

## MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

January 18, 2022

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held January 18, 2022, at the Morton Education and Administration Center.

### **REGULAR MEETING**

#### **Call to Order and Roll Call –**

President Tim Braker called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Members present: Mr. Tim Braker, Dr. David Cross, Dr. Diane Krall,  
Mrs. Amanda Leman, Mr. Tom Neeley, Mr. Jerry Rudd

Member absent: Mr. Bart Rinkenberger

#### **Reports -**

##### **Administrative –**

##### **Freedom of Information -**

Dr. Hill reported there have been no Freedom of Information requests.

##### **Recognize MJHS 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Basketball – State Tournament -**

The Board of Education recognized the 7th Grade Girls Basketball team who were runners up in the state tournament. Mr. Carter and Coach Swearingen praised the team members for their efforts on and off the basketball court. He noted the team has a 4.0 GPA on average. Coach Swearingen has enjoyed seeing the program grow over the years.

##### **Superintendent's Report –**

Dr. Hill reported:

- on unanticipated sources of revenue including CPPRT Funds up an additional \$120,000; IDEA ESSER Grant up an additional \$180,000; \$50,000 NSLP (National School Lunch Program) equipment grant for kitchen equipment; \$5,000 Morton Community Foundation grant; additional \$8,000 from FEMA for tests; \$107,500 for sale of old IPADS (expected \$53,000); NSLP Reimbursement \$80,000 – received approval to use to renovate high school dock.
- he has been invited to participate in a Legislative Roundtable that will involve Central IL Superintendents and Legislators. The date is yet to be determined.
- as follow-up to Mrs. Franklin's Student Services report in December, it has been learned that there were 270 counseling cases in the first semester. In comparison, there were 268 total cases for school year 2021-2022. There has also been an increase in mental health hospitalizations for students this school year. Administration will continue to

monitor these trends.

- TRO (temporary restraining order) hearing for lawsuit Morton District is named in along with 145 other districts will take place January 20. He will update as he gets information.

### **Discussion Items –**

#### **Textbook Proposal – AP Psychology -**

Dr. Teater shared information on the proposed textbook for the AP Psychology course being offered in the upcoming 2022-23 school year. This is the only book that is specifically written for this class and supports the latest AP course framework. This book's curriculum mirrors the AP board's standards with superior graphics, depth of knowledge, and case studies used to prepare the students for the AP Psychology exam. This textbook offers all of these items in addition to supplemental e-text with many student and teacher resources. The book will be placed on the District website for 30 days with forms available for comments.

#### **Textbook Proposal – Standard Biology–**

Dr. Teater shared information on the proposed textbook for the Standard Biology course at Morton High School. "Inspire Biology" published by McGraw Hill is being recommended for the standard biology textbook. In the last 10 years, there has been a significant shift in the methodology of teaching science. Our classes have consistently been inquiry-based even before this paradigm shift. The biggest shift has been the approach to each topic. NGSS recommends starting each unit with a natural phenomenon. The phenomenon is ultimately explained at the end of each unit through the incorporation of hands-on inquiry-based lessons and STEM unit projects.

The current textbook from 2010 does not meet the needs of teaching science using the NGSS three dimensions of learning which include: science and engineering practices (SEP) disciplinary core ideas (DCI), and crosscutting concepts (CC). In addition, many of the chapters are also out of date concerning the content that has been expanded upon because of further scientific research and findings. i.e. genomics. The book will be placed on the District website for 30 days with forms available for comments.

### **Action Items –**

#### **Approve 2022-2023 School Calendar –**

Motion by Mr. Neeley, second by Dr. Cross that the 2022-2023 School Calendar be approved as presented.

Roll Call:                      Yea 6                      Nay 0                      Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried.

**Approve New Course Proposals –**

Motion by Dr. Krall, second by Mr. Rudd, that the Board of Education approve the new course proposals for Morton High School for the 2022-23 school year – Introduction to Skilled Trades; College Preparatory Algebra with Trigonometry; Broadcast Journalism; and AP Psychology.

Roll Call:                      Yea 6                      Nay 0                      Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried.

Mr. Neeley expressed his appreciation to all that served on the curriculum committees for the in depth work that goes into the research for these courses.

**Approve Resolution Authorizing Litigation Against ISBE and State Superintendent –**

Dr. Hill explained the purpose of this resolution is to authorize litigation against the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the State Superintendent of Schools. District 709 and other area districts are challenging the ISBE's authority to withdraw a school district's recognition status and withhold funding for declining to follow state-required COVID-19 mitigation measures. The Board of Education adopted a Return to School Plan at its August 3, 2021, meeting. The Plan balanced safety with other important considerations including student and employee attendance, social and mental health, the efficacy of various mitigation measures, learning and achievement. The Board and Administration advocated for a more localized, more accurate assessment of infection risk and transmission within our schools and community.

The following day Gov. Pritzker issued his executive orders and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) imposed emergency regulations, shifting from the "recommendations" of just weeks before to mandates. The state superintendent then sent a letter to all Illinois schools threatening to remove their recognition status, accompanied by the surrender of state funding, if they failed to comply. Morton School District made the decision to abide by the mandates to start the year, despite its faith in the integrity of its own plan, despite questioning the ISBE's standing to take such action, and despite the passion of its members regarding the principle of local control and parent choice. That reluctant compliance continues to this day.

The district has sought legal guidance, and have been advised that there is an argument to be made that ISBE lacks the legal authority to follow through with its promised consequences. The district has repeatedly advocated for local control by communicating concerns to the governor's office, the ISBE and state superintendent, and the IDPH, essentially exhausting all other remedies.

By filing this lawsuit and asking the court to clarify the ISBE's permitted powers, in advance of implementing its own Return to School Plan, the Morton Board is not imperiling the district's recognition should the judge find in favor of ISBE.

It was noted that the Morton School Board and administration have the best interests of students and staff in mind, and feel that locally elected board members are in the best position to determine what will be best for the students of Morton.

Board members emphatically stressed that the purpose of the litigation is to implement the district’s own mitigations laid out in the Return to School Plan.

Motion by Dr. Cross, second by Mr. Rudd, that the Board of Education approve the Resolution Authorizing Litigation Against ISBE and the State Superintendent.

Roll Call:                      Yea 6                      Nay 0                      Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried.

**Consent Agenda –**

Motion by Mr. Rudd, second by Dr. Cross, that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented:

- Approve Personnel Report
- Approve Out of State/Overnight Trips – MHS Marching Band – St. Louis and Indianapolis
- Approve Minutes of the December 14, 2021, Regular Meeting, and the December 14, 2021, Regular Meeting Closed Session.
- Approve Bills and Payroll

	<b>Bills 12-10-21</b>	<b>Bills 12-17-21</b>	<b>Bills 1-14-22</b>	<b>Payroll 12-10-21</b>	<b>Payroll 12-24-21</b>
Ed. Fund	\$22,370.61	\$466,066.37	\$518,837.00	\$817,435.73	\$886,292.98
Bldg. Fund	875.93	222,642.22	33,100.64	43,547.34	47,949.09
Trans. Fund	327.56	13,750.72	16,429.75	17,080.86	26,979.83
IMRF Fund	--	--	--	42,265.79	51,054.89

Roll Call:                      Yea 6                      Nay 0                      Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried.

**Closed Session**

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

Roll Call:                      Yea 6                      Nay 0                      Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried. The board entered closed session at 6:22 p.m.

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

Roll Call:                    Yea 6                    Nay 0                    Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried. The board returned to regular session at 7:06 p.m.

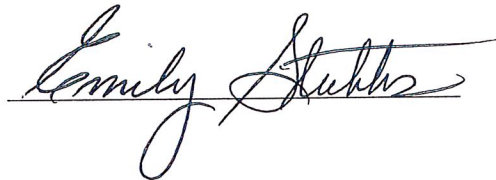
**Adjournment –**

Motion by Mr. Neeley, second by Mr. Rudd, that the meeting be adjourned.


Voice Vote:                    Yea 6                    Nay 0                    Absent 1 (Rinkenberger)

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Recorded by,

  
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Respectfully submitted,

  
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David Cross, V. President



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Tim Braker, President