

MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

November 3, 2020

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held November 3, 2020, at the Morton Education and Administration Center.

REGULAR MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call –

President Shad Beaty called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Members present: Dr. Shad Beaty, Mr. Jeff Schmidgall, Mr. Kevin Austin,
Mr. Tim Braker, Dr. David Cross, Mr. Tom Neeley, Mr. Bart Rinkenberger

Reports –

Administrative –

Freedom of Information Requests -

There are no Freedom of Information requests to report.

Board Member Appreciation Day –

Dr. Hill reported that November 15, 2020, is set aside as Board Member Appreciation Day by the Illinois Association of School Boards. He commended the Board members for their dedication to serving the school district, especially over the past 8 months during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Superintendent's Report –

Dr. Hill reported that:

- The 2020 Illinois Report Card metrics have been affected by COVID-19. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has added data qualifiers to indicate the affected metrics to - 1) Assessments 2) Teacher Attendance 3) Health and Wellness.
- Dr. Lee Hoffman has recently earned his Doctoral Degree.
- Governor Pritzger has indicated if the progressive tax referendum does not pass, there could be a 5% reduction in funding to Illinois school districts.
- He has signed a letter to the Governor that is being circulated throughout the state asking that the Governor allow students to participate in extra-curricular activities this school year.

Dr. Hill asked board members to offer their opinions of the Jr. High and High School participating in IHSA and IESA basketball. All of them agreed that it is in the best interest of students to be playing sports. Dr. Hill will have our attorney review the district's liability insurance policy. The board will vote on this issue at its November 17th meeting.

Current COVID-19 numbers as of today – Staff – 13 positive; 32 quarantined. Students – 31 positive; 288 quarantined. The administration is being as proactive as possible. There have been three priorities from the beginning – health and safety of students and staff; preserving in-person instruction for the largest percentage as possible; continuity for our community.

President’s Report –

Dr. Beaty again expressed his appreciation to the administration and staff in their handling of in-person/remote learning. He is not surprised at the current “bump” in cases. It was expected to occur at some time. Quarantining the current number of students has allowed the district to remain in-person. He noted that the Tazewell County Health Department has been in agreement with how the District has handled the recent situations. Dr. Smock added that the health department has been phenomenal in its support of the District.

Dr. Beaty reported that Board members had a walk-through of the new construction at the Jr. High and the areas at the high school where there is planned work for the upcoming summer. An open house will be planned after completion of the Jr. High construction.

Discussion Item –

2020 Auditors Report –

Adam Pulley of CliftonLarsonAllen reported the findings of the recent audit conducted on the district’s finances. He noted a clean, unmodified opinion, which is the best that can be given. The district’s profile per the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is shown as “Recognition,” which is the highest designation a district can receive from ISBE. There were no findings, current or prior.

Mr. Pulley acknowledged the business office for its thorough preparation and success of the audit.

Action Item -

Approve Facility Improvements for 2021 –

The Facilities committee met on October 27th to prioritize facility work for 2021 based on board discussion at the October 20th board meeting. The Facility committee is recommending to list the MHS roof project as an alternate bid and delay the Morton Softball field project until March when the financial picture has more clarity. All other projects being considered at this point are needed to continue both maintenance and improvement of the District’s facilities. Facility improvements include roofing at Jefferson and Lincoln; MHS – south parking lot seal and stripe; west gym – strip and refinish floor, replace bleachers, remodel three science labs into STEM lab classrooms plus storage area.

Motion by Mr. Austin, second by Dr. Cross, that the Board of Education approve going to bid on the identified items with the MHS roof being an alternate bid, and waiting until March to evaluate the softball project.

Mr. Braker asked how the MHS roof project can be delayed for a year. It was explained that the roof is on the 15 year plan, but is not in bad condition. Mr. Schuck noted it is not uncommon to move projects around on the plan depending on the availability of funds and prioritizing.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried.

Approve 2021-2022 Proposed Budget and 2020 Tentative Levy –

The administration has completed the initial tentative budget for the 2021-22 school year. Details of that information were provided during the October 20th Board of Education meeting.

The county clerk has informed us that all of the old property will be taxed at a maximum extension increase of the CPI rate of 2.3%. The maximum rate allowable under tax caps is 5% or the CPI, whichever is lower. Last year the CPI was 1.9%. We have received a preliminary indication from the county assessor's office that the change in the assessed value for the District as a result of new construction for the year will be approximately \$3.3 million, an increase of .556%, and that the EAV with this new construction is estimated to be \$591,042,496. The law requires that if the proposed levy represents a 5% or more increase over the prior year's extended taxes, the District must publish notice and establish a hearing. This year the proposed levy is under that threshold at 2.7%, including the bond levy and at 2.87% excluding the bond levy and the notice and hearing are not required. However, a hearing will be held for the purposes of inviting public comment on the levy at the December 8, 2020, Board of Education meeting.

The Education Fund expenses for this levy were calculated based on projected salaries and benefits, the two largest components of expenditures in the Education Fund. The details of the documents were reviewed with the Board on October 20, 2020. The levy resolution will be brought back to the Board of Education on December 8, 2020, for final approval.

Administration recommended that the Board of Education approve the 2021-22 Proposed Budget and the 2020 Tentative Levy at the maximum extension increase of the CPI rate of 2.3%.

Discussion followed. Mr. Schmidgall reiterated his recommendation from the October 20th meeting. He finds it difficult to tax the maximum allowed by PTELL given the events with COVID-19 this year. He recommended the CPI rate of .46%.

Dr. Beaty noted that the levy is the only avenue to increase our revenue to cover cost of living expenses. Taking less than 2.3% will impact district revenues forever and will compound over time. The district will have to remove something from the budget every year and our reserves will be reduced. This year there were unplanned, unbudgeted expenses due to COVID-19. The current board plans to remain in our current buildings for a long while. 2.3% is the maximum allowed under tax caps. He reminded board members that our community is 13th out of 15 peer communities in regards to tax rate. Next year's projected CPI is 1.2%. Loss of revenue usually means cuts in staff and programs.

Dr. Hill explained his recommendation of 2.3%. The district can create relief for those in need in the district without hampering district funds, i.e. fee reductions. This board decided the Jr. High was in most need of improvement, but agreed that after the Jr. High was completed, we would move on to the high school that is also in need of improvements. There is sense of urgency to continue to prepare our high school students for the world by giving them all the opportunities available. With less levy dollars, that plan may have to be slowed down. This board is making decisions that will affect future boards, future superintendents, and future students 5 – 10 years down the road. Boards make long-term decisions that can have long-term consequences. He believes the best thing we can do for our community is to provide the best education possible. We are providing an incredible value for our current tax rate.

Mr. Braker and Mr. Rinkenberger agreed with Mr. Schmidgall.

Mr. Neeley added that the board is going to have to tighten up spending regardless. He feels taking less than 2.3% is a risky decision that will have an impact on students.

Dr. Cross understands both sides. He would hope that future boards would use district funds wisely.

Mr. Schmidgall understands the apprehension in taking less than 2.3% CPI because a future board can always point back to this decision as a scapegoat for potential budget issues. However, every board has to problem solve and make adjustments to live within its budget. Also, he does not agree with the suggestion that significant cuts are warranted just because we take less than full CPI for one year out of the past 20 years.

Motion by Mr. Neeley, second by Dr. Cross, that the Board of Education approve the 2021-22 proposed budget and the 2020 tentative levy at the maximum extension increase of the CPI rate of 2.3%.

Roll Call: Yea 3 Nay 4 (Austin, Braker, Rinkenberger, Schmidgall)

Motion failed.

Motion by Mr. Schmidgall, second by Dr. Cross, that the Board of Education approve the

2021-22 proposed budget and the 2020 tentative levy at the extension increase of the CPI rate of .46%

Roll Call: Yea 5 Nay 2 (Beaty, Neeley)

Motion carried.

Consent Agenda –

Motion by Mr. Schmidgall, second by Mr. Austin, that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented:

- Approve Personnel Report
- Approve Auditor’s Report
- Approve Minutes of the October 20, 2020, Regular Meeting and the October 20, 2020, Regular Meeting Closed Session.
- Approve Bills and Payroll

	Bills 10-23-20
Ed. Fund	\$407,953.75
Bldg. Fund	53,412.27
Trans. Fund	17,172.02
TORT Fund	2,244.00

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried.

Closed Session -

Motion by Mr. Neeley, second by Mr. Austin, that the Board of Education enter into closed session for discussion of Personnel. **(5ILCS 120/2 115 ILCS 5/18)**

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried. The board entered closed session at 8:45 p.m.

Motion by Dr. Cross, second by Mr. Austin, that the Board of Education return to regular session.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried. The board returned to regular session at 8:52 p.m.

Adjournment –

Motion by Mr. Rinckenberger, second by Mr. Austin, that the meeting be adjourned.

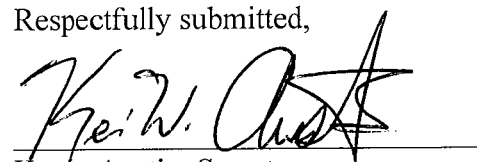
Voice Vote: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.


Recorded by,



Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Austin, Secretary



Shad Beaty, President