

**BURRELL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING - BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES
April 1, 2025**

Call to Order

The Burrell School District Board of Directors Agenda Meeting was held in the High School Board Room and was called to order at 7:05 PM by President Rick Kaczor.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Kaczor asked all present to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Mrs. Gretchen V. Beveridge, Ms. Tricia Shank, Mrs. Nikki Watson, Mrs. LeeAnn S. Guido, Mrs. Pam Key, Mr. Tom Deiseroth, Mrs. Jean Schager and Mr. Rick Kaczor

Board Members Absent: Mr. Timothy J. Vinkovich

Quorum present

Others Present: Dr. Shannon L. Wagner, Superintendent, Mrs. Jennifer S. Callahan, Business Administrator/ Board Secretary and Dr. Gregory Egnor, Director of Student Services

Student Representatives Present: None

Comments from the Public - Agenda Only

None

Budget 2025-2026 Draft – Information

Mrs. Callahan presented the Draft General Fund Budget for 2025-2026 as follows:

- Budget Prep process and some of the main items the District is facing in 2025-2026 budget
- Budget Revenue \$37,420,991 and Expenditures \$37,757,432 leaving Deficit \$-336,441
 - Includes 4.5 mill Real Estate Tax increase
 - Includes use of \$780,000 Fund Balance for technology equipment \$330,000 and Transfer to Capital Reserve \$150,000 and Budgetary Reserve \$300,000
- Expenditures - Largest category increases: Safety/Security; Special Education/Student Tuition Costs; Health Insurance Benefits; Debt Service (Bond Payments)
- Expenditure Details costs, increases and explanation of items in each of the budget areas:
 - Salary/Wages, Insurance Benefits, Retirement Contribution, Debt Service/Bond Payments, Building Budgets, NWCTC costs, Cyber/Charter School Tuition, Special Placement Tuition, Special Education Services, Online Education, ESOL, Psychologist Services, Social Work Services, Safety/Security, Other Services
 - Athletics, Transportation, Facilities Maintenance
 - Detailed Evaluation of Historical Data on Tuition and Special Education including number of students and number of educational aides
 - Detailed review of Debt Service and Bond Payments outstanding and planned
- Revenue – Local Revenue, State Revenue, Federal Revenue reviewed total, increase and changes of each

- Real Estate Tax Review
 - No increase in overall District assessed value past several years; now at 2011-2012 level
 - Further decrease due to commercial property appeals decreased tax revenue \$-58,494
 - Commercial Property Tax appeals over past few years resulted in decrease in tax revenue totaling nearly \$-700,000 which equates to 4.6 mills of taxes.
 - Additional pending appeals reviewed
 - Tax Increase 4.5 mills = 3.7% increase; \$103.50 increase to average homeowner
- Basic Ed and Special Ed Review
 - Increase budgeted at 100% of Governors proposed budget for Basic Ed
 - Results in budget increase to revenue of only \$3,915
 - Reviewed historical data and explained reasoning
- Budgeted expected State PCCD Grant funds for Safety and Mental Health \$130,000
- Federal Revenue Review
 - No more ESSERS Funds
 - Federal Funding unknown impact
- Fund Balance Review
 - Total Committed Fund Balance
 - Estimated Ending Fund Balance \$1,705,064 or 4.5% of expenditures – only if can eliminate budget deficit
- Discussed Next Steps – Administration will keep working to try to reduce deficit by cuts/adjustments, review additional months of revenue for estimates, look for other reallocations and/or changes. Present Proposed Final at May meeting with changes and then Final Budget at June meeting with additional changes.

Budget 2025-2026 Discussion

General discussion ensued regarding various parts of presentation.

Ms. Shank asked when do we get the final health care costs.

Mrs. Callahan responded we won't have it until after the May trustee meeting because the group bases rates on claims so we try to have as much data as possible. Trust agreement dictates what we keep in our designated and undesignated fund balance so the increases must also take that into consideration.

Ms. Shank asked Mrs. Callahan to explain what happened that caused the spike in PSERS costs.

Mrs. Callahan stated it was the result of a few things including legislative decision to increase benefits, decrease in market and interest rates, and changes in the calculation of how the District contributions occur.

Mr. Kaczor commented about the increase in debt service bond payments. He stated that although we need an additional \$10 million bond issue, if we would have chosen to keep Stewart School open, it would have cost an additional \$17 million on top of the total other renovations.

Mrs. Guido asked about the bond issue and if they are allocated for specific improvements.

Mrs. Callahan explained that bond issues require the Board to state the intended uses of the bond issue. At the time, we included all of the possible capital improvements being considered so that we are covered for any or all if the Board decides to proceed. This included additions/alterations at Bon Air, boilers and HVAC and air conditioning at Bon Air, Middle School, and High School.

Mrs. Guido stated she seems to have heard rumblings about a new capital improvement grant. She suggested that we will hopefully still be able to pursue anything we can if the grant resurfaces.

General discussion ensued about the \$5 million grant application that Dr. Wagner and Mrs. Callahan worked very hard on to try to help offset capital improvement costs. However, we were not awarded

funding. There were funds that were awarded to districts who seem to have better financial status and facilities than us so it was frustrating.

Ms. Shank asked if the technology funds budgeted for interactive boards will cover all of the additional classrooms when students are moved to Bon Air and Middle School.

Mrs. Callahan responded yes.

General discussion ensued about the NWCTC cost to our District.

Mrs. Guido stated it doesn't seem to make sense that our cost increase is up nearly 5% but our student increase is only about 2%.

Mrs. Callahan explained that the CTC guidelines require that the budget is built and the remaining funding need is provided by the districts. The ADM percentage share of the school is used to determine each district share of the total District contribution. The formula sometimes results in an overall decrease in funding but an increase to certain districts whose membership increase. It is dependent upon the total but also upon the changes in other districts memberships.

General discussion ensued regarding Special Education costs.

Mrs. Key asked what it costs us to educate a special education student.

Mrs. Callahan explained that there are several factors and multiple ways to calculate costs per student. The most simplistic calculation would be to take total special education costs including services and personnel pay, benefits, etc. and divide that by the number of students we educate. Looking at the Draft 2025-2026 budget that is about \$10,500 per student. However, students have various needs and services provided so some students could actually cost \$60,000 while some cost a few thousand.

General discussion ensued about the cost of cyber charter schools and how the current laws and regulations are completely unfair and cost the District and ultimately the taxpayers so much money.

Mrs. Watson asked how cyber charter schools and the legality started. She stated that she believes it is ridiculous and that something needs to be done.

Mrs. Key stated she will be attending PSBA advocacy day and can bring up this concern of our Board.

Mr. Deiseroth added that in the PSBA State of Education report, it is reported that cyber charter schools is one of the top financial pressures for all districts.

Mrs. Guido asked if we eliminate any of these costs based on the residency audit she has requested.

Dr. Egnor stated that we have done an audit of residency but it did not result in any changes. He added that the charter schools typically let us know when students move in or out of our District.

Mrs. Key asked for an explanation about AKAE and eAcademy.

Dr. Wagner explained the programs.

Mrs. Guido suggested the District gets feedback from families about why they don't choose those options but rather choose cyber school.

Ms. Shank asked about the tariff that was mentioned in relation to electricity cost increases.

Mrs. Callahan responded that she will get more information to provide an explanation.

Mrs. Watson asked about SEL listed under Federal Title IV funds.

Mrs. Callahan stated that funding is actually used to support the Behavior Specialist position.

General discussion ensued about property taxes and the reduction in overall assessed value that is a frustration and difficulty for our District.

Mrs. Callahan stated that unfortunately when the large commercial/industrial properties have substantial reductions in assessed values, it impacts the bottom line revenue so ultimately the other taxpayers including homeowners are burdened with tax increases to offset the loss.

Mrs. Guido asked if we know what is going on with Alcoa and the data center. She stated that if buildings that are empty are then being used, she would hope that the real estate taxes would also increase.

Mrs. Callahan responded that we only have the information that was reported in the newspaper about a data center company purchasing part. We also received real estate transfer revenue from the actual sale of the property from Arconic/Alcoa to the new owner – Tecfusions Keystone LLC.

Mrs. Callahan explained concerns though that when a building is not changed/improved, it does not necessarily result in increased assessed value and ultimately tax revenue. One example of this was the Schadler Yesko transition in the old JC Penney building. Although they put money into updating things for their use and are now fully operational, the county tax assessor indicated that there is not an increase in assessed value since the structure of the building didn't change and it is basically the same building being used as a warehouse. She is concerned that the Tecfusions property could be the same type of situation.

Mrs. Callahan suggested that we ask the property specialist at Andrews and Price to explain better how this works.

Mrs. Schager asked for confirmation that the tax millage is at 117.5 and going to 122 so the average home owner will see increase of \$103/year.

Mrs. Watson asked about the increase for homeowners and for information on the market value/aid ratio.

Mrs. Callahan explained that the Draft Budget includes an increase in millage rate from 117.5 to 122. That would result in an increase of about \$103 per year for the average homeowner. She added that the increase is budgeted but ultimately the Board decides the tax rate in June.

Mrs. Callahan further stated that although our millage rate is higher than other districts, some of the data from last year shows that other districts get much more money per mill increased. She reviewed some of the values.

Comments from the Public

Debbie Keller, resident

- *Appreciates the helpful information in presentation*
- *Believes District is in tough situation – not getting new businesses, population down to 11,442 and poverty rate is at 7.55*
- *She asked why we are not getting new businesses and wondered how they can be recruited*
- *Thinks people are moving out or not coming into the District due to tax increases*
- *Does not know what the answer is on how to curtail tax increase after seeing presentation of all of the required costs and increases*
- *Expressed concerns about elderly on fixed incomes having a rough time paying increases*
- *Works at local food bank and sees the financial needs*
- *Does not want taxes raised*
- *Suggested that the District eliminate air conditioning from any projects as she believes it is not necessary and that is a reflection of parents "babying" their kids; Has many years of teaching experience with no air conditioning; it is hot, but doable*
- *Suggested that the District should have maintained the boilers and HVAC equipment*

Mrs. Key explained that most kids now grow up with air conditioning so their lungs and bodies adapt and now it can cause significant issues for kids to be in buildings that are not air conditioned. They have many more issues with asthma and allergies relating to bad air quality. Therefore, she believes air conditioning is needed.

Mrs. Schager added that the District has maintained the building equipment very well which is why the equipment is so old but has lasted this long.

Mr. Kaczor thanked her for her comments.

Rich Duncan, resident

- *Property values going down around him because people are not taking care of their homes*
- *Concerned that taxes keep going up and that our millage rate is the highest in the county*
- *Expressed concerns that people are going to move out of the District due to taxes*
- *Questioned why there is no business or other growth in the city and suggested it is not the District's fault, but is the city's responsibility*

Mrs. Guido stated that our taxes are not necessarily the highest as there are other factors that are involved with the calculation. She stated that the Board is frustrated as well but we try to do what we can.

Mrs. Callahan reported the District millage rate is the highest number at 117.5 currently but she added that a mill of taxes is worth a different amount of revenue in each district and ours is not the highest. She reported some of the other county districts values for comparison - 1 mill of taxes brings in tax revenue as follows: Burrell \$151,000; Franklin Regional \$355,000; Greater Latrobe \$330,000; Kiski Area \$255,000; New Kensington-Arnold \$123,000; Penn Trafford \$371,000; Norwin \$417,000; Greensburg Salem \$221,000.

Mrs. Callahan also stated that last year she reviewed the increases in assessed value that other districts have been realizing while Burrell has had a decrease. She provided some examples for the period 2019-2020 through 2023-2024 and Burrell had a decrease in Assessed Value of \$416,000 while most other districts realized an increase: Franklin Regional \$350,643; Greater Latrobe \$696,000; Bell Vernon \$585,000; Mt Pleasant \$324,000; Norwin \$1.4M; Penn Trafford \$1.33M. So these districts have substantial increase in real estate tax without raising taxes due to natural growth. Burrell School District has had a decrease in overall assessed value during this time.

Mrs. Callahan stated the assessed value decreases and lack of growth substantially impacts the District finances and really is the largest major issue we face. It directly impacts the necessary tax increases in our District.

General discussion ensued among Board members about the negative impact on District finances and the difficulties we face as a result.

Mrs. Guido stated that after seeing the presentation, you can see that Board members do what they can to offset costs. We are eliminating positions which is really the only thing we can do to make a substantial difference.

Mrs. Key stated that we are not willing to do that at the expense of student's education. She added that as an older person on the Board, she has already expressed that raising taxes is not an option for her. She stated that people can't keep putting out money each year, but we don't know what else to do.

Adjournment at 9:28 PM

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Schager
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor

Seconded by: Mrs. Key
MOTION CARRIED



Jennifer S. Callahan
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

JSC/mls

**BURRELL SCHOOL DISTRICT
AGENDA MEETING MINUTES
April 8, 2025**

Call to Order

The Burrell School District Board of Directors Agenda Meeting was held in the High School Board Room and was called to order at 7:03 PM by President Rick Kaczor.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Kaczor asked all present to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Mrs. Gretchen V. Beveridge, Mr. Timothy J. Vinkovich, Ms. Tricia Shank, Mrs. Nikki Watson, Mrs. LeeAnn S. Guido, Mrs. Pam Key, Mr. Tom Deiseroth, Mrs. Jean Schager and Mr. Rick Kaczor

Board Members Absent: None

Quorum present

Others Present: Dr. Shannon L. Wagner, Superintendent, Mrs. Jennifer S. Callahan, Business Administrator/ Board Secretary, Dr. Gregory Egnor, Director of Student Services, Dr. Autumn Turk, Director of Curriculum and Development

Student Representatives Present: Donovan Cosentino

Announce Executive Sessions

April 8, 2025 – Immediately following meeting - Personnel Agenda

April 15, 2025 - 7:00 PM - Personnel Agenda

Approval of Minutes

Agenda Meeting – March 11, 2025; Regular Meeting – March 18, 2025

Approval of Monthly Financial Reports

- a. Treasurer's Report
- b. General Fund Report
- c. Capital Reports
- d. Food Service Reports
- e. Student Activity Reports

Comments from Public - Agenda Items Only

None

Reports of Administration and Standing Committees

SUPERINTENDENT - DR. WAGNER

Student/Staff Recognition and Reports

Dr. Wagner introduced Darcy Holtzman and Ron Zanella to report on the Career Readiness Program.

Ron Zanella and Darcy Holtzman presented information about year 2 of future readiness and career exploration as follows:

- Courses and classes including independent course work and Google IT course; new CNC machine which will be used to do some work for things around the school; makerspace printing
- Getting more classes involved to go on trips with the career group for related areas
- Focused Trips – potential college major related
- Tech schools – Bidwell, Rosedale, Penn State New Kensington 2-year medical equipment repair program
- Trades – visited various unions
- Pittsburgh area – most popular job fields: Healthcare and Manufacturing/Technology
- Conventions and Connections
- Specific Student Examples
- Provided statistics: 162 students involved in various experiences so far this year
- Next steps include:
 - Trying to set up job shadows next year
 - Career Center
 - Grants and Donations
 - Financial donation Class of 1970
 - Donation of Robotic Arm

Mrs. Key stated what they are doing is amazing.

Mrs. Guido stated the opportunities the students are having is wonderful.

Ms. Shank stated there is a need in the world to be funneled into certain industries. This really shows the students what is out there. It seems like you will get busier due to the connections you are making. It may result in companies and schools reaching out to us about opportunities.

Mr. Zanella stated students are now coming to them with ideas and requests.

Ms. Holtzman stated that many other schools and companies are impressed with what we are doing here.

Mr. Kaczor asked how often do these trips occur.

Mr. Zanella stated sometimes it is a few times a week sometimes less. It was juniors and seniors the last two years but we want to open it up to sophomores as well.

Mrs. Beveridge asked about transportation and financing these trips.

Dr. Wagner stated we have two activity vans so they are used and we budget for buses when needed.

Mrs. Guido asked for clarification if the District owns the vans and so the only cost is gas.

Mrs. Callahan confirmed.

Permission to advertise for construction project bids for the following project: Bon Air Elementary School Additions and Alterations

Dr. Wagner stated she will ask for permission to bid the Bon Air project next week. She stated the Architects Andreas Dometakis and Jim Vizzini from HHSDR are present to discuss the project.

Dr. Wagner stated we have already awarded the High School boiler project bids. The contractor is preparing for the job. She stated we anticipate a change order due to asbestos in the gaskets. It has been presented by the contractor for the architect's review. It may be added to the agenda next week for approval. It is necessary work for the project and will likely cost approximately \$30,000. It will also extend the project timeframe of final completion date to August 22.

Dr. Wagner reviewed cost estimates for the Bon Air cafeteria/kitchen addition and air conditioning at \$10.4 million and with the classroom addition alternate it is an additional estimated \$4.7 million. The timeline is to bid in May, award in June, start construction July 7 and complete the project in July or August of 2026.

Mr. Kaczor asked about confidence in cost estimates.

Mr. Dometakis stated that we look at today's number when we estimate. We cannot say what will happen in 2 months or with tariffs. He added that we must use American steel and do not use any equipment made overseas.

Mr. Dometakis stated he talked with AGX, Inc. for a proposal on asbestos review for areas being renovated. This must be tested based on legal requirements.

Mrs. Schager asked why it wasn't assumed that they included asbestos.

Mr. Dometakis stated that you don't know where asbestos is until you open certain things up.

Ms. Shank asked wouldn't we have that information and have taken care of it with Bon Air renovations.

Mr. Dometakis stated there are parts that may not have been disturbed so they would not have been addressed.

Mr. Dometakis stated we know in the High School there may be some but it may not be disturbed.

Mrs. Beveridge asked if doing any asbestos work would interfere with students.

Mr. Dometakis stated the plan is to have it all done in the summer. There is containment when there are students and staff around.

Dr. Wagner stated we work through all of those logistics when we do a project. She summarized the cycle and rotation that occurs with renovations and work.

Ms. Shank asked about the \$10 million bond issued in 2024 and what it is paying for. She also asked for explanation of why would we need an additional \$10 million bond.

Mrs. Callahan responded that when we issued the \$10M bonds in 2024, we included the use of funds to be for everything the Board has been considering such as the addition/alteration at Bon Air, HVAC, air conditioning and boilers at Bon Air, High School and Middle School so we are permitted to use the funds for any of those things.

Dr. Wagner explained that we are looking at the Bon Air addition/alteration project estimated over \$10 million plus High School HVAC at around \$8 million plus the High School boiler project awarded for around \$1 million. Therefore, we need additional bonds issued to cover the costs of all of the projects.

Dr. Wagner reviewed renderings of Bon Air with the new kitchen/cafeteria addition and the project with the classroom addition. She stated that the architect has prepared specifications for both. She stated the High School HVAC project estimates include air conditioning. She asked Mr. Vizzini to review the concept of air conditioning.

Mr. Vizzini explained that home air conditioning just recirculates the same air all the time. The institutional building code guidelines for indoor air quality demand certain amount of fresh air be brought in from outside. The process is different than a home. He provided an example of 20 students in a room which would be cooling air and dehumidifying since it would be pulling in the outside air. We can't just let air conditioning run all the time. He explained how air conditioning works and how humidity is impacted. He explained how the operation sequences must be set up properly. He stated that we would set up summertime operation to have sequences to not bring in all the fresh air. It is important to understand how to operate the systems.

Mr. Kaczor asked if these are chiller or air condition units.

Mr. Vizzini stated that they are air cooled chillers.

Mrs. Beveridge asked if there will be sensors and hydrometers.

Mr. Vizzini stated there will be humidity sensors and they will have sequences built in. It will be mainly automated.

Mr. Vizzini explained the ionization process to sterilize and purify the air. Bipolar ionization – ozone free technology will allow the District to have the best quality of air when in the buildings.

Dr. Wagner stated Air Conditioning is included in the base bid project and the bid will include an alternate which is the additional classroom wing.

Mrs. Guido asked if the contingency listed in estimated costs is to cover change orders.

Mr. Dometakis replied yes, he stated that there is typically use of 1-2% for unforeseen conditions and it is typical to budget 5% here.

General discussion ensued regarding electrical service for building and whether it will be one service.

General discussion ensued regarding the kitchen equipment.

Mrs. Callahan stated that the intent is to use the food service fund to offset the cost of the kitchen equipment as this is an allowable use of these available funds.

Dr. Wagner suggested review of the High School HVAC project because the Board will be asked to approve for advertising in May to proceed with the timeline. The project is proposed to end in August 2026.

Mr. Vizzini stated controls will be web based to control and evaluate rooms.

Mrs. Schager asked if the High School project is already built into the budget.

Mrs. Callahan explained that the Draft budget included estimated payments for an additional bond issue of about \$10 million to hopefully cover the projects being discussed including the High School project. She reminded Board members that there is a tax increase included in the Draft budget and part of it is for this.

General discussion ensued about impact on taxes and on the 2025-2026 budget.

Mrs. Schager stated it could impact people and they may move out of the community.

Dr. Wagner stated she does not recommend eliminating the High School project. She believes that some people will move out for other reasons.

Mrs. Schager stated everything is a "catch 22". She questioned what brings people here when there are no businesses.

Mrs. Watson stated she believes it is the schools that draw people to the community. She thinks the only people complaining about taxes and costs are those without students.

Mr. Kaczor suggested that if people are moving out, they are selling their homes, and someone will buy them. When they move out, someone else will move in.

Mrs. Key stated we can't always go with "what if".

Mrs. Callahan stated the High School project estimates are not just for Air Conditioning costs, it is for other work on HVAC equipment that is very old.

Ms. Shank stated the boilers are already started and that project covers the building heat.

OTHER ADMINISTRATION - DR. TURK / DR. EGNOR

Approval of Westmoreland Intermediate Unit Master Services Agreement for 2025-2026 school year

Dr. Egnor stated this is the yearly agreement for major services for approval.

Approval of Services Agreement with The Day School at The Children's Institute for educational services for 2025-2026 school year with Extended School Year (ESY) 2026

Dr. Egnor stated this is a yearly service agreement and includes ESY.

Mrs. Key asked how many students we have at this school.

Dr. Egnor stated one student.

Ms. Shank asked what the cost is.

Dr. Egnor stated since it is APS, the state reimburses 60% of the cost of the school. We pay 40% of the cost. He explained that the school handles a lot of significantly disabled students, so the tuition amount listed is for that. The Children's Institute is higher but for students that qualify we only pay 40% of the cost. Some other APS includes The School for Deaf, Blind and Easter Seals.

Dr. Egnor explained that a student that is placed, they don't automatically qualify for that state discounted rate.

Dr. Egnor reviewed tuition cost of licensed schools.

Mrs. Guido asked if The Children's Institute is the only school we send students to for ESY.

Dr. Egnor stated the intention of our strong ESY program is to have students come here for our ESY to help reduce costs.

Mrs. Key stated students are attending other schools so it may be disruptive to come to another program. The Children's Institute is so case specific that she doesn't think our ESY could handle that level. In the best interest of the children, it may be better for some students to attend ESY where they go to school.

Dr. Egnor stated there are instances it would cost more to develop an ESY program for significantly disabled students so he considers both options when setting up ESY in an IEP.

Appointment of Michael A. Chapman, DDS as school dentist for 2025-2026 school year

Dr. Egnor stated this an annual agreement to have a school dentist.

Mrs. Schager asked if the cost of \$100 is for the entire school year.

Dr. Egnor stated yes. They offer services to benefit the District at a very low cost.

Mrs. Watson asked how many students really are serviced.

Dr. Egnor stated very few.

Appointment of Kultar Shergill, MD as school physician for 2025-2026 school year

Mrs. Schager asked if this is the only physician available.

Dr. Egnor stated yes. He put out an RFP and contacted other physicians but this is the only one available.

Approval of Student Education Agreement with River Academy of Excellence for Special Education Services for 2024-2025 school year

Dr. Egnor stated this student was recently placed for the remainder of the school year.

Mrs. Schager asked is there only one student here.

Dr. Egnor stated this is the 3rd student attending currently but he will be scheduling a meeting regarding other students potentially returning to the District within the next year or so. The school requires a separate contract for each student.

Dr. Egnor stated the needs exceed what the District can provide and it is very significant.

PERSONNEL: Approval of Personnel Log dated April 15, 2025

Northern Westmoreland Career & Technology Center Report - Mr. Kaczor/Mr. Vinkovich

Westmoreland Intermediate Unit Report - Mr. Deiseroth

PSBA Liaison Report - Mrs. Schager

BUSINESS - MRS. CALLAHAN

Approval of budgetary transfers

Approval of Contract with Graham Professional Sound & Video for Event Services at Commencement on June 5, 2025

Mrs. Callahan stated this is an agreement with a vendor for the sound/video for graduation. They have been doing it for a few years for us but this year they are asking for a signed contract. We do not have the technology/sound equipment for this type of production. It is the same cost as last year at \$5,084. It is budgeted along with chair rental and other costs of graduation.

Award bids for purchase of Athletic Supplies for 2025-2026 fiscal year

Mrs. Callahan stated we typically bid supplies for athletics and janitorial for the following year to ensure we are in compliance with the law and to get the best pricing. As we are in transition between buildings and the Administrators are overseeing the cleaning out of buildings, we are evaluating what items are needed and what we have stock of so that we can use what we have. Therefore, there are no janitorial bids at this time. We believe we won't need to purchase as much as in the past due to existing stock and better training in use of items. However, we did bid athletics items. The total recommended award is \$32,946 to 5 vendors.

Mrs. Guido asked if this bid covers everything that is needed for athletics or if things were cut out of the order.

Mrs. Callahan responded that it covers everything needed. Mr. Ferra reviewed the bids submitted to ensure that items meet the quality needed and/or the cost is better than what can be purchased direct. Any adjustments that were made would be for those purposes, but overall, it covers everything.

Mrs. Guido asked if the mascot costume is being replaced and included in the bids and/or budget.

Mr. Ferra responded that it was already purchased this year but has not yet been used.

Adoption of 2025-2026 Westmoreland Intermediate Unit General Operating Budget

Mrs. Callahan stated the WIU General Operating Budget is presented to the IU Board and then to each district school board for approval. The total is \$ 6,663,529 which is a substantial decrease from prior year but mainly due to a transfer of programs out of this budget. IUs have several budgets and function differently than school districts. The General Operating Budget is the only IU Budget that the District contributes to directly. District contributions total is \$290,000 which is up 4.3%. Our share is \$10,932 which is a \$1,876 increase over prior year. That figure was reflected in our Draft budget.

Approval of Contract with TimeClock Plus, LLC for TCP Software program and equipment services effective May 1, 2025

Mrs. Callahan stated she is strongly recommending the implementation of this program. She explained that along with the Payroll/Benefit Specialist we evaluated several programs to become more efficient for hourly pay tracking. We are currently doing it manually on paper and the time, errors, movement between departments for approval, etc. is extremely inefficient. We evaluated 5 programs. This one offers the best product at the best annual price. The overall cost the first year is higher because we will purchase 4 pieces of equipment that will be used to easily and quickly use existing badges to clock in and out. This will be used for all hourly employees including food service so the food service fund will cover about a 3rd of the cost of this entire project. The funds are available now because we budgeted for an appraisal but the appraisal company is so backed up that they will not get to us for another year. The annual cost to our general fund budget will be about \$3,500. The time and efficiency will make that up easily.

Mr. Kaczor asked how many clock/equipment pieces does this include.

Mrs. Callahan responded 4.

Mr. Kaczor stated that he thinks this program will save much more than the cost in time and efficiency and work production of hourly workers.

Approval of request to establish student activity account – 5K Wellness Run and Walk Club

Mrs. Callahan stated Mr. Rossi is requesting to establish this group of students to provide the program.

Approval of Contract with High Quality Steel Structures for purchase and installation of storage buildings using Capital Reserve Fund

Mrs. Callahan stated this is a contract that is required for the purchase of the steel buildings that we had planned with our capital reserve fund budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Quotes were obtained from various vendors and this was the lowest cost.

Mrs. Callahan stated we have the concrete base poured and had issued the PO's for the buildings and then the vendor informed us that a contract is required. We budgeted \$65,000 for this, but overall the project will be under \$45,000 for both storage structures at the High School.

Mrs. Guido asked about the locations.

Mrs. Callahan responded one will be near the storage garage in the stadium for athletic storage. The other will be near the Central Admin parking lot for drama, band and music storage.

Communications

Mrs. Callahan stated there is an anonymous letter addressed to the Board included in Communications.

Mrs. Guido stated that she will not consider anonymous letters. She believes that anyone who wants to make a statement or write a letter regarding something related to the school should sign their name. If they want the Board to hear something, they should be willing to state their name.

Mrs. Watson agreed with Mrs. Guido.

Members stated they received the same anonymous communication by mail.

Requests for Use of Buildings

Payment of Bills

Additions to Agenda (Agenda Meeting only)

None.

Comments from Public

Bob Harris, Resident

- *Requested that Board members keep in mind that a large portion of the community feels that the best way to spend our tax money is in our schools, so voting to bid all of the construction projects is recommended*
- *Expressed his belief that schools should be the center of the community*
- *Believes that there are people who leave the area due to taxes, but there are other people who might leave for another district if our buildings are not upgraded as well*
- *Urged Board members to vote to upgrade the buildings*
- *Suggested financial responsibility is Board Members job and it is irresponsible not to spend funds where they are needed to be spent*

Mr. Kaczor thanked him for his willingness to express something positive and supportive of what the Board is trying to do.

Mrs. Guido stated it is good to hear because we do get a lot of backlash from "keyboard warriors" and from people who don't even live in the community.

Bob Harris, Resident

- *He stated that he feels like where he works, community members don't stick up for the District so he is trying to do so as he has seen people on Facebook bashing the District because they don't understand it*
- *Expressed his belief that a large portion of the community is in favor and in support of what the Board is trying to do*

Mrs. Watson stated that people on Facebook really don't want to talk. They just complain about things and much of it is not accurate.

Mrs. Watson stated she is angry about the cyber charter schools and amount that our District has to pay. She stated that she is angry about PSERS costs. She thinks people need to be talking to our legislators.

Mrs. Schager stated she feels that she needs to address the discussion because she thinks it may be directed at her. She explained that she is just suggesting we try to trim the budget and the costs.

Mrs. Key stated at some point we may have to stop adding and start taking away. We need to get down to what we need to do and give students a good education. We need to stop trying to design our District like a Fox Chapel district. We need to take a hard line look at the finances so that we are not so far in debt that we can't do anything.

Mrs. Watson stated she appreciates Mrs. Schager's comment because she also doesn't want to raise taxes. She doesn't think that the public understands without seeing all of the things that we have to pay for. We don't want to raise taxes but it is not fair for our schools and students to take cuts. It isn't fair for people on fixed incomes. She stated that she cannot believe we have not had cyber charter reform since 2002. She intends to go down the rabbit hole to try to impact change on this. She stated it would be great if we could figure out ways not to raise taxes. She also stated that she wishes people should be actively engaged all the time. She added that legislators are frustrating and if we don't fight the fight, we won't be heard.

Mrs. Callahan stated that she sent an email to Board members with a link to information about the Auditor General's report on Cyber Charters schools financing.

Mrs. Guido asked if eAcademy students have access to the career program and are they utilizing it.

Dr. Egnor stated they are not really using it. He will show how we are highlighting the things we have to offer to try to highlight what we have going on to help encourage students to use our cyber charter school rather than other more costly cyber charter schools.

Mrs. Watson stated that she is angry that students are permitted by law to participate in Burrell events if they are a cyber school student but not a Burrell student in our eAcademy.

Dr. Turk suggested using Valley News Dispatch reported, Kellen Stepler to get an article out there about these things and the costs. She thinks it is important for them to know how much we are spending and he can do the research and get the information out there.

Mr. Kaczor stated the people who were here for the budget workshop meeting seemed to understand the difficulties we face.

Mrs. Key stated that the Farmers Market starts May 24 and it is a program in partnership with Burrell School District.

Adjournment at 9:06 PM

MOTION:
VOTE:

Motion by: Mrs. Key
Roll Call: All in Favor

Seconded by: Mrs. Guido
MOTION CARRIED



Jennifer S. Callahan
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

JSC/mls

**BURRELL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 15, 2025**

Call to Order

The Burrell School District Board of Directors Board Meeting was held in the High School Board Room and was called to order at 7:36 PM by President Rick Kaczor.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Kaczor asked all present to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Mrs. Gretchen V. Beveridge, Mrs. Nikki Watson, Mrs. Pam Key, Mr. Tom Deiseroth, Mrs. Jean Schager and Mr. Rick Kaczor

Board Members Absent: Mr. Timothy J. Vinkovich, Ms. Tricia Shank and Mrs. LeeAnn S. Guido

Quorum present

Others Present: Dr. Shannon L. Wagner, Superintendent, Mrs. Jennifer S. Callahan, Business Administrator/ Board Secretary and Solicitor Lee Price

Student Representatives Present: None

Announce Executive Sessions

April 8, 2025 – Immediately following meeting - Personnel Agenda

April 15, 2025 - 7:00 PM - Personnel Agenda

Approval of Minutes

Agenda Meeting – March 11, 2025; Regular Meeting – March 18, 2025

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mr. Deiseroth

VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Monthly Financial Reports

- a. Treasurer's Report (Attachment 4-1)
- b. General Fund Report (Attachment 4-2)
- c. Capital Reports (Attachment 4-3)
- d. Food Service Reports (Attachment 4-4)
- e. Student Activity Reports (Attachment 4-5)

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mrs. Beveridge

VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Comments from Public - Agenda Items Only

None

Reports of Administration and Standing Committees

Mr. Kaczor acknowledged Dr. Wagner for her receipt of the prestigious Dr. Jean E. Winsand Distinguished Woman in Education Award from the Tri-State Area School Study Council. The award honors a woman who has made significant impact and positive difference throughout her career. The award recognizes a woman who has demonstrated exemplary leadership and service to others through her activities and initiatives.

Dr. Wagner thanked Mr. Kaczor and stated it is an honor to be considered with the women who have received the award over time.

Mrs. Beveridge asked how she was nominated.

Dr. Wagner stated she is not sure.

Mrs. Callahan spoke on behalf of the Administrative team stating that Dr. Wagner is very deserving of the award and she has demonstrated exemplary leadership and service to others. She has been a role model and driving force for all of us that have worked with her on the Administration team. The women on the Administration team were able to attend the workshop and support her while she was recognized.

SUPERINTENDENT - DR. WAGNER

Student/Staff Recognition and Reports

Dr. Wagner recognized the following:

- Amanda Pagnotta and Bryan Mike for their work together on the co-taught course (English and Science) relating to the criminal justice system. This was one of the courses that came out of reimagining senior year at the High School.

Dr. Wagner stated the District was recognized nationally by AASA – American Association of School Administrators as a Learning 2025 Lighthouse Demonstration System. She stated much of the participation was funded through the Grable Foundation which we are grateful.

Dr. Wagner stated we are a “lighthouse” for other districts, Future Ready Learners: Personalized Learning & Real-World Career Experiences.

Dr. Wagner provided the application for the Board to review to see what all we are doing that helped get us the designation and recognition.

Permission to advertise for construction project bids for the following project: Bon Air Elementary School Additions and Alterations

Dr. Wagner stated last week the architects were here to review the information for the Bon Air project.

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mr. Deiseroth

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Beveridge stated we need to make sure that we are staying on topic when the architects are here to speak to us.

Mr. Kaczor agreed.

VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of HS Boiler Replacement Project Change Order HC-1 in the amount of \$28,720 for removal and disposal of boilers and piping due to asbestos containing boiler gasket

Dr. Wagner explained that the Board awarded the contract for boiler replacement at the High School, to replace the 1964 boilers, and as part of the process, we need to deal with some asbestos.

MOTION: Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth Seconded by: Mrs. Key

VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Acceptance of Proposal of AGX, Inc. for asbestos building material surveys at High School and Bon Air Elementary School

Dr. Wagner stated that we received a proposal from AGX, Inc. to test materials for asbestos prior to the HVAC projects that we are considering moving forward. The total cost will be \$5,400.

MOTION: Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth Seconded by: Mrs. Key

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Schager asked if the Middle School needs this as well.

Dr. Wagner responded no because it was renovated from 2006-2008 so it is not needed.

VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

OTHER ADMINISTRATION - DR. TURK / DR. EGNOR

Approval of Westmoreland Intermediate Unit Master Services Agreement for 2025-2026 school year (Attachment 4-6)

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mrs. Beveridge

VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Services Agreement with The Day School at The Children’s Institute for educational services for 2025-2026 school year with Extended School Year (ESY) 2026 (Attachment 4-7)

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Schager Seconded by: Mrs. Key
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Appointment of Michael A. Chapman, DDS as school dentist for 2025-2026 school year

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Schager Seconded by: Mrs. Key
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Appointment of Kultar Shergill, MD as school physician for 2025-2026 school year

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mr. Deiseroth
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Student Education Agreement with River Academy of Excellence for Special Education Services for 2024-2025 school year

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mrs. Beveridge
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

PERSONNEL: Approval of Personnel Log dated April 15, 2025 (Attached)

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mr. Deiseroth
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Northern Westmoreland Career & Technology Center Report - Mr. Kaczor/Mr. Vinkovich

Mr. Kaczor reported:

- Approved several policy revisions last month
- Approved audit from Hosack, Specht, Muetzel and Wood CPA
- Supplementary Equipment Grant received in amount \$147,259 to be used for Welding Class

Westmoreland Intermediate Unit Report - Mr. Deiseroth

Mr. Deiseroth reported that the meeting is next Tuesday and asked Mr. Rice to report.

Mr. Rice reported:

- School Safety Table Top exercise with Critical Response Group (CRG) so able to secure funding from state for our county. This will enable some tactical maps of High Schools of the county – including Burrell High School – to be put in place at no fee for Districts. He stated CRG uses military grade technology for this; Schools will control who gets the map and digital copy
- Expects new law to come into place that each school has accurate blue prints. This will provide an accurate map to comply with the law.

PSBA Liaison Report - Mrs. Schager

BUSINESS - MRS. CALLAHAN

Approval of budgetary transfers (Attachment 4-8)

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Schager Seconded by: Mrs. Key
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Contract with Graham Professional Sound & Video for Event Services at Commencement on June 5, 2025 (Attachment 4-9)

MOTION: Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth Seconded by: Mrs. Key
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Award bids for purchase of Athletic Supplies for 2025-2026 fiscal year (Attachment 4-10)

MOTION: Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth Seconded by: Mrs. Key
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Adoption of 2025-2026 Westmoreland Intermediate Unit General Operating Budget (Attachment 4-11)

Mrs. Callahan stated the General Operating Budget total budget is \$6,663,529 with District total contributions of \$290,000 of which Burrell School District's share is \$10,932. This is an increase of \$1,876 over prior year.

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mrs. Beveridge
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Contract with TimeClock Plus, LLC for TCP Software program and equipment services effective May 1, 2025

MOTION: Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth Seconded by: Mrs. Schager
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor except Mrs. Watson voted NO MOTION CARRIED

Approval of request to establish student activity account – 5K Wellness Run and Walk Club

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mrs. Beveridge
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Contract with High Quality Steel Structures for purchase and installation of storage buildings using Capital Reserve Fund

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mr. Deiseroth
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Communications

Requests for Use of Buildings (Attachment 4-12)

Mrs. Callahan presented the building use requests as prepared and recommended by Director of Athletics and Building Operations, Brian Ferra.

MOTION: Motion by: Mrs. Key Seconded by: Mr. Deiseroth
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Payment of Bills (Attachment 4-13)

MOTION: Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth Seconded by: Mrs. Schager
VOTE: Roll Call: All in Favor MOTION CARRIED

Additions to Agenda (Agenda Meeting only)

Comments from Public

Gary Sproul, taxpayer; graduate of Burrell; School Board member in Clarion County

- *Questions about budget: Taxes gone up 17 mills in last several years; unheard of in Western PA*
- *Paying \$400+ increase and as a retiree has less money each year; was a school teacher*
- *Asked his neighbors their thoughts about another tax increase and they think that is why a lot of people are moving out of the District*
- *Stated the district he is board member renovated a school and only raised 1 mill over last few years*
- *Asked about closing of Stewart and the saving of money there*
- *Asked if planning to reduce staff because do not need administration and support staff when moving grades to Bon Air and Middle School*
- *Believes District is overstaffed already; should not need extra custodian and another principal*
- *Believes taxpayers cannot afford another 4 mills*
- *Stated that District has highest taxes in county*
- *Suggested we will lose people from the District that will sell their house and move.*

Mr. Kaczor stated even though the tax millage is higher we are not the highest in the county.

Dr. Wagner summarized positions and reviewed the right sizing and eliminating of positions that have been done this year including: Administrative, Guidance Counselor, Librarian, Custodian, and Secretary.

Mrs. Callahan explained that approximately \$145,000 in savings from closing Stewart is budgeted but there will be additional savings once the building is sold.

Mrs. Callahan explained that she provided details on April 1 at the Budget meeting, but to summarize, even though our millage rate is the highest in the county, what you are not seeing is the value of each mill. Some districts generate several hundred thousand per mill while Burrell is only \$151,000 per mill. She also explained that our District has been decreasing in Assessed Value while nearly all or the other districts in the county have increased substantially. Our decrease in assessed value and lack of property development growth in our District is the single largest issue we face financially which results in required tax increases.

General discussion ensued about the tough position the District is in financially.

Gary Sproul, taxpayer; graduate of Burrell; School Board member in Clarion County

- Stated that there is a huge travel plaza and other developments within the district he serves.

Mrs. Callahan suggested that growth is why his district is likely able to keep taxes lower.

Mr. Kaczor stated someone else will buy the houses that people sell in our District.

Mrs. Schager stated the City of New Kensington is coming back and Burrell is going down. Leechburg Road has no new businesses and she is concerned about that. Hillcrest Plaza has a new owner so gets decrease in taxes and raises the rent. We are in a very difficult position.

Mrs. Watson stated it needs to be a community effort. People that are retired are in a different season of life and may not facilitate the energy that is needed in a community to generate growth. She mentioned the burden on taxpayers for PSERS increase. She was at a legislative meet & greet recently and she questioned leaders and what will it take for Pennsylvania. She believes things need to happen at a state level. Senator Joe Pittman stated we will be receiving income from the Data Center. She stated she thinks we need to do things at a state level and with a communal effort. We need to be attractive as a school district because people come here for the education. She also added that the legislators haven't really even talked about cyber charter reform. We are paying \$700,000 when we have an online program.

General discussion ensued about the area and lack of businesses.

Gary Sproul, taxpayer; graduate of Burrell; School Board member in Clarion County

- Asked if District has done assessment about student population over the next 10 years before adding onto a school since birth rates are diving

Mrs. Watson stated the addition that is base plan it is not to accommodate additional students just to accommodate the cafeteria.

Dr. Wagner stated yes, all of the birth rates and student related data has been reviewed and considered in the recommended plans.

Mrs. Watson stated the school district can only do so much. We need to work together with the City of Lower Burrell.

Gary Sproul, taxpayer; graduate of Burrell; School Board member in Clarion County

- Summarized his concern about how the millage increases each year
- Stated his brother lives here and works at Belair;
- Wished Board members and Administration well and expressed acknowledgement that it is tough

Adjournment at 8:24 PM

MOTION:

Motion by: Mr. Deiseroth

Seconded by: Mrs. Key

VOTE:

Roll Call: All in Favor

MOTION CARRIED



Jennifer S. Callahan
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

JSC/mls