

Trail parents concerned about consent
BY KEVIN MCCONLOGUE PRESS EXAMINER Wednesday, April 6, 2022

A lesson about consent has caused concerns for some parents in the Lackawanna Trail School District.

At a work session meeting Monday night, Trail parent Ronda Norman addressed a letter sent home to high school students that during the month of April, the school counseling department will be teaching a lesson on consent to students.

The school is using the lessons as a way to teach students about the importance of respecting the choices and boundaries of others, to form positive and healthy relationships, what defines sexual harassment/assault, and to promote understanding of what is and is not appropriate.

“Adults in the school talking about consent and exploring sexuality with children as young as 12 is completely inappropriate,” Nor man said. “Our focus should be on building strong families and protecting our kids, not exposing them to these types of behaviors.”

High school principal Mark Murphy said this is an important issue to address with students, especially for students who might not get these types of talks at home or have broken home lives.

“We can’t sit here as a group of adults and not address the issue of con- sent,” Murphy said. “Sexual assaults and harassment are a very sensitive topic, but I think lessons like these could go a long way in stopping these types of things from happening.”

Murphy said the consent lessons are split by grade level, so each presentation is age appropriate. Parents also have the opportunity to opt their child out of the lesson should they choose.

Some parents commended the district for taking the time to put the lesson together. Parent Lauren McNamara said teaching children about consent is critical. She also praised the recently formed Gender and Sexuality Alliance which provides LGBTQ students a safe space to meet.

“It’s a great thing the district is taking care of its LGBTQ students,” McNamara said. “Consent is a very important lesson, and the more students know about it, the better off they will be.”

Wyoming County District Attorney Joe Peters addressed the board saying he wants to work with the board to make county schools the safest place possible for children. He talked about how issues like drugs and violence are not just big city problems, other rural Pennsylvania schools are seeing issues.

“We need to come together to identify what causes these problems so we can get ahead o f t h e s e issues before t h e y g e t here,” Peters said. “Prevention education is a key thing. I want to work with all our schools so they could be as safe as possible for all students.”

Superintendent Matthew Rakaukas presented the academic calendar for the 2022- 23 school year. The first day of school will be Aug. 31. The last day of school for students will be May 31, 2023 with graduation on June 2, 2023.

The district will continue to implement flexible instruction days, where they can pivot to fully virtual instruction in place of a traditional closure for weather or other issues. The Pennsylvania Department of Education allowed districts to implement flexible instructional days during the 2021-22 school year, should schools have to close because of the pandemic.

Beginning with Monday’s meeting, the board will once again allow the public to virtually participate. Beginning this month, the board would still offer meetings virtually, but only members of the public in-person would be allowed to participate.

Board members unanimously agreed the virtual option allows more flexibility and welcomes more participation.

Board member Joe Ross asked to think about the possibility of moving the meetings to another location such as the High School auditorium or Elementary Center gym. He said the size of the board room does not allow for ample public participation.

Business Manager Keith Glynn said the district would have to invest in more technology for the virtual aspect in a bigger location, but he will look into the matter for the future.

Next week the board will vote to approve:

■ A Tower North contract renewal from April 30, 2022 to April 30, 2023.

■ The upgrade of the Focus School Software child accounting solution at $11,250.

■ The first reading of the following policies : 140.1-extracurricular participation by charter/cyber charter students; 239-foreign exchange students; 801-public records.

■ Eligible tuition waiver students for 2022-23.

■ The appointment of Jessica Tigue as an extended school year teacher. ■ The retirement of Lisa Vallone, high school family and consumer science teacher.

■ The resignation of Jody Kwitakowski, girls varsity basketball assistant coach.

The board will meet for its regular meeting on Monday, April 11, at 7:30 p.m.