

JOHNSTOWN-MONROE LOCAL SCHOOLS

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Lacrosse to become a Johnstown-Monroe varsity sport with the 2023 sports season

The Johnstown Board of Education voted to approve lacrosse as a sanctioned varsity sport, beginning with the 2023 season of competition.

Board president Tim Swauger stated Johnstown will now be one of the few school districts of its size to field a varsity lacrosse team.

Swauger stressed more must still happen in terms of equipping the team and getting a coach in place, but said, "It's exciting."

Superintendent Dr. Philip H. Wagner said there has been effort undertaken to work through ownership of needed sporting equipment with the help of some staff members, and the Athletic Boosters.

Swauger asked Johnstown-Monroe Athletic Director Robbie Brickner for an estimate regarding how many athletes are expected to participate and what would represent a reasonable number to justify a sustainable varsity lacrosse team.



Johnstown-Monroe High School Junior Megan Miller (pictured with Dr. Philip Wagner) is in her third year of playing lacrosse. She was present for the end of the Dec. 12 board meeting.



Johnstown-Monroe Athletic Director Robbie Brickner answers board questions regarding lacrosse.

Brickner explained that at any given time, there is a minimum of 10 athletes on the field, so a base-line roster would likely total at least 15 players, but "preferably more than that."

According to Brickner, it is expected the J-M team will consist of between 20 and 25 players, this coming season. He said effort will also be made to ignite enough interest at the middle school to eventually perhaps foster a team at that level, as well.

The effort to launch a varsity lacrosse team has been a long one for proponents, but board members said that now is the right time to do so.

Board members Anne Thomas said the sport has continued to attract support and she acknowledged the strong interest on the part of the student athletes. "It's definitely growing."

Renewal issues likely to appear on May ballot

Treasurer Kimberly Pulley provided the board of education with a further 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 renewal levies on the May 2, 2023, ballot.

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.

As previously reported, the two levies provide approximately 30% of the district's current annual operating funding. "Obviously, it's a huge part of our operating budget," Pulley said.

While media and community attention are focused on Intel and related development projects, Pulley cautioned, "Intel will have an impact in the future, but that impact will not happen until the Intel plant opens, and that is believed to be sometime in 2025."

The board has also committed to the concept that eventual revenue from Intel and allied development will be used to fund needs related to district growth stemming from those developments, Pulley said.

The school district will not begin to realize any potential revenue from Intel or other new employers until those companies employ workers. Because of that fact, Pulley said, "The levy renewals are going to be very, very important in providing that operating money."

The issues to be offered for renewal in May will maintain current levels of funding, Pulley also said.

Board member Ruth Ann Booher also reminded that the issues going to the ballot would be renewals, and not any form of new tax: "I think we need to reassure the voters that it's not an additional tax, it's a renewal. We're just trying to stay at the level we are now, funding our programs."

"We're not asking for additional monies," Swauger also stressed. "It's just a renewal of our existing two levies."

Committees Update

Dr. Wagner discussed with the board making some potential changes to board committees in the coming year. The most significant discussion focused on the probability of creating two new committees, one focused on district communications and the other on district finances.

Board & Superintendent comments

Board member Thomas cited the strong community support enjoyed by the PTO's Winter Art Show held at the Elementary School; it is estimated to have attracted more than 1,500 attendees.

Board member Alan Benton, who attended the art show with fellow member Amanda Davis and Superintendent Wagner said, "It was great. The children were really excited. It was amazing to see the effort that was put in by our staff. You had every one's name under every piece of artwork. It was all professionally done, and it really looked nice."

Benton described the resulting crowds as "unbelievable."

Davis said, "I agree. The community was so excited, and the teachers and administrators were so excited to have the community back in the building."

Board member Booher expressed her hope the concept could continue to grow, perhaps even expanding to Johnstown-Monroe High School.

Dr. Wagner commended the Johnstown PTO and its members' work on the Winter Art Show. "They just did a tremendous job of organizing the show."

The Superintendent praised Mike Giannini, president of the Johnstown-Monroe Athletic Boosters, for his volunteer work at the art show, helping to ease apprehension on the part of any young visitors who might have been stressed by their visits with Santa Claus, who was also present at the show.

Dr. Wagner also updated the board regarding ongoing collaborations to resolve issues related to the General Miles Estate.

"We've got a lot of work done," he said. "We've had a strong partnership with the city and the Johnstown Greater Parks and Rec District... We've been working closely with the Licking Parks Board. We had a very good meeting on Tuesday of last week, and we have some more events coming up."

Dr. Wagner added, "I also want to thank Mrs. Booher because she's been a tremendous teammate throughout this project. She's done an awful lot of research, and I think we're a good team in representing the school district." A status hearing in Newark regarding the Estate is scheduled for Jan. 3, 2023.