

**LA FAYETTE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION – REGULAR MEETING  
January 14, 2016**

I. Opening

- A. Call to Order - The Regular Board of Education meeting for LaFayette Central School District was called to order at 5:31pm by President Matthew Dodge. Present were Vice President Johnson, Trustees Whitney, Scofield, and Superintendent Laura Lavine, School Business Official and District Clerk Kasey McHale. Also in attendance were Administrators Susan Osborn, Diane Ellsowrth, James Chupaila, Jennifer Blossey, Karen Ocque, and Jim Kesler, Cindi Commins, Alexis Fenstermaker, Clay Rockwell, Walt Nowey, Jerry Kelly, Janna Keefe, Anne Courtwright, Patty Kenney, Sandra Ruffo, Myia McCarthy, Tom LaRose, Jacob Fox, Isaac Tenenbaum, Christine Baker, Cathy Nagel, Denise Dodge, Kevin Morel, Joseph Fox, Sue Bang, Maria Nastasi, Sean Griffin, Esther Wanlass, Nancy Hummel, Ron Spicer, Tess Miller, Jennifer Park, Chris Gray, Carrie GAnoe, Kelly Kubeja, Michael wais, Anne Wais, Bruce Wais, Sean Zehner, Lisa Chapman, David Stablein, Damon Derbyshire, Leonardo Oppedisano, Christina Shute, Connor Oakman and Family, Kristine Jarosz, Gary Oelkers, Kristin McClary, Karyn Meaney, Ken Keech, Rebecca Rogers, Molly Rogers, Carlee Clarke, Bruce Wanlass, Dennis Earle, Jeanie Gleisner, John Vossler, Mr. Shaver, Tim Miller, Jim Shorts, Daryl Felice, Ann Schaefer, Jane Schaefer, Mary Conover, Gretchen Gretskey, Kaitlyn Dodge, Cassie Dodge, Mackenzie McElhannon, Robin O’Kane, Nancy Powless, Christine Cromley, Adrian Shute, Jimmy Welch, and Stacy Peios. Trustee Keefe arrived at 5:34 pm.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance - Led by President Dodge
- C. Opening Remarks - President Dodge thanked all members of the community for coming out to the meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes

- A. Regular Minutes - December 17, 2015 - Board members that were present could not reach a quorum. It was decided that the approval of these minutes would be tabled for a future meeting.

III. District Presentations and Reports

A. Presentations and Recognition

1. Student Recognition for Cross Country, Connor Oakman - President Dodge welcomed Bill O’Leary to introduce Connor Oakman. Mr. O’Leary explained that Connor is LaFayette Central School District’s first boys’ cross country sectional champion, competed in the New York State cross country championship, and, in what he considers most important, is the recipient of the Sportsmanship Award for Section III boys’ cross country. Mr. O’Leary stated that Connor puts in a lot of time and heart into the sport. Connor received a certificate of achievement from the Board of Education and congratulations from the District.
2. Student Presentation: Proposed Project, Nicholas Park - Dave Stablein introduced Nick, a junior at Big Picture. Nick explained that in junior high school he was very introverted and not involved in school. He felt that higher education was not in his future, but then he was introduced to the Big Picture program. Since becoming a student at Big Picture, Nick’s outlook on education has completely changed. He has found friends with similar interests, found skills he wants to pursue and wanted to find a way to give back to the school. He presented a proposal to the Board for a courtyard sculpture, his way to thank the Big Picture program. He is interning with a sculptor and architect firm, and has designed 3 different sculptures for the school. He presented with the hope that the Board would discuss his proposal, and give him approval to move forward with the project, and feedback on what design they like. Trustee Johnson asked Nick which of his designs was his favorite, and Nick said his design (the bench/couch sculpture) was. Trustee Whitney asked how long the presentation and designs took him to complete. Nick said the whole process took about

two weeks per design, from working on the sketch to the different programs for the renderings. Superintendent Lavine thanked Nick for his presentation and the Board agreed to discuss his designs and get back to him with their decision.

3. New York State School Boards Association Representative, Sandra Ruffo - Sandy thanked the Board for welcoming her to the meeting and stated that since she has become the Area 4 NYSSBA Representative, it has been a goal for her to travel to all of her 75 districts in her region through. She wanted Board members to know her, feel comfortable contacting her and understand what we are receiving through NYSSBA.
4. Cayuga BOCES: Online Courses, Janna Keefe and Tony Abbatiello - Ms. Keefe and Mr. Abbatiello described the history of online courses and the requirements through the state for online learning. Mr. Abbatiello explained that when school districts offer online courses it allows students to take courses they may not normally have access to, and that colleges are looking for transcripts to have a more robust style of learning, so it can also help students in their journey to higher education. Ms. Keefe explained that most colleges are giving online courses now, and students who enter college with no online course experience do not have as high a success rate as those with experience, and so taking online courses in high school helps in preparation for that, as well. Online courses offered through Cayuga BOCES offer communication with students, parents, guidance, and administration. Students are able to work on their online coursework any time from any location, and their online teachers mostly communicate through email within a 24 hour window. Coursework involves a variety of different tasks, including readings, writing assignments, go-out-and-do projects, and discussion with other students. Online courses are always a work in progress, and Cayuga BOCES is always taking suggestions and updating what is offered and how they work. Online classes have been offered since 2010. Sue Bang asked about the grading process and if online grades become a part of a student's GPA. Ms. Keefe said that in every case she has worked with before the grades are included in a student's GPA, but it is up to the school. Mrs. Bang asked if the online courses are for high school credit or AP credit, and Mr. Abbatiello answered that if a course is an AP course, it is for an AP credit, but otherwise it would be high school. Trustee Whitney asked if it was on the student to be able to have internet access and the proper equipment to take an online course, and Ms. Keefe answered that Cayuga BOCES works with the school to make sure the students have a study hall or access to use their time and take the course, but ultimately it would be a student and parent/guardian's responsibility to make sure they were equipped to take the online course. Mr. Abbatiello also mentioned that there are full or half credit courses. Mrs. Cromley asked if students would be able to take courses just at home if they don't have a study hall and Ms. Keefe said yes, as long as they can be sure they have reliable internet access. Mrs. Comins asked if the school district pays for the courses and Mr. Abbatiello said yes, except for AP courses, which are the responsibility of the student. Mr. Fox inquired about the communication with parents and at what point Cayuga BOCES reaches out to the families. Mr. Abbatiello explained that if a student is struggling, Ms. Keefe checks in multiple times a week and can see that, and communicates with the student and counselors. If the student is starting to drop off, she will reach out to the parents to see if it is an access to internet issue, or a coursework issue. If she cannot see any time online, she tracks their online time, she makes a phone call at home to see what is going on. Ms. Keefe also explained that there are exams and quizzes, and that the quizzes are open book and all exams are done in school. Mrs. Miller inquired about the cost of courses and Mr. Abbatiello said that a half credit course is \$400 and a full credit course is \$750 for a full year per student. Mr. Chupaila explained that the high school course catalogue is now available on the school website, and has information for parents who are interested in more information on what is being offered.

B. Oral Communications-Board Member Updates - None.

#### IV. Old Business

##### A. Strategic Plan Update

1. 2016-2017 Staffing/New Courses - Mr. O'Leary and Mr. Chupaila explained that the guidance team went to a Project Lead the Way conference, and came back thinking of making a goal for their building to bring back the engineering program with more Project Lead the Way instructors. Mr. O'Leary feels that our district needs those teachers available, and the student numbers may not grow right away, but could start building up the program, making it possible to go into elementary level to start interest at a younger age. Doing this would allow room in Junior and Senior High level courses. Mr. Chupaila reiterated that there is a lot of flexibility in the program to integrate between high school level to elementary level. Discussion ensued regarding certification areas and new course offerings. Trustee Whitney inquired where the District is on getting computers in the hands of all students and making computer technology available for learning, and Mrs. Turner explained the process of getting the money from the Smart Schools Bond Act for just that purpose.

B. Capital Project Update - Mr. Kesler, Sean Griffin and Chris Gray presented an itinerary to the Board with an update of what is left to be worked on in the Capital Project and estimated dates for completion. Mr. Griffin reported that most items are completed, and any incomplete projects should be done either by the end of this month, or scheduled for February break. Superintendent Lavine read a letter from Yale Lock Company, apologizing for the inconvenience the District has experienced during the project, and offering extending the warranty for four years and onsite security during that warranty period. Mr. Griffin also reported that the auditorium work is moving forward, and they are anticipating District use of the auditorium for the start of April 2016.

#### V. New Business

A. Safety/Security Committee - Superintendent Lavine presented a memo to the Board regarding her proposal to start a Safety and Security Committee for the District, the proposed people who could be asked to be involved and topics for the first meeting. The Board agreed the Committee would be a good idea and would get back to Ms. Lavine regarding which Board members would participate.

B. Jr/Sr High School Principal Search: Process and Timeline - Ms. Lavine also presented a memo to the Board outlining her proposed timeline of events in hiring a principal at the Jr/Sr High School. The Board agreed with the timeline and the decision to begin advertising the position and forming an interview committee.

C. Leonard Bus Company Invitation - Superintendent Lavine reported that the Leonard Bus Company, where we purchase our buses, has invited Ron Cooper and Dan Alexander on an all-expense paid trip to Tulsa to take a tour of their company. Mr. Cooper feels that this would be a very beneficial opportunity for both himself and Mr. Alexander to see how buses are made, and help him to help drivers with checking the buses and making sure they are as safe as possible. Ms. Lavine stated that she had reached out to the school attorney, as there is a Board policy regarding accepting anything from vendors over a certain dollar amount and while this offer does not appear to be a gift, she did not want to give the appearance that this conference would influence the District's decision of where to buy buses, and that the school attorney felt this trip would not be in violation of the policy or a conflict of interest. Vice President Johnson stated that it is his belief that trips such as these are how business is being done, and that it is a great opportunity to see who we are doing business with face-to-face and gain understanding of the products we are purchasing. The Board consensus was that it is beneficial for the school district and supported accepting the invitation.

##### D. Food Service

1. Microwave for Student Use - Superintendent Lavine asked Mr. Rob Kennedy of Food Service to begin a discussion regarding placing a microwave at the Jr/Sr High School cafeteria for student use.

Mr. Kennedy stated that he is not comfortable with placing a microwave in the cafeteria for student use for many reasons, and in his experience other districts do not have microwaves due to safety issues. He stated that he understands that students are more tech savvy, and comfortably use a microwave at home, but there can be issues with how long food items are cooking in the type of commercial-grade microwave the District would have to use, and food could burn. He is concerned about students understanding what can go into a microwave, burning themselves on over-cooked food, and the effect a microwave could ultimately have on the finances for daily sales of school meals. Mr. Kennedy also expressed his concerns with who would be responsible for cleaning the microwave, maintenance of the microwave, etc. Superintendent Lavine asked Mr. Kesler to express his opinion on the topic. Mr. Kesler had talked to the safety officer, and the biggest concern was to make sure there is adequate power to run the machine. He said that it can be illegal if there's not enough power, as it can lead to blowing breakers. He also expressed concern over food placed in too long as it could burn, set off fire alarms and force the school to vacate the building. He agreed with Mr. Kennedy's concern about students putting things that shouldn't go in a microwave in and it causing injury. He stated that while having a microwave is not illegal, it could be dangerous. Items he would like to be considered would be that the microwave needs to be cleaned after each class, and a decision about who would be cleaning it, how it would be disinfected and who would supervise what is being put in the microwave. He said he is not opposed to putting a microwave there, he just wanted to make sure everyone knew there are issues that need to be discussed. Vice President Johnson asked Mr. Stablein if Big Picture has had issues or injuries, as they have a full kitchen with microwaves and stoves. Mr. Stablein responded they have not had issues in their kitchen, but all students have been taught proper safety to use items, there is always staff around, and the safety discussions are happening constantly, not just one time. Vice President Johnson stated he feels that if Big Picture has been successful, it should be brought to the High School. Trustee Whitney stated that he does not know of any deaths caused by microwave, and that dangerous things happen every day but it doesn't mean we shouldn't let our kids into cars or use a microwave. Mrs. Felice asked if there was enough staff to supervise the microwave, and Mrs. Gretsky suggested that it could be put on a cart so only available for certain times or grade levels, and offered as more of a privilege. Mr. Chupaila stated that he has seen schools try to use a microwave for student use but it was removed, and expressed his personal concern over items that should be refrigerated until microwaved. Mr. Kennedy agreed with that concern, because if a student does get sick from food cooked in the District's microwave from it not being refrigerated, that gets reported to the Health Department. If such reports become a habit, it could affect their ability to pass health inspections. There was continued discussion regarding importance of sanitation and food allergies and food temperature if students are allowed to use a microwave in the cafeteria.

At this point (7:09 pm) Chief ADA Joseph T. Coolican and ADA Kerry Buske from the District Attorney's Office had arrived, and the Board agreed to move to Agenda Item IX. A.

- VI. Superintendent's Report - 8:07pm - Superintendent Lavine congratulated Connor Oakman again, for all of his accomplishments and showing great Lancer Pride. She also thanked Nick Park for presenting to the Board, doing an outstanding job in the presentation, and overcoming a case of nerves. Ms. Lavine announced 3 students who made the Central New York Volleyball team, and another student who was the recipient of the Zebra Scholarship, and that all of these students will be recognized at a future meeting. She gave her thanks to Sandy Ruffo for visiting, and thanked Janna Keefe and Tony Abbatiello for all of their information on the exciting new opportunities available to our District. Ms. Lavine thanked Trustee Whitney for informing her about issues with the sign in front of the High School, and let him know that Tiana Poplawski was on top of checking the information. She gave an

update regarding the search for a special education teacher, where four candidates had been interviewed and they were in the process of reference checking. She also indicated that there would be a Parent Information Night announcement coming from Mr. Chupaila tomorrow evening and Sunday evening. Ms. Lavine thanked Melanie Saba, fourth grade teacher at Grimshaw, for being willing to have all of the Administrators observe her class. She also reported that the District SchoolTool transition continues, with trainings approximately once a month. The Budget Committee has had two meetings to date, which are going well, and which seek input from community and teachers. The LaFayette Sports Hall of Fame is underway, and the committee has made a lot of progress. They are hoping to get something by the spring, and will be coming to a board meeting soon to present their plans. Ms. Lavine indicated that the District does have set a plan for snow days. in the case of inclement weather, and announced that the High School course catalogue is now available. She concluded by giving copies of the High School newspaper to all of the Board members and thanked advisor Maria Nastasi. Ms. Nastasi reported that the English department offered Journalism this year, and that this is the second edition of the newspaper, which is completely run by the students. Copies are also available on the High School website.

## VII. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Board Action Items
  1. 504, CSE, CPSE Recommendations
  2. Confidential Contracts 2015-2016
  3. Board of Education Meeting Dates Change
- B. Approval of Personnel Items
  1. Instructional Appointments 2015-2016
  2. Non-Instructional Appointments 2015-2016
  3. Substitute Appointment 2015-2016

**Motion: 1st: Vice President Johnson      2nd: Trustee Keefe**

**Vote: Yes: 5 No:0 Abstain:0 Absent: 2 (LaCava & D. Dodge)**

## VIII. Board Non-Action Items - None

## IX. Communications

- A. 7:00pm - Discussion with Staff from Onondaga County District Attorney's Office - Superintendent Lavine introduced Chief ADA Joseph T. Coolican and ADA Kerry Buske of the Onondaga County District Attorney's office, and Mr. Coolican gave the timeline of events regarding the former student who was arrested after a post on Facebook was published. Mr. Coolican described the events from when Superintendent Lavine was first made aware of the posting and called the Syracuse City Police, to when the case arrived at the District Attorney's office and where the case now stands. Ms. Buske explained the lawful definition of the charge the former student was placed under, and the steps they took in practicing an abundance of caution and determining if there was a threat towards the school, or any students and staff. After explaining the timeline of events and how the case arrived at the District Attorney's office, Mr. Coolican and Ms. Buske offered to take any questions the Board or community members had for them.

Mrs. Felice asked that all staff members be made aware of any similar situations in the future. Mr. Oelkers asked for clarification regarding if after Ms. Lavine notified police they did not update her again, and Mr. Coolican explained that the police told Ms. Lavine they went to the house of the student that night she called them after taking her statement, a search was made of the student's house, car and room, and that the Syracuse Police Department told her there was not an immediate threat and that the

defendant was saying it was a joke. The case was then closed until it was brought to the District Attorney's office. The Syracuse Police Department made no other contact with Ms. Lavine after immediately telling her there was no immediate threat, and that the case was closed.

Ms. Peios commented that she believes communication needs to improve. President Dodge reiterated the beginning of the Safety and Security Committee, and how one of the main goals of the committee is to reevaluate safety protocols and communication. Ms. Peios asked how the District would be taking those meetings and using them for the future. President Dodge stated the representatives from the committee will be available for when these events happen, and a plan would be put in place to follow. Ms. Lavine explained that there are photographs of students posted in school office for the clerical staff to be alert to not allow the students in the building, but that those photographs had been posted before the facebook posting in question.

Mrs. Courtwright asked for clarification on if it was Mr. Brisson who was contacted by the Syracuse Police Department once the District Attorney's office decided to follow the case. It was the Sheriff's Deputy who contacted Mr. Brisson. He told Ms. Lavine that the case was being pursued by the District Attorney's office and someone would contact her if anything was going to happen. Tess Miller asked if there was no immediate threat, why would the school need to be watching out for the student to come back on grounds, and Ms. Buske stated that nothing was found on the young man's technology, but the arrest was based solely on facebook post out of an abundance of caution in this day and age. Ms. Lavine reiterated that the pictures were posted in the office before the Facebook post, and that former students should not be allowed back to socialize. Tess Miller said that other students visit all the time, and Ms. Lavine said she felt this would be a good conversation for safety and security committee to discuss.

Anne Wais expressed her appreciation that officials were using an abundance of caution, but concern that teachers and parents were not notified.

Chris Baker expressed concern that at the time of the incident the door locks at the building were not working, and concern that the arrest took so long because he couldn't be found. Mr. Coolican responded that they were told by the police department that he could not be found. Ms. Lavine indicated that she doubted that since they had already been to his house. (Point of Information: At the time that the locks were not working, the District employed someone to monitor the doors and allow people to enter the building.) Mrs. Baker also expressed that if the initial threat in the posting wasn't enough of a concern to inform the community, that maybe the doors not working and him not being found should have been enough to inform the community. Ms. Lavine responded that she did not know about the arrest until December 16th, because she was unaware it was an ongoing investigation. Gave her timeline of when she was notified, and what happened.

Ms. Buske explained what it meant to be charged with "Making a terroristic threat" She said that it is a D felony, and that there is no lesser misdemeanor this person could have been charged with under the circumstances of the posting. She said that this is not a thoroughly reviewed law currently, but these are coming out in other school districts and so the law has to catch up with the times, as the civilian population and immediate threat is still under a debate amongst law officials.

Rebecca Rogers stated that she wants to know when she sends her kids to school that they are in the safest hands, and while she has had great experiences with the teachers, she would have felt much better if they were told that the faculty and staff were notified that something could happen. Jane Schaefer, a Big Picture student, stated she has always felt safe and comfortable around Dakota, having gone to school with him for years before he left, and that she respects Laura Lavine, and knows that she would do anything to keep the students safe. Gretchen Gretskey expressed she feels there is a gap

in the system between Syracuse Police Department and the District Attorney's office, but she feels we're moving forward as a District, and need a next step.

Mr. Oelkers asked if the Syracuse Police Department interviewed any teachers the student had, and Mr. Coolican responded that they had not, to his knowledge. Mr. Oelkers stated he felt the Syracuse Police did a terrible investigation. Superintendent Lavine reported that she and Susan Osborn were at the Courthouse on December 18, 2015 and that Ms. Osborn was briefly interviewed by a judge. Superintendent Lavine said that with this particular case, the school attorney felt that a call would not have been an appropriate action, and they have since said that they would not have advised that if they could go back, but she was under advice of the school attorney.

A community member asked how far the District would be going to watch the doors at sporting events, after school, and during the school day, as this is an issue especially at the High School.

Superintendent Lavine stated that last school year there was staff hired to watch students, but doors are still being left open, so it is a topic to address at the safety and security committee. Mrs. Gretskey asked if the former student was no longer in custody, and Ms. Buske responded that he is currently on probation, and the probation department will monitor his schooling.

Dave Amidon inquired if there were programs being worked on to tell kids to not tell these types of jokes, and learning the seriousness of these types of statements, and Mr. Coolican said that there is a program within the bureau, especially in Special Victims, where information on safe use of smart media is available, because most younger people do not realize that once is posted online, it's out there for life. Cindi Commins asked how long the young man would be on probation, and Ms. Buske said three years. Mrs. Peios asked if the safety committee going to cover bullying and Superintendent Lavine said yes, that she will add it to agenda. Kevin Morel expressed his concern about the two photos posted in office, that because he was not told about the photos or that there was an issue and he knew the student, he would have let him in. Trustee Whitney asked if, under abundance of caution, would Superintendent notify people if this happened tomorrow. Superintendent Lavine said yes, and that she would follow up with officials if they say something is closed to make sure.

X. Calendar Review

- A. Upcoming Events - 1/28, next Board of Education Meeting.

XI. Financial Reports-FYI - None

XII. Closing Remarks

- A. Public Communications to the Board - Tess Miller expressed her concern with the way people are being hired, and that the teacher's union had wanted a hiring committee that was lost in negotiations, but there was a 'gentlemen's agreement' that there would be a committee. She questioned why someone who is employed by the District in a different position wasn't deemed good enough for the Special Education positions. She also is concerned about the District still looking for the position when there are students that need support. Superintendent Lavine said there have already been three rounds of interviews and that the process is confidential.

Nancy Hummel expressed concern in the change in budgeting process, and having to budget for supplies at the beginning of a school year. She is concerned by not having taught a full year and not being sure what materials she may need to replace or get more of. School Business Official Tiffany Turner responded that a zero based budgeting process doesn't mean that teachers can't get an emergency item if needed, it just allows an estimation for what is needed. She also stated that extra funding is always budgeted, in case things come up during the year so students will never be left without items they need for learning. This process just gives a better idea for the following school

year, and all Principals have a discretionary fund as extra funding, so items can be purchased if needed. Mrs. Turner expressed that if something breaks and it's needed for the classroom, that teachers can put a requisition in and it will be purchased. Patti Kenney expressed concern if a teacher changes a grade level and supplies that were budgeted at the beginning of the year change, and Mrs. Turner reassured that they could accommodate for any change in needs, as this process was just to give an idea. Mrs. Wais asked how the District chooses who is on committees, and President Dodge responded that they ask for volunteers from parent groups and staff from every building.

XIII. Proposed Executive Session

A. Enter into Executive Session for the purpose of Contract Negotiations

**Motion: 1st: Vice President Johnson 2nd: Trustee Keefe**  
**Vote: Yes: 5 No: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 2 (D. Dodge, M. LaCava)**  
**Time: 8:37 p.m.**

M. LaCava entered Executive Session at approximately 9:06 p.m.

B. Reconvene into Open Session

**Motion: 1st: Vice President Johnson 2nd: Trustee Whitney**  
**Vote: Yes:6 No:0 Abstain: Absent: 1 (D. Dodge)**  
**Time: 10:50 p.m.**

XIV. Adjournment

A. Adjourn the Meeting

**Motion: 1st: Trustee Keefe 2nd: Trustee LaCava**  
**Vote: Yes: 6 No: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 1 (D. Dodge)**  
**Time: 10:51 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kasey McHale

District Clerk