

**PALMERTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Palmerton, PA

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

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, January 21, 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 (arrived late at 5:58 p.m.-present for all voting items), 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: Olivia Bruce, Nathan Hamrick, Dalton Creyer, Willow Conway, Rosalie Carlson, Juliet Krebs, and Abigail Marques at Towamensing Elementary; Morgan Strohl, Evan Goodbred, Skyla Saas, Mia Pereira, Ezra Haas, Mary Farrell, and Elaina Lucykanish for November; Sullivan Glose, Ashley Billingsby, Victor Pelaez, Emalee Horn, Maddox Goss, Aria Briele, Makayla Allen, and Jacob Collins for December at S. S. Palmer Elementary. Also honored were Silas Nieves and Isabel Palazzo who were absent from November’s recognition meeting.

Junior High School – Leah Hofmann, grade 8

- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math – decorated tree with ornaments created using the exterior angles of polygons
- Sponsored a Christmas tree in the borough park; decorated by Mrs. Owens’ class
- Mrs. Smith’s students submitted entries for the “Hardest Math Problem” contest through the Institute of Competition Sciences for a chance to win contributions to a 529 savings plan; sang carols to all classes before the Christmas break
- NJHS – inducted 22 eighth grade students this year
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies – participated in class project that involved launching a marketing campaign; created various advertisements across different media for Spartan Military Camp
- Boys’ Basketball –has 8-3 record; continue to work daily on crucial skills of team sports
- Digital New Club – working on their second newscast of the year
- Band & Chorus – performed at the winter concert on December 11; both groups performed selections at the elementary buildings on December 9; now preparing for the spring concert; two members were selected for the PMEA District 10 Intermediate BandFest being held January 24 and for the SongFest which will be held on March 27
- Wrestling – boys’ wrestler, Steel Zalik, placed in top 3 at multiple tournaments this season; other standout boys are Landon Eckhart, Connor Walterick, and Matthew Bechtold; girls’ wrestling having success with dual competitions; captains are Nickayla Tomsic and Makenna Ringler; other standout girls are Ayva Rodrigues, Calliegh Pastier, and Sofia Amorim

High School – Josh Merkel, grade 12

- Poetry Out Loud – Maddie Rakos, junior, won the building competition; will compete at regional competition at ArtsQuest in Bethlehem on January 29
- Scholastic Scrimmage – lost in the quarterfinals of the Channel 39 PBS tournament in December; Levi Strohl, grade 12, qualified to play in the all-star match on January 8
- PYEA – members gaining valuable experience by developing classroom observations; some students teaching lessons or small group instruction

- NHS – finished the first season of Lunch Buddies in December; created Santa letters for Charley Brown Nursery School and S. S. Palmer PTO; will begin tutoring program after school with S. S. Palmer
- Mrs. Baumgardt’s Geometry Class – held an activity involving determining volumes of items; also held a “Shark Tank” activity
- Athletics – *Girls’ basketball*: both teams having great years, varsity has a record of 14-3; Mikayla Pengelly was named BRCTV13 Athlete of the Week in December, and Courtney Connell was named to the Pocono Mountain West Holiday All-Tournament team; senior night held last night, two seniors recognized  
*Boys’ basketball*: showing progress throughout this year; Corey Serfass, grade 12, was nominated as the Morning Call Athlete of the Week in December  
*Girls’ wrestling*: interest is growing from last year; Cassidy Merkel and Skylar Benninger lead the team in wins; hosted the Bombers Brawl Tournament on January 4 with Jade Kuhns placing fourth, Paige Kibbler and Skylar Benninger placed third, Lea Schaible and Molly Reis, second, and Cassidy Merkel, took first place  
*Boys’ wrestling*: took 2<sup>nd</sup> as a team at the Case Flynn Duals in Pottsville; place fourth at Carlisle with seven individual placewinners; placed third in the Bill Scott Memorial Tournament in Orlando with eight individual placewinners; second place at the Gov. Mifflin Holiday Tournament; two placewinners at the Colonial League tournament; overall team record is 10-2; Derek King is close to attaining his 100<sup>th</sup> win; Dillon Lombardi won LVHN student-athlete

#### **SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT:**

- Noted word changes to consent agenda, Personnel #2, Letter H, two positions should be “substitute secretary”
- January is School Director Recognition Month; thank you to our Board for devoting time to school governance; luncheon planned at CCTI on February 6
- Substitute teaching and support staff rate increases will be effective January 26; a tiered system of pay for teacher substitutes; support staff substitutes raised to \$13.00 per hour
- Working on creation of a Dean of Students position to assist Mr. Andrews in his operation of S. S. Palmer/Parkside; will post this temporary position soon; open to teaching staff who wish to try out a leadership position; once filled, we will look to backfill that open position with a salaried substitute

#### **BUSINESS MANAGER’S REPORT:**

- After two consecutive years of decreases, our PSERS rate will increase to 34%, up from 33.9%; only a slight increase, but it will have a budgetary impact; more on this at our March workshop
- At our February workshop, we will have PFM Financial Advisors here to discuss financing for the potential new construction projects. At our recent town hall, a brief update was given based on borrowing in \$5m increments but the real numbers will come from PFM next month; PFM will base their presentation off of the KCBA presentation
- On the consent agenda tonight is a transfer of \$250k to the capital reserve fund; this will be to pay the remaining construction invoices for S. S. Palmer and the weight room and for our upcoming paving project at S. S. Palmer since we are starting to be invoiced for engineering costs already

#### **BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:**

- Director Krawchuk – CCTI: finishing up the 5<sup>th</sup> grade visits in area schools, will be visiting 6<sup>th</sup> grades in the future; approached Jim Thorpe borough on an issue with pipes and running water which was partly on borough land to help defray the cost to fix this, now they only have to pay \$20k and the borough will pay the rest; alot of spring competitions coming up; eSports Club finished sixth nationwide
- Director Danielle Paules – PSBA: celebrating 130 years in existence; partnering with “TeachRock”, an educators’ workshop, to provide professional development on February 25; deadline for scholarships mentioned prior is March 14
- Director Haas – *Library*: more information to come in the new year

	<p><i>CLIU</i>: video posted on website on the gifting of specially-adaptive bikes or strollers to students; thanks to everyone who purchased basket raffle tickets, surpassed last year’s goal</p> <p><b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING MINUTES</b>	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Mazepa, to approve the board meeting minutes from November 19, 2024, December 3, 2024 (reorganization meeting), and December 3, 2024 (regular meeting).</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
<b>CONSENT AGENDA ITEM REMOVAL</b>	<p>Director Krawchuk moved, seconded by Director Haas, to remove from the consent agenda, Item #3 Other, Letter G, Liberty University agreement, and place as a main agenda voting item.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
<b>CONSENT AGENDA w/ABSTENTIONS</b>	<p>Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Connell, to approve the revised consent agenda without Item #3, Other, Letter G, Liberty University agreement.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present with the exception of an abstention from Director King for consent agenda, Item #2 Personnel, Letter A, hiring of Ryan King, and an abstention from Director Krawchuk for consent agenda, Item #2 Personnel, Letter H, Sally Krawchuk line only, due to conflicts of interest. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
<b>FISCAL REPORTS</b>	<p><b>CONSENT AGENDA:</b></p> <p>Approved accounts payable reports</p> <p>Approved treasurer’s reports</p> <p>Approved budget transfers</p>
<b>CAPITAL RESERVE TRANSFER</b>	<p>Approved retroactively the transfer to the capital reserve fund from the general fund in the amount of \$250,000.00</p>
<b>TAX COLLECTOR COMPENSATION</b>	<p>Approved the Tax Collector Compensation Resolution</p>
<b>SETTLEMENTS- FOREST INN</b>	<p>Accepted the settlement of \$6,400,000 Market Value 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.</p> <p>Accepted the settlement of \$6,400,000 Market Value on Parcel ID 27-57-B4.01A, effective July 1, 2025, on Docket No. 2023-2445, Forest Inn Property, LLC v. Carbon Co. BOAA et al.</p>
<b>HERSHEY CATERING AGREEMENT</b>	<p>Approved the agreement with Hershey Park Groups for the group picnic catering reservation agreement for the district’s FBLA club. The cost of the agreement will be covered by FBLA student fees and fundraising</p>
<b>HS LIFE SKILLS</b>	<p>Approved Ryan King as High School Life Skills Teacher at Bachelor’s, Step 1, at an annual salary of \$49,722 prorated effective January 22, 2025</p>
<b>HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT</b>	<p>Acknowledged the following horizontal movement effective the second semester of the 2024-2025 school year:</p>

Isabelle Beedle	From Bachelor’s to Bachelor’s +24
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**FMLA** Approved the following for Family & Medical Leave:

Employee #8438	Effective from January 28, 2025 through approximately April 28, 2025
Employee #538	Effective from approximately May 19, 2025 through June 11, 2025
Employee #529	Effective intermittently from January 22, 2025 through June 30, 2025

**UNCOMPENSATED LEAVE** Approved the following uncompensated leave request:

Employee #531	Effective February 14, 2025
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**RETIREMENTS** Accepted the following retirements:

Robert Falkenstein	Teacher-High School	Effective at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year
Timothy Kleintop	Health Room Technician-Towamensing	Effective at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year
Ann Therese Plocinik	Building Secretary-Towamensing	Effective June 2, 2025

**SUB/GUEST TEACHER** Approved the following at the prevailing Board-approved rates effective January 22, 2025:

Rachel DeMicco	Substitute Teacher
Paige Mathieu	Guest Teacher

**PAMPA CHAPERONE** Approved Marlena Stroup as Palmerton Area Music Parents’ Association (PAMPA) Volunteer Chaperone for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year effective January 22, 2025

**SUB REMOVALS** Removed the following from the current substitute lists effective January 22, 2025:

Michael Adams	Substitute Teacher
Katherine Wysocki	Substitute Teacher
Sally Krawchuk	Substitute Secretary
Diane Smelas	Substitute Secretary

**REVISED SUB RATES OF PAY** Approved the revised district substitute rates for the teachers and support staff effective January 26, 2025

**TUITION REIMBURSEMENT** Approved tuition reimbursements

**SETTLEMENT/ RELEASE** Approved retroactively the settlement agreement and release for student #24134 effective December 20, 2024

**FIELD TRIPS** Approved the following field trip requests:

Video/Newspaper/ Yearbook Clubs-HS	PA School Press Association state competition at Penn State University, State College, PA	March 31, 2025 through April 2, 2025
FBLA-HS	State Leadership Conference/Competition Hershey, PA	April 6, 2025 through April 9, 2025
Chorus-HS	District Chorus Festival, Elverson, PA	February 6, 2025 through February 7, 2025

	Band-HS	District Band Festival, Catasauqua HS	January 23, 2025 through January 25, 2025
<b>CONFERENCE</b>	Approved the following conference:		
	Ryan Kish	PASBO Annual Conference, Hershey	March 12, 2025 through March 14, 2025 Estimated cost of \$1,634.98
<b>SOLIANT HEALTH AGREEMENTS</b>	Approved the client services agreement with Soliant Health, LLC, from January 22, 2025 through January 21, 2026		
	Approved the client assignment confirmation with Soliant Health, LLC, from January 22, 2025 through June 11, 2025		
	Approved the client confirmation for per diem substitutes with Soliant Health, LLC, from January 22, 2025 through January 21, 2026		
	<b>END OF CONSENT AGENDA</b>		
<b>LIBERTY UNIVERSITY</b>	Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director King, to approve the affiliation agreement with Liberty University, Inc.  Aye Votes: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Krawchuk and Mazepa. Abstention: Director Schaible. Motion Carried.		
<b>CLIU #21 BUDGET 2025-2026</b>	Director Haas moved, seconded by Director King, to approve the 2025-2026 General Operating Budget of the Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit #21 for the fiscal year July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.  Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.		
<b>LCCC BUDGET 2025-2026</b>	Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to approve the Lehigh Carbon Community College Operating Budget, Debt Service/Leases, and Capital Budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026.  Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.		
<b>TAX APPEAL DENIED</b>	Director Haas moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to deny the real estate tax appeal for parcel 6-57-A1.  Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.		
<b>ACT 93 MOU 2025-2029</b>	Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director King, to approve the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Administrative Compensation Pursuant to Act 93 effective July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2029.  Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.		
	<p><b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Farquhar – had a hard time finding feedback survey about recent town hall meeting on district website, asked for copy of those results; questioned the need of so many single-use</li> </ul>		

classrooms; asked why we should take on extra debt for projects if enrollment is not increasing; concerned about tax increase to the community

- Clare Papay – not enough time allowed to participate in recent town hall survey; moving 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the junior high school will lessen leadership opportunities for students; concerned about influence of being with older students; focus groups or another survey would be valuable; concerned about equity between elementary schools; make repairs to S. S. Palmer building ; include families in this process before any final decisions are made
- Lisa Fatzinger – frustrated by varsity cheer coaches lack of leadership; cheerleaders are mostly unseen at wrestling matches; consider not hiring current coaches back for next season
- Hailey Jennings – 2024 graduate, frustrated as a student with last year’s cheer coaches; rules and procedures were not followed; expressed overall displeasure in participating with the team
- Lynn Passerini – concerned with increased grade sizes and potential detriment to students in regard to participation in extracurricular activities; hire more staff by using money to improve the situation instead of spending more on transportation costs; listen to community input
- Julie Rambo – provide a solution to fix S. S. Palmer without dividing students

**FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

- Mrs. Friebolin congratulated Ryan King, new High School Life Skills Teacher, as the newest member of our team
- Mrs. Paula Husar spoke in honor of Mr. Bob Falkenstein, High School English teacher for 27 years, on his upcoming retirement at the end of this school year; stated he is a true professional and extremely dedicated, among many other attributes; thanked him for everything he has done for the district and wished him health and happiness
- Director Danielle Paules read a statement from a community member about Mr. Falkenstein’s focus and drive as a teacher, his exceptional support of students, and community involvement

**ADJOURNMENT**

Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline McCandless  
Board Secretary