

MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

May 24, 2022

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held on May 24, 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 5:35pm

Members present: Mr. Tim Braker, Mr. Bart Rinkenberger, Dr. David Cross, Dr. Diane Krall, Mrs. Amanda Leman, Mr. Tom Neeley and Mr. Jerry Rudd. Member absent: 0

Administrative Reports:

Crisis Plan Update - Dr. Smock

- Dr. Smock stated that our hearts go out to the community of Uvalde, Texas where a school shooting unfolded earlier in the day. It is a reminder of the importance of reviewing and practicing our crisis plans.
- Morton 709 Crisis Plan teams recently met to review current safety protocols and response plans in the event of an emergency. Community safety professionals were a part of the discussions. Multiple meetings were held in individual buildings and collectively, seeking to evaluate areas of improvement.
- MJHS changes have improved safety for students and the community. Morton Academy's crisis plan is developing with plans to use Guardian Angel Home for shelter when necessary.
- The Transportation office and other sites are being reviewed for security upgrades, including cameras and addressing safety in bad weather.
- Dr. Smock noted the evacuation plans and practice drills implemented in the past have included the evacuation of students to safer locations. This will be revisited. Morton 709 will continue to assess and plan for the worst case scenario, hoping we never have to use it.
- Mr. Braker noted his appreciation for the seriousness of the 709 Leadership, Staff and Community Members involved in recent meetings. He was impressed. Mr. Neeley asked about the security audit that was done several years ago. Dr. Smock indicated the district addressed the most pressing issues first and have continued to work on the list. There were some instances where there was not full agreement on the best way to proceed to improve safety. The list is a work in progress.

Superintendent's Report— Dr. Hill

- Matt Cropper met with building administrators for input and observations. The report will be ready on July 1, 2022.
- Digital signs are going up at Grundy, Lincoln and Jefferson in a joint project with building PTO's. Brown decided not to invest in a digital sign at this time.
- Dr. Hill reflected on a beautiful graduation including student speeches. Mrs. Ripka and the MHS team responded swiftly and with excellence in making decisions around graduation weather uncertainty. The general consensus was that the graduation ceremony was outstanding in every way.
- Covid numbers were currently at 2 students and 2 staff across the district.
- Dr. Hill recognized Dr. Lee Hoffman for his 14 years of service to Morton 709 and positive impact on the staff, students and their families.

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Assistant Superintendent's Report - Dr. Smock

- Presented the urgent need to address and increase wages for our district aides and some other key jobs in our buildings. Minimum wage increases are happening over the next three years, raising minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025. This impacts our instructional, resource and special education aides. There is a plan to create three tiers within the job structure for aides based on the duties of the positions and work. Some aide positions are teaching assistants. Other aides work with students with special struggles requiring aide support in the classroom and throughout the school day. Another group serves in positions requiring higher skills and special training. Board approval is needed, and a plan is forthcoming for the board's perusal and review.

Discussion Items:

- The proposed Morton 709 Resolution on Parents Rights/Teachers Roles supports an unbiased learning environment that builds student critical thinking skills while respecting individual family diversity. Dr. Hill read the drafted resolution. The purpose of this resolution is to insure Morton 709's commitment to classrooms that teach students not what to think, but how to think. Equipping students to navigate the world, with respect to the uniqueness of individual families is the focus. Education in a safe, neutral and space, without usurping or severing the values taught at home. Thoughtful classrooms allow students to learn and grow, without promoting divisive agendas. Parents can choose to opt out on some topics. Dr. Hill noted Dr. Smock's efforts in drafting this resolution include the work of 709 Administration over the past six months. Mr. Neeley commended Dr. Smock for considering the values of the 709 community and for his response to a request from the board to look at creating this kind of policy. Dr. Krall asked if it was more philosophical or enforceable. Mr. Rudd defined it as a position statement and not a policy. Dr. Krall noted humans are emotional beings. All sides being heard and fairly presented allows students to critically think and form opinions.
- The Restraint/Timeout (RTO) Reduction Plan was discussed. Mrs. Franklin was present at the meeting, clarifying a few board member questions. Morton 709's restraint count is very low compared to other places. Verbal de-escalation techniques are most often used. Sometimes restraint is the safest response for the student, other classmates and staff.

President's Report - Mr. Braker

- Mr. Braker noted the graduation was beautiful. A brief shower and then it was a beautiful day for the graduating class and their families.
- Mr. Braker reported that the reception for the 18 retiring teachers and staff was well attended. Mr. Braker noted Dr. Smock calculated almost 400 years of teaching experience left with them into retirement.
- Mr. Braker, also, took time to recognize the retiring Board of Education Secretary and Secretary to the Superintendent, Emily Stubbs. He thanked her on behalf of the BOE for the many ways she has served over the years. He, also, recognized Dr. Hill for his outstanding leadership through some tough years and the overall positive impact of his time at Morton 709. Dr. Hill spoke, briefly, thanking his wife for her support and sacrifices over the years. He noted how great it was to work with the people here. Board members joined in to thank him for being a man of calm helping to bring about a sense of peace, even when the times were challenging. Dr. Smock noted that Dr. Hill, Dr. Hoffman and Emily Stubbs are people of outstanding character.

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Action Items –

Student Handbook Revisions for 2022-23

Student Handbook revisions were approved for the 2022-23 school year. Dr. Krall noted that the term “disruptive” may be difficult to interpret.

Motion by Mr. Rinckenberger, second by Mr. Rudd to approve the Student Handbook Revisions.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

License Extension Agreements with Center for Youth and Family Services

Approved the one year License Extension Agreements with CYFS, with the understanding that Morton 709 can leave the agreement if necessary. We continue to use more of the facility square footage for educational purposes. Rent was increased. The Board asked if grants help with the space rental. The answer was not readily available, as to how the space is funded.

Consent Agenda –

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

Approve Personnel Report

Approve Minutes of the May 10, 2022 Regular Meeting; and the May 10, 2022,
Regular Meeting Closed Session.

Approve Bills

| | Bills 5-6-22 |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| Ed. Fund | \$575,970.99 |
| Bldg. Fund | 68,345.35 |
| Trans. Fund | 16,808.09 |

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

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Adjournment –

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

Voice Vote: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Recorded by,

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Smith, Board of Education Secretary

Bart Rinkenberger, Secretary

Tim Braker, President