

La Harpe Community School District #347
LA HARPE SCHOOL BOARD News Release



La Harpe School Board: Front row- Pres. Bobi James, Lacey Covert, Dana Blythe; Back Row- Vice Pres. Dustin Detherage, Ryan Johnson, Brian Brown, Jake Allen

On May 21st the La Harpe School Board held a Committee of the Whole meeting at which they reviewed policy wording, footnote updates, and a new policy regarding a Targeted School Violence Prevention Program. The regular meeting followed, and visitors included Melissa Johnson, Julie Garrison, Ashley Cox, and Susan Bray. The Board approved policy updates, monthly bills and annual school board association membership dues. The Board discussed several personnel issues, and approved summer custodians, Leslie Fisher and Brenda Coulter as sub cooks and sub aides, and summer school teachers Jan Bailey and Amanda Byers. The Board received Erin Schatz's resignation from teaching 2nd grade. Schatz has taken a teaching position close to her Burlington area home. The Board also determined not to renew Chris Howard's position as part-time evening custodian. Updates on individual student items and pending litigation were discussed. Dr. Lee mentioned the District would be soliciting bids for goods and services for the coming year. The Board chose a scoreboard contract with Pepsi to replace the gym scoreboard in coordination with the Boosters and AD. The board considered new bookkeeping software due to the ending technical support for the current software. Dr. Lee presented information on the annual school board conference in Chicago in November. The Central Office will have summer hours Monday -Thursday and will be closed on Fridays.

Dr. Lee gave the Board a list of summer maintenance items planned to be completed, a tentative 2019-2020 school calendar, and an update on asbestos at the Corry House, Staff Appreciation Week activities, and tree removal info. Lee also gave a legislative update and area information on athletic directors' pay and responsibilities.

Interim Principal, Mr. Kensler gave information on Presidential Fitness Challenge Testing, Elem & JH music concerts, and an upcoming Academic & Athletic Awards Ceremony and 8th Grade Promotion. June 3 is the last attendance day and will have a 2:00 p.m. dismissal, a list of spring class field trips was provided, and 7 students went to the State track meet and one placed. Kensler provided reports from Kindergarten of the Muffins with Mom parent involvement activity, notes of the Sand Valley Conference from the A.D. meeting, and an Activity Fund report. Mr. Kensler thanked the Board for the great opportunity to work at La Harpe.

On May 29th the La Harpe School Board held a Special Meeting. Visiting were School District Atty Scott Brunton of Miller, Hall & Triggs, LLC, Grant James, Ryan & Molly Hopper, Laura Claassen, Erin Schatz, Jan Bailey, Erin Neff, Courtney & Curt Rude, Julie Garrison, Madison Mershon, Sherry Beals, Kendrah Ruebush, Laurie Myers, Ryan Kitch, Susan & Wayne Bray, Joanna Sholl, Kari Wallace. James recognized the visitors including the school district's attorney, Mr. Scott Brunton, thanked everyone for coming, and announced that the board would go right into closed meeting. James explained that the Board would hold the closed meeting in another room, and then return for the remainder the open meeting. Closed meeting discussion included an

update on teacher contract negotiations and discussed details of the final points left for the committee to negotiate with the LEA and discussion of two ongoing employee matters. Mr. Brunton advised the board on confidentiality and the district's responsibility to protect every employee's rights. The Board returned to the library to resume open meeting at 6:00 p.m. for a Citizen Forum. Additional visitors present were: Denise & Charles Kost, Kayla Dickson, Darcy Stonger, Liz McCarter, Ashley Johnson, Brenda Coulter, Joanna Wright, Cindy Pollock, Cindy Fry, Jeni & Brad Richardson, Bart Thompson, Mark Guzman, Patty Finch, Rex & Teresa Huston, Ben Cox, Nathan Todd, Amber Eaves, Tiffany Bangel, Joni Imthurn, Laurena Hunter. Three representatives of local law enforcement were also present. President Bobi James thanked everyone for coming and for their support and interest in the school. James began this citizen forum by assuring everyone that the members of the board are working together as a team, focusing on the best interests of this school, including administration, faculty, staff, students, and finances. One of the responsibilities of the board is to provide the best education with the funds available to them. James then explained the board is working to increase the financial stability of the school district especially in light of recent school consolidation legislation being considered at the State level. James set straight the misconceptions she had heard regarding reducing the number of aides, junior high and elementary teaching assignments, PreK field trip, a new teacher who has taken a position in another district, field trip concerns, and the new principal hiring procedure. Regarding hiring the new principal, Sara Ryner, James explained that the interview process was rigorous and involved two rounds of interviews with multiple people. The process was objective, and the board has hired the best person for the job. James also spoke in support of superintendent, Dr. Michelle Lee, explaining that the superintendent's job is to bring recommendations to the board, but that the Board makes the final decision. James acknowledged that change can be difficult, but encouraged citizens to trust the process and to know that each board member and administrator only wants what is best for the school even though some may not agree with their decisions.

James then cleared up some misinformation regarding teacher Carrie Finch and spoke of the significant amount of support that the board, administrators, and staff have provided to the Finches in the year and a half since their daughter, Maddie, died. James stated that with respect to ongoing employee matters, the board and administration will not discuss any details of these matters in order to protect employee confidentiality. Atty. Brunton explained that this privilege of confidentiality extends to all employees for the good of the district, and that while the timing of recent decisions is inconvenient – being the last few very busy days of school—the administration is working to resolve the issues at hand without delay.

James then invited citizens to voice their opinions within reasonable time guidelines and with expected decorum. Seven citizens shared their thoughts and James thanked each individual for their participation. The meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

La Harpe School Board meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month in the District Office Conference Room. Agendas and approved minutes are posted on the website at laharpeeagles.org.