The Board of School Trustees of the Nettle Creek School Corporation met in a work session on April 28, 2026 at Hagerstown Elementary LGI Room.
The following board members were present: Mike Banning, Sandi Schraub, Ruthie LaMar, Shaun Lieberman, Julie Blaase, Marcie Houghton and Cody Sankey (6:47 pm).
Guests present were: Belinda Locke, Jordan McCaslin, Ron Cross, Maria Tinkle, Jason Bulmer, Peggy Muller, Laynie Vinson, Hannah Arnold, Missy Burns, Paige Johnson, Heather Lugar, Christina Neuman, Madilyn Coomes, Glen Meek, Jordan McCaslin, Scott Snodgrass, Emily West, Lisa Bane, and Abby Klein. Dr. Brian Harmon attended virtually.

CALL TO ORDER OF BOARD MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of School Trustees was called to order by Mr. Lieberman at 6:31 p.m. at Hagerstown Elementary LGI Room.
Mrs. Schaeffer certified compliance with the open meeting law.

WORK SESSION

Mr. Lieberman stated this work session is to discuss revenue and expenditures of the. 2026 Budget and future years. Mrs. Schaeffer stated the work session is to address the current financial reality of Nettle Creek Schools currently and where we need to be moving forward. The reality is that school funding has changed over the years due to declining enrollment and new legislation changes. At this time, Mrs. Schaeffer turned it over to Dr. Brian Harmon with Harmon Consulting.

Dr. Brian Harmon was a Superintendent for over 30 years and currently assists over 30 school districts in Indiana with their budgets. Dr. Harmon explained what cash versus appropriations are to give a better understanding of the school budget. Dr. Harmon explained the challenges schools face when preparing the budgets with so many unknown factors. During his presentation, Dr. Harmon thanked the Board and Mrs. Schaeffer for realizing that Nettle Creek needs to do something now with the budget before it's too late and DUAB begins getting involved. Dr. Harmon put it into terms that now is the time to right size the district to continue providing high quality educational opportunities for students based on current financial realities. He informed the Board that you can calculate potential savings but they are just that, potential savings; not guaranteed. Unfortunately, the guaranteed savings will be by reducing staffing.

Mrs. Schaeffer thanked Dr. Harmon for his time. Mrs. Schaeffer and the Board began discussing the potential cost savings the corporation is facing at this time. Mrs. Schaeffer reiterated that this is just a discussion and nothing is being formally recommended at this time.

Mr. Banning asked Mrs. Schaeffer, if enrollment is declining, what does that look like for class sizes? Mrs. Schaeffer stated our current class sizes are between 16 and 22 currently. Dr. Harmon mentioned during his presentation, the days of class sizes being 16 or so are gone. Based on that recommendation and in comparison, to other schools, we could increase our class sizes to grades K-2 sizes between 23-25 students and intermediate 3rd through 6th between 25-28 students per class. Mrs. Schaeffer shared that based on enrollment numbers today, that would move class sizes to about 22-26 students per class. That would decrease teaching staff by 5 positions and would save approximately $380,000. We currently need to cut $600,000 out of the education budget.

The board also asked about instructional assistants. Mrs. Schaeffer shared that instructional assistants are unique and every school is unique. It is hard to say if we can cut instructional assistants but it is something that can be looked at. Mr. McCaslin and Mrs. Locke both stated that instructional assistants are covering in classrooms over fifty percent of the time.

Mr. Lieberman reminded the board that the changes we make now will be helping the 2027 budget and that we have a rainy-day fund to get us by for this year. All board members agreed. With declining enrollment, Mrs. Schaeffer will continue to work with building administrators on class sizes for next school year.

Mrs. Blaase asked how we would determine if and when we need to add another section to a particular grade level if we have an increase in enrollment? Mrs. Schaeffer stated that once we hit those maximum class sizes in each section in that particular grade, discussions will begin with building administration on when and if another section needs to be offered. Mrs. Schaeffer shared she would keep communication open before adding another section.

Mrs. Houghton brought up a concern with today's environment and not trying to single any certain child or group out, but would we ensure that one class doesn't have IEP's and 504 students? Mrs. Locke stated that the teachers work together to place the kids for the following year. Communication with building Administration and teachers would take place to ensure this doesn't happen. Mrs. Locke stated that these would also be a case-by-case basis as each one is different.

Mrs. Houghton asked how many vocational students we transport to New Castle. Mr. McCaslin stated it is around 6-10 students. Discussion was had on the pros and cons of offering transportation to these students. All agreed that we do not want to take away any student's opportunity to grow and learn.

There was discussion regarding the charging of athletes each season to help cover transportation costs for away events. Mr. Snodgrass provided some information on what other districts are doing to help with transportation costs. He fears if we up the cost too much, parents will not be able to afford it and participation could potentially decrease in some sports.

Mr. Lieberman asked if the board could come back to another work session to follow-up on some items and to discuss the operations fund. To summarize, we need to look at HES class sizes, review the number of instructional assistants, see if there are any cost savings at the High School, and review more of the athletics budget. Mrs. Schaeffer agreed on those items.

Mr. Lieberman opened the floor for any public comment.

Mrs. Shedd, sixth grade teacher, is concerned with all the discussion about possibly making all the cuts at the Elementary. She asked if the cost of the program's teacher use has been considered, taking the cafeteria back to making our own meals rather than being outsourced and if administrative costs has been reviewed?

Mr. Lieberman and Mrs. Schaeffer both stated that nothing is off of the table and everything is being reviewed.

Mrs. Burns stated the sooner we could communicate with teachers that they are the ones that are being cut, the better. She feels like each day, the stress level continues to rise. She understands we have until July 1st to notify staff, but Mrs. Burns stated by that time, it is harder to find another job.

Mrs. Schaeffer understood Mrs. Burns concerns and stated she did not want to rush this decision but also wanted to let staff know as soon as possible. Mrs. Schaeffer stated she would be in communication with building Administration and the Board on next steps.

ADJOURN

Adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Signed _____ _____ _____

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