

**Trail K-12 principal resigns**Brook Williams / Published: September 11, 2019

The Lackawanna Trail School Board acknowledged the resignation of Principal of Student Management Rebekah King at Monday’s school board meeting.

King, whose resignation was effective on Sept. 6, oversaw students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

There was no discussion about plans for replacing her on Monday.

A group of district residents attended Monday’s board meeting to voice concerns about Lackawanna Trail’s new transportation policy that requires students to have only one bus stop.

The policy was passed within the updated school handbooks over the summer ahead of the 2019-20 school year.

Jay Foux, who has a child in the district, questioned the policy and said it has negatively impacted him since his son could not get on the bus at one location and get off at a different stop since he works late.

“My job is on the line right now because I can’t leave work,” echoed Charlotte Bennett, the boy’s mother. “Last year, I was allowed to write a note where he could get dropped off at his grandfather’s house.”

Their son’s uncle Albert Olive, who said he has had to pick up his nephew at the bus stop a few times since school started, was also present to express his personal views on the matter.

“The working class in this district is being bombarded with this because they have to work past 5 p.m.,” Olive said.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said there are few schools that still allow students to get on and off the bus at different stops. A few years ago, Trail allowed this and encountered issues.

“It became very difficult,” he said. “It became a safety concern.”

Business manager Keith Glynn said school districts have an obligation to transport students to and from their residence, but Trail makes an extended accommodation for people to choose a designated location.

He encouraged parents concerned about after school care to utilize the stop where their child gets off the bus for after care in the morning as well.

Maintenance and Transportation Director Rick Kordish said there are 550 students in the elementary center.

“If there’s 500 notes at the end of the day, they all get on and they pile them on the bus drivers,” Kordish said. “This isn’t a convenience thing, it’s a safety thing. We know where the kids are going.”

Brian Kearney, elementary center principal, said he has received calls from other concerned parents and doesn’t take these situations lightly, but the policy has made a huge difference at the end of the day with bussing students.

Rakauskas reiterated that the policy is in place for safety reasons.

“I do understand that there are hardships for some people,” he said. “The intent is not to hurt anyone, certainly not people with job obligations. But there are different ways to work them out and we’ll work with you.”

Also on Monday, the board approved service agreements with CareGivers America Medical Staffing LLC, Bayada Home Health Care Inc. and Interim Healthcare for substitute nurse staffing in the 2019-20 school year.

Registered nurses Genevieve Evans, Brenda Grunza, Maureen Mahoney and Lorie Tweed were also approved as substitute school nurses for this school year.

The board authorized Solicitor John Audi to sign assessment appeal stipulations on behalf of the district and also accepted an assessment appeal stipulation for two properties at $10,500.

In his superintendent’s report, Rakauskas reminded that the elementary center and high school gymnasiums still have space for new advertisers.

Initial fees include $250 for a 3’ x 4’ sign and $300 for a 4’ x 6’ sign, each with an annual $75 renewal fee.

Mark Murphy, high school principal, said students had a smooth start to the new school year and reminded that all student forms are due.

With King’s departure, he said other administrators have had to pick up responsibilities with the new Lackawanna Trail Cyber Academy, which has also seen success so far.

The cyber academy has around eight full-time students, three to four students with blended schedules and about four students taking additional courses for enrichment.

Homecoming week is also approaching, Murphy said. A bonfire is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 26. The homecoming football game against Mid Valley is the next day, followed by a homecoming dance on Saturday.

Kearney agreed that the year has begun smoothly and also spoke of the success of a program through Nutrition Group that brings breakfast to the classroom.

The fifth annual ROAR program that promotes positive behavior also kicks off this week, he said.

Students in both schools will also undergo classroom diagnostic tests this month, with the elementary students also taking DIBELS tests for early literacy.

Special Education Director Amie Talarico said the Center for Independent Living, where Trail sends students for transition services, is looking to expand, possibly on Keystone College’s campus or somewhere in Tunkhannock.

The center is also interested in the transition needs for Trail students with disabilities, she said.

Talarico also said that the district received a grant with the state Department of Labor for eight students to complete the child development associate’s degree with Keystone.

Currently, three students are enrolled and Talarico plans to recruit more.

Glynn said the finance committee plans to meet on Monday, Sept. 16 and provide a report at the next board meeting.