

November 15, 2021

**SCHUYLKILL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
929 Lakeshore Drive  
Leesport, PA 19533-8631**

**MINUTES**

**November 15, 2021**

**1.0 The Regular Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Board Vice President, George H. Mertz III, in the LGI Room/Auditorium of the Schuylkill Valley Middle School.**

**1.1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

**1.2 ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Paul L. Bendigo (arrived at 7:30 p.m.), Robert M. Dempsey, Nicoleen M. Kleffel, Linda R. Lash, George H. Mertz III, David E. Moll, Kevin Raudenbush, Alfonso F. Rossi

Members Absent: G. Dane Miller

Secretary: Linda R. Lash

Treasurer: Michelle Kauffman (not present)

Recording Secretary: Susan A. Christman (not present)

Administrative Staff Present: Dr. Cathy Taschner, Dr. Janet Heilman, Michael Billman, Robin Brightbill, Candice Kehres, Jason Williams

**1.3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Moved by Kevin Raudenbush and seconded by David Moll to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 25, 2021, as presented.**

**Yeas: Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**1.4 EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Mertz reported that the Board met in executive session on November 8, 2021, prior to the Board meeting, for personnel and legal matters; on November 8, 2021, following the Board meeting, for a personnel matter; and on November 15, 2021, prior to the Board meeting, for a personnel matter.

**2.0 REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND BOARD REPRESENTATIVES**

**2.1 PRESIDENT – G. Dane Miller**

No report.

**2.2 SECRETARY – Linda R. Lash**

Mrs. Lash reported that she received the 2021 PSBA Insurance Trust Travel Accident Insurance Enrollment form for anyone who would like to subscribe. Board members are covered traveling to and from meetings so this would be in addition to that coverage.

**2.3 BERKS COUNTY I.U. BOARD – Linda R. Lash**

Mrs. Lash reported that she attended the COLA meeting on November 9. It was a very informative meeting which included speaker Dr. Mark DiRocco, Executive Director of PASA.

He reviewed 2020 census data which showed that in Pennsylvania, rural counties continue to decline in population while counties with suburban and urban centers continue to grow in population. Also, in 2010-2011 there were 1,781,206 public school students enrolled in Pennsylvania Schools, including public charter schools. In 2019-2020 there were 1,724,454. That is a loss of 56,752 public school students over the past decade. During the pandemic year of 2020-2021, another 26,000 students disappeared from public education and an additional 9,000 students went missing from private and parochial schools. While early enrollment estimates appear to show that some of these students have re-enrolled in our schools, many are still missing. They also discussed solving the cyber charter funding dilemma. Legislators are looking to reinstate the 30% tuition reimbursement that districts previously received for cyber charter students. In regard to special education costs, in Berks County we pay approximately \$32,025 for one student. The next BCIU Board meeting will take place on November 18.

**2.4 BERKS CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER – George H. Mertz III**

Mr. Mertz reported that three 10<sup>th</sup> grade SV Culinary Arts students, Amonie Rivera, Landen Reich, and Gwen Fell, helped to make a dinner for the Joint Operating Committee at BCTC East. At the meeting they reviewed future projects including replacing their awards cases with monitors that will feature accomplishments from all of the schools. Also, the BCTC East and West restaurants will be getting renovations, there are two upcoming roof projects, and the chillers will be replaced at both campuses as they are over 25 years old. They will be receiving a grant of \$1.875 million to assist with these updates. The BCTC had a clean audit report and this has been constant for the last eight years. They are also working on teacher contract negotiations.

**2.5 TAX COLLECTION COMMITTEE – David E. Moll**

Mr. Moll stated there was no meeting this past month.

Mr. George Mertz, Vice President, recessed the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Mr. George Mertz, Vice President, reconvened the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

**2.6 PA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION LIAISON – Linda R. Lash**

No report.

**3.0 PERSONS WHO WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD**

Kelly Steinke, Bern Township – Masks during gym class and sporting events

**BOARD**

Audit Review Report / Herbein & Company

**4.1** Mr. Nick Bieber, Herbein & Company, reviewed the June 30, 2021 audit report with the Board. He stated that this year the focus was on the district's implementation of GASB 84, which is related to fiduciary activities. The scholarships and student activities which had previously been presented within the financial statements as fiduciary activities are now presented as special revenue funds of the district. The education trust fund which had previously been presented within the financial statements as fiduciary activities is now reported within the general fund. Mr. Bieber presented the Audit Summary. As previously noted, they issued unmodified opinions on the financial statements as well as on compliance for the major federal program tested which was the Special Education Cluster. There was a significant deficiency finding for internal controls over financial reporting related to account reconciliations and adjustments posted as a result of the audit. There were no deficiencies in compliance noted within our federal awards testing over the Special Education Fund programs. The district qualified as a low-risk auditee for their audit under Uniform Guidance. The audit finding results for account reconciliations and adjustments stated that overall through the audit within the various funds there were 48 total journal entries, which is higher than normal. The main cause of this was the business manager's resignation on August 27. Herbein's field work began September 13 for the audit with that position still vacant. Recent turnover in the business office staff contributed to certain reconciliations not being performed timely or accurately. This has not been an issue in past audits. In regard to general

fund revenue, overall the district had about \$1.1 million actual revenues in excess of budget which is about a 2.9% positive variance. The primary categories for local revenue sources that were over budget are real estate taxes, EIT, transfer taxes, COVID funds from the BCIU, and refund of prior year expenditures from the BCIU related to the incarcerated education program. One thing to note with the overage is at the time of the budget, there was an uncertainty as far as the revenues that would come in specifically related to earned income and transfer taxes. Those line items compared to the prior year's budget were reduced by about \$390,000. The actual results for the year within those two categories was \$406,000 over budget, so really, they came in line with prior year revenues. With state and federal revenue sources, a lot of those variants stemmed from COVID related grants that came in that the district was not aware of during budget preparation. General Fund expenditures came in \$300,000 under budget or a 0.7% positive variance. Some line items that were over budget include regular programs related to wages; administration due to the superintendent settlement; operation and maintenance of plant due to COVID grant-related purchases; and savings in transportation and student activities related to the pandemic. Transfers out were \$575,282 over budget due to an additional transfer of \$100,000 to the capital technology reserve to reimburse for COVID related grant expenditures within that fund, as well as the board agenda item for approval tonight to approve the additional \$474,365 transfer into capital reserves for the assigned fund balance in excess of the board policy.

Putting this all together with the revenue and expenditures, the district had budgeted for a use of \$816,093 of fund balance for the 2020-21 year. The actual surplus in the general fund was \$111,403, mostly driven by revenues being over budget by about \$1.1 million. Prior to the additional year end transfer to capital reserves the surplus was \$585,768. This brought the fund balance for the general fund at the end of the year to \$4,733,673. The restricted fund balance of \$70,000 represents monies in the education trust fund. The assigned fund balance of \$1,336,166 at year-end consists of the budgeted deficit for the 2021-22 year which was \$842,633, and cyber charter school costs which was \$493,533. The unassigned fund balance at June 30, 2021, is 8.0% of budgeted expenditures for the 2020-21 year which is within the thresholds outlined in the district's fund balance policy. The district's fund balance trend of the general fund and capital reserve fund for five years shows a fairly steady increase and is at 15.3% of the next year's budgeted expenditures at year end. Highlights of the capital project fund include the district issuing 2020 notes that resulted in \$23 million in proceeds to the district including a premium of \$4.6 million for upcoming capital projects. Prior to this issue, the debt payoff for the district was 2025 and it is now 2035. Primary expenditures for capital in 2020-21 included HVAC and roof restoration projects. The ending fund balance consists of approximately \$1.6 million in capital reserves and \$20.7 million in unspent bond notes. Overall the results for the food service fund had a decrease in net position of \$130,528. If you pull out the pension and OPEB valuation adjustments this would have been a deficit of \$83,698. In comparison to the prior year, the prior year deficit was about \$8,000. This was seen across the board at various districts; it was rough year for the food service fund in general. The overall net position of the district, while presented at a \$629,326 deficit, this is really driven by the net pension and OPEB liabilities that are allocated to that fund. Without these liabilities, the district would have presented a positive net position of \$283,710 which is about four months of operating expenses. The state recommendation for the net position within the food service fund is to be at about three months of operating expenses. The district at year end 2020-21 is still in a good financial position. A few items in their management recommendation letter included the importance of grant tracking, the homestead and farmstead exclusion calculation, and information on upcoming standards with the most significant for the district being the lease standard which will be impacted in the 2021-22 year.

Mr. Moll asked if the district should be looking at our accounts quarterly or semi-annually, and what is the practice of other districts. Mr. Bieber stated that the primary accounts that do get reconciled on a monthly basis are the cash accounts. Outside of that, payables, accrued wages or accounts payable are done at year end where they have those liabilities set up. The one key thing where they had most of the adjustments is really looking at the grants and most importantly is the identification of the funds when they come in as local, state or federal revenues and having them properly coded. PDE has a chart of accounts that gives a guide as to where specific revenues should be recorded to, and there were a couple that came in that they did have to reclassify to

match the state chart of accounts. A few other adjustments were interim real estate taxes that were improperly recorded to current real estate taxes. This can be looked at on a monthly or quarterly basis to do a quick review of certain account line items.

Acceptance of Audit Report

- 4.2 Approves accepting the report of the annual local audit as performed by Herbein & Company for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.

**Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Linda Lash to approve accepting the report of the annual local audit as performed by Herbein & Company for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.**

Roll Call Vote

**Yeas: Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi, Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

5.0 **SUPERINTENDENT**

Monthly Reports

- 5.1 The following monthly reports have been provided to the Board:

- 5.1.1 Enrollment Year-To-Date
- 5.1.2 Principals' Report
- 5.1.3 Dropout Report

Superintendent's Update

- 5.2 Dr. Taschner thanked everyone for the warm welcome to the district and the kind reception she has received over the last two weeks. She is honored to be a part of this school district and it's her hope to get to know each faculty member, each student and the families over the next six months. This weekend she was honored to attend the Run for Riley 5K and if you have a chance to take a look at the pictures, you'll see the embodiment of a community that shows up to support children and their families. She also attended the Violins of Hope performance on November 3 at our middle school. It was a wonderful opportunity for our students and she thanked the middle school teachers and administration who did all the planning to make that happen for our students. In addition, she visited one of the high school classrooms along with Ms. Brightbill to speak to students who are studying the interview and hiring process. It was an amazing group of students and Dr. Taschner was impressed by the teacher who carefully constructed the learning experience for our students. She looks forward to seeing more students in classrooms and getting to see our staff and teachers in action. Also, this week marks American Education Week and we are celebrating the work of schools. This work not only includes our celebration of teachers, but it also includes celebrating the work of our custodians, paraprofessionals and food service workers. It celebrates our coaches, parents and also our administrators. Dr. Taschner also acknowledged the emails that she's received in regard to the Health and Safety Plan. The responses, though varied, were very informative and instructive and they demonstrate how deeply our parents are committed to seeing this district thrive. We will revisit the plan later and she is responding to all of the emails that are received. She also thanked Kate Costenbader, Supervisor of Special Education, for her work in the district. She will be leaving the district in November and we wish her all the best in her new endeavors. Dr. Taschner ended with thanking our fall athletic teams, the band, coaches, parents and boosters who have represented the district so well.

6.0 **POLICY, PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

*Summary of Committee Deliberations – George H. Mertz III*

The Policy, Personnel and Public Relations Committee met at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021, in the Schuylkill Valley Middle School LGI Room. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2022.

***Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration***

**Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:**

**6.1** Accepts, with best wishes for the future the following resignation due to retirement effective with the last day of the 2021-22 school term unless otherwise noted:

**6.1.1** Ms. Virginia Snyder, Part-Time Child Accounting Secretary, effective date to be determined.

**6.2** Accepts, with regret and best wishes for the future, the following resignations:

**6.2.1** Mrs. Tiffany Smith, Special Education Teacher at the Middle School, effective no later than December 23, 2021.

**6.2.2** Ms. Lisa Krockner, School Psychologist at the Elementary School, effective no later than December 23, 2021.

**Board Action: Moved by Robert Dempsey and seconded by Paul Bendigo to accept the retirement in Item 6.1.1, and the resignations in Items 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, as presented.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**6.2.3** Mrs. Juliana Fernandes Andrade, Full-Time ESL Paraprofessional, effective December 23, 2021.

**Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by David Moll to accept the resignation in Item 6.2.3, as presented.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**6.3** Approves the employment of the following (all elections are contingent upon receipt and district approval of all necessary pre-employment forms, certification, state-mandated physical examinations, clearances, etc.):

**6.3.1** Ms. Danielle Readinger, Part-Time Reading Paraprofessional at the Elementary School, 6 hours per day at an hourly rate of \$12.39, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Miss Isabella Heffernan, effective November 9, 2021.

**6.3.2** Mentor for the 2021-22 school year at a stipend of \$1,175.00 for full year mentors and \$587.50 for half year mentors.

**6.3.3** Job description for the position of Director of Pupil Services.

**6.3.4** Proposed district organizational charts.

**6.3.5** Substitutes for the 2021-22 school year.

- 6.3.6 Volunteers for the 2021-22 school year.

**Board Action: Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Paul Bendigo to approve the employment in Items 6.3.1 through and including 6.3.6, as presented.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- 6.3.7 Additional bus drivers utilized by Eshelman Transportation for the 2021-22 school year.

**Board Action: Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve the employment in Item 6.3.7, as presented.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- 6.4 Approves the following leaves of absence:

6.4.1 Mrs. Lisa Lawson, Part-Time Food Services Worker, effective November 1, 2021, through November 19, 2021.

6.4.2 Ms. Shelly Folk, Part-Time Food Services Worker, effective October 12, 2021, through November 29, 2021.

- 6.5 Approves the conference request from Ms. Judy Strausser to attend the 2022 PIMS Data Summit from March 21-23, 2022 in Hershey, PA, at a cost of \$783.00.

**Board Action: Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Alfonso Rossi to approve the leaves of absence in Items 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, as presented; and to approve the conference request in Item 6.5, as presented.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## 7.0 CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY

### *Summary of Committee Deliberations – Kevin Raudenbush*

The Curriculum and Technology Committee met at 7:13 p.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021, in the Schuylkill Valley Middle School LGI Room. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2022.

### *Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration*

#### **Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:**

- 7.1 Approves the contract with B&B Light and Sound, in the amount of \$800.00, to provide DJ services at the Junior/Senior Prom on April 29, 2022.

- 7.2 Approves the Berks County Intermediate Unit Service Agreement for the purchase of DocuSign licenses and pro-maintenance and support, effective November 30, 2021 through November 29, 2022, at a cost not to exceed \$1,900.00, pending review and approval by the district solicitor. NOTE: The DocuSign envelopes are to be utilized by the Special Education Department for electronic signature of documents.

**Board Action:** Moved by David Moll and seconded by Robert Dempsey to approve the contract with B&B Light and Sound, in the amount of \$800.00, to provide DJ services at the Junior/Senior Prom on April 29, 2022; and to approve the Berks County Intermediate Unit Service Agreement for the purchase of DocuSign licenses and pro-maintenance and support, effective November 30, 2021 through November 29, 2022, at a cost not to exceed \$1,900.00, pending review and approval by the district solicitor.

**Yeas:** Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**8.0 BUDGET AND FINANCE**

***Summary of Committee Deliberations – David E. Moll***

The Budget and Finance Committee met at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021, in the Schuylkill Valley Middle School LGI Room. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2022.

***Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration***

**Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:**

- 8.1** Approves/ratifies the payment of bills in the following amounts from October 15, 2021, to November 16, 2021, as presented.

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>GENERAL FUND</b>                      | \$225,346.05        |
| <b>CAFETERIA FUND</b>                    | \$68,617.55         |
| <b>CAPITAL PROJECT FUND</b>              | \$7,332.00          |
| <b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FUND</b> | \$1,175.00          |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>                       | <b>\$302,470.60</b> |

**Board Action:** Moved by David Moll and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve/ratify the payment of bills in Item 8.1 from October 15, 2021, to November 16, 2021, as presented.

**Yeas:** Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- 8.2** Approves the Act 1 resolution which states that 2022-2023 real estate taxes will not increase more than the Act 1 index of 4.2%.

**Board Action:** Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by David Moll to approve the Act 1 resolution which states that 2022-2023 real estate taxes will not increase more than the Act 1 index of 4.2%.

**Roll Call Vote**

**Yeas:** Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi, Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- 8.3** Approves the November 2021 budget transfers in the amount of \$6,250.00.

- 8.4** Approves, in conjunction with closing the 2020-21 financial audit, transferring \$474,365 from the Unassigned Fund Balance to the Capital Reserve Fund.

**Board Action: Moved by David Moll and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve the November 2021 budget transfers in the amount of \$6,250.00; and to approve, in conjunction with closing the 2020-21 financial audit, transferring \$474,365 from the Unassigned Fund Balance to the Capital Reserve Fund.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **9.0 BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS**

### ***Summary of Committee Deliberations – Alfonso F. Rossi***

The Buildings and Grounds Committee met at 7:21 p.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021, in the Schuylkill Valley Middle School LGI Room. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2022.

### ***Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration***

**Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:**

- 9.1** Approves renewal of the contract for services from eFileCabinet, for the annual software fee for the district's electronic buildings and grounds file management system, in the amount of \$660.00.

**Board Action: Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve renewal of the contract for services from eFileCabinet, for the annual software fee for the district's electronic buildings and grounds file management system, in the amount of \$660.00.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- 9.2** Approves Spotts, Stevens and McCoy to provide professional services to design and assist with the placement/upgrade of diesel generators to natural gas generators at the high school and elementary school to accommodate additional load created by additional emergency power requirements for the IT equipment, at a cost of \$53,900.00, to be paid from the Capital Improvement Projects Fund, pending review and approval by the district solicitor. All related utility work to be included in the design.

**Board Action: Moved by Alfonso Rossi and seconded by David Moll to approve Spotts, Stevens and McCoy to provide professional services to design and assist with the placement/upgrade of diesel generators to natural gas generators at the high school and elementary school to accommodate additional load created by additional emergency power requirements for the IT equipment, at a cost of \$53,900.00, to be paid from the Capital Improvement Projects Fund, pending review and approval by the district solicitor. All related utility work to be included in the design.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- 9.3** Approves the rental agreement from Pure Water Technology, for a new water cooler in the Administration Building, at a cost of \$60.00 per month.

**Mr. George Mertz, Board Vice President, tabled Item 9.3.**



- 9.4 Approves the proposal from Spartan Athletic Co. for the purchase of wind screens for three sides of the tennis courts, at a cost not to exceed \$5,500.00, to be paid from the Capital Project Fund.

**Board Action: Moved by David Moll and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve the proposal from Spartan Athletic Co. for the purchase of wind screens for three sides of the tennis courts, at a cost not to exceed \$5,500.00, to be paid from the Capital Project Fund.**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

10.0 **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

***Summary of Committee Deliberations – Nicoleen M. Kleffel***

The Extracurricular Activities Committee met at 7:37 p.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021, in the Schuylkill Valley Middle School LGI Room. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2022.

***Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration***

There were no Committee recommendations.

11.0 **OTHER BUSINESS/GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Mrs. Lash reported that the district has an elementary student, Callahan Kehs-Rossi, and a middle school student, Hennessey Kehs-Rossi, who will be participating in the Berks Ballet Theatre production of *The Nutcracker* at the Scottish Rite Cathedral on December 18-19. Mrs. Kleffel stated that the 3rd Annual Thanksgiving 'Count Your Blessings' Meal distribution will take place on Wednesday, November 24 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at Leesport Farmer's Market. Mr. Dempsey noted that the Schuylkill Valley Education Foundation will meet on November 17 at 6:30 p.m. in the Seip Room at the high school. He also thanked Mr. Raudenbush for his dedication as a member of the school board since 2008 and wished him well.

12.0 **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Mertz announced that there would be an executive session immediately following the meeting for personnel matters.

13.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by David Moll and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel, there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned**

**Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Kleffel, Lash, Mertz, Moll, Raudenbush, Rossi**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

  
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Linda R. Lash, Secretary  
Board of School Directors