

POTTSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Directors
Special Board Meeting
July 6, 2016
Academic Center
7:00 p.m.

Present: Mr. Boran, Mrs. Blankenhorn, Dr. Cortese, Dr. Davidson, Dr. DiCello, Mr. Moran, Atty. Rismiller (via telephone), Mr. Thomas, Mr. Wagner, Dr. Zwiebel, Superintendent; Mr. Curran, Business Manager / Board Secretary; Mr. Thornburg, Solicitor; Mr. Ansbach, Mrs. Lombel, Mr. Pytak, Republican Herald

The special Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President John Boran.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, Mr. Boran asked if anyone would like to address the Board.

Mr. Boran thanked everyone for coming to the special meeting. Mr. Boran noted that the purpose of this meeting is to review the report from the hearing officer on the public hearings from Gillingham Charter School.

Mr. Boran, in a prepared speech, stated the following:

“As you all know we had two options as the home district of Gillingham Charter School. Option number one was to renew the charter based on information we were receiving over the past five years. We knew this was not an option.

Option number two was not to renew the charter. Not renewing the charter meant we as the home district has the oversight of the process. The process of not renewing the charter meant we must follow the state guidelines and hire attorneys and hire a hearing officer to oversee the process of a public hearing. This decision was not taken lightly but necessary for the sake of our district’s children attending Gillingham charter.

There were a lot of man hours over the period of five years that the Pottsville Area School District employees performed as oversight that were added to their responsibilities at no additional cost or payroll, just added to their job duties. I want to thank our administration and staff in guiding us in this decision-making and pulling together information for the Board to make a responsible decision.”

Mr. Thomas, Chairperson of the Spec. Ed / Alternative Ed / Charter Committee, thanked the administration and the hearing officer, Atty. Marc Fisher for his due diligence in the 71 page report. Mr. Thomas said all Board members were mailed this report last week.

Mr. Thomas, Chairperson of the Spec. Ed/ Alternative Ed/Charter Committee, noted the Conclusions of Law, as were stated in the Report and Recommendation of the Hearing Officer for the Gillingham Charter School, and are as follows:

1. Gillingham committed one or more material violations of conditions, standards or procedures contained in the written charter.
2. Gillingham failed to meet the requirements for student performance set forth in 22 Pa. Code Ch. 5 (relating to curriculum) or subsequent regulations promulgated to replace 22 Pa. Code Ch. 5 and failed to meet performance standards set forth in its written charter.
3. Gillingham did not fail to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management or audit requirements.
4. Gillingham violated provisions of the CSL.
5. Gillingham violated provisions of law from which it has not been exempted including federal laws and regulations governing children with disabilities.

On the recommendation of the Committee on Spec. Ed/Alternative Ed/Charter, and on motion of Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Wagner, the Board voted to accept the "Report and Recommendation of the hearing officer for the Gillingham Charter School Renewal. Motion carried by roll call vote: Mrs. Blankenhorn, Dr. Cortese, Dr. Davidson, Dr. DiCello, Mr. Moran, Atty. Rismiller (via telephone); Mr. Thomas, Mr. Wagner and Mr. Boran, Aye.

For the record, Atty. Thornburg clarified the vote, that the recommendation of the hearing officer, for the Gillingham Charter School Renewal, be denied and that our original denial stands.

Mr. Wagner noted that the Gillingham Charter School should have been in violation of fiscal management; the school was going to yard sales for school supplies.

Dr. Davidson noted that the test scores for Gillingham Charter School were well below the state's standards and continued to get progressively worse as the years went on. After reading the report, he did not realize the many serious infractions of law. Dr. Davidson said this should definitely be taken into consideration.

Atty. Rismiller (via telephone) thanked the administration, Dr. Zwiebel, Mr. Curran, and the Act 93 Administrators who went above and beyond. Atty. Ellen Schurdak, who did a tremendous job and Atty. Marc Fisher who was very deliberate in citing the facts in the Conclusions of Law for a complete and unbiased report. Atty. Rismiller noted that based upon Atty. Fisher's conclusions with the numerous violations, we need to serve the children of our district and the other children in the county. Atty. Rismiller feels we made the right decision tonight.


Mr. Wagner noted that one out of every three students is a Pottsville student.

Mr. Thomas urged the taxpayers to read the "Report and Recommendation of the Hearing Officer" which will be on the school district's website.

Dr. Zwiebel also noted the following:

"I'd like to publicly thank the administrative team. As I previously mentioned, this was an exhaustive effort on everyone's part, specifically during the months of April and May when we were pulled from many of our daily duties. But the bottom line is the education, not only of our students in this district, but all the students that attend Gillingham Charter School. And I said it before and I'll say it again, I have very grave concerns for the educational well-being of those students at Gillingham."

There being no further new business, on motion of Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mrs. Blankenhorn, meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

 8/17/16
Stephen C. Curran (Date)
Board Secretary