Jan 2024 Ck#973-975		
Capital Reserve (Fund 39)	Jan 2024	Jan 2024	Jan 2024 Ck#1001-1006		
Activity	Dec 2023	Dec 2023			

## **2. Approval of 2024 Mileage Rate**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the 2024 standard mileage reimbursement rate for the use of a personal vehicle for business purposes of 67¢ per mile in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service guidelines as of January 1, 2024.

## **3. Berks County Intermediate Unit Proposed Mandated Services Budget for the 2024-2025 School Year**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the Berks County Intermediate Unit Proposed Mandated Services Budget for the 2024-2025 School Year at the district's share of \$43,530.79.

## **Education**

### **1. Conference Requests**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the following conference requests:

- a. Ms. Stacy Wiza to attend the PETE&C Conference in Hershey, PA on February 4, 2024 to February 6, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$560.00 (funded through Technology Department).
- b. Ms. Nicole Huntbach to attend the Making a Difference: Education Practices that Work-PDE Conference in Harrisburg, PA and Hershey, PA on February 27, 2024 to March 1, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$759.06 (funded through Special Education Department).
- c. Ms. Jesse Todero to attend the National Art Education Convention in Minneapolis, MN on April 2, 2024 to April 7, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$165 (funded through General Fund).
- d. Dr. Cathy Shappell to attend the 2024 PAFPC Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, PA on April 14, 2024 to April 17, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$1,529.82 (funded through Title I Funds).

## **2. Settlement Agreement and Release**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the Settlement Agreement and Release for the following student as presented.

- a. Student No. #40778

## **3. Certificate of Support Students**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District approve the enrollment of Certificate of Support Students, PA School Code 1302, for the 2023-2024 School Year as listed.

## **4. Acceptance of Gifts, Grants, Donations**

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Muhlenberg School District accept the following donations in accordance with district Policy 702, Gifts, Grants, Donations:

- a. Ms. Yesenia Acosta, donation of a drum set and snare drum for the band and orchestra program at C.E. Cole Intermediate in the Muhlenberg School District.
- b. Public Education Foundation Fund for Instructional Innovation, grant of \$500 for the "HEXBUG Maze" project and grant of \$100 for the "Celebration of Learning" project at Muhlenberg Elementary Center in the Muhlenberg School District.
- c. Ben Franklin Trust Fund, grant of \$500 for the "Glazed Ceramics" project at C.E. Cole Intermediate and grant of \$400 for the "Celebration of Learning" project at Muhlenberg Elementary Center in the Muhlenberg School District.

## **Student Activities**

*There are no items.*

## **Minutes**

Review minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 10, 2024 and the Regular Board Meeting of January 10, 2024.

## **Old Business**

*There are no items.*

## **New Business**

### **13.01 Memoriam of Mr. Robert W. Steinmetz**

Resolved, that we remember the passing of Mr. Robert W. Steinmetz who served in the Muhlenberg School District for twenty-three (23) years (1958-1981) as an English Teacher. We honor his memory for his dedicated service to the school district and community.

Be it further resolved that we convey through this resolution our deepest sympathy to his family, and that this resolution be made part of the permanent record in the minutes of the Muhlenberg School District.

## **Hearing of Visitors**

Presentation is limited to approximately two minutes per person. Should any citizen require more than the two minutes allocated, please contact the Superintendent prior to the meeting. He will coordinate such requests for the Board. Citizens addressing the Board should be aware that the meeting is being taped.

*There were none.*

## **MSD/RMCTC Board Visitor of the Month**

Schedule 2023-2024

February	Ms. Kristyna Eagle
March	Mr. Miguel Vasquez
April	Ms. Janet Howard
May	Mr. Ronald J. Haas

## **Review of Board Meetings and Calendar of Events**

February 12	6:30 PM	RMCTC Board Meeting
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February 14	6:30 PM	Committee of Whole Meeting and Regular Board Meeting
March 6	7:00 PM	Committee of the Whole Meeting
March 11	6:30 PM	RMCTC Board Meeting
March 13	7:00 PM	Regular Board Meeting
April 3	7:00 PM	Committee of the Whole Meeting
April 8	6:30 PM	RMCTC Board Meeting
April 10	7:00 PM	Regular Board Meeting
May 1	7:00 PM	Committee of the Whole Meeting
May 8	7:00 PM	Regular Board Meeting
May 13	6:30 PM	RMCTC Board Meeting
June 10	6:30 PM	RMCTC Board Meeting
June 12	6:30 PM	Committee of the Whole and Regular Board Meeting

**Adjourn Meeting**

Moved by Mrs. Eagle and Ms. Howard, that there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned. Meeting adjourned at 7:52 PM.

Attest:

  
Cindy L. Mengle  
Secretary