

March 15, 2021

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting for General Purposes on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 7:30pm prevailing time via Zoom.

1. Call to Order  
President Gilmartin called the meeting to order at 7:40PM.
2. Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Roll Call – By the Secretary.  
Present: Directors Cruz, Dempsey, Fox, Hume, Malloy, McAndrew, Welby, Yanni and President Gilmartin.  
Absent: All Present.
4. Transaction of Business for Which Special Meeting was Called  
President Gilmartin announced the Special Meeting was called for General Purposes and has been duly advertised.  
Superintendent McTiernan gave the following presentation:  
[Final Reopening 3 15 2021.pdf](#)  
Mrs. Emilia Ogozalek was present and provided translation to our Hispanic viewers.

Director Dempsey asked Mrs. McTiernan about the employee's report on March 18<sup>th</sup> that it was only two days notice, were the teachers given notice so they could make arrangements for their own children, did we work with the union to come up with the timeline.

Mrs. McTiernan responded that Mr. Dougherty and Mrs. Grebeck meet with the union representatives on a weekly basis and with all due respect, teachers were supposed to report back on March 1<sup>st</sup> and then we did have a set-back so the thought process behind this was that March 1<sup>st</sup> the teachers probably would have had those things straightened out so now we're a couple weeks later and it's March 18<sup>th</sup> but that's where we today and that is her recommendation.

Director Dempsey understood and asked if all of the ventilation issues are fixed.

Mrs. McTiernan said yes, they have been given the go ahead by our third party experts to move forward and Arif from D'Huy is available tonight but for right now she would like to get through the rest of the presentation and then if the board would like an update from Arif he is available.

Director McAndrew asked if the paraprofessionals are returning.

Mrs. McTiernan said the recalled paraprofessionals.

Director McAndrew asked about transportation for Bancroft and the motion that they're approving is just a temporary one for now until the end of the year.

Mrs. McTiernan said that is correct, this has nothing to do with the board vote that will take place on April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Director McAndrew asked if transportation for special ed and the regular transportation is ready to go when needed.

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Mrs. McTiernan responded that is why it is being presented on March 15<sup>th</sup> and not starting the kids until March 29<sup>th</sup> because after the meeting tonight, once they are moving forward, the bus company needs two weeks to get the buses inspected and recall their drivers and whatever they need to do to get ready adding that the bus company was not willing to move forward until we were absolutely certain that this plan would be set so that is why we needed to have this meeting now and once decisions are made we can notify the bus company and they can be ready by March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Director McAndrew asked if both Red Top Transportation and Denaples are ready.

Mrs. McTiernan said no, we do not have a current contract with Red Top.

Director Yanni asked what the cost is; we're going to approve these motions for busing, what's the costs associated with busing the students to these schools.

Mrs. McTiernan asked Julie Maloney how many additional buses/shuttles they had to add.

Mrs. Maloney responded that right now we're not actually adding any buses, we're looking to use buses that are already running, the schools we were looking at were some of our non-publics because they start a little earlier than our schools so they can drop those kids off, come back to Bancroft, shuttle the children from Bancroft to Isaac Tripp so there would not be an additional cost. It's another run for the existing buses and the same goes for Whittier, those kids are going to get their bus to Whittier, they're going to load the children on the bus and driving them to South Intermediate.

Mrs. McTiernan clarified Mrs. Maloney's response that we pay for the bus by a daily cost. The additional run will not cost us any additional money. Mrs. Maloney agreed.

Director Dempsey asked Mrs. Maloney if these students are already in Transfinder and we've routed them to make sure that it all flows. Mrs. Maloney said yes.

Director McAndrew asked about the Bancroft Kindergarten who are attending Armstrong and Adams because their classes clash, are they going to stay there or are they going to need transportation as well going to Tripp.

Mrs. McTiernan asked if he means this year or next year. Director McAndrew said this year.

Mrs. McTiernan replied that all of Bancroft will be transported to Tripp, all K-5; that is the motion tonight.

Mrs. Maloney believed that Mr. McAndrew is asking about the students who were placed in Armstrong; it was not her understanding that she needed to move their school; they were going to stay where they will be transported to the building.

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Mrs. McTiernan misunderstood and responded no, we are not moving kids out of Armstrong to go to Tripp, kids that are currently at Bancroft right now will go to Tripp, kids that were moved out of Bancroft and went to Armstrong, we are not displacing them, no.

Mrs. Maloney said anyone who is displaced from a building would automatically get transportation.

Director Yanni asked Superintendent McTiernan if she is comfortable with the space at Tripp to move these kids even for the social distancing, can we get all of them in there.

Mrs. McTiernan said yes, and that Mrs. Grebeck was there today, and Mr. Dougherty worked closely with Mr. Emiliani and Mrs. Phillips. Mrs. McTiernan asked Mrs. Grebeck to join and give an overview of the set up at Tripp.

Mrs. Grebeck said the amount of work that went into making this happen is incredible and yes, Mr. Emiliani has worked closely with his maintenance team and his staff to restructure some rooms, to make room to relocate some teachers who were itinerants and let them share library spaces in pods, classrooms that were quite large he was able to divide and make three small classrooms, he has dividers that he is ordering to separate small spaces so that large rooms can be maximized, he's using his art room and his music room also and a science room to make those into two classrooms, and he and Mrs. Phillips reached out to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade staff to see if they would be willing to share one of the large rooms for example, the two 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were asked if they were willing to share one of the large art rooms or music rooms and it's a jumbo size classroom and they were both very excited to do that so that room has already been set up with tables and chairs socially distanced and they're going to divide that room in half so both of those colleagues can teach in the same large space with a little separation in between the groups of children, he's also looked at the feedback that Mrs. Phillips received on teachers returning and based on that data he was able to set desks to accommodate the families of students that will be returning, the amount of work that was done over there is incredible, they did an amazing job, they're ready to go, the rooms are clean, waxed, Pre-K and Kindergarten rooms have bathrooms and they're ready for the Bancroft family to begin to move in.

Mrs. Grebeck said as far as Whittier Annex, she was at South Intermediate, Mr. Wolff and Mr. Gilroy worked together in selecting rooms that would be appropriate for 5<sup>th</sup> grade, there were a couple of room shifts they had to make but those rooms are clean and ready, the Annex family is beginning to move into South Intermediate and Whittier Main rooms are cleaned out, waxed, ready for teachers to move in, Mr. Wolff has even managed to put rooms next to each other for teachers to co-teach together.

Director Dempsey asked if she wanted to tour Isaac Tripp and South to see the accommodations would she reach out to her, she would like to see the classrooms.

Mrs. McTiernan said per policy she would have to let Mrs. McTiernan know and she will reach out to the principals and they'd set it up.

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Director Dempsey asked, in terms of infrastructure within the schools, how did today go with synchronous learning for those that were in the buildings, were there any infrastructure issues and do we anticipate that March 18<sup>th</sup> is to test this system, is that the thought process, is everyone ready with two days notice.

Mrs. McTiernan said exactly, that gives the teachers two days this week and five days next week to work out some of the issues that we may or may not have. Mrs. McTiernan added that she received several emails today from parents who were hesitant about synchronous learning but they are now thankful; she did not receive any email that stated anything went wrong with synchronous learning today, although that doesn't mean there weren't any issues but she didn't receive anything.

Director Dempsey asked Mr. Dougherty if everything was pretty smooth across the district.

Mr. Dougherty said very smooth, he was in every elementary building today and touched base with secondary schools and he heard nothing but positive things and attendance was much stronger than it had been so that is certainly good news and he received good feedback from our secondary levels today.

Mr. Dougherty said as far as the infrastructure, he knows that all of our access points are up and working, we know that and we can check on them remotely and we also have new access points on deck ready to go to address any issues that might creep up as people get back into the buildings adding that we were able to purchase access points through e-Rate at an 85% discount, we have those in stock and ready.

Director Dempsey asked if the access points are something they could install in the classrooms.

Mr. Dougherty said it depends on where, we have to make sure they don't overlap obviously but we have two network personnel that do an outstanding job and they'll be able to identify where there's a weak spot and address it almost immediately.

Director Hume asked Mr. Dougherty about the distribution of the new Chromebooks and will more Chromebooks be reaching the students.

Mr. Dougherty said he certainly hopes so and if they were to walk into any school right now they will see hundreds and hundreds of Chromebooks and as students come back in synchronous learning we'll be distributing them to those students that come back on their specific day but we're certainly hopeful and he knows our principals have set up distribution at night, over the weekends and in rare circumstances they delivered them to homes so we're trying our best to accommodate people that reach out to ask for an accommodation which we have not heard from as many as we have expected but as kids get back in the building they're going to be distributed.

Mrs. McTiernan also announced that even if a student has their own personal laptop we want them to have a School District laptop.

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Mrs. McTiernan asked if there were any more questions regarding the plan because she would like to have Arif from D'Huy join the meeting.

Director Cruz asked if the plan to move the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Annex students to Whittier Main and the plan to move the Bancroft students to Tripp is temporary and how temporary is it.

Mrs. McTiernan responded that Bancroft and the Whittier Annex are schools that the Board may or may not close so we are not going to put money into those and the Annex is a lease so we're not putting money into a lease. The Board has to make a final decision on Bancroft on April 12<sup>th</sup> so what she recommends tonight are temporary moves until the end of the school year then based on the Board's decision on April 12<sup>th</sup> we will plan for the next school year.

Director Hume asked to confirm that the Bancroft children will get to Bancroft as if they were going into the Bancroft building so anybody whose child is at Bancroft will get the child to Bancroft as they normally would and then it would be similar to what we did at Northeast Intermediate.

Mrs. McTiernan said exactly; what we did at Northeast and shuttled the students to South and West Intermediate. Transportation will tell the parents what time to get the students to their school and the students will be shuttled to either South or Tripp.

Director Yanni asked if anyone thought about what a parent would do if they don't have a car and their child gets sick and they can't get to them by walking.

Mrs. McTiernan responded that on a case by case basis the principal is going to have to work that out with that parent; she doesn't have one solid great answer to that other than we will work with the parent the best we can to take care of that student until the parent can come and get them.

Director Hume asked about communication between the schools. Mrs. McTiernan responded that it is all computerized and all staff will have access to the student records.

Mrs. McTiernan now asked Mr. Arif Fazil from D'Huy to join the meeting and give a brief summary to the board of where we are and why we are able to move forward and put staff in the building.

Mr. Fazil, speaking on behalf of the leadership team of the school district, including the Board said all of the ventilation systems were gone through and where there were issues they have been repaired and confirmed they operate as originally designed, there may be one or two remaining items, very incidental, they will definitely be ready by March 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Fazil said the systems are very old and there will be times when some of them will break and they will be fixed because the team is ready to do that and schools will be ready to accept the students.

Mrs. McTiernan thanked Mr. Fazil for his help and cooperation.

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Director Dempsey voiced concern of the term “operate as designed” , and in the GPI report it said they weren’t operating according to CDC guidelines, so does he mean they’re operating as when a building was built in 1955 or 1924, are we talking they’re operating as per the recommendations of GPI’s report.

Mr. Fazil said what GPIs report did outline is that it needs to operate as designed and we have some big advantages with operates as designed. Many of the systems are total outside air which means there’s no recycled air with the ventilation system so in some cases it far exceeds current code requirements for outside air but essentially most of the buildings have direct ventilation to the outside where they have unit ventilators and so for those you are getting a lot of fresh air directly through the unit ventilators when they operate. The older buildings have big mechanical systems with chaises and some of the issues with them have been addressed or in the process of being addressed such as Northeast, the 1904 building, we are addressing those chaises but in those cases the “as designed” is actually very beneficial under the current COVID requirements because it’s essentially bringing in outside air and you completely exhaust it so in those cases there’s really no benefit or need for having additional filtration or anything like that. In the other buildings we are also following through on some enhancements but we don’t have them ready right now, a purchase order has been issued for the ionizers and those will be installed in the unit ventilators, the majority of buildings that have unit ventilators and so that will be an add-on that will even benefit the district more and the original recommendations were to just bring portable ones in but to get best value for the district we’re going to be putting permanent ones in so they’ll be installed and connected to the fan systems and a building like Armstrong where we’re going to be doing a replacement, we’ve looked at those units, they will be taken out and put into the new system when we put the new system in so “as designed” is actually what GPI noted so he apologized if there was any confusion with that but “as designed” should get us in good shape from a ventilation standpoint at this time.

Director Dempsey asked if they see any procurement delays for the MERV filters or the ionizers, any potential delays for those.

Mr. Fazil said those will not be in, they placed the order but they’re just not available no matter how much money you have or who you know, they’re only recommendations for improvements but fresh air is the ticket and in some cases our buildings are just leaking fresh air, it’s not a real good advantage but it’s an advantage in this particular case. Mr. Fazil thinks the ionizers are two weeks out from delivery and it will probably take two weeks to install district wide.

President Gilmartin clarified with Attorney Conn that there may be times the board may need to get consensus on something and then ratify it at an official meeting and she knows they talked a lot about the purchase order for the filters and ionizers and it is on the agenda for this evening but they did communicate, she called each of the directors to make sure that we clarify that was a step we did want to take.

Mr. Conn added that the board still has the right to turn down the purchase orders at tonight’s meeting and the vendors will have taken that risk but particularly in emergencies like this it is not at all uncommon to ratify a decision that had to be taken before the meeting took place.

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Director Hume asked for confirmation that since we are putting our staff and our students back into schools and buildings, classrooms and areas that the air is safe to breath.

Mr. Fazil said that is correct, and the areas they didn't feel were ready have been vacated and they are also looking at adding some other enhancements, another purifier machine, in nurses areas because some of the nurses areas, they believe need that as an enhancer and they're going to be looking at all of that too but to answer Director Hume's question, there is no air quality issues that they are aware of at this point.

Director Yanni asked Mr. Fazil, with regards to the maintenance team that he mentioned, who is that maintenance staff.

Mr. Fazil replied that we have a very good system in place and it starts with the building managers and the principal but then the information gets very quickly to Mr. Pugliese and Mr. Dougherty and then from there you have on call the resources of a very good, organized and committed to the district with Scranton Electric and they have some significant resources that the district can utilize if this is not a simple thing they can fix there are going to be times when things break and that's what he was referring to.

Director Yanni asked about the nursing areas Mr. Fazil mentioned and if they feel that they are appropriate to handle cases of Covid if a student did come in, how are we going to handle that; perhaps it is a question for Superintendent McTiernan.

Mr. Fazil said they have put in the outside air units so all of the nurses areas that did have it and many that did not, now have a direct outside air unit that brings in fresh air and they suggested buying portable air purifiers to further enhance that area. With regards to Covid situations he is not an expert on that.

Mrs. McTiernan said that each individual building has their own plans and each school plan is different. Mrs. McTiernan asked Mr. Gentilezza to confirm that all of this has been addressed.

Mr. Bert Gentilezza said yes, it has and every building has a different set up; we do have isolation rooms that are available and if some buildings did not have a complete isolation room available their medical room was divided in half with barriers in case if a student was showing multiple symptoms where they can immediately be picked up by their parent, it's all been taken care of.

There being no further questions Mrs. McTiernan turned the meeting back over to President Gilmartin.

President Gilmartin announced that the next board meeting will be held at Scranton High School on April 12<sup>th</sup> while all work sessions and committee meetings will continue to be held virtually.

##### 5. Public Comment

Haley Passero, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Bancroft spoke against closing Bancroft, she would like to continue her education at Bancroft and urged to vote no to closing Bancroft.

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Vivian Williams, parent said it is time to be more proactive to move the district forward, urged better communication with parents and it is time for students to return to school.

Holly Meade, teacher at Northeast, spoke about the \$36 million dollars in federal money coming in to the district and how to spend it. Mrs. Meade suggested to start with ways to help the students, curriculum the students need, new text books, online versions that we don't have, bring back Accelerated Reader, dynamic internet accessible social skills training programs for all special education students, library books for every library that hasn't bought any new books since the librarians were furloughed, guidance counselors for students who are returning with tons of trauma and also suggested asking the teachers, parents and students who would all have great ideas on ways to spend that money. Mrs. Meade also asked the board to task Dr. Finan to present a new amended recovery plan at the April board meeting by asking for a motion to revise the recovery plan.

Margie Holmes, teacher at Bancroft, spoke of her concerns moving students from Bancroft to Tripp, ventilation issues throughout the district, transportation concerns and consolidating schools in the middle of a pandemic.

Lisa Suda, Vice President Bancroft PTA, spoke against closing Bancroft, misleading information and there being no legitimate reason to close Bancroft.

Frances Regan, teacher at Bancroft, spoke against closing Bancroft.

Rosemary Boland, SFT President, spoke of the short notice to teachers returning to school, vacant positions and short staffing.

Suzanne Furey, teacher at Armstrong, spoke of diversity training, short notice to teachers of returning to school, difficulty attracting teachers, lack of heat today at Armstrong, and other ongoing issues at Armstrong.

Robert Lozada, music teacher, spoke of the physical restructuring of rooms, the hybrid plan not addressing music in the classroom, a study by the University of Colorado regarding effectiveness of PPE, ventilation issues in buildings and inoperable windows in buildings.

Matt Barrett, parent, spoke of the amazing things the students in the Scranton School District are doing and the challenges of the last year. Mr. Barrett asked if we are allowing students access to a world class education system and if so why are we the last district in the area to provide synchronous and hybrid learning and how is that acceptable. Mr. Barrett said for every week we're not in school we have more educational losses.

At this time administration spoke of the funds coming into the district and that they must be spent in certain areas and they are one time sources.



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## 6. Motions

### 6.01 {B-1} Motion to Approve GASB 75 Valuation Proposal

Director Yanni made a motion, seconded by Director McAndrew. Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

#### ON THE QUESTION:

Director Yanni asked Mr. Laffey to explain in more detail.

Mr. Laffey said they are preparing for the 2021 financial statements and working with our auditors and we felt it was a good idea to have a refresh valuation of our GASB 75 which puts a valuation on post employment benefits other than pension which would consist of anything for retirees related to medical, dental and life insurance. It is recommended to be updated every couple years and we thought it was an appropriate time based on the recommendation of our auditors.

### 6.02 {D-1} Motion to Approve Relocating Bancroft Elementary Pre-K - 5 students to Isaac Tripp Elementary and Whittier Annex Grade 4 students to Whittier Main Building and Whittier Annex Grade 5 students to South Scranton Intermediate School.

Motion to Approve to relocate the following students:

- Pre-School through 5<sup>th</sup> grade Bancroft Elementary students from 1002 Albright Avenue Scranton, PA 18508 to the Isaac Tripp Elementary School, 1000 N. Everett Avenue, Scranton PA 18504
- Whittier Annex Grade 4 students from 415 Hickory Street, Scranton, PA 18505 to Whittier Elementary School, 700 Orchard Street., Scranton, PA 18505 and
- Whittier Annex Grade 5 students from 415 Hickory Street to South Scranton Intermediate School, 355 Maple St., Scranton, PA 18505.

Director Welby made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy.

#### ON THE QUESTION:

Director Cruz believes the school community, the students, families and teachers need to be given the remainder of the school year to be together as a school family within the building to understand what is going on face to face before potentially transitioning to a new learning environment next year and she will be voting no to this motion in its entirety.

Director McAndrew asked Attorney Conn that since this motion doesn't read that this is just temporary for the end of the school year does he think we need to make an amendment to put that in there.

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Mr. Conn responded you don't have to, it would certainly be fine if you did, the only reason he is hesitating, it makes sense in reference to Whittier but if there's no objection it makes sense for the duration of the 2021 school year to this motion.

Director Dempsey asked about the administrative content on the motion that states to approve motion as indicated above is required by PDE guidelines; so they voted November 2<sup>nd</sup> to follow PDE, Department of Health guidelines, they voted again at the Special Meeting February 8<sup>th</sup> to give administration the power to do what they needed to do to reopen the schools. This sounds to her that it is operational, to get the kids back into buildings to implement a plan already voted on; she does not understand.

Mrs. McTiernan explained that PDE told them they need to do this to relocate and do an address change and that is why it says per PDE guidelines.

Director Dempsey asked if this is just specific to the rest of this school year to implement the hybrid model, not necessarily what would potentially happen in the fall.

Mrs. McTiernan said, yes, this has nothing to do with the hybrid model, this has to do with relocating students to another building in the middle of the school year, so right now per our boundaries Bancroft students are at Bancroft, we're closing, PDE has an AUN number and right now those students are assigned to that AUN number, we are moving students to a new AUN number at Isaac Tripp, what you're approving is an address change.

Director Dempsey said we cannot put children in that building currently, correct?

Mrs. McTiernan responded per Scranton Electric, Mr. Newell, he presented at the last meeting, it is not his recommendation to put students in the building as it stands today so per that recommendation she is not recommending and she will not so if the board chooses to do that they will be going against what she is recommending and what their experts are recommending.

President Gilmartin said she doesn't think this is necessarily a financial conversation but she thinks it is important to point out that the costs that have been referenced are estimates that were in the ventilation assessment report, there was really no discussion on the financial piece of any of the work that Scranton Electric identified, that seemed to be of a much larger scope and scale so we honestly can't really debate the financial impact of that, is that correct?

Mrs. McTiernan responded correct.

Director Hume said as she understands it, the system of the ventilation at Bancroft is the issue.

Mr. Dougherty said that Scranton Electric, Harold Newell, shared with us those unit ventilators are some of the oldest ones that we have in buildings within the district. If they were functioning correctly there would be outside air coming in. They found that there are electrical issues now within a good number of those unit ventilators which means that's not going to bring in any outside air so there really will not be mechanical ventilation, and certainly if you open windows, that is ventilation but it's never going to be mechanical ventilation. The wiring that goes through

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this building and into those univents is actually cloth covered wiring, it's original to the building so the discussion has become even if we put in new unit ventilators we're probably going to need to rewire, and a strong possibility, the entire building to make that function properly. This is something that did not exist last heating season, this is a relatively new issue. This was found not by GPI, this was found when Scranton Electric was going around and doing the last minute building checks making sure we were ready to go so really it's more of an electrical issue than anything else but the cost of putting in new unit ventilators and rewiring, that would be a large number and not something that could happen quickly.

Dr. Finan added that there is also an issue with the sewer in that building that is not repairable. Mr. Dougherty agreed add that we have to pump all the sewage up to the city sewer line and the sewer in the school sits below the city line.

Dr. Finan added that it's literally impossible to get all of it pumped up so there's always a bit of a concern with an odor and any kind of back up.

Director Hume said there's no fix we can make to bring those units bring in fresh air and Ms. Hume shared her experience with cloth covered wiring in a home she had and what we're talking about here is not something we could, even if we spent the \$90,000 that is listed in the report it would still not fix the ventilation.

Mr. Dougherty said the GPI report is a draft report, Scranton Electric found bigger issues at Bancroft than GPI identified there, so obviously that'll be in the final report that's issued by GPI but we might be looking at that cost per classroom and then the cost of rewiring the building. Those unit ventilators are not cheap and we are way beyond the lifespan of what we were expected to get to them but even if we engage Scranton Electric to put in new univents they're not going to do it with cloth wiring running to it.

President Gilmartin, going back to Sean's point, for the sake of clarity, amending this motion to reflect that this is by no means the permanent decision on the Bancroft building or the Whittier Annex, this is because we cannot occupy these spaces at this time for the remainder of the year.

Director McAndrew made a motion to reflect this is not a permanent decision; it is for the remainder of the year. Director Yanni seconded. Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

President Gilmartin, moving on to the original motion, Director Yanni asked, so she understands correctly, if they don't pass this motion then the children from Bancroft cannot go back to school; we need to pass this to get our kids back into school.

Mrs. McTiernan responded yes, that is correct.

Motion now passed with eight (8) affirmative and one (1) negative. Director Cruz voted in the negative.

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#### 6.03 {F-1} Motion to Approve Increase in Daily Teacher Substitute Rate

Motion to increase the daily teacher substitute rate effective March 16, 2021 through the end of the 2020-2021 school year from \$90.00 per day worked to \$150.00 per day worked. Substitute teacher salaries will be paid from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER).

Director Yanni made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy.

#### ON THE QUESTION:

Director Hume asked for a friendly amendment following the sentence from \$90.00 per day worked to \$150.00 per day worked, to add to the motion that such action shall not establish a practice or precedent. Director Yanni seconded.

#### ON THE QUESTION:

Director Dempsey said she is of the opinion as Dr. Finan said earlier that the ESSER funds outlined in this motion are to be used for the continuity of education. Mrs. Dempsey recognizes the importance of attracting higher quality professionals, being competitive with other districts, but she believes these funds will better serve our students in the form of educational programs, updating curriculum, buying into more online curriculum, updating our technology, our district infrastructure, updating and improving our buildings to prepare for a full return to five day in-person learning. She does not believe that increasing the sub rate which would subsequently increase the rate paid to Kelly Services from \$118.80 to \$198.00 per day, per sub, is an appropriate use of the federal dollars and for those reasons she will be voting no this evening.

President Gilmartin asked to clarify this, she understands Director Dempsey's concerns but can they clarify the piece about it being an appropriate use of these funds.

Mrs. McTiernan asked Mr. Laffey to clarify adding that we do have a call in to get federal guidelines.

Mr. Laffey said that is correct we do have a call in and in terms of the allow ability he believes it's the 15<sup>th</sup> use under ESSER II which Director Dempsey mentioned is the continuity of services in an LEA to continue to employ existing staff, we feel most likely fall under there, he does have some concerns related to what we talked about earlier regarding existing contracts and the aggregate total cost of what our contract is with Kelly Services, federal procurement calls for different practices, however there's some flexibility with these dollars where you can almost supplement; it doesn't apply with these funds and we can look to utilize state and local dollars to offset this increase and use federal ESSER II funds to offset some of our already budgeted for state and local expenditures, so you would almost be swapping one funding source for the next.

Mrs. McTiernan added this was something we were brainstorming on how we can address the staffing issues and our number one goal is to get kids back in their classrooms, she can't do that if she doesn't have the staff to support our students, so this is one of those things, outside the box idea, and another district we were told was using to try to attract substitutes so it's one of the things we're trying; if the board approves, if it works, great; if it doesn't then it would be

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something that we tried but she thinks we have to try because we are going to have shortages within our buildings and she'd rather have a substitute to cover the class rather than have to call school off for the day and have kids go backwards to all virtual.

Director Yanni understands but she's not necessarily comfortable voting to approve this until we know we're going to meet the federal guidelines because that's what we're saying in the motion, that we are going to be paying it from the ESSER funds, so she would like to make a motion to table this until we get that clarification.

Attorney Conn replied that because it's built into the motion, if it turns out its ineligible, it fails; it can't be implemented because it's already in the motion. In other words if you can't use that ESSER fund to do it then it's not going to happen because your motion specifies the source.

Director Hume, equally, given what Mr. Laffey's explanation, she thinks we simply could remove the last sentence and simply just increase the amount and then the funding would be found as equitable through Mr. Laffey once we had the guidance. It's going to cost the district a lot more money if we constantly have to close schools because we have staffing issues and we can't get the subs. If we remove the last sentence then we would pay them wherever appropriate source was appropriate.

Mrs. McTiernan said yes, that was the thought process.

Director Yanni asked where it would be from.

Mrs. McTiernan doesn't believe you need to identify something then so basically, Mr. Conn brought up a great point, if you keep it as is and we can't use the ESSER funds then the motion fails. If we move forward and take that line out then as Mr. Laffey was explaining before there are other things that can be paid for with ESSER funds that we know then we would free up GOB (General Operating Budget) money to pay for that so it would be moving and shifting money around with allowable expenses under ESSER to free up money to pay for something like this.

Director Yanni agrees with Director Hume that we take that last sentence off from the motion.

Director Dempsey asked if Kelly Services ever actually hit their guaranteed coverage rate and that we'll end up paying them more money and she knows this is going to impact the Collective Bargaining Agreement; the coverage rate would jump from \$22.50 to \$37.50 for our teachers and she knows Kelly Services has really had an issue staffing subs in the past, and asked if has it been proven that an increased sub rate actually translates into bodies showing up.

Mrs. McTiernan cannot answer that because we've never increased the money so this is the first time that we've actually tried this.

Director Dempsey asked about the other districts that Mrs. McTiernan referenced.

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Mrs. McTiernan said no, she doesn't have those statistics; this was something outside the box that we thought we would try.

Director McAndrew asked if we know the rates and how competitive we are to other districts.

Mrs. McTiernan didn't know and deferred to Mr. Castrovinci.

Mr. John Castrovinci didn't have the figures in front of him but he's pretty sure the last time he looked at it we were on the lower end but he can gather that and send it to the board.

Director Yanni asked how we decided to the \$150.00.

Mrs. McTiernan responded that they looked at the number, the percentage we pay Kelly Services and what we thought would be enticing for an individual to come and want to sub in our buildings during a pandemic, she being as realistic as possible and that was the number they chose based on that figure keeping it under \$200 total. She doesn't know if it will work but if the board is willing to move forward with it we'll see if it works or not and overall there are no substitutes, the individuals aren't available right now so if they are available hopefully we can entice them with more money than what another district is paying because unfortunately we lost our substitutes to other places so maybe this will get those individuals back.

President Gilmartin questioned if this has any bearing on the existing contract. It only changes the rate; it doesn't extend the contract or back us into anything else because this has been an ongoing discussion, she believes in October 2019 where they voted not to include the paraprofessionals in this service and she remembers at that time there was discussion of perhaps moving away from this, is that something we are still assessing, she realizes that's maybe not something obviously if we're in a contract, we would fulfill it but also maybe that's something that has become a bit of a back burner issue at this point but that was something they were talking about.

Mrs. McTiernan deferred to Mr. Castrovinci as she did not talk to them.

Mr. Castrovinci said this does not extend the contract we have with them.

Dr. Finan recalls those discussions,, they had a lot of conversation, because of the cost we're paying Kelly Services. She thinks at the time it was placed on hold because we were getting close to the end of the contract and we weren't prepared because we didn't have someone who could step in and make those calls or create a pool of candidates. In normal times the districts that paid more for their subs did get subs so from her own experience she paid \$40 more per day and she never had a substitute problem. These are not normal times, this is a pandemic; whether we would entice people to come to our district or entice them to come out of their home to come into a classroom, she doesn't know if that's a possibility but in normal times paying more gets more substitutes to come to your district.

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President Gilmartin asked if it is fair to say in this situation that if it solves the current shortage, it has been a wise investment and if it doesn't we don't spend the money so if it has no impact, if it doesn't entice people they're not coming and we don't have to pay them.

Dr. Finan agreed.

Director Hume believes this is a proactive step and as President Gilmartin says, that it's not going to cost us anything if it doesn't work and if it does work it could potentially ease some of the major obstacles to getting back in the classroom.

President Gilmartin doesn't want to speak for everyone and she thinks this is a subject for another night but she feels strongly that the conversations around the issue as a whole should pick back up as soon as possible.

Director McAndrew said this is a tough decision for him. We're saying we want to be competitive but we can't get any facts of what other districts are spending. He is a stats guy, he likes to know comparisons and if we're going to say we're trying to be competitive but without having the statistics he's probably going to vote no.

Director Hume asked if they want to leave in the last sentence or do they not, or should she move the amendment and people can vote on it.

Director Yanni would like to make an amendment to get that last sentence off.

Director Yanni made a motion to remove the sentence starting with substitute teacher's salaries.

Director Hume seconded.

ON THE QUESTION OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> FRIENDLY AMENDMENT:

Director Welby asked if we are trying to remove the friendly amendment that said this isn't a precedent.

Director Hume said no, we're going to take out the sentence that says it would be paid for from ESSER funding because we still are not 100% sure.

Director Welby spoke of what Mr. Conn said that it doesn't matter if it's not, if it doesn't fall under those guidelines then this is a void.

Director Hume responded then we can't go forward to get the extra subs whereas we can shuffle money around to pay the extra money to the substitute teachers; it's having that specific sentence in there which identifies the source of the funds to pay for the extra money for the substitutes that is potentially going to do it. If they take that sentence off and they get the guidance that it can be paid from ESSER funding then it can be paid through ESSER funding. If they get the guidance that it needs to be paid from different funding, they can pay from state and local funds from the

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GOB (General Operating Budget) and then use ESSER funding to make up a different part of the money, it makes it more flexible and removes people's concerns.

Director Fox does not personally feel comfortable making a vote to potentially shuffle money around, her vote would be to vote down the friendly amendment to see what comes and if it did come that the funds can't come from there she thinks that's something else that should come to them just hearing the way that it's being said to rob Peter to pay Paul and shuffle money around, she doesn't feel fully comfortable. She would be fine voting for it to come from ESSER if it can't come from that she would rather it be brought forward to them again.

Director Yanni asked Mr. Laffey, at \$150/day, what is the starting salary of a new teacher, the breakdown to per day. She'd like to make sure a sub doesn't walk in making more than a starting teacher.

Mr. Castrovinci responded for Mr. Laffey and said a first year long term substitute makes the same rate; they earn \$207.45 per day, a Step I Bachelors level.

Prior to roll call Director Malloy asked for clarification on what they are voting on.

Mr. Conn said the motion on the floor is a motion to amend the already amended motion to remove the restriction that it has to be out of ESSERs funding.

Director Malloy, based on what Director Fox said, he will be voting no.

Motion failed upon roll call – (1) one affirmative and (8) eight negative. Directors Malloy, McAndrew, Welby, Cruz, Dempsey Fox, Hume and Gilmartin voted in the negative. Director Yanni voted in the affirmative.

President Gilmartin now clarified the motion: The motion is to increase the daily teacher substitute rate effective March 16, 2021 through the end of the 2020-2021 school year from \$90 per day worked to \$150 per day worked; such action does not set a practice or a precedent. Substitute teacher salaries will be paid from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.

Director Yanni said she is not comfortable putting her name, attaching it to a motion saying she is going to approve something that's going to be paid from ESSER funds when we don't know so that's why she will vote no.

President Gilmartin asked Mr. Conn, is there another way that we need to clarify this or is the directive, and if Mr. Laffey isn't able to accomplish what is written here it doesn't happen and he comes back to us.

Mr. Laffey said if tomorrow he gets a negative response it would stay at \$90/day.

Mr. Conn said that is correct.



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Director Dempsey asked if they need to include in this motion the fact that Kelly Services rate will increase to \$198, for the sake of transparency.

Mr. Conn said no, they don't have to but he's glad she brought it out, informationally it is useful to have it out but because it happens contractually it's not as if you could vote down one part and not the other.

Motion passed with six (6) affirmative and three (3) negative. Directors McAndrew, Yanni and Dempsey voted in the negative.

6.04 {F-2} Motion to Appoint Jackie Musto Carroll as Investigator

Motion to appoint Jackie Musto Carroll as Investigator at a rate of \$195/hour.

Director Cruz made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy; motion passed unanimously on roll call.

6.05 {F-3} Motion to Appoint George Shovlin as Hearing Officer

Motion to appoint George Shovlin as Hearing Officer for Section 514 Furlough Hearings at a rate of \$195/hour.

Director Cruz made a motion, seconded by Director Hume; motion passed with eight (8) affirmative and one (1) negative. Director Yanni voted in the negative.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director McAndrew asked, for the public's knowledge, why aren't we using our own attorney for this.

Mr. Conn responded that technically, for the Section 514 hearing, the administration is sort of like the prosecutor presenting the case so the attorney will either work with the administration presenting that case or at the end of this advise the board about the recommendation, but in either of those roles it's not appropriate for us to sit as the hearing officer.

6.06 {E-1} Motion to Authorize the Purchase and Installation of MERV 13 Filters

Motion to authorize the purchase and installation of Merv 13 filters where recommended per the GPI ventilation study at a cost of approximately \$50,000. The board authorizes the District Administration pending availability to purchase and install Merv 13 filters in locations recommended by the GPI ventilation study. The approximate cost is \$50,000.

Director Hume made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy. Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

ON THE QUESTION:

President Gilmartin asked if we can clarify the approximate cost.

Mr. Laffey respond that from discussions they've had and reaching out to vendors, that's what they feel the approximate cost is based off the quantities necessary, he doesn't think they've had

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success in locating them in stock yet but they do feel like that is in the ball park of what they feel is necessary.

President Gilmartin said there of course could be some fluctuation based on availability.

Mr. Laffey agreed that if they can locate them and purchase more to sustain these for a longer period of time.

6.07 {E-2} Motion to Authorize the Purchase and Installation of Ionizers

Authorize the purchase and installation of 181 Plasma Air PA 662 Bipolar Ionizers from EBS HVAC at a cost of \$111,858. The Board authorizes the purchase and installation of 181 Plasma Air PA 662 Bipolar Ionizers as recommended in the ventilation study performed by GPI Engineers.

Director Hume made a motion; Director McAndrew seconded. Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

Mr. Laffey informed the board that this is on PA State Contract, this is not utilizing ESSER funds, it is because these are goods and it exceeds the \$21,000 and we need to follow the state thresholds. COSTARS is an allowable state procurement vehicle, it does not comply with the federal requirements so they will be utilizing local dollars not federal dollars for this procurement under state contract.

6.08 {I-1} Motion to Approve Transporting Bancroft K-5 students from Bancroft Elementary School to Isaac Tripp Elementary School and Whittier Annex Grade 5 students from Whittier to South Scranton Intermediate School.

Motion to Approve to transport the following students:

K through 5<sup>th</sup> grades students of Bancroft Elementary to the Isaac Tripp Elementary School, 1000 N. Everett Avenue, Scranton PA 18504 and Whittier Annex Grade 5 students to the South Scranton Intermediate School, 355 Maple St., Scranton, PA 18505.

Director McAndrew made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director McAndrew asked for a friendly amendment for the Bancroft students; this is only until the end of this school year.

Mr. Conn noted the motion would add for the duration of the 2021 school year to the end of the motion.

Director Dempsey seconded.

Friendly amendment passed unanimously on roll call.

ON THE QUESTION of original motion:

Director Fox asked if this is an exception to our current policy.

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Mrs. McTiernan said yes, these students would not be getting transported to those current schools; that is why it needs Board approval because these kids do not all qualify for transportation per our policy.

Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

At this time Mrs. McTiernan congratulated wrestlers Cameron Butka, 8<sup>th</sup> place in State and Austin Fashour, 7<sup>th</sup> place in State, as well as Swimming and Diving 5<sup>th</sup> place in State Victoria Watkins. Mrs. McTiernan also congratulated Scranton High School Boys Basketball for winning District Championship; they are heading to State tournament and wished them luck.

#### 7. Adjournment

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Director McAndrew, seconded by Director Dempsey and the meeting adjourned at 10:17PM.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary