

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

MINUTES

November 28, 2023

1.0 The Regular Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Board President, David E. Moll, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School.

1.1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

1.2 ROLL CALL

Members Present: Paul L. Bendigo, Robert M. Dempsey, Linda R. Lash, George H. Mertz III, G. Dane Miller, David E. Moll, Bryan J. O'Donnell, Alfonso F. Rossi

Members Absent: Nicoleen M. Kleffel

Secretary: Linda R. Lash

Recording Secretary: Susan A. Christman

Administrative Staff Present: Dr. Cathy Taschner, Dr. Melissa Brewer, Jennifer Gabryluk, Russell Poper, Jacqueline Rivas, Michael Sobczak, Kristen Wallace

Solicitor: John Miravich, Esq., Fox Rothschild LLP

1.3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Linda Lash to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 23, 2023, and the minutes of the special meeting of November 20, 2023, as presented.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

1.4 EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Moll reported that the Board met in executive session on November 16, 2023, for legal and personnel matters; on November 20, 2023, prior to the Committee meetings, for legal and personnel matters; and on November 28, 2023, prior to the Board meeting, for legal and personnel matters.

2.0 REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND BOARD REPRESENTATIVES

2.1 PRESIDENT – *David E. Moll*

Mr. Moll stated that the Board would be reorganizing in December. He recognized the outgoing members of the Board which include Mr. Robert Dempsey, Mr. George Mertz III, and Mr. Dane Miller.

2.2 SECRETARY – *Linda R. Lash*

No report.

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

Mrs. Lash reported that on December 6 she would be attending the Head Start meeting with the regional Head Start specialist in attendance. The IU had put out a bid for transportation at the

Reading School District as they were looking for a new company to provide transportation. There were two private companies that placed bids, Zum Services and Durham. There are six departing board members at the BCIU that were recognized at their last meeting. On October 18, PDE encouraged Pennsylvanians to nominate an outstanding educator to be the Commonwealth's 2025 Teacher of the Year. In state legislative news, House Bill 1778, Parental Accountability for Bullying, and House Bill 1779, Creating the PA Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, were introduced on October 19 and have been referred to the Education Committee. Mrs. Lash also attended the November COLA meeting which included a representative from PSBA who spoke on legislative affairs. There was also information given on behavioral and mental health services in the county. In Berks County, there were 11,562 students referred to SAP (student assistance program).

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

Mr. Moll reported that there is no meeting held in November, but they will have their reorganization meeting on December 14. There is another partnership in the works with NASA. Mr. Mertz added that paperwork has been signed for the third phase of the BCTC student-built house project in Oley Township and this will be on the BCTC December agenda for approval. There is enough land across from the Oley Elementary School for the BCTC to build approximately 25 additional homes.

2.5 TAX COLLECTION COMMITTEE – *David E. Moll*

Mr. Moll reported that the committee's next meeting will be held in December.

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

Mrs. Lash attended the PSBA Delegate Assembly virtually on November 4. Items discussed, under school board operations, was allowing school districts the option to specify mechanisms for fulfilling public notice requirements which are not limited to the newspapers of general circulation. The current mandate only allows advertisements to be placed in printed newspapers, which is outdated and inefficient. Districts need a flexible menu of print and electronic options for advertising legal notices. On the topic of charter school reform, they would like to adopt a funding structure for cyber charter schools. It was proposed that set tuition be established for regular education and a tiered tuition for special education students, regardless of the student's home district. They also want to enact legislation that would allow school districts to withhold payment to charter schools for each student in the absence of validated current residency within the school district.

2.7 SCHUYLKILL VALLEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION – *Robert M. Dempsey*

Mr. Dempsey reported that the foundation met on November 15 at Tompkins Bank. Their website is up and running and is now separate from the SVSD webpage. They plan to have a presence at the SV Winterfest on December 10 and they've discussed setting up a date for a fundraiser event in the spring of 2024. The foundation has a new member with extensive fundraising experience which is an excellent addition. Also, a student representative was introduced at the last meeting. Their next meeting will be held on December 20.

3.0 PERSONS WHO WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Christine Wysocki, Bern Township – Thank You to Outgoing Board Members

4.0 BOARD

There were no items for Board approval.

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' Dashboard Reports

Other (Old/New Business)

- 5.2 Dr. Taschner reported that it was a very successful fall sports season. Our football team advanced to the district quarterfinals and it was the first time in school history that we had won a home district playoff game. Girls soccer made it to the district semi-finals and played in a third and fourth place game to qualify for states. They went on to play in states and lost to the team who eventually became the state champion. Field hockey also had a great season and qualified for county and district playoffs. They also matched up with the team that was eventually the state champion. Boys and girls cross county teams both qualified for states, and girls volleyball had a great season and qualified for districts. She noted that our cheerleaders had a wonderful opportunity to perform at the Navy Game. We will be honoring our athletes at a future meeting in December. All of our winter teams have begun their practices and we're looking forward to their success. Our swimmers and their families are looking forward to the completion of the renovated pool at the middle school. We are awaiting final permits for occupancy and are hopeful to have these turned around in about a week.

Our FFA program was very successful at their first fall regional competition. On November 20, our FFA program was visited by two of the FFA state officers who discussed opportunities in agriculture and being active in FFA. Applications for BCTC's 2024-25 school year are now available on berkscareer.com and are due on November 29. Upcoming events include our Redware Program at the middle school, Colonial Williamsburg at the middle school in December, and holiday shopping is set up at the elementary school. Balloons Over Schuylkill Valley took place at the elementary school on November 17 with our kindergarten students, who created balloon floats that they shared with the entire school. Dr. Taschner invited everyone to the SV Winter Festival which will be held on December 10. She noted that in regard to snow days, we continue to prioritize in-person learning for our students. We'll continue to use snow days that are on the calendar and, when possible, try to give a call the evening before so parents can plan for child care if needed. We can't always do that and we try to be as accurate as possible. Dr. Taschner also recognized the outgoing Board members for their willingness and dedication in serving the district.

6.0 POLICY, PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Summary of Committee Deliberations – George H. Mertz III

The Policy, Personnel and Public Relations Committee met at 6:34 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2024.

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 resignations due to retirement:
- Mrs. Diane Rothenberger, Full-Time Reading Paraprofessional, effective January 22, 2024.
- 6.2 Accepts, with regret and best wishes for the future, the following resignations:
- Mr. Casey Blankenbiller, Director of Buildings and Grounds, effective November 17, 2023.
 - Ms. Lori Seisler, Part-Time Special Education Paraprofessional at the elementary school, effective November 10, 2023.
- 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 Mrs. Shelby Ammon, Assistant Athletic Trainer, at an annual salary of \$55,100 (prorated for actual days worked), effective November 27, 2023, to fill the newly created position.

- 6.3.2** Mrs. Bobbi Behm, Full-Time Custodian, at an hourly rate of pay of \$14.00, effective October 30, 2023, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr. Devin Schlottman.
- 6.3.3** Ms. Josephine Gruber, Part-Time Library Paraprofessional, 6 hours per day at an hourly rate of pay of \$12.39, effective date to be determined, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Ms. Elia Evans.
- 6.3.4** Ms. Heather Hadwin, Certified Building Substitute Teacher, at an annual salary of \$43,553 (reduced rate of pay with single level benefit option is available and prorated for actual days worked), effective October 16, 2023, to fill the vacancy created by the newly created position.
- 6.3.5** Mrs. Melissa Kauffman, Title 1 Reading Specialist PK-12, at an annual rate of pay of \$96,147 (prorated for actual days worked), based on Master's+42, Step 19, effective pending release from current assignment, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mrs. Katharine Koch.
- 6.3.6** Ms. Angelina Wagner, Part-Time Food Services Worker, at an hourly rate of pay of \$11.00, effective November 6, 2023, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Ms. Tiffany Denk.
- 6.3.7** Substitutes for the 2023-24 school year:
- Jennifer Mazaika - Paraprofessional
 - Danielle Readinger - Guest Teacher
 - John Ruggles - Paraprofessional
 - Angelina Wagner - Food Services
- 6.3.8** Approves the following volunteers for the 2023-24 school year:
- Scott Allen - ES/HS/MS
 - Amy Alway - ES
 - Emily Allwein - ES/HS
 - Amanda Batdorf - ES/HS
 - Mercedes Doll - ES
 - Steve Fehnel - ES
 - Kristin Good - ES
 - Stacey Hewitt - ES
 - Joshua Knoblauch - ES
 - Crystal Lagenbacher - ES
 - Danielle Long - ES
 - Jennifer Mazaika - ES
 - Courtnie Nein - ES/HS/MS
 - Evangeline Ortiz - ES
 - Savitri Puran - ES
 - Meghan Shannon - ES
 - Danielle Smyre - ES
 - Whitney Wentzel - ES/HS
- 6.3.9** Change of hours for the following part-time food service workers:
- Mrs. Brittany Cassidy, from 5 hours per day to 4 hours per day, effective November 6, 2023.
 - Ms. Charlene Henne, from 4 hours per day to 5 hours per day, effective November 6, 2023.

6.3.10 Transfer of Mrs. Charlotte Lupia from Special Education teacher, to Elementary classroom teacher, effective pending release from current assignment, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr. Hunter Beane.

6.4 Acknowledges the following Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leaves of absence:

- Mrs. Stephanie Erb, School Nurse at the elementary school, effective November 20, 2023, through December 5, 2023.
- Mrs. Jessica Harle, Art Teacher at the high school, effective November 7, 2023, through December 20, 2023.
- Mrs. Elizabeth Oswald, Health Assistant at the middle school, effective October 10, 2023, intermittently through June 6, 2024.

6.5 Approves the leave of absence for Mrs. Kristin Holst, Supervisor of Special Education, effective October 23, 2023, through approximately November 23, 2023.

6.6 Approves the request from Mr. Makoto Kizuka, STEAM Teacher at the Middle School, to use five (5) consecutive unpaid days, from April 5, 2024, through April 11, 2024.

Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Bryan O'Donnell to accept, with best wishes for the future, the resignation due to retirement in Item 6.1, as presented; and to accept with regret and best wishes for the future, the resignations in Item 6.2, as presented; and to approve the employment in Items 6.3.1 through and including 6.3.10, as presented; and to acknowledges the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leaves of absence in Item 6.4, as presented; and to approve the leave of absence for Mrs. Kristin Holst, Supervisor of Special Education, effective October 23, 2023, through approximately November 23, 2023; and to approve the request from Mr. Makoto Kizuka, STEAM Teacher at the Middle School, to use five (5) consecutive unpaid days, from April 5, 2024, through April 11, 2024.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

6.7 Approves the revisions to Policy 006: Meetings.

Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Alfonso Rossi to approve the revisions to Policy 006: Meetings.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, Rossi

Nays: O'Donnell

Motion carried.

6.8 Approves the revisions to Policy 251: Homeless Students.

6.9 Approves the deletion of Policy 255: Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care. This is a recommendation made by PSBA as a result of the revisions to Policy 251: Homeless Students.

6.10 Approves issuing a professional employee contract to the following temporary professionals who have served three (3) years and have received satisfactory ratings, in accordance with Section 1108 of the Pennsylvania School Code:

- Kali Antalosky
- Kristi Harrison
- Micah Storms

- 6.11 Approves the addition of one ES PTO representative, and one MS PTO representative, at a rate of \$480, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the SVEA collective bargaining agreement.
- 6.12 Approves the organizational chart update. The update reflects the Director of Buildings and Grounds as a contracted position.

Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Alfonso Rossi to approve the revisions to Policy 251: Homeless Students; and to approve the deletion of Policy 255: Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care. This is a recommendation made by PSBA as a result of the revisions to Policy 251: Homeless Students; and to approve issuing a professional employee contract to the temporary professionals in Item 6.10, as presented; and to approve the addition of one ES PTO representative, and one MS PTO representative, at a rate of \$480, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the SVEA collective bargaining agreement; and to approve the organizational chart update. The update reflects the Director of Buildings and Grounds as a contracted position.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

- 6.13 Approves the changes to the non-certified compensation plan.

Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Paul Bendigo to approve the changes to the non-certified compensation plan.

Mr. Bendigo proposed an amendment to Item 6.12 to add '*effective the first pay period in January 2024*', as there is a considerable amount of administrative work involved in implementing this change.

Board Action: Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by George Mertz to approve the amendment and for Item 6.13 to read: Approves the changes to the non-certified compensation plan *effective the first pay period in January 2024*.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

- 6.14 Approves the agreement with School Investigation Services for a confidential student matter.

Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Bryan O'Donnell to approve the agreement with School Investigation Services for a confidential student matter.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

7.0 CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY

Summary of Committee Deliberations – G. Dane Miller

The Curriculum and Technology Committee met at 7:10 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2024

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

- 7.1 Approves the disposal of special education textbooks, as presented.
- 7.2 Approves the agreement for repair with Strickler Signs in the amount of \$914.86.
- 7.3 Approves the agreement for K-12 Science curriculum development. The agreement includes ongoing meetings and support for curriculum writing with teachers from grades K-12 and culminates with new science curriculum documents that are aligned to the new STEELS standards.
- 7.4 Approves the agreement of academic cooperation with Kutztown University as discussed in the October Committee meeting.
- 7.5 Approves the pilot of the *Baking and Pastry Arts* course which will be offered at the HS this school year.

Board Action: Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Bryan O'Donnell to approve the actions in Items 7.1 through and including 7.5, as presented.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

8.0 BUDGET AND FINANCE

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Paul L. Bendigo

The Budget and Finance Committee met at 7:17 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2024.

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 7, 2023, to November 29, 2023, as presented.

GENERAL FUND	\$2,072,708.14
CAFETERIA FUND	\$84,001.38
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FUND	\$159,268.62
MS/HS ACTIVITY FUND	\$15,700.03
GRAND TOTAL	\$2,331,678.17

- 8.2 Approves the CAFCO Participation Agreement for the Food Service Department to participate in the collaborative procurement effort to purchase food for the 2024-2025 school year.
- 8.3 Approves the 2023-2024 IDEA Part B sub contract agreement with the BCIU and accepts funds in the amount of \$440,525.07. The agreement is contingent on PDE's approval of services as outlined in the agreement through the BCIU's application for IDEA 611 B funding.

Board Action: Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by George Mertz to approve/ratify the payment of bills in Item 8.1, from October 7, 2023, to November 29, 2023, as presented; and to approve the CAFCO Participation Agreement for the Food Service Department to participate in the collaborative procurement effort to purchase food for the 2024-2025 school year; and to approve the 2023-2024 IDEA Part B sub contract agreement with the BCIU and accept funds in the amount of \$440,525.07. The agreement is contingent on PDE's approval

of services as outlined in the agreement through the BCIU's application for IDEA 611 B funding.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

9.0 BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Alfonso F. Rossi

The Buildings and Grounds Committee met at 7:22 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023 in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2024.

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

- 9.1** Approves the commissioning agreement for the HS HVAC project.
- 9.2** Approves the Facilities Use Agreement between the YMCA of Reading and Berks County and the Schuylkill Valley School District for the Before and After School Care Program.

Board Action: Moved by George Mertz and seconded by Linda Lash to approve the commissioning agreement for the HS HVAC project; and to approve the Facilities Use Agreement between the YMCA of Reading and Berks County and the Schuylkill Valley School District for the Before and After School Care Program.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

9.3 Other (Old/New Business)

Mr. Rossi thanked the youth groups and the SV swimming program athletes and parents for being flexible throughout the construction period of the middle school pool.

10.0 STUDENT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Nicoleen M. Kleffel

The Student Services and Activities Committee met at 7:57 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held in January 2024.

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

- 10.1** Accepts the donation of an underwater pool logo from the Schuylkill Valley Parents Aquatics Booster Club at a cost of \$795.
- 10.2** Approves the agreement between the Wilson School District and Schuylkill Valley School District to provide special education services for the 2023-24 school year.
- 10.3** Approves the Settlement Agreement and Release for Student #2917.

- 10.4 Approves the addendum with Soliant Health, LLC, for tele-therapy speech services.
- 10.5 Approves the tuition agreement with New Story, LLC, for Student #5533.
- 10.6 Approves the addendum with Pediatric Therapeutic Services (PTS) for licensed behavior specialist services and bilingual speech therapist services.
- 10.7 Approves the Settlement Agreement and Release for Student #4089.
- 10.8 Approves the waiver of expulsion hearing and release for Student #1968.

Board Action: Moved by Bryan O'Donnell and seconded by Paul Bendigo to accept the donation of an underwater pool logo from the Schuylkill Valley Parents Aquatics Booster Club at a cost of \$795; and to approve the agreement between the Wilson School District and Schuylkill Valley School District to provide special education services for the 2023-24 school year; and to approve the Settlement Agreement and Release for Student #2917; and to approve the addendum with Soliant Health, LLC, for tele-therapy speech services; and to approve the tuition agreement with New Story, LLC, for Student #5533; and to approve the addendum with Pediatric Therapeutic Services (PTS) for licensed behavior specialist services and bilingual speech therapist services; and to approve the Settlement Agreement and Release for Student #4089; and to approve the waiver of expulsion hearing and release for Student #1968.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

11.0 OTHER BUSINESS/GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mrs. Lash noted that in regard to the question about our solicitor attending board meetings, in the 80's and 90's, there was always a solicitor at those meetings. Following that period, it was decided by the Board that a solicitor was not needed. However, with a new superintendent, it was agreed that we would again have the solicitor attend meetings. This is a common procedure and many Boards have a solicitor present at their meetings.

Dr. Taschner reminded everyone that the SV Board Reorganization meeting scheduled for December 4 has been canceled. The district will not receive the Certificates of Election from the Berks County Board of Elections until after December 4, when at some point the election will be certified and the certificates issued. We anticipate everything being certified by December 7, and if so, we will hold the meeting on December 7. If not, we'll hold the meeting on December 8. We are also planning a special meeting on December 14.

Mr. Moll reminded everyone that the district's FFA charter presentation will occur at the PA Farm Show on January 8, 2024.

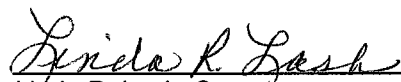
12.0 ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Robert Dempsey and seconded by George Mertz, there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned.

Yeas: Bendigo, Dempsey, Lash, Mertz, Miller, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.


Linda R. Lash, Secretary
Board of School Directors