

MINUTES
Special School Board Meeting
CATASAUQUA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Wednesday, April 2, 2025
 6:00 PM – District Administration Office

1. CALL TO ORDER **Dale Hein, President**
President, Dale Hein Called the Meeting to Order at 6:00 P.M

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
The Pledge of Allegiance was given

3. ROLL CALL

<i>Board Members</i>		<i>Non-Board Members</i>	
<i>Dale Hein, President</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Dave Knerr</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Jillian Emert, Vice President</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Christina Lutz-Doemling</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Jason Bashaw, Secretary</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Lindsey Wallace</i>	
<i>Christy Cooper, Treasurer</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Paul Reilly</i>	
<i>Lauren Cieslak</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Eric Dauberman</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Eric DeLabar</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Melissa Inselmann</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Shawn McGinley</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>David Todd</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Jeremy Smale</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Robert Kucharczuk</i>	
<i>Jamie Nattress *</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Thomas Moll</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Student Representatives</i>		<i>Daniel Kotran</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Ayden Wellington</i>		<i>Patrick McNulty</i>	
<i>David Janoski</i>		<i>Other: Joseph Henrich, Coach</i>	<i>X</i>

** Jamie Nattress entered the room at 6:04 pm*

X = Present

P= Phone

Visitors: See list inserted in Permanent Minute Book

4. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE SESSIONS
There was no executive session held during this evening's board meeting.

5. PRESENTATION/AUDIENCE INPUT ON AGENDA

- A. Thanksgiving Day Football Game Presentation
- B. Audience Input
- C. Board Discussion

The Catasauqua Area School District administrators and football coach presented concerns regarding the Annual Thanksgiving Day Football Game, highlighting issues such as disparities in school size, player safety, competitive balance, and the impact on multi-sport athletes. Also discussed were legal and ethical considerations, specifically the school district's duty of care and previous legal challenges faced by schools and the PIAA. The administration proposed creating new homecoming traditions and exploring alternatives to continue collaboration with Northampton Area School District. The board also heard public support for continuing the game. Ultimately, CASD and NASD will hold votes in April to determine the future of the Thanksgiving Day football game.

1. Competitive Imbalances and Safety:

- *Disparity in School Sizes and PIAA Levels of Classifications: There are fundamental differences in the scale and competitive landscape between the two school districts, potentially leading to safety risks.*
- *Team Depth & Player Safety: The difference in school size likely impacts team depth, potentially putting a smaller school at a disadvantage and raising concerns about player safety due to fatigue and/or roster depth.*
- *Competitive Balance: There is a lack of competitive balance in the game, potentially diminishing the positive experience for student-athletes and resulting in safety risks.*
- *Player Size, Team Resources, Physical Disparities: Inherent differences between the schools, beyond just classification, contribute to an uneven and potentially unsafe competitive environment.*

2. Legal and Ethical Considerations:

- *School District - Duty of Care: The administration emphasized the school district's fundamental responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of its students.*
- *Cases where schools and the PIAA faced legal challenges due to safety oversights in athletic programs: Presented the potential legal risks associated with continuing a game where safety concerns are present, referencing precedents where similar situations have led to legal action.*
- *A 2A team playing a 6A team does not align with PIAA classifications/football scheduling practices.*

3. Impact on Multi-Sport Athletes:

Negative impacts associated with a late Thanksgiving Day game on small-school multi-sport athletes beginning their winter sports season were also discussed, including lack of recovery time and less time to prepare for the upcoming winter season. These factors could potentially impact their performance and increase the risk of injury.

4. *Consideration of New Traditions and Connections:*

- *"CASD administration plans to involve students in the process of creating new homecoming week traditions.*
- *"Additionally, CASD/NASD will consider activities to remain connected".*

5. *Public Comment (Public Comment took place before and after the presentation):*

- *The School Board listened to public comment from students/players, parents, and a teacher/alumnus who spoke out in favor of continuing the Turkey Day game (strong tradition, fond memories, community event, challenge of the game, time spent with teammates, reflections on personal experiences), thus indicating community support for the tradition and highlighting the emotional significance of the event for many stakeholders.*
 - *Christopher Wellington- student, football player*
 - *Hector Garcia- parent, community member*
 - *Brandon Keks- faculty member, alumnus*
 - *Emmanuel Bolmer- student, football player*
 - *Mylinh Huynh- parent, community member*
 - *Cadeo Estronza- student, football player*
- *Administration and Coach Henrich emphasized the team disparities, competitive imbalance, safety risks and opportunities to involve students in creation of new traditions.*
- *Administration, Coach Henrich & School Board commended the students for their hard work, dedication and public speaking, and thanked the public for the respectful interactions during public comment.*

6. *School Board Discussion:*

- *Discussion focused on history of the game, wins/losses, tradition, loss of revenue, PIAA classifications, immediate and long-term safety concerns, liability, potential for future imbalance due to each district's geography/size, activities associated with the game, and the possibility of new traditions.*

7. *Collaborative Decision-Making and Timeline:*

- *"Catasauqua Area School District has been working in collaboration with Northampton Area School District regarding Thanksgiving Day Game concerns."*
- *"Catasauqua Area School District will vote to determine the future of the game at the April 8th Board Meeting. Northampton Area SD School Board will vote on the future of the game at their April School Board Meeting."*

Disparity in School Size and Classification:

Catasauqua High School:

- Total Enrollment: **471** students (2024-2025)
- Male Enrollment: **232 (Gr. 9-12)**
- PIAA Football Classification: **2A**
- Average Graduating Class Size: Approximately **115** students
- Potential for only a small number of new homes.
- Roster Size: **40** (9th - 12th)
- Middle School Roster: **20**

Data Sources: PIAA, CASD, NASD, PDE

Northampton Area High School:

- Total Enrollment: **1926** students (2024-2025)
- Male Enrollment: **990 (Gr. 9-12)**
- PIAA Football Classification: **6A**
- Average Graduating Class Size: Approximately **465** students
- Potential for a vast number of new homes.
- Roster Size: **125** (9th - 12th)
- Middle School Roster: **50**

PIAA Classifications and Competitive Balance

PIAA Classification System:

- The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) implements classification systems in football to ensure fair and equitable competition among schools of similar sizes. According to the PIAA's "Competition Formula Explanation," **the purpose of classifying schools is to "allow for schools to compete within certain parameters against similar size schools."**
- By grouping schools based on enrollment figures, the PIAA aims to promote balanced competition, safeguard the educational values of interscholastic athletics, and uphold high ideals of sportsmanship. **This approach helps to "organize, develop, and direct an interscholastic athletic program which will promote, protect, and conserve the health and physical welfare of all participants."**
- These classifications are reviewed and updated every two years to accommodate changes in school enrollments, ensuring that the system remains fair and reflective of current demographics.

The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) classifies high school football teams into six classifications—A, AA, AAA, AAAA, AAAAA, and AAAAAA—based on male enrollment numbers in **grades 9 through 11**. These classifications are adjusted every two years to ensure competitive balance.

For the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, the enrollment parameters for each classification are as follows:

- **Class A:** 1 to 143 male students
- **Class AA:** 144 to 216 male students (Catasauqua 193 + 49 over minimum - growth very limited)
- **Class AAA:** 217 to 295 male students
- **Class AAAA:** 296 to 423 male students
- **Class AAAAA:** 424 to 619 male students
- **Class AAAAAA:** 620 and above male students (Northampton 788 +168 over minimum - Growth virtually unlimited)

• BOARD APPROVALS

None

• RECOGNITION OF GUESTS & VISITORS

See #5 Public Comment above.

Mr. Moll recognized the following student athletes in attendance at the meeting for their athletic achievements:

- *Manny Bolmer- Set the school record in the boys long jump at our home meet versus Bangor on March 18th. Manny's jump of 22'4" broke the previous school record of 22'3" set by Chris Ritter in 1997.*
- *Evan DeLong and Manny Bolmer- members of the District XI 3A Boys Basketball championship team.*
- *Maliya Walp- finished third in the girls 100 Backstroke at this year's District XI 2A Swimming Championship at Parkland High School. Maliya also finished fifth in the 200 Individual Medley.*

- **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION BY: Emert

SECONDED BY: McGinley

Motion carried

Time Adjourned: 8:04 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jason Bashaw
Secretary*