

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

MINUTES

February 24, 2025

- 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: Franklin M. Ammarell, Paul L. Bendigo, Nicoleen M. Kleffel, Linda R. Lash, David E. Moll, Bryan J. O'Donnell, Alfonso F. Rossi, Daniel B. Weyandt

Members Absent: Kelly J. Steinke

Secretary: Linda R. Lash

Recording Secretary: Susan A. Christman

Administrative Staff Present: Dr. Cathy Taschner, Robin Brightbill, Toni Crater, Dr. Joshua Kuehner, David McDonaldson, Dr. Shannon O'Donnell, Jenny Rexrode, Michael Sobczak, Dr. Patrick Winters

Solicitor: Alicia Luke, Esq., Fox Rothschild LLP
- 1.3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Paul Bendigo to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 25, 2024, the minutes of the reorganization/regular meeting of December 3, 2024, and the minutes of the regular meeting of January 27, 2025, as presented.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.
- 1.4 EXECUTIVE SESSION**
Mr. Moll reported that the Board met in executive session on February 18, 2025, following the Committee meetings, for personnel matters.
- 2.0 REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND BOARD REPRESENTATIVES**
- 2.1 PRESIDENT – David E. Moll**
Mr. Moll reported there have been discussions with SVEA and he asked Mr. Jonathan Jenkins, SVEA President, to review the information. Mr. Jenkins stated that in early January, Schuylkill Valley Education Association conducted a workplace climate survey to gather data needed to ensure effective representation of their membership. On February 5, SVEA leadership met with the Board to review the results of the survey and propose a working relationship for the betterment of their members. The conversation that followed the review of the survey data was positive and the Board expressed their commitment to continue to meet with SVEA, and they are optimistic that these meetings will lead to positive changes in the district. Their next meeting is scheduled for early March and they will continue to give regular updates to their members. Mr. Moll added that he appreciates SVEA leadership taking the time to meet with the Board.

2.2 SECRETARY – Linda R. Lash

No report.

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

Mrs. Lash reported that the Annie Sullivan Award ceremony will be held on April 2 at the BCIU. Three SV elementary students participated in the virtual round of the PA Invention Convention which earned them an invitation to the state competition in Hershey, PA. Dr. Michelle Reichard-Huff, BCIU Director of Early Childhood and Student Services, has been selected as the recipient of the 2025 PAPSA Distinguished Service Award. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of pupil services in Pennsylvania. Camp Connect Bereavement Camp will hold two sessions, June and August, for children who have experienced the death of someone close to them. The PA House will reconvene on March 17 and the PA Senate will reconvene on March 24.

2.4 BERKS CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER – David E. Moll

Mr. Moll reported that as of this week, BCTC has received 1,148 applications. Enrollment is open until August and they typically take 700-725 applicants. The BCTC is working with Tulpehocken Area School District to develop a large animal veterinarian program and are coordinating this with the Bernville veterinarian. This will be the first program of its type in the state. Their preliminary budget for 2025-26 will be presented at the February 26 meeting and will then be sent out to the sending districts for their approval.

2.5 TAX COLLECTION COMMITTEE – Nicoleen M. Kleffel

Mrs. Kleffel reported that their next meeting will be held in March.

2.6 PA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION LIAISON – Linda R. Lash

Mrs. Lash reported that the governor delivered his 2025-26 proposed state budget address on February 4. There was a 6.7% proposed increase in basic education funding which is a \$601 million increase; Special Education received a 2.7% increase or \$40 million; CTE received a 3.8% increase or \$5.5 million; Student Teacher Stipends increased 100% or \$20 million; School Food Services received a 10.9% increase or \$10.8 million, which includes universal free breakfast for all students.

2.7 SCHUYLKILL VALLEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION – Linda R. Lash

Mrs. Lash noted that the foundation will be holding their *Inaugural Red & Black Gala* on April 4 at Graystone Farm from 6-9 p.m. This is a semi-formal event and will include an auction/fundraiser.

3.0 PERSONS WHO WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Lisa Jacobson, Bern Township – District Leadership
Joanna Schlottman, Bern Township – District Leadership/Environment
Kai Miller, Ontelaunee Township – Interim Athletic Director
Jane Sigoda, Centre Township – Former Athletic Director
Christine Wysocki, Bern Township – Retirement Recognition/Former Athletic Director
Peggy Romanies, Leesport Borough – Former Athletic Director
Joseph Brown, Bern Township – Student Coat Policy
Ryan Gordon, Leesport Borough – Football Field Maintenance

4.0 BOARD

There were no items for Board approval.

4.1 SOLICITOR'S REPORT

No report.

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

5.2 Superintendent's Update

Dr. Taschner provided highlights from January 2025. Mrs. Vroman, ES Teacher, and three fourth grade gifted students showcased their project, the Foodmatron 5000, at the state-level competition of the PA Invention Convention. The elementary school held their annual Family Reading Night on February 5 with author Matt Phelan in attendance. On February 23, the high school National Honor Society inducted 32 new members selected on their high standards of scholarship, service, leadership and character. Our FFA members attended the Agricultural Cooperation Establishes Success Leadership (ACES) Conference on January 25-26. In addition, Lucy Kerr and Lily Kratz attended Berks County's Leadership Development Event, competing in employment skills and creed speaking. Athletics post-season included the following teams in district competition: boys wrestling, boys basketball, bowling, and swimming/diving. Charlotte Schwendeman and Carly Crills qualified for districts after finishing first and second at the BCIAA Championship Diving meet and Charlotte is the first SV diver to win a BCIAA Championship. The SV girls basketball team reached counties and SV cheerleading competed in the national Reach the Beach Championship. Dr. Taschner recognized Corielle Yarde, SV elementary teacher, who was inducted into the 2025 Berks County Basketball Hall of Fame class. The high school held a Financial Reality Fair where seniors learned "real world" situations to understand the value of a paycheck including costs related to housing, transportation, insurance and food. In music news, Gabriel Perry and Andrew Kerper will perform with the Berks County All-Star Jazz Band on April 8 and 10. Dr. Christopher Heffner, Director of Bands and Trumpet Professor at Lebanon Valley College, conducted a rehearsal with the high school concert band and answered student questions regarding pursuing music in college and as a career. Our Panthers-On-Parade 2025 musical, *Once Upon A Mattress*, will be held on March 28-29 and tickets are now on sale. On February 22, the 2025 Souper Bowl was held which raised funds for the SV Art Club and The Conner Kleffel Memorial Foundation. All three buildings participated in creating amazing bowls for the event.

6.0 **POLICY, PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Paul L. Bendigo

The Policy, Personnel and Public Relations Committee met at 6:52 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, March 17, 2025.

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

6.1 Approves the adoption of the annual calendar for the 2025-2026 school year.

Board Action: Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve the adoption of the annual calendar for the 2025-2026 school year.

Mr. Bendigo requested that the motion for the school calendar be amended to change February 9, 2026, from a non-school day to a normal school day, and April 6, 2026, will become a non-school day. This request came out of discussion with SVEA where the option between the two dates was given and the general consensus was that more employees preferred April 6, 2026, as the non-school day.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

- 6.2** Accepts, with regret and best wishes for the future, the following resignations:
- Stephanie Deibler, Athletic Director, effective March 2, 2025
 - Charles Fellows, Custodian, effective February 11, 2025
- 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. Donna Novakovich, Certified Building Substitute Teacher at the elementary school, \$44,803 (reduced rate of pay with single level benefit option available and prorated for actual days worked), effective February 3, 2025, to fill the vacancy created by the promotion of Ms. Roxanne Bollman.
- 6.3.2** The transfer of Mrs. Tiffany Rollman from Part-Time Special Education Paraprofessional at the Schuylkill Valley Education Center to Substitute Paraprofessional, effective January 12, 2025.
- 6.3.3** Ms. Tiffany Wagner, Grades PK-4 Long-Term Substitute Teacher at the elementary school, Master's, Step 1, \$59,955, (prorated for actual days worked), effective January 21, 2025, through the conclusion of the 2024-25 school year, to fill the vacancy created by the leave of absence of Mrs. Meghan O'Donnell.
- 6.3.4** Extracurricular appointment for the 2024-25 school year:
- Jeff Egan - Softball High School Assistant Coach - \$5,480
- 6.3.5** Mentor for the 2024-2025 school year at a stipend of \$1,175.00 for full year mentors and \$587.50 for half year mentors:
- Matthew Reed - Half-Year
- 6.3.6** Substitutes for the 2024-25 school year:
- Kalika Kauffman – Paraprofessional
 - Charles Moody - Paraprofessional
 - Maricela Moreno - Food Services Worker
 - Carly Schaffer - Guest Teacher
 - Morgan Schmeck - Guest Teacher
 - Susan Staus - Guest Teacher, Paraprofessional
- 6.3.7** Volunteers for the 2024-25 school year:
- William Eschbach – Internship Redner's
 - Eric Garcia - ES/MS
 - Terry Kaufman - ES/MS
 - Stephen Kunkle - Internship Top Flight of Reading
- 6.3.8** Game workers for the 2024-25 school year, to be paid \$40 per event:
- Jana Grim
 - Shannon Lewis
 - Kim Makosch

Kim Rinehart
John Rissmiller
Lisa Young

- 6.4 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:

- Stephanie Erb

Board Action: Moved by Bryan O'Donnell and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve the resignations in Item 6.2, as presented; and to approve the employment in Item 6.3.1 through and including 6.3.8, as presented; and to approve issuing a professional employee contract to the temporary professional in Item 6.4, as presented.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

- 6.5 Approves the following co-curricular assignment stipend adjustment for the 2024-25 school year:

- FFA Head Advisor - Lisa Chillot - \$3,665

Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Paul Bendigo to approve the co-curricular assignment stipend adjustment for the 2024-25 school year in Item 6.5, as presented.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

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

- Susan Christman, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent, effective January 9, 2025, through January 29, 2025.

- Deborah Hill, English as a Second Language Teacher at the elementary school and middle school, effective December 16, 2024, through January 15, 2025.

- Anna Martin, Special Education Teacher at the middle school, effective approximately March 18, 2025, through the conclusion of the 2024-25 school year.

- Ronald Sausser, 6th Grade Teacher at the middle school, effective March 11, 2025, through March 25, 2025.

Board Action: Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Alfonso Rossi to acknowledge the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leaves of absence in Item 6.6, as presented.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

7.0 CURRICULUM AND TECHNOLOGY

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Linda R. Lash

The Curriculum and Technology Committee met at 7:19 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, March 17, 2025.

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration,

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

- 7.1 Approves the proposal from Sapphire Software for an online enrollment and registration training along with a one hour consultation, if needed, in the amount of \$675.00.

Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Linda Lash to approve the proposal from Sapphire Software for an online enrollment and registration training along with a one hour consultation, if needed, in the amount of \$675.00.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

- 7.2 Approves the awarding of E-Rate Category 2 funding to SHI for Cisco wireless and switching equipment and further authorizes the Director of Technology to sign off on the quote, not to exceed the District's Universal Service Administration Company funding allotment of \$353,372.00.

Board Action: Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by Nicoleen Kleffel to approve awarding of E-Rate Category 2 funding to SHI for Cisco wireless and switching equipment and further authorizes the Director of Technology to sign off on the quote, not to exceed the District's Universal Service Administration Company funding allotment of \$353,372.00.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

- 7.3 **Other (Old/New Business)**

2023-2024 State Assessments

Mrs. Crater reviewed the high school Keystone scores which included Algebra Proficient or Advanced 24% Spring and 11% Winter with the state average at 32%; Biology Proficient or Advanced 23% Spring and 15% Winter with the state average at 40%; Literature Proficient or Advanced 44% Spring and 21% Winter with the state average at 53%. This is a great example of why the work that we are doing with the curriculum writing process for English, Math and Science is such important work so that we can align our curriculum to the standards and hopefully see improvements in the scores because of that work. Our current 11th graders are at the following proficiency level for the keystones: Literature 55%, Biology 46%, Algebra 49%. In comparison, the state proficiency rate at the end of 11th grade (2024) was Literature 63.2%, Biology 50.5%, Algebra 41.6%. Regarding Act 158, 100% of our graduating seniors met this requirement with 36% scoring proficient on the Keystone exams, 23% met with a composite score, 21% took an alternate assessment, 10% took a CTE exam, 8% met by meeting their IEP goals, and 2% met with evidence-based which is a combination of criteria.

Dr. Kuehner stated that students in the middle school take the PSSA's and are tested on math, language arts and science in 8th grade. Beginning this year, 5th grade students will be tested on science. Math results for 2023-24 were: grade 5 - 31.4% proficient vs. 42.8% state average; grade 6 - 40.8% proficient vs. 37.4% state average; grade 7 - 30.1% proficient vs. 34.0% state average; grade 8 - 23.3% proficient vs. 28.5% state average. For the past two years, 8th graders took the Keystone exam in Math and scored 41.1% proficient which was in line with the state average. Language arts results were above the state average in each grade: grade 5 - 53.5% proficient vs. 52.2% state average; grade 6 - 57.7% proficient vs. 53.0% state average; grade 7 - 57.4%

proficient vs. 53.4% state average; grade 8 - 62.9% vs. 52.2% state average. Science proficiency for grade 8 was 60.5% vs. 54.5% state average. This information is available on the Future Ready PA Index website which has details of achievement/growth and state averages. PSSA's are just one snapshot of the students' performance, and this data will serve as a benchmark to show how we will move forward in a positive direction in all the curricular areas.

Dr. O'Donnell reviewed the 2023-24 elementary data and noted that while we're meeting the growth measure, we saw a slight decline in math for our students who tested in 3rd and 4th grade and are currently in 5th grade, however there is a slight increase in reading for these same students. PSSA scores for math were grade 3 – 53% proficient vs. 51.4% state average; grade 4 – 39% proficient vs. 48.6% state average. Language arts proficiency: grade 3 - 55% proficient vs. 55.8% state average; grade 4 - 48% proficient vs 51.4% state average. Science proficiency for grade 4 was 79% proficient vs. 77.1% state average. They will no longer be testing in science for grade 4 as science testing was moved to grade 5. In addition, they will be transitioning to a digital version of state testing and this is the last year where they have the option to use paper and pencil. The district has designed a plan where some grades will be piloting the digital assessment while others will be taking the paper and pencil version. Dr. O'Donnell has been working with 3rd and 4th grade teachers who are implementing the PSSA tests on the PDE released test design and also on item scoring samplers which are available on their website. There are 17 teachers at the elementary school participating in the Teacher Leadership Academy which is a joint program with Kutztown University. This entails taking graduate level courses with a focus on literacy instruction and best practice. When they finish at the end of spring, these 17 teachers will have coaching endorsements through PDE and they are very excited to start working with their colleagues to share their knowledge and help all elementary teachers implement best practices for literacy.

8.0 BUDGET AND FINANCE

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Nicoleen M. Kleffel

The Budget and Finance Committee met at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, March 17, 2025.

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 January 13, 2025, to February 25, 2025, as presented.

GENERAL FUND	\$1,403,288.31
CAFETERIA FUND	\$80,259.83
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FUND	\$234,130.30
CAPITAL RESERVE FUND	\$40,083.75
MS/HS ACTIVITY FUND	\$10,836.39
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,768,598.58

- 8.2 Approves accepting the report of the annual local audit, as performed by Herbein & Company, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.
- 8.3 Approves, in conjunction with the closing of the 2023-2024 financial audit, a transfer of \$1,092,061 from the unassigned fund balance into the Capital Reserve Fund. NOTE: The transfer will be posted to the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year.

Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Paul Bendigo to approve/ratify the payment of bills in Item 8.1 from January 13, 2025, to February 25, 2025, as presented; and to approve accepting the report of the annual local audit, as performed by Herbein &

Company, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024; and to approve, in conjunction with the closing of the 2023-2024 financial audit, a transfer of \$1,092,061 from the unassigned fund balance into the Capital Reserve Fund. NOTE: The transfer will be posted to the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

9.0 BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Bryan J. O'Donnell

The Buildings and Grounds Committee met at 7:21 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, March 17, 2025.

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

- 9.1** Approves Change Order #10 from A.N. Lynch for a credit in the amount of \$5,840.91 for the labor, material and supervision to re-install the additional 4 light fixtures previously removed for access by the mechanical contractor during the High School HVAC Upgrade Project.
- 9.2** Approves the rental contract with Tents & Events for the 2025 high school graduation stadium set-up in the amount of \$4,304.87.
- 9.3** Approves the waiver of rights agreement with Ontelaunee Township.

Board Action: Moved by Linda Lash and seconded by Alfonso Rossi to approve Change Order #10 from A.N. Lynch for a credit in the amount of \$5,840.91 for the labor, material and supervision to re-install the additional 4 light fixtures previously removed for access by the mechanical contractor during the High School HVAC Upgrade Project; and to approve the rental contract with Tents & Events for the 2025 high school graduation stadium set-up in the amount of \$4,304.87; and to approve the waiver of rights agreement with Ontelaunee Township.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

- 9.4** Approves pending Change Order #9 from eciConstruction, LLC, in the amount of \$76,424.00 for costs associated with existing drain repairs during the Middle School pool renovation project.

Board Action: Moved by Paul Bendigo and seconded by Bryan O'Donnell to approve pending Change Order #9 from eciConstruction, LLC, in the amount of \$76,424.00 for costs associated with existing drain repairs during the Middle School pool renovation project.

Mr. O'Donnell asked for an amendment to the motion updating the change order amount from \$76,424.00 to \$50,000.00. This is the amount that was negotiated by EI Associates with eciConstruction.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

- 9.5 Approves the proposal from 101 Mobility of Reading, PA for two (2) 18 foot ramps to be used during the 2025 HS graduation ceremony in the amount of \$2,050.00.

Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Franklin Ammarell to approve the proposal from 101 Mobility of Reading, PA for two (2) 18 foot ramps to be used during the 2025 HS graduation ceremony in the amount of \$2,050.00.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

10.0 STUDENT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of Committee Deliberations – Alfonso F. Rossi

The Student Services and Activities Committee met at 7:27 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in the Auxiliary Cafeteria of the Schuylkill Valley High School. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, March 17, 2025.

Committee Recommendations for Board Consideration

Be It Resolved, That the Board of School Directors:

- 10.1 Approves the 2025-2026 Schuylkill Valley High School Student Handbook.
- 10.2 Approves the 2025-2026 Schuylkill Valley Middle School Code of Conduct.
- 10.3 Approves the 2025-2026 Schuylkill Valley Elementary School Code of Conduct.

Board Action: Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Paul Bendigo to table the approval of the 2025-26 Schuylkill Valley Handbooks in Items 10.1 through and including 10.3, as presented.

Mr. Bendigo asked when the handbooks are due and Dr. Taschner stated that there is still time as these were brought to the Board early in case there were questions or changes. Mr. Bendigo has multiple items to review regarding each of the handbooks. Dr. Taschner suggested scheduling a meeting with Mr. Bendigo and the three principals to review his edits with a copy going to the Board after the changes are complete. Mr. Bendigo added there is concern about whether the district uniformly enforces the dress code, the cell phone policy and other policies.

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion tabled.

11.0 OTHER BUSINESS/GOOD OF THE ORDER

12.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

13.0 ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Nicoleen Kleffel and seconded by Alfonso Rossi, there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned.

February 24, 2025

Yeas: Ammarell, Bendigo, Kleffel, Lash, Moll, O'Donnell, Rossi, Weyandt

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.



Linda R. Lash, Secretary
Board of School Directors