

Hampshire County Board of Education

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Jeffrey Pancione



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ed Morgan, President

Matthew Trimble, Vice

President

Bernard Hott, Member

Corena Mongold, Member

Kim Poland, Member

Again, Mr. Morgan referenced the CEFP committee as being a part of the name change process and read to the Commission a list of the Hampshire County people on the committee, then stated the county was well represented. Several public speakers later questioned strongly the validity of the committee. Since this past Tuesday the Commission has heard from members of the committee that were on the list cited by Mr. Morgan that say they were never involved in a name change discussion or didn't even know of such committee. Why are we seeing such discrepancy in accountability here?

After the CEFP was formed and had started meeting, certain members of the CEFP stopped coming to meetings whether it was one or two or just all together. Unfortunately, note taking in those meetings happened to be an oversight.

Please give a clear statement of how the school names were chosen. Who exactly made the final recommendation for the names of the schools to the BOE to consider? It was also referenced by Mr. Morgan that the principals were responsible for choosing the names of the schools. Additionally, Mr. Morgan stated that the BOE was not required to have anyone's recommendation for the school names. The Commission would simply like to give their constituents a straight answer on how the BOE named the schools.

The Board of Education would like to give you and our constituents a straight answer by reminding you that the board did not choose the names. We **approved** the names that were voted on by the students, the staff, and community members. The school name process started several months ago when Superintendent Pancione informed the affected principals that it would be beneficial to them if they were to start considering ideas for new names to go with their new schools. Flash forward to January of 2023 when principals sent out ballots with students for them to pick the new name of their choosing. Board members and Superintendent Pancione started to receive phone calls and text messages from all sorts of people. Parents of kids who wanted to know why they were changing, people who really didn't know there were new schools coming in the near future and an overwhelming amount of people in support of the name change. Vice President Trimble and Superintendent Pancione attended a PTO meeting that was held at Augusta Elementary on January 10th. During the course of that meeting there were a handful of parents that expressed their concern for the school naming process. Vice President Trimble and Superintendent Pancione decided that it would be beneficial to extend the deadline, past the original date of January 20th to allow the board to assess and figure out a plan of action. After listening to residents of the county about their concerns over the school names the board took it to a vote during an open board meeting on January 22nd at Romney middle school. The vote passed and schools were directed to choose new names, colors and mascots.

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Will there be any mitigation for the loss of the park in Slanesville where the new school is being built? Were citizens made aware that they would lose this popular spot for their children's recreation before the bond was presented?

The Board of Education has worked collaboratively with county and community entities to provide a recreational area on our property. Mr. Gary Edwards annually presented to the board updates on behalf of the Ruritan. However, the board always reiterated their position that the property ultimately belonged to the board of education. The walking trail is not completely gone. The board will acknowledge the benefit of the trail for our students and community. We will strive to work with the contractor to tie the existing portions of the trail to the new parking areas.

How will Slanesville School be supplied with water? Was the original new school in Slanesville designed and proposed to the public without a plan or funding for water? There are two wells located on the premises, one with ample amounts of water. Will there be consideration of keeping those and treating or updating them so they could at least be used as a backup water supply?

As the commission is well aware, the Central Hampshire PSD has been working on a water expansion project for the past few years, to supply the new Ice Mountain Elementary school. Hampshire County Board of Education has worked diligently in collaboration with the Central Hampshire PSD to secure additional funding for the water expansion along Bloomery Pike. There have been a handful of wells drilled on the Slanesville school property and once the municipal water project is complete the board will evaluate the existing well to determine future use.

Has the Board of Education made any concessions in the bathroom plans in the new schools for transgenders? Mr. Morgan stated no there was not. He stated there are several single unit, same sex bathrooms. Plans were shown to the Commission. Mr. Morgan stated it may seem like a lot of bathrooms, but it is primarily for the teachers. Does the BOE as a whole wish to comment any further? The County Commission stated clearly, they would not have supported a vote on the ballot for funding that would include any type of concessions for transgender lifestyle choices.

Once again, we are asked to respond to rumor and speculation after stating emphatically that there are no such things as "transgender" bathrooms in the new schools. There are however, single occupancy bathrooms strategically placed in each school for the convenience of all stakeholders. Plans were presented to the public and the commission that clearly show all the bathrooms in our new schools.

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Mr. Morgan commented that the County Commission only wants to work with the BOE on rumor type matters. Do any other Board of Education Members wish to expand on, agree, or disagree with him on that statement.

While the commission may disagree that they are only interested in rumor type matters, it is the desire of the Hampshire County Board of Education to remain open and transparent in all of their decision making. While board members may agree or disagree with one another on various topics, the board will collectively strive to speak and work in unity with one voice for the betterment of Hampshire County Schools. We would like to use this letter to publicly extend an open invitation to the Hampshire County Commission to attend the Hampshire County Board of Educations' meetings in an effort to strengthen our relationship. We share a common goal in wanting the best for Hampshire County.

In closing, the board recognizes the desire of the Hampshire County Commission to address citizen concerns. We hope that this response is found to be satisfactory. Our hope remains that we will continue to work together for the citizens of Hampshire County. Our children are the greatest assets of Hampshire County and should be our collective focus for the future.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ed Morgan". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Ed Morgan, President

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Matthew Trimble". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Matthew Trimble, Vice President

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bernard H. Hott". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Bernard H. Hott, Member

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Corena Mongold, Member

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Kim Poland, Member