

**Trail to hold cyber school meeting**Brook Williams / Published: August 14, 2019

Lackawanna Trail administrators have been preparing for the start of a new school year, as well as the launch of the district’s new cyber school program.

Tomorrow, Aug. 15, the district plans to host a meet and greet in the high school library at 6:30 p.m. for the new Lackawanna Trail Cyber Academy set to begin this fall.

“This board and this administration have made a strong effort to try to keep students here at Trail in the brick and mortar,” Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said at Monday’s board meeting, noting that it has been difficult to bring students back from outside cyber programs.

Principal of School Management Rebekah King has invited current cyber students living in the district to attend the meet and greet. Others who are interested in Trail’s cyber academy are also welcome to attend to get more information.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board supported two House bills that would have helped the district recoup its losses from funding cyber education for students in the district who prefer it, but the bills haven’t left committee.

“It’s been disappointing,” Rakauskas said. “Hopefully we can save some money for the district and offer these students a better education. I know we can do both.”

Also at Monday’s meeting, board members voted to amend the 2019-20 school calendar to make Thursday, April 9 a full school day following a mistake in the calendar that only planned for 179 school days.

Board members Robert Minick and Michael Mould were absent.

Faculty will return for three staff development days starting on Monday, Aug. 26, with students starting the academic year on Thursday, Aug. 29.

High school principal Mark Murphy said that Wednesday, Aug. 14 at 6 p.m. is new student orientation, and returning students in grades 8-12 will receive their schedules on the first day of school.

Murphy said the Remind system has been charging users. While a team figures out how to handle this, important messages have been going out through Remind, while those of less urgency have been communicated elsewhere.

Elementary principal Brian Kearney said all kindergarten students should have received their introductory packets in the mail, and mailings for grades 1-6 will go out this Thursday.

Special education director Amie Talarico said the district underwent its cyclical monitoring with the Bureau of Special Education.

“We were given a few areas for corrective action,” she said, noting that the administrative team will be trained on discipline procedures and referring students to law enforcement. “We also made some corrective actions with our processes for extended school year paperwork and we’ll be holding two on-site parent trainings.”

The district was also audited for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act this year.

“We are meeting with the secretaries that do intake and looking at our enrollment paperwork and how we manage the paperwork in both buildings,” Talarico said.

The board also voted on Monday to increase its substitute nurse pay rate in order to stay competitive with other school districts.

Board members agreed to raise the rate for registered nurses to $125 per day and licensed practical nurses to $110 beginning in the 2019-20 school year.

The board also approved spending $38,254 to purchase a 2019 Chevrolet Express cargo van from Bob Fisher Chevrolet under a COSTARS contract.

In an emergency motion, board members approved the purchase of a handicap accessible van for the upcoming school year at cost, up to $60,000.

Board member Joe Strauch said he recognized the need for the van, but voted no because of the cost.

The board officially hired Nicole Pizzola as a secondary science teacher at a salary of $50,786, effective at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year.

After conducting interviews, the board approved Jillian Rojek as a secondary music teacher at a salary of $56,588, and Marisa Ryon as an elementary teacher at a salary of $58,998, both to begin this school year.

Jodi Rinehimer was approved as a mentor for Rojek at a stipend of $450.

The board voted to allow the Pennsylvania School Boards Association to add a note at the bottom of policies that state if a policy reference awaits board approval.

Superintendent secretary Tara Crum said she plans to reach out to the PSBA to see how soon this would go into effect following the vote.

The board approved the recommended bus contractor’s rate at the state formula and the recommended car and van driver’s rate at $1.51 per mile in compliance with the state formula for the 2019-20 school year.

Troy Thurston was retroactively approved as a private vehicle contractor for the upcoming school year.

The board also approved a list of bus contractors/contracted drivers; a list of substitute bus drivers; and a list of private vehicle contractors/substitutes.

The board approved a repository property sale bid of $3,365.30 of a parcel located on Colvin Road in Benton Township, as well as an agreement with ISS Solutions for IT help during the 2019-20 school year, with Strauch voting no on the contract.

Steve Jervis Sr., Ben Simmons, Brett Stage, Jeff Stage, Colin Golden and Tyler Hinkley were approved as volunteer assistant football coaches for the 2019-20 school year.

The board also approved Michael Dalton and Diane Dalton as volunteer marching band assistants, as well as Michelle Fahey and Marisa Ryon as volunteer junior high field hockey coaches, both for the 2019-20 school year.

Addison Hoffman was approved as a volunteer boys varsity basketball coach for the 2019-20 school year.

The board tabled adopting Policy 204: Attendance in order to have one last reading. Since the PSBA recently released a new template, Rakauskas said he wants to make sure Trail’s policy is in line with it.

Policy 217: Graduation was adopted, and the board approved second readings of Policy 249: Bullying/Cyberbullying, Policy 810: Transportation, Policy 810.1: School Bus Drivers and School Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers and Policy 810.3: School Vehicle Drivers, as well as a first reading of Policy 828: Fraud.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board is scheduled to meet for a work session on Tuesday, Sept. 3 at 7:30 p.m.