

July 28, 2020, Press Release

Middleton trustees adopt pay-to-play plan for sports; selects two applicants to fill vacancies on the board



Middleton School District Trustees adopted a pay-to-play plan for secondary sports -- the first in the history of the district -- to help cover lost revenue, but reduced the financial impact on families significantly, considering the fees originally proposed.

Instead of proposed fees ranging from \$100 to \$550, the fees will be \$100 for middle school athletes and \$200 for high school athletes.

- Monday's meeting was streamed via [YouTube video](#).
- The [agenda](#) and supporting documents are also posted online.

The Middleton School District has been forced to cut \$2.3 million for the 2020-2021 fiscal year because of two state mandated holdbacks, prompted by COVID-19, and the failure to pass an ongoing \$1.3 million supplemental levy.

Superintendent Kristin Beck told the board earlier this month that passage of the two-year, \$1.5 million levy, proposed to voters for the third time on August 25, could reduce the pay-to-play fees, but the school district is no longer in the position that it can subsidize sports 100 percent. [Other budget cuts](#) were previously identified and are listed on the web.

The fees will cover the cost for coaches, transportation and the athletic director. The fees as were approved only cover a portion of the coaches, no transportation, and not the athletic director. The fees do not cover all related costs, including maintenance and utilities of sports facilities. Athletic transportation will not be offered by the district this upcoming year, teams will be responsible for organizing their own travel arrangements.

The reduced pay-to-play fees means that the district must find ways to cut another \$33,000 or cover it with the district's fund balance which is already below the amount required by MSD policy.

Trustee Derek Moore said it makes sense to "dip into our rainy day fund" to offset the full cost for athletes and provide an opportunity for the majority of the student athletes to participate.

Trustee Chair Kirk Adams said he felt that even at \$200 for high school students, the fee seems too high for some students and families.

"The parents will be stressed," Adams said, "but I think, given the reality of the situation, that's probably the compromise that gets you a budget that you can work with without a huge cliff if the levy doesn't pass. It's a short-term Band-Aid, anyway we look at it."

Moore and Adams supported the \$100 and \$200 per-sport fees, but Trustee Aleisha McConkie expressed concerns, looking forward when the district faces another \$1 million shortfall in the 2021-2022 school year if the supplemental levy is not renewed.

"I don't feel comfortable touching our rainy day fund for athletics," McConkie said, after the district already eliminated several educational positions.

"I love sports and my kids play sports ... but you have over 3,000 kids who don't participate in sports, and we're going to dip into our rainy day fund for the 700 kids that do play sports"

Moore stressed the importance of high school sports and the potential loss of student athletes who go elsewhere because the fees are too high.

"Obviously we have some other decisions we have to make if the levy does not pass, but that's at a risk of losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in community support in athletics in people leaving because their kids are going to go to different schools because they can play somewhere else," Moore said.

"I don't like 200 bucks, because it's over what everybody else charges, but I think it's very manageable for the short term. Let's see what happens because the public knows, the community knows, everybody knows if the levy does not pass it's going to get worse. If it does pass, we have some opportunity," Moore added.

Jake Dempsey and Pamela Wagoner selected

Middleton will have two new trustees in August when they are sworn in at the next regular board meeting, set for 6 pm August 10.

Trustees Adams, McConkie and Moore interviewed the applicants Monday night and selected Jake Dempsey in Zone 3 and Pamela Wagoner in Zone 4, filling the positions vacated when Briggs Miller and Marianne Blackwell resigned.

The District also received applications from:

- Bradley Bingham, Celina Templeton and Donald Watt in Zone 3.
- Jedediah Jason Boyd, Meaghan Coles and Delwyn Hughes, who later withdrew his application, in Zone 4.

Jake Dempsey has lived in the Middleton School District for four years and has three children in school. He has managed companies in Taiwan, China, and the US and currently is a corporate evangelist for a software company and works from home. Dempsey said in his application that he has been active in Boy Scouts, and volunteers when there are opportunities.

“(I have) a general feeling that things need to move forward and happen, and while I am not eager to become a community target for some of the extreme elements. I am willing to do it to help my community and my family.”

Pamela Wagoner, mother of five children, three Middleton High School graduates, and two current MHS students, Wagoner has run a non profit Junior Golf Association for the past 12 years.

“We need to bring our community back together and instill a good relationship with all of the district employees, teachers and staff,” Wagoner said in her application. “We moved our children to the Middleton School District in 2007 to improve their learning environment. It has been heartbreaking the last few years. Hopefully, we can move forward and get this school district back on track! I would love to give back to the schools that have been good for my family.”

“I want to thank all those who applied for the open board positions,” Beck said today. “I feel confident in the board’s decision, and would have been happy to work with any of the candidates who applied. We had a group of very qualified applicants each with experience and insight that would benefit the district, we will plan to engage all of the applicants in the future as we move forward with various initiatives.”

Breakfast and lunch fees set for new school year

Trustees approved a plan to charge students \$2.00 for breakfast when it has been free in the past. The reason, the board heard, is because the District lost eligibility in the USDA program that allowed for free breakfasts. Without enough applicants for free and reduced meals, the Middleton School District can't offer it. [Applications can be found online.](#)

The reason for the price change for breakfast is the loss of eligibility to participate in the USDA Provision II program that allowed the District to offer free breakfast for all students.

Lunch prices will also increase to meet the requirement of USDA regulations, which requires that paid lunch prices be near or equal to the free reimbursement rate. The new prices are: elementary - \$2.70; middle school - \$2.80; and high school - \$2.90.

Regulations also require schools participating in the National School Lunch Program to ensure sufficient funds are provided to the nonprofit school food service account for meals served to students not eligible for free or reduced-price meals.