

Lehigh Area School District
1000 Union Street
Lehigh, PA 18235
Monday, October 10, 2022 at 6:00 PM
WORKSHOP MEETING - MINUTES

1. Opening Exercises

A. Opening Exercises

Please rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence.

B. Call to Order

Board President called the Workshop Meeting to order at 6:01 PM

C. Roll Call

PR/AB

PR	Ms. Joy Beers	PR	Mr. Nathan Foeller	PR	Mr. Brian Shaner
PR	Mr. Richard R. Beltz	PR	Mr. Jeremy Glaush	PR	Mrs. Kerry Sittler
PR	Ms. Barbara Bowes	PR	Ms. Heather Neff	AB	Ms. April Walker

Also Present:

Mrs. Christina Fish, Superintendent
Mrs. Mary Figura, Assistant to the Superintendent
Mr. Edward Rarick, Business Administrator
Ms. Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary

Suzanne Howland, Mark McGalla, Samantha Kistler, Stephen Ebbert, Justin Smith, Kevin Buraks, Dave Krause, Patricia Sterner, D'Ache Zelrick, Kevin Buraks, Francesco Ranieri, Michael Lang, Konrad Kutter and John Young.

D. Public Comment

P. Sterner introduced herself as the head cheerleading coach. She mentioned that the girls look happier and are having more fun. She said they enjoyed the season as well as the mascot. She said their motto was "One Team, One Voice." She stated the community had enjoyed their performances also. She expressed her concern about the uniforms saying that they have been passed down for 15 years. She showed how the uniforms differ and may be inappropriate for the Middle School students. She greatly appreciated if the Board could look into getting new uniforms for the cheerleaders as well as cheerleading mats. She stated the wrestling mats that they use are not designed for cheerleading and mentioned how the mat room in the High School has the lights too low to perform stunts safely. She asked the Board to keep this in consideration for the next budget. She said the team is set to go to the States competition. She also mentioned that the technology is lacking. She said there was nothing available for them to use for practicing and the entire budget was spent on technology. She explained how the sport had gotten more expensive but the budget has not grown. She stated she was working hard to prove to the community, the District and the Board that cheerleading is a sport. J. Glaush asked if this had been discussed with Mr. Sports. P. Sterner said yes there were emails. C. Fish asked if P. Sterner could forward the emails. J. Beers stated how D. Zelrick had previously discussed how the Band uniforms have aged as well. P. Sterner said the Band uniforms are 12 years old. She mentioned how the District hosts for states with other athletic events, this could be an opportunity for the District to showcase the cheerleaders for states and bring in extra money to offset funds for the equipment.

D. Zelrick questioned the first reading of the Assignment and Transfer policy where it states: "The Superintendent, in considering any assignment or transfer, shall assure that low-income students and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers." C. Fish stated this was a required statement due to the McKinney Vento act and was not an issue that the District has.

2. Finance

A. Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd.

K. Buraks from Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd. was in attendance to answer questions from the Board. He distributed a response summary to the Board. N. Foeller asked what the timeline would be for selling a property. K. Buraks said no sooner than 18 months. He said he has been with the District for 9 years and had not sold a property yet. N. Foeller asked if wages could be garnished. K. Buraks stated that was something that was not typically done.

J. Glaush questioned the charge for the county commission on the tax bill. K. Buraks said the county takes 5% commission on all taxes and some choose to shift that to the taxpayer.



B. Bowes asked what the amount collected was for the last 9 years. K. Buraks said 2014-112%; 2015-114%; 2016-112%; 2017-109%; 2018-106%; 2019-101%; 2020-93%; 2021-83% and part of 2022 had been collected and is currently at 46% from April. He said in cumulative it is 104% and \$8.2 million collected with delinquencies reduced by 40%. He explained the benefit of having an incentive or reminder to collect taxes and property owners can pay up until the house is sold. He said there are payment plans and hardship programs available. He mentioned the District has 958 payment plans and 491 hardship arrangements. B. Bowes stated she heard from a previous business Administrator that Portnoff assists with or advises property owners to get reverse mortgages. K. Buraks said No, they do not do that. He said they represent 57 school districts.

J. Beers asked what the annual revenue was last year. K. Buraks said over \$784,000 in taxes was collected for 2021 and there were \$40,962.35 in fees collected. B. Bowes asked if taxes collected on property sales would go to Portnoff or the School District. K. Buraks said both. He explained the taxes would be collected by Portnoff from the homeowner and the amount owed to the District would be released. B. Bowes asked if the District stopped collection if the District would owe fees to Portnoff. K. Buraks said it would depend on the reason for the discrepancy. He said costs are fronted by Portnoff and it would be a recuperation.

The Board discussed Act 57 and discretionary fees and recommended a discussion within an executive session. E. Rarick said they were still studying and evaluating the law. B. Bowes said she would like to see the percent of interest on the payment plan. K. Buraks said it could be no interest because of no lien, besides the late fee interest. He said he feels it is working because they are not selling properties. J. Glaush recommended putting a section online on the District website for taxpayers to explain the process and give information. K. Buraks said they could link directly to Portnoff's site and explained about incorporating "points of pride" for taxpayers.

B. Solar Energy Proposals

Presentations were given by F. Ranieri of Ecogy and M. Lang/K. Kutter from CMTA Wunder for Solar Energy Proposals.

E. Rarick stated F. Ranieri was at the Meeting in February and gave a presentation at that time. He wanted to give an updated proposal with an update in market materials. F. Ranieri reviewed information about Ecogy including development, financing, construction and operation. He stated the installation is outsourced locally. He reviewed the Ecogy team and some projects completed in and around Pennsylvania. He reviewed the offer to the District which included an educational program, a project marketing campaign and an econode real-time energy monitor. He stated he liked to spread their message of clean energy.

F. Ranieri reviewed the electricity expenses overview which showed 93% of the electric being used by the school buildings. He said the energy charge is currently \$0.1573/kWh, which has increased 0.018 since July 2021. He reviewed the scope of the proposal and the utility rate increases. He discussed the school buildings and the types of solar mounts for each building's roof types.

F. Ranieri reviewed the PV System performance saying 40% of the total annual site consumption would be offset by clean energy with minimized export. B. Shaner asked why only 40%. F. Ranieri explained that this number would be dependent on if the utility company would accept more. C. Fish stated the Borough relies on the District as a consumer and would still have to purchase energy from them. K. Sittler asked how they make money. F. Ranieri explained that they recuperate from energy that goes back to the company and would take 10-12 years to recuperate their investment. K. Sittler asked if they ever changed their name. F. Ranieri said no. K. Sittler asked who would fix issues if there was something wrong with the product. F. Ranieri said local contractors would fix any issues. K. Sittler asked what the turnaround time was if something was wrong. F. Ranieri said there was a 24/7 communication center with tracking of the devices. He said they would make contact within 48 hours. K. Sittler asked if the tracking would interfere with the District internet. F. Ranieri said they could add their own internet with 5G. K. Sittler asked what would happen if a panel breaks. F. Ranieri said everything was insured by Ecogy. J. Beers asked what would happen after year 25. F. Ranieri said the District would have to remove it and they have 120 days after the end of the contract and can donate it to the school. K. Sittler asked how many had removed them. F. Ranieri said they were purchased and retrofitted. B. Bowes was concerned about the weight on the roof. F. Ranieri said it was 3-5 lbs/sq ft. B. Bowes asked about the weight with the ice and snow. F. Ranieri said they would come and do a structure analysis to see how much the roof could sustain prior to doing anything. He said this is a \$40,000-\$50,000 investment for ecology to look into the structure.

C. Fish asked about the educational resources and if there is training available to science teachers to incorporate into their curriculum. F. Ranieri said there is a curriculum tailored to specific age groups to empower teachers. They discussed the data analytic program and the apprenticeship program. F. Ranieri reviewed the solar industry forecast showing solar jobs increasing on average of 5% each year. C. Fish stated she was interested in helping students to find jobs to keep within the community. She asked what the prospects were of solar companies locally. F. Ranieri said there are some smaller firms locally, but the field is growing in general.

B. Bowes asked about the kiosk fees. F. Ranieri said there is a charge for the monitoring system after the first year. He said that could be negotiated. He reviewed the power purchase agreement and the summary of the proposal. K. Sittler and F. Ranieri discussed the \$2,000 sign-on bonus. F. Ranieri discussed a \$30,000 donation toward a security project and how it could be removed and used to reduce the Purchase Power Agreement (PPA).

K. Sittler asked who used the SREX. F. Ranieri said they utilize it in order to finance the project. B. Shaner asked about the donation to a security project. F. Ranieri said some schools ask for some upfront funds. He said it could be removed. He mentioned how material costs were increasing and would like to start the project as soon as possible so they could complete it for the winter of 2024. B. Bowes asked if the panels were produced in the US. F. Ranieri said yes, it also incentivizes with the Inflation Reduction Act. The Board thanked F. Ranieri for his presentation.

E. Rarick introduced M. Lang from Provident and K. Kutter from CMTA. K. Kutter explained that they had been in business since 1998. He discussed how Wunder and CMTA work together to bring solar benefits to Lehigh. He said Wunder would own and maintain the project (PPA) long-term and CMTA would handle the installation and inspections of the project. He explained how the PPA worked and who the stakeholders were. He reviewed the different systems for each of the school buildings. He mentioned that these were preliminary designs and would work with the staff for efficiency. C. Fish asked why they focus on the roof versus on the land. K. Kutter said the PPA rate is higher with ground panels.

K. Kutter reviewed the Educational experience and opportunities involved. C. Fish asked if there was a curriculum available to integrate with the teachers. K. Kutter said yes, there are a lot of different options based on grade levels. He discussed the general summary and next steps. B. Shaner asked if there were different stipulations for PPA rates. K. Kutter said Wunder would calculate it and it may start higher for a zero escalation. K. Sittler asked about their customer service. K. Kutter said repairs would need to be onsite within 24 hours since it is within their interest to keep the panels running. C. Fish asked if they use the District's internet. K. Kutter said they prefer hardwire or they could defer to a cell plan. K. Sittler questioned how long they had been providing solar service in Pennsylvania. K. Kutter said they were in Pennsylvania for one year but have been doing solar for 20 years in the nation. K. Sittler asked what would happen after 25 years. K. Kutter said they could extend for five years at no cost or could purchase the system. He stated the modules were from Thailand or Mexico. C. Fish asked if they could redo a 25 year project after the 25 years were completed. K. Kutter recommended a five year extension and then the District could actually extend for an additional five years. K. Sittler asked if they were paid off of the SREX. K. Kutter said they are paid by the construction and over time. He said CMTA was not really making money off of the SREX. E. Rarick asked if covering the roof with solar panels improves the roof. K. Kutter said specific sections would have a better life because of the radiation of the sun going to the panels instead of the rooftop. C. Fish asked what would happen if the roof needed work. K. Kutter stated that the District would be responsible to remove and replace the panels

K. Kutter reviewed some additional solar projects they have. He said about 80-90% of their work is from schools. D. Krause questioned the automation where it monitors consumption in order to maximize. K. Kutter said it monitors consumption and production and they would be able to find a happy medium. F. Ranieri asked if CMTA was the owner operator or if Wunder was. K. Kutter said Wunder would be the owner and they would not sell the system. He said he would send a copy of the contract for them to review. The Board thanked CMTA and Provident for their presentation.

C. Franklin Covey Client Sales, Inc.

C. Fish explained that this Leader in Me Agreement was for an Administration Professional Development regarding the seven habits in order to develop leadership skills with the team. B. Bowes questioned the shipping and handling. C. Fish said there were workbooks being shipped that were needed for the program and it was not all done virtually.

3. Academic Affairs

A. Comprehensive Plan Update

M. Figura gave a Comprehensive Plan overview to the Board. She reviewed the LASD Mission Statement which was "Partnering with students, families, and community to provide opportunities for life-long success through academic excellence and individual growth in a safe and supportive environment." J. Beers questioned the origin of the statement. M. Figura explained that it was collaboratively done on letterhead previously. J. Beers mentioned that the Board had a meeting in the past, looking to see if we worked to update the vision of the District. C. Fish stated that this was a typical process. She explained that this was a one to one and a half year-long process that is being completed within only a couple of months. She said it would be discussed during the Board Retreat and the Comprehensive Plan may be tweaked throughout the process. M. Figura reviewed the Comprehensive Plan Process.

M. Figura discussed the Steering Committee with an array of diverse stakeholders which included Administration, Staff, Board Members, Community Members and Students. She explained the District focus to include a Succinct vision and mission statement, an understanding of the educational community and internal and external stakeholders values. She discussed how the Comprehensive Plan includes the LEA Profile with current strengths, challenges, trends and conditions; the geographic and demographic data; perceptual data from surveys, forums and advisory groups; and present and predicted internal and external influencers of the organization.

M. Figura explained that a shared vision and clearly stated mission would identify the kind of learning to be achieved and would help to keep the efforts of the school community on target. She said a vision statement focuses on the future and what an organization would want to ultimately become. She stated that a mission statement focuses on today and what an organization does to achieve it. She emphasized that both are vital in directing goals.

M. Figura discussed the value statements and core principles that guide an organization and its culture and how they help guide decision making. She reviewed the areas where data is retrieved to utilize for the Comprehensive Planning process. She explained the strengths and challenges of goal setting, action planning, professional development and communications. She also reviewed other state-required reports in the planning process. She mentioned the steering committee dates which included October 12, 2022 at 6:00 PM, October 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM and October 20, 2022 at 6:00 PM at the Lehigh Elementary Center Cafeteria. She explained that they were under tight time constraints to work through the Comprehensive Plan and that it had already been extended twice. S. Kistler mentioned the first extension was due to COVID-19 and was automatically granted. She said the second extension was requested by Mr. Corby in order to allow for the new Superintendent and Assistant to the Superintendent to complete under their long-term decision.

B. Staffing and Enrollment Report

C. Fish reviewed a template to be used to report the staffing and enrollment to the Board. She said this would help with budgeting for where the District would need to add staff or redistribute. She said she would ask the Board to approve the completion of a 5 year staffing & enrollment report which is to be presented at the January 2023 Board Meeting, as it would need to be a direction. B. Shaner asked why they would need to instruct C. Fish to do this.. C. Fish said it was a formality for the minutes.

4. Policy

A. First Reading of Policies

204.1 - Truancy Procedures

B. Bowes questioned students in Pre-K getting attendance letters and compulsory school age. M. McGalla said letters were no longer going out for Pre-K

309 - Assignment and Transfer

331 - Job Related Expenses

E. Rarick said this policy was last revised in 2018 and recommended an update for rates for meals. B. Shaner asked how often the District pays mileage. E. Rarick said about a handful of times each month, since they prefer staff to request a school vehicle first.

917 - Parental and Family Involvement

M. Figura said it was a requirement that policies need to be updated and/or reviewed annually. B. Shaner asked if they could please keep a running list of dates for review.

918 - Title I Parent and Family Engagement

B. Bowes questioned if it was a requirement to have a parent volunteer. C. Fish said she would look into it. She also mentioned that she will have administrative regulations coming to the Board to review.

5. Athletics

A. Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager or Extracurricular Activities

Approval of the following requests for Athletic Coaching/Manager Candidates, as per contracted rates, pending any necessary paperwork:

Daniel Rossino - Volunteer Middle School Boys Basketball

Skylynn Faust - Volunteer Girls Varsity Basketball

6. Buildings & Grounds

A. NuChem Corp.

Approval of the Water Treatment Agreement for the Middle School in the quarterly amount of \$991.80 with NuChem Corp.

B. Use of School Property

1. **Rite-Aid (Kali Andrew)** - October 12, 2022 - 12:00-5:00 PM - Admin Board Room - Flu Shot Clinic
2. **LABC (Kaitlyn Zehner)** - October 15, 2022 - 2:00-3:00 PM - Middle School Lower Parking Lot - LABC Participants to load Parade Floats
3. **LAEC Title Staff (Mark McGalla/Aaron Sebelin & Teachers)** - October 19, 2022 - 4:30-8:30 PM - Elementary Center Gym/Cafeteria/Outside Fields/Pits & Hallways - Title I Family Night
4. **LAEC (Diane Brownmiller)** - October 17, 2022 - 1:30-3:00 PM - Elementary Center Gym/Cafeteria - Science Explorers
5. **LAHS Senior Parents (Kim Marchessault)** - October 20, November 17, December 15, 2022 & January 19, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18, 2023 - 6:30-8:00 PM - High School Cafeteria/Classrooms - All Night Party Meetings.
6. **LAHS Drama Club (Laurel Zimmerman)** - October 19, 2022 - 3:30-4:30 PM - High School Auditorium - Drama Club Meeting

S. Howland explained that she had requested that all after school meetings be held in the auditorium. B. Bowes asked for it to be updated for the Board Meeting.

7. Personnel

A. Monthly Attendance Report

C. Fish discussed a September report for staff and asked if the Board would like them for Board Meetings in order to know how many substitutes we were using and to discuss the need for subs. The Board agreed.

B. Student Teacher Substitutes

C. Fish explained that some Universities and Colleges are allowing qualified student teachers to cover classes as substitutes for their teacher's absence with compensation. This would be another option to utilize for substitute shortages. B. Shaner asked how many student teachers the District had. S. Kistler said there were four at the Elementary Center and one speech pathologist coming in spring. C. Fish said she would ask the team to help support the student teachers. C. Fish and J. Beers discussed increasing the relationship between the District and colleges/universities for more student teachers. S. Howland said there were more Elementary student teachers, generally, than secondary.

C. Superintendent's Leadership Conference

C. Fish asked for the Board to approve her to attend the Superintendents Leadership Conference scheduled for November 9-11, 2022, including lodging at Hershey Lodge.

J. Beers discussed the Board attendance at the PSBA Conference. N. Foeller said he was interested in attending both days. He said any Board Member could attend and do part of the day if the full conference did not work or only wanted part of the conference.

D. Resignations

Accept, with regret, the resignation of the following employees:

Justin Fritz - 4th Grade Teacher effective November 11, 2022

Ricky Kistler - Part-Time Cleaner effective October 3, 2022

8. Miscellaneous

A. PO Box Discussion

J. Beers said she would like to release this P.O. Box in Palmerton and would need approval by the Board.

B. Complaint Form

N. Foeller asked if it could be an online form. C. Fish said yes. J. Partenio said they could do a Google form online. N. Foeller stated how complaints come in different forms. He asked if they could add the process with the form. J. Glaush wanted whistleblower rights added to it as well. C. Fish said it would be added under the Community tab.

C. Change Workshop Start time

J. Beers said A. Walker had asked to change the Workshop Meeting time to 7:00 PM, since she is unable to make it before then. C. Fish said it would be amended for November and December and then a new schedule would be released. B. Shaner asked if the Board could have an Executive Session before the Meetings then. J. Beers said yes.

J. Beers asked the Board to deliberate on Portnoff and the Solar Proposals.

Portnoff:

B. Bowes stated that she did not get the data that he emailed. K. Sittler did not think it would be worth hiring an additional person to handle those duties if the taxes could not be recuperated. She explained a personal situation she had with Portnoff and said they were very accommodating. E. Rarick mentioned that Jim Thorpe was using the County Tax Claim Bureau and they did not feel they worked well with property owners, they just sell their home. N. Foeller would rather have someone who works with the owners. C. Fish said they could not afford an employee in admin for this. J. Beers wanted more data, like how many people are contacted and how much is collected.

Solar Proposals:

J. Beers felt the first presenter sounded like a better deal. J. Glaush wondered if this project would affect the property insurance and the electric buy back program. J. Beers was very interested in C. Fish's conversation to be had with the Borough. K. Sittler was concerned about the roof replacement. S. Ebbert mentioned the Middle School is from 1965 and the structural steel and support system are original, even though it had been gutted and renovated. He was concerned about the winter with the additional weight. J. Beers discussed the structural engineering of the flat roof and the ability to bear weight. She asked if the Board should send additional questions to E. Rarick to get more answers. The Board agreed. J. Beers was concerned about what it would cost to take the system down and put it back up again and if it would be covered by insurance. C. Fish stated she would invite the Borough Manager to the next Workshop Meeting to discuss.

9. Communications

A. Public Comment

D. Zelrick questioned the change with the use of facilities forms. She wanted to know if it would affect forms that were previously approved. S. Howland said yes, the organizations were notified.

D. Krause asked the Board to contact other customers for referrals from both vendors. N. Foeller suggested doing an online search for press releases as well.

J. Glaush questioned the remediation in the auditorium. J. Smith said it had been finished and no one had been called back. He said he would look into it. B. Bowes said she was concerned about the leak from the foundation. J. Smith explained that it was actually a drain pipe that was leaking water down to the foundation.

B. Adjournment

MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by K. Sittler, to adjourn the Meeting.

VOTE: YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

The October 10, 2022 Workshop Meeting was adjourned at 9:39 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edward Rarick, Board Secretary
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary