

PALMERTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Palmerton, PA

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

An executive session was held after the workshop on Tuesday, February 7, 2025, concerning personnel matters.

The regular board meeting of the Palmerton Area School District Board of School Directors was held in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 680 Fourth Street, Palmerton, PA, on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, and called to order at 5:30 p.m. President Earl Paules presided. The meeting was viewable via livestream on the district’s Facebook page.

Pledge of Allegiance

ROLL CALL

Present: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Krawchuk, Mazepa, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder

OTHER ATTENDANCE

Angela Friebolin – Superintendent, Ryan Kish – Business Manager, Jacqueline McCandless – Board Secretary, and Shawn Lochinger– Solicitor

STUDENT REPORT:

Elementary – select students were recognized for their leadership skills in the Leader in Me program with a certificate signed by the Superintendent and Board President: Madeline Olewnik, Liah Behler, Mary Carlson, Shawn Gower, Luca Tobia, Ava Riggio, and Makayleigh Bennett at Towamensing Elementary; Eliana Smith, Violet Musselman, Isaac Landsman, Justin Mandes, Jessa Smith, Lilly Nenscel, and Sean Goodbred at S. S. Palmer/Parkside Elementary.

Junior High School – Isabella Stroup, grade 8

- Mrs. Owens’ class – in January, won Times News contest “Write On” for best winter poem writing prompts
- Band & Chorus – Music in Our Schools Month concert will be held March 10
- PMEA Intermediate BandFest – two band students attended, held on January 24
- Boys’ Basketball – finished with record 8-6-1
- Girls’ Wrestling – combined record of 80-74; final competition was on February 16
- ACE Team – continue to meet and practice for early March competition
- Digital News team – streamed their second broadcast about junior high happenings
- After-school escape room – interest is high with many more students compared to last year
- Peer tutoring/homework helpers – hosted once a week by teachers Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Hoffman for 8th grade students
- NJHS – first dance was held February 14

High School – Ella Baumgardt, grade 12

- Art – Addison Horn, grade 10, received an award through Healing Through the Arts for her painting which is on display at Lehigh University through March
- Mock Trial –district competition on February 25 & 26 at the Monroe County Courthouse
- FBLA – last week celebrated National FBLA week; 67 state qualifiers continue to fundraise for their upcoming competition
- Environmental Science Academic classes – various guest speakers in school during February
- Sophomore class – currently fundraising for the prom
- Boys’ Wrestling – competed in district dual tournament on February 1, fell in the semi-finals; finished season 11-4; varsity will compete in individual district tournament on Feb. 21 & 22
- Girls’ Wrestling – Calleigh Pastier, placed 3rd; Alex Silfies, Sofia Amorim, Ayva Rodrigues, and Nicole Jennings placed 2nd; and Nickayla Tomsic was district champion; team awards: 2nd overall, AA district champs

- PAAC – completed service work on January 10 at Blue Mountain Animal Rescue
- Intro. to CAD class – personal hovercraft engineering project started; challenging students in research, design, building, and testing of hovercraft; funded by Raising the House organization
- STEM mini-grant – Ms. Allen, shop teacher, recently chosen as a recipient of the Hess Corp./Baylor College of Medicine STEM outreach program; received learning kits and curriculum to bring math, science, and engineering into the classroom
- Music – Zane Himmelwright, grade 12, and Ellie Apollo, grade 11, earned spots in district festivals this year; Ellie placed second in band, playing tenor sax, and Zane was part of the bass 2's
- Music In Our Schools Month – March concert coming together; all ensembles including jazz band will be performing

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

- Provided a letter of reference to Josh Merkel, grade 12, for the PA Trust scholarship
- Herren Talks presentation for junior and high school students postponed due to weather; rescheduled for March 25
- Congratulations to Mr. Josh Rake for becoming the District XI junior high girls wrestling coach of the year
- High school girls' basketball qualified for district playoffs to be held this Saturday

BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT:

- Gov. Shapiro proposed the 2025-2026 state budget recently; includes less than 1% increase in basic education subsidy and 2.7% increase in special education subsidy; proposal holds the line on personal income and sales tax rates, the state's two largest sources of income, and instead uses about \$4.5B in reserve cash to balance; second straight year of multibillion-dollar deficits translating to a \$100k increase in basic education subsidy, and a \$53k increase in special education subsidy; could see our Ready to Learn block grant increase by \$300k; hopefully we receive official figures before the June voting meeting
- Monitoring the status of federal department of education and how they impact our district subsidies; \$500k is estimated to be received by the district from the federal government next budget year, or 1.3% of our total budget; most of our budget is paid with local and state taxes
- Parking lot paving project at S. S. Palmer Elementary moving forward; notices are being advertised; bids are due March 10; all work is to commence after the close of the school year and all work shall be completed this July 31; bid available for viewing on district website

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:

- Director Danielle Paules – PSBA: state budget video viewable online until Friday; proposing charter school funding to decrease to \$8k per student per year plus a tiered formula for special education, overall savings to districts could be \$378m per year; want to pass infrastructure grant; advocacy day to support state budget at state capitol on May 13

OLD BUSINESS:

- RLPS Architects – feasibility study summary:* Chris Linkey and Mike Savage presented the final feasibility study report to the Board. Enrollment will remain relatively flat over the next 10 years; elementary enrollment exceeds functional capacities of existing facilities and faculty needs are increasing especially with growing special education requirements; options reviewed showing cost-comparison plans; staff and community feedback from town hall meetings evaluated; gave overview of geography and population and our educational program, projected enrollment analysis, building capacity, building condition, and construction options; drawings provided of possible grade realignment and building additions.
- District construction projects options discussion* – lengthy discussion held on options for future construction. Director Earl Paules reported KCBA Architects will match the cost of the feasibility study done by RLPS Architects (~\$18k) to be used as a credit on future construction projects. Mr. Faenza contacted KCBA Architects for a second look at possible

construction plans because of previous work they did at the junior high school.

Discussions included options that do not include realignment, such as building an addition to the JH/HS campus and housing 6th grade students there, how to create safety and more space at the elementary level without overtaxing the residents, constructing a new district administration building to do so, involving more stakeholders in the decision-making process, being able to accommodate all learning styles, focusing more on educational needs of students, and trying to come to a consensus on moving forward. Mr. Paules reminded the Board that all plans for any construction are always approved by the Board.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- Pinar Angun – thank you for hearing the community and taking action to solve issues; questioned if realignment is still being considered and what other renovations need to be made
- Lynn Passerini – asked when the Board meets for discussions; should meet with staff and administration to make informed decisions; looking to understand how equity pertains to the elementary schools
- Lori Nemeth – questioned consent agenda motion for refund as credit next year on a settlement agreement; asked about cell phone tower rental income and what money is being used for
- Mary Farquhar – if enrollment is flat, why are we running out of room; new buildings don’t equal better education; decisions do affect taxpayers
- Ryan Smith – questioned if there is a cost to keep the construction projects pushing forward; need to create better spaces for staff and students; agrees with building new district office and moving 6th grade; security is an issue at all buildings; focus on students

MEETING MINUTES

Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to the board meeting minutes from January 7, 2025 and January 21, 2025.

Aye Votes: All Directors Present.
Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Mazepa, to approve the consent agenda.

Aye Votes: All Directors Present.
Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA:

FISCAL REPORTS

- Approved accounts payable reports
- Approved treasurer’s reports
- Approved budget transfers

TAX COLLECTOR EXONERATION

Approved to exonerate the following current tax collectors from the collection of the 2024-2025 school year delinquent per capita taxes effective January 1, 2025:

Bowmanstown Borough	Maria Smith	\$ 1,840.00
Lower Towamensing Township	Maxine Scherer	\$ 6,450.00
Palmerton Borough	Raquel Lutton	\$13,900.00
Towamensing Township	Susan Marques	\$ 7,200.00

PER CAPITA EXONERATION

Approved the per capita tax exoneration list

DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR	Appointed Berkheimer Associates, Bangor, PA, as the delinquent tax collector of the 2024-2025 school year per capita taxes effective January 1, 2025. There is no fee assessed to the district for this service; the fees are assessed to the taxpayer.																		
REFUND CREDIT-SETTLEMENT	Approved retroactively the refund, granted as a result of the approved settlement agreement on Parcel ID 27-57-B4.01A, effective July 1, 2024, on Docket No. 2023-2445, Forest Inn Property, LLC v. Carbon Co. BOAA et al, to be granted as a credit for the 2025-2026 school year																		
GASB 75	Approved the agreement with the Pennsylvania Trust to contract with Conrad Siegel for the bi-annual required GASB 75 services to perform an actuarial valuation for the district at an estimated cost of \$5,975.00																		
THEATRE WORLD	Approved the lease/rental agreement with Theatre World Backdrops for the backdrop rental package for the High School Drama Activity Club in the amount of \$973.29																		
DONATION	Approved the donation from Beltzville Beverage in the amount of \$165.00 for Towamensing Elementary School																		
IA's-PT CUSTODIAN	Approved the following effective February 19, 2025: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Jamie Bass</td> <td>Instructional Assistant</td> <td>\$18.28 per hour</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Erika Katona</td> <td>Instructional Assistant</td> <td>\$18.28 per hour</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tina Gebhard</td> <td>Part-time Custodian</td> <td>\$15.69 per hour</td> </tr> </table>	Jamie Bass	Instructional Assistant	\$18.28 per hour	Erika Katona	Instructional Assistant	\$18.28 per hour	Tina Gebhard	Part-time Custodian	\$15.69 per hour									
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HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT	Acknowledged the following horizontal movement effective the second semester of the 2024-2025 school year: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Tanya Hess</td> <td>Master's +15 to Master's +30</td> </tr> </table>	Tanya Hess	Master's +15 to Master's +30																
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RESCIND FMLA	Rescinded the previously approved Family & Medical Leave for the following: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Employee #8438</td> <td>Effective from January 28, 2025 through approximately April 28, 2025</td> </tr> </table>	Employee #8438	Effective from January 28, 2025 through approximately April 28, 2025																
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FMLA	Approved the following for Family & Medical Leave: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Employee #279</td> <td>Effective from approximately April 26, 2025 through June 11, 2025</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Employee #8438</td> <td>Effective from February 28, 2025 through approximately May 23, 2025</td> </tr> </table>	Employee #279	Effective from approximately April 26, 2025 through June 11, 2025	Employee #8438	Effective from February 28, 2025 through approximately May 23, 2025														
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UNCOMPENSATED LEAVE	Approved retroactively the following uncompensated leave request: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Employee #609</td> <td>Effective January 21, 2025 through February 28, 2025</td> </tr> </table>	Employee #609	Effective January 21, 2025 through February 28, 2025																
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SPRING EVENT WORKERS	Approved the following as Spring Event Workers at a rate of \$30.00 per event effective February 19, 2025: <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Pamela Andrews</td> <td>Vicki McHugh</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jeana Baumgardt</td> <td>Christine Owens</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Craig Borland</td> <td>Andrew Remsing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jessica Cohen</td> <td>Christine Rodrigues</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Julia Dougherty</td> <td>Darris Rodrigues</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darlene Dugan</td> <td>Kimberly Seiler</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Robert Falkenstein</td> <td>Thomas Smelas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Travis Fink</td> <td>Brian Stevko</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kelly Heinrich</td> <td>Denise Strohl</td> </tr> </table>	Pamela Andrews	Vicki McHugh	Jeana Baumgardt	Christine Owens	Craig Borland	Andrew Remsing	Jessica Cohen	Christine Rodrigues	Julia Dougherty	Darris Rodrigues	Darlene Dugan	Kimberly Seiler	Robert Falkenstein	Thomas Smelas	Travis Fink	Brian Stevko	Kelly Heinrich	Denise Strohl
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	Michael J. Horvath	Kevin Wertz	
	John Hrebik		
RESIGNATIONS	Accepted the following resignations:		
	Janelle Taylor	Instructional Assistant	Effective January 22, 2025
	Jamie Bass	Food Service Worker	Effective February 4, 2025
SUBS	Approved the following substitutes effective February 19, 2025:		
	Stephanie Miller	Substitute Teacher	\$135.00 daily rate
	Kevin Snyder	Substitute Custodian	\$13.00 per hour
SUB LIST REMOVALS	Removed the following from the current substitute lists:		
	Benjamin Wysocki	Substitute Teacher	Effective January 28, 2025
	Marybeth Altemus	Substitute Food Service Worker and Substitute Secretary	Effective January 27, 2025
	Erika Katona	Substitute Instructional Assistant	Effective February 19, 2025
RETIREMENT AMENDED	Amended the retirement date for Timothy Kleintop, health room technician, with a revised effective date of January 30, 2025		
TUITION REIMBURSEMENT	Approved tuition reimbursements		
HS PROGRAM OF STUDIES	Approved the 2025-2026 High School Program of Studies		
SAFEWAY DRIVING SCHOOL	Approved the agreement with The Safeway Driving School, Inc. for July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026		
PROCARE THERAPY AGREEMENTS	Approved the client services agreement with ProCare Therapy effective February 19, 2025 through June 30, 2026		
	Approved the client assignment confirmation with ProCare Therapy effective February 24, 2025 through June 10, 2025		
FINALSITE	Approved the agreement with Finalsight for the district website construction at an initial set up cost of \$6,500.00 effective February 19, 2025		
CONFERENCES	Approved the following conference:		
	Angela Friebolin	PASA Women’s Caucus Annual Conference, Hershey	May 18, 2025 through May 20, 2025 Estimated cost of \$1,110.52
	Jamie Schuler	PDE Data Summit, Hershey	March 24, 2025 through March 26, 2025 Estimated cost of \$1,199.00
1ST READINGS 216-218.1-222-235.1-254	Approved the first reading of the following policies:		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Policy #216 Student Records 2) Policy #218.1 Weapons 3) Policy #222 Tobacco & Vaping Products 4) Policy #235.1 Surveys 5) Policy #254 Educational Opportunity for Military Children 		

CHANGE ORDER- JBM MECH.- PALMER RENO	<p>END OF CONSENT AGENDA</p> <p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director King, to approve Change Order Number 1, JBM Mechanical, Inc. The contract sum will be increased by this change order in the amount of \$3,399.38.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
KCBA-HS FRONT ENTRANCE SECURITY	<p>Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Connell, to authorize KCBA Architects to review the design at no cost to the district for the security project of the existing front entrance of the high school.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Krawchuk, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Director Mazepa. Motion Carried.</p>
KCBA-DISTRICT OFFICE	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Schaible, to authorize KCBA Architects to proceed with the building design and bid package for the district administration office addition project.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Krawchuk, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Director Mazepa. Motion Carried.</p>
KCE-DISTRICT OFFICE	<p>Director King moved, seconded by Director Schaible, to authorize Keystone Consulting Engineers to proceed with the planning, bid document preparation, and fee schedule for the district administration office addition project.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Connell, King, Krawchuk, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Haas and Mazepa. Motion Carried.</p>
KCBA-JH/HS ADDITION (failed)	<p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to authorize KCBA Architects to proceed with the building design and bid package for the building addition to the high school/junior high school.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Danielle Paules and Earl Paules. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Krawchuk, Mazepa, Schaible, and Snyder. Motion Failed.</p>
HS ASST. PRINCIPAL/ ATHLETIC COORDINATOR	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director King, to approve Justin Petersen as High School Assistant Principal/Athletic Coordinator, as a Group One employee per the Act 93 Memorandum of Understanding, at an annual salary of \$92,000 prorated effective upon release from his current position.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Krawchuk, Mazepa, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Director Danielle Paules. Motion Carried.</p>
CLIU #21 BOARD- YR. TERM	<p>Director Mazepa moved, seconded by Director Connell, to approve the nomination of Director Sherry Haas to the Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit #21 Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2028.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
<p>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	

ADJOURNMENT	<p>FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Friebolin congratulated Mr. Justin Petersen on his new position as Assistant Principal/ Athletic Coordinator; start date to be determined; spoke about his accomplishments and background • Mr. Petersen thanked everyone for their support and the opportunity to be in the position, will offer his best to the district • Director Earl Paules stated there will be four school director seats available this election year and encouraged everyone to vote; offered to donate money to non-athletic clubs; stated if he did not receive 3,000 votes then he would resign from the Board • Director Mazepa would like the LCCC report brought back to board member reports section of the regular board meeting; would be happy to provide this monthly report • Director Earl Paules announced there will be an executive session immediately after this meeting for personnel matters <p>Director Haas moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 p.m.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,</p> <p>Jacqueline McCandless Board Secretary</p>
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