



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 19, 2018**

### **District 157-C November 14, 2018 Board of Education Meeting Recap**

FRANKFORT, IL — The regular Frankfort School District 157-C Board of Education meeting of November 14, 2018 was called to order by Board President Gina Briese at 7:04 p.m. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. Board Member Edith Lutz was absent. The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board received two letters of correspondence — one from the Frankfort Teachers Association thanking the School Board for their continued efforts in promoting the health and wellness of staff members and one from Hickory Creek seventh-grade teacher Sue Niendorf thanking the Board for allowing her to visit Washington, D.C. for the National Blue Ribbon Schools Recognition Ceremony.

The Board approved the Open Session minutes of the regular meeting of October 17, 2018.

During Public Forum, six members of the public addressed the Board.

Stephanie Argyle, a parent of students in the district, said she had concerns about content on the online instructional content platform Newsela. The tool promotes reading comprehension by allowing students to read about news and search for topics of interest. It includes quizzes and writing prompts. Argyle said she was concerned about students being exposed to leftist ideology through certain articles on the platform. She said she knew many of the articles are unbiased, but biased articles were mixed in with them. She added that the students deserve a balanced curriculum and to hear articles that come from all sides of the political spectrum.

Sital Bhargara, another parent in the district, said her children benefit from using Newsela. She said she contacted Newsela about their sources, and the company gave her a list of news sources from which they aggregate information, most of them deemed to be “center” by AllSides.com.

Emily Biegel echoed support for Newsela and also asked the School Board to vote against an Illinois Association of School Boards 2018 Resolutions Committee item allowing districts to create policies allowing armed administrators, faculty and staff in schools after completing state-approved training to carry a concealed weapon. She said she did not want schools to be a place for guns and added fear for children.

Gretchen Dust spoke in support of Newsela, and said she does not want to see the tool banned.

Tayo Hill said she appreciates Newsela for encouraging her children to become critical thinkers and delve deeper into current events. She added that she appreciates how teachers are using the tool, and she would like to see it continue to be used in the district.

Melissa Cosich said she likes Newsela, but she would like to see some parental control over when children are exposed to certain topics. She also told the Board she was disappointed that the Halloween party was changed to a fall party this year to accommodate families that do not celebrate Halloween.

Board President Gina Briese thanked the speakers for their comments and invited them to reach out directly to Superintendent Dr. Maura Zinni or the Board members for further dialogue.

During their reports to the Board, school principals provided updates on current and planned projects the schools are undertaking during the giving season. Grand Prairie Elementary School Principal Kirsten Frankovich said her school will work with Chelsea Intermediate School to collect donations for military troops. Last year, the schools sent 60 care boxes containing treats, toiletries, snacks and more. She said one family already donated 60 cases of candy canes to this effort. Chelsea Principal Doug Wernet said students at his school donated 500 pounds of candy to Operation Gratitude and donated more than 1,500 canned food items to the Frankfort Township Food Pantry through its annual Stack the Stock can-stacking event. Hickory Creek Middle School Principal Will Seidelmann said his school will again purchase gifts for students of Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center in Chicago for the holiday season.

Director of Human Resources Shayna Cole reported that Open Enrollment for the district began November 5 and ends November 16, and many staff said they were well-informed to make decisions about insurance changes. She said 83 percent of the district's insured staff completed on-site wellness screenings, so far, and she hopes that will increase by the end of the month. Cole added that as the district heads into winter months, it is working to strengthen its substitute teacher pool to fill in for staff who are sick.

Director of Curriculum & Instruction Janet McClarence reported that she is working with teachers to develop a new report card for Grand Prairie that aligns with curriculum and assessments. She said work will continue on this throughout the year, and she will report back to the Board on progress.

Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds Rodney Davis reported that his department is getting trucks serviced and plows put on for the winter. Over Thanksgiving break, carpet will be replaced in the preschool wing of Grand Prairie, a water heater will be replaced at Hickory Creek, and the district's custodial contractors, GSF, will complete deep cleans of bathrooms, and some carpets and tiles.

Director of Special Services Jennifer Bajda said as more students with significant needs are screened, spots are filling up in early childhood classrooms. She said staff members are doing a good job of keeping these students in the district.

Director of Technology Jacob Nelson reported that his staff avoided a bad Microsoft update that the company released in October, saving the district time and trouble, and they are on pace to have 2,000 devices upgraded before winter break. He added that they are also making progress on an email upgrade.

Board Member Edie Adamski provided the Board with the October 15 Advisory Board and October 23 Governing Board meeting minutes from Lincoln-Way Special Education District 843.

Band & Orchestra Booster President Cori Chojnacki gave the Board an update on the organization's projects from this school year. She said the Boosters have eliminated their fundraisers except for hot lunches, which have been successful. At Chelsea, the band has 100 students, and the orchestra has 74. The groups will have a combined first concert on Thursday, January 23. At Hickory Creek, the band program is split into a concert band for sixth-graders and a symphonic band for seventh- and eighth-graders, with roughly 60 and 70 members, respectively. Chojnacki said the bands' Veterans Day Concert, held Thursday, November 8, was a huge success. Roughly 50 students participate in Hickory Creek's jazz band, and 80 students participate in the school's orchestra. She said because of the programs' growing sizes and difficulty finding venues large enough to meet at, the Boosters have cut back on social events. The Boosters sponsored a performance for the students by The Barefoot Movement, a bluegrass group from

Nashville; a performance by the Black Willow Brass Quintet and refreshments for the public at the Veterans Day Concert; \$14,000 worth of band and orchestra instruments last year; two additional basses for Chelsea this year, eliminating a need for the large instruments to be transported between Hickory Creek and Chelsea; scholarships for music students; and plaques for Illinois Music Education Association Festival participants. This year, the group is working with district staff and the Chorus Boosters to host the Illinois Grade School Music Association Solo and Ensemble contest for the region in February at Hickory Creek.

Zinni shared that the Education Foundation's 2019 Casino Night Fundraiser is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 8, at The Odyssey in Tinley Park. Tickets are on sale at a discounted rate through RevTrak, accessible through the school district's website.

During the Superintendent's Report, Zinni updated the Board on Illinois School Report Card results. She said all of the district's schools received the exemplary designation from the state, meaning the schools have no underperforming student groups and rank in the Top 10 percent of schools for test scores statewide. She said all of the schools were also in the highest tier — Tier 4 — for evidence-based funding. In Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) scores, the district was second in Will County for growth in English and first in the county for growth in math. Statewide, the district ranked eighth in English, up from 26th last year, and fifth in math. For growth, the district ranked third in English and first for math. Zinni said the district's math growth is very exciting, particularly because the district implemented a new math curriculum last year. "It's really remarkable seeing this growth in math with a brand new resource," she said. The district had a decrease in teacher absenteeism, and Zinni thanked the Frankfort Teachers Association for their partnership in working to improve attendance.

Board Member Dr. Larry Kociolek congratulated the district on these results and requested data on subgroups of students who are struggling with subjects. Zinni said this data is being analyzed and will be presented in the future.

"I want to say congratulations on the Report Cards," Briese said. "This is an excellent job for everyone. Thanks for all your hard work. We appreciate it."

Also during the Superintendent's Report, Zinni acknowledged that it was American Education Week and School Board Recognition Week. She thanked the School Board members for their volunteerism and dedication to coming to meetings prepared, ready to ask challenging questions. Zinni gave special recognition and thanks to Board Member Kevin Regas, who is being relocated for his job and was participating in his last board meeting for the district. "You have tirelessly supported this district and made sure our schools were taken of," Zinni said. She thanked Regas for his attention to finance, and the budgeting and levying processes, as well as for ensuring teachers had what they needed while also being a voice for taxpayers. The Board approved several millions of dollars' worth of tax abatements, made strides in its 21st Century Continuous Learning Plan, improved security systems, and increased extracurricular activities while Regas was on the Board.

Briese also thanked Regas for serving on the Board and for the time he volunteered to the district, and wished him luck.

Director of Business and Operational Services Kate Ambrosini provided the Board with the November 2018 Treasurer's Report and Graphs. In October, the total fund balance decreased by \$1,632,488. Monthly revenue receipts totaled \$600,731 primarily due to Will County property tax receipts and evidence-based funding. Monthly expense disbursements totaled \$2,274,192 primarily due to payroll and accounts payable.

There were three Freedom of Information requests that were responded to in a timely manner.

In discussion, Ambrosini welcomed Lincoln-Way Community High School District 210 Superintendent Dr. R. Scott Tingley, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Brad Cauffman and Director of Transportation Mike Leone to talk with the Board about bussing. Ambrosini thanked District 210 for working to ensure District 157-C students get to and from school safely. She said there have been some challenges this year in communication and staffing. Tingley said this is the first time there have been such challenges. Staffing concerns are normal in the industry right now, he said, and he added that D210 took responsibility for failures in communication. Cauffman said the district is facing a bus driver shortage, and the district is working hard to fill vacancies and find substitute drivers. On Nov. 1, they had 20 drivers out with injuries or illnesses, adding to issues faced by the driver shortage and requiring routes to be doubled up, Cauffman added. "We're very dedicated to making sure we provide the highest quality of service to your district and others we serve, including 210," he said. Kociolek asked how many students are on a bus when a route is doubled, and Leone said it is usually not more than 40. Kociolek said bus drivers might be stressed because of doubled routes and doubled supervision without bus monitors. Leone said the district attempts to avoid doubling up at all costs, and it is a last resort. "I have not had one 157-C parent call and say they are afraid to put their child on the bus," Leone said. Ambrosini said the challenges the district has faced are likely challenges it would face with any vendor, but D157-C administration is looking into how to streamline efforts and have a consistent communication plan in place between the districts, and between D157-C and parents. Briese said the district has so far received excellent service from D210, and it is just a rough time right now that can be resolved. Kociolek said he wanted to hear more solutions, and that money should not be an obstacle to ensuring children's safety at bus stops. Briese said she thought many of those solutions could be from within the district. District administration will have a report for the Board in December on bus system communication and other potential solutions to transportation issues. "I want to thank Lincoln-Way," Zinni said. "Scott is the person who gets up on snowy, icy days and tells the other superintendents if the busses started and if the roads are clear. That's a lot of service we wouldn't get with a commercial company. They care about all the kids who are, at some point, going to land in their schools. There is room for improvement, but we're up for the challenge."

In discussion, the addition of three activity busses at Hickory Creek operating Mondays-Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. was proposed. This would cost roughly \$25,000 per year. Ambrosini asked the Board if they would want to release a survey to parents about interest in the addition of these busses. Board members agreed they would be interested in surveying parents. Leone said he has a few drivers who said they would be interested in driving these routes to pick up extra hours.

In discussion, Board members reviewed the Illinois Association of School Boards 2018 Resolutions Committee Report. In the report, the committee recommended school districts adopt a resolution regarding student safety and protection that would allow armed personnel, including administrations, faculty and staff members, inside of schools after completing state-approved training to carry a concealed weapon. Kociolek, the district's IASB representative, asked the Board for their recommendations on the resolution so he could vote in representation of the Board at IASB's annual meeting on November 17. Briese said she wanted this item added to the agenda so Board members could publicly state how they feel. She said she is strongly opposed to the resolution and believes guns do not belong in schools. Board Secretary Edie Adamski said she had the opposing view, feeling strongly that each district should have a right to decide this for themselves. She said she would vote against the resolution for D157-C, but she would not want to take away the right for other schools to decide this, particularly if it may take first responders a long time to arrive at their schools. Board Members Brett Cosich and Regas said they agreed the decision should be made on a district level. Kociolek said he would like input from principals and teachers on how they feel about the resolution. Board Vice President Tom Reidy said that IASB is not really deciding this issue but is asking for opinions on this as a lobbying issue. He said he did not believe the district should get involved one way or the other and should abstain from the vote. Kociolek said he would vote representing the majority of the Board members' feelings, voting "yes" on the resolution.

In discussion, Ambrosini presented an update on tax appeals. She said there were six objections to property tax bills based on the assessment of individual homes, and the district has roughly \$75,000 of taxes at risk.

In discussion, Ambrosini presented the tentative property tax levy for 2018 and potential abatement scenarios. The district will need approximately \$29.8 million levied for operating/capped funds and approximately \$4.2 million for non-operating/non-capped (debt service) funds. Ambrosini recommended the Board abate roughly \$2 million from the district's Debt Service Fund, for approval in December. Ambrosini said the levy amounts were calculated using a 3.41 percent increase in equalized assessed valuation and \$13 million in new construction. Regas said he thought the district should abate closer to \$4 million, and Adamski said she thought her minimum would be \$3 million. Briese asked for a breakout of what all of the district's fund balances would look like if the Board did choose to abate a larger amount. Ambrosini said she could have this prepared for the next board meeting.

The Board took action to approve the Tentative Certificate of Tax Levy, Truth in Taxation Resolution and the Certification for the 2018 tentative tax levy, set the date for a Public Hearing on the Tax Levy for December 19 at approximately 7:05 p.m. in the Administrative Office Board Room, and directed the Administration to publish notice of said public hearing and take any other actions as required by the Truth in Taxation Act and relevant State laws.

The Board took action to approve repair work for Grand Prairie Condensing Unit 11.

The Board took action to approve contracted snow plowing services with Bill's Lawn Maintenance for Chelsea.

The Board took action to approve a two-year contract with Engie Resources for the purchase of electricity.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Angela Vander Kooi as a full-time long-term substitute English as a second language teacher at Grand Prairie Elementary School with a start date of November 16, 2018 and tentative end date of January 4, 2019 or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Charles Riemma as a full-time long-term substitute special education teacher at Chelsea Intermediate School with a start date of February 11, 2019 and tentative end date of May 14, 2019 or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Natalie Skobel as an internal substitute Spanish language teacher at Hickory Creek Middle School with a start date of November 16, 2018 and tentative end date of January 7, 2019 or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Adam Turlakes as a full-time long-term substitute social studies teacher at Hickory Creek Middle School with a start date of November 19, 2018 and tentative end date of March 5, 2019 or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Leslie Walton as a part-time long-term substitute reading interventionist paraprofessional at Hickory Creek Middle School with a start date of November 19, 2018 and tentative end date of March 5, 2019 or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Brandon Egan as a full-time stipend Head Wrestling Coach at Hickory Creek Middle School for the 2018-2019 school year with a start date of November 30, 2018 and tentative end date of February 28, 2019 or until the assignment ends, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the employment of Eryn Jerz as a full-time Bookkeeper at the District Office with a start date of November 19, 2018, contingent upon the receipt and evaluation of employment documentation required by District 157-C and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Board took action to approve the overload of 41 minutes for five days a week of Cari Clousing, special education teacher, for the month of November.

The Board took action to approve the position change of Anna Vestfal effective Monday, November 12. This change allows Vestfal to continue lunch/recess supervisor responsibilities while also filling the vacant full-time paraprofessional position at Chelsea Intermediate School.

The Board took action to approve the payment of bills for October 2018 as presented.

The Board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:57 p.m. and entered into Closed Session for the purposes of personnel issues of specific employees, a student issue, pending litigation and collective bargaining at 9:03 p.m.

The Board adjourned Closed Session at 9:18 p.m. and adjourned the regular meeting at 9:18 p.m.

The next regular District 157-C Board of Education meeting will be held on December 19, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at the District Office, 10482 W. Nebraska St. in Frankfort, Illinois.