

JOHNSTOWN-MONROE LOCAL SCHOOLS

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Board approves insurance rates, HSA employer contributions

The Johnstown-Monroe Board of Education approved health insurance rates and employer contributions, including a new Health Savings Account (HSA) option following a presentation on November 28.

HSA's permit users to set aside pre-tax money for medical costs. This allows those who elect to take the HSA option to save for health-care expenses, while simultaneously reducing taxable income.



Superintendent Dr. Philip H. Wagner and District Treasurer Kimberly Pulley noted that for the past four years, district insurance claims have exceeded contributions, requiring some restructuring with the objective of realizing future cost efficiencies for the district and its staff. Dr. Wagner furthered noted, “Our increase this coming year will be 15 percent on our health insurance. That was the lowest premium we could obtain for the foreseeable future, even after going to market and asking numerous insurance companies to bid on our district plan.”

An audit of existing users will also be undertaken to ensure that only qualified recipients are receiving insurance benefits. The district is also in the process of organizing a health insurance committee with 8 – 10 staff members representing a cross section of positions to monitor health insurance and plan for the future.

Renewal issues may appear on May ballot

Treasurer Pulley also provided the board of education with a tax funding update. Two district tax levies currently in place are scheduled to expire over the next two calendar years. The board is considering placing the levies on the May 2, 2023, ballot, seeking voter renewal.

The first issue is a 1% income tax that generated \$4,911,644 during the 2021-22 school year and will expire on December 31, 2023. The other is an emergency levy set to expire on December 31, 2024; it generates \$2,200,000 annually.

Together, the two levies provide approximately 30% of the district's current annual operating funding.

Board member Ruth Ann Booher noted how critical it is to renew both levies as the district continues to plan for historic enrollment growth driven by Intel and supporting enterprises over the coming years.

Board President Tim Swauger agreed, "We're not going to ask for additional dollars, but we need these renewals."

Committees Update

Board Vice President Amanda Davis and board member Anne Thomas confirmed the Curriculum Committee met on November 2. Davis said the committee is in the process of establishing priorities, determining who should be part of the process, organizing and structuring, as well as reviewing local and state data.

The Policy/Development Committee met on November 21. Amanda Davis and board member Alan Benton said the committee is in the process of reviewing more than 600 district policies. Benton said because of the number of policies to be reviewed, "It's going to be a journey. It's going to take a little bit of time."

Other committee meeting dates are yet to be determined.

Superintendent's comments

Dr. Wagner said the district continues to work collaboratively with key stakeholders regarding the General Miles Memorial Estate.

The Superintendent also said he recently met with AEP and Ohio Health executives and continues to seek community partnerships with these and similar agencies.

Board President Tim Swauger thanked Dr. Wagner for engaging in such community outreach. "We've always had a good relationship with the city and it's just getting stronger," Swauger said. "A lot of good things are occurring, and Dr. Wagner is leading a lot of those charges." Stating how critical it is for the district to engage with city and township government leaders, Swauger stressed that where commercial and residential development is concerned, "We're not decision makers, we're influencers."