

PALMERTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Palmerton, PA

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

<p>ROLL CALL</p>	<p>The regular board meeting of the Palmerton Area School District Board of School Directors was held in the High School Library, 3525 Fireline Road, Palmerton, PA, on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, and called to order at 5:31 p.m. President Haas presided. The meeting was viewable via livestream.</p> <p>Pledge of Allegiance</p> <p>Present: Directors Connell, Haas, King, Krawchuk-Boschen (arrived at 5:41 p.m.), Mazepa, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules and Snyder</p>
<p>OTHER ATTENDANCE</p>	<p>Angela Friebolin – Superintendent, Ryan Kish – Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Facilities, Daniel Heaney – Assistant Superintendent for Academic Programs and Technology, Jacqueline McCandless – Board Secretary, and David Conn – Solicitor</p> <p>STUDENT REPORTS:</p> <p><u>Elementary</u> – select students were recognized for their leadership skills in the Leader in Me program with a certificate signed by the Superintendent and Principal: Emersyn Hoster, Mikayla Diaz, Liah Behler, Jasmine Rankin, Cecelia Williams, Wyatt Fox, Maci Binder, Paige Hewko, Ellianna Moyer, Joslyn Krebs, Nathan Hamrick, Rodger Robinson, Gunner Sturdik, Hailey Glass, Julianna Getz, and Matthew May at Towamensing Elementary for November and December 2025; Catherine Farrell, Liam Lucykanish, Silas Nieves, Lukas Bartholomew, Isabel Palazzo, Ezra Haas, Joel Ciminieri, Kennedy Cseh, Sullivan Glose, Ashley Billingsby, Rhylie Izarek, Harper Abel, Evelyn Pelaez, Jaxxon Hartman, and Rayne Vazquez at S. S. Palmer/Parkside Elementary for November and December 2025.</p> <p><u>Junior High School</u> – Sophia Commesser, grade 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• STEM – partnered with 8th grade math teachers to bring STEM activities into the math classrooms; STEM teacher developed hands-on learning experiences that connected directly to math concepts currently being studied; students explored real-world applications and deepened their understanding through creative problem solving• Mrs. Smith’s math classes – wrote their own math-themed Christmas carols and spread cheer and shared their carols for all to hear on December 17• Band and Chorus – students participated in annual holiday concert on December 18th and put on incredible performance; now working on selecting and preparing pieces for spring concerts• Girls’ wrestling – had a fantastic start to the season; leaders include Avya Rodrigues and Baylor Bartholomew, who have a number of medals from various tournaments this season; team has only one loss this season so far• Boys’ basketball team – 9-2 record so far; will carry momentum forward and finish strong• Dodgeball tournament – held on December 19; admission required teams to donate hygiene items to benefit families in Palmerton through St. John's Towamensing Lutheran Church <p><u>High School</u> – Mikayla Maxwell, grade 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FBLA – 65 of 82 members qualified for state competition in Hershey; estimated cost of trip is \$630 per student; fundraising opportunities through Capriotti’s and, hoagie and donut sales to help defray costs. At conference held on December 17, Nathan Marlatt was elected Region 21 Treasurer; sponsoring donation drive for Family Promise of Carbon County by collecting hygiene supplies, blankets, gift cards, and food items• NHS – students wrote Santa letters for students at S.S. Palmer and Charley Brown Nursery; currently exploring volunteer opportunities, such as the Carbon County Special Olympics; seniors have begun planning their field trip• Scholastic Scrimmage – hosting Carbon County Academic Bowl on March 6; information and invitations will be sent out soon; preparing for county event and IU competition in late March

- PYEA – students completed first semester working with mentor teachers and gained valuable in-class experience; will either continue developing in current placements or transition to new classrooms with different mentor teachers to broaden their experience
- Music – thank you to administration for supporting the winter concert production; music continues to thrive at PASD; Bella Stroup qualified for All-District Band on bass clarinet; County Chorus Festival at Palmerton on February 25–26; jazz band will attend Delaware Valley Jazz Festival on May 2; students selected for Carbon County Band held at Panther Valley HS on March 10-12 are: Ruth Hook, Willow Brown, Jacob Shafer, Isabella Stroup, Eniessa Groller, Ellie Apollo, Alexander Beblavy, Caleb Heist, Gabrielle Miller, Lillie Brown, Lucas Miller, and Emily Dorward
- Elementary District Band event was held on January 9; guest conductor, Scott Watson, a prominent elementary band composer, worked with students
- Music in Our Schools Month – concert rescheduled for March 16 during the school day and live-streamed for friends and family
- Guidance – 9th grade students were offered opportunities to tour, shadow, and apply to CCTI for admission next year; shadow day is expected to be organized in February with submitted CCTI applications to follow; course requests and scheduling for next year will begin soon, with the approval of the high school Program of Studies in February; grades will be finalized at end of this week
- Winter sports – winding down with only a few contests remaining; wrestling teams honored their seniors on January 7; girls' basketball team will celebrate senior night January 23 while boys' senior night is January 29; girls' wrestling team posted an undefeated regular season to date and will have the opportunity to win the title; girls' basketball team secured both league and district playoff berths
- Drama Club - auditions for *Legally Blonde* will be held January 26–28

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

- January is School Director Recognition Month; thank you to our Board for their service
- Looking forward to Mrs. Marlena Stroup starting on January 29 as principal of Parkside/S.S. Palmer; huge thank you to Mr. Rich DeSocio for his work as interim principal
- Thank you to Mrs. Audrey Larvey for meeting regarding LCCC updates to be given to the Board
- Congratulations to Darlene Smale on her upcoming retirement from her Instructional Assistant position; employed since 1991
- Mr. Dave Sodl spoke about proposing an Environmental Club at the junior high level
- Mrs. Paula Husar recognized Kelly Heinrich, guidance secretary, who will retire soon with 25 years in the district; wished her the best in retirement

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS' REPORTS:

- *Dr. Heaney* – Hiring: first grade teacher hiring is complete, will be on February agenda; high school Special Education teacher and Elementary Long-Term Substitute interviews this week; coaching positions close on Friday. Safety: conducted required quarterly School Safety and Security meeting; will solicit input from staff with an online survey on safety training needs
- *Mr. Kish* – recommended passing the resolution stating we will not raise taxes over the adjusted Act 1 index as set by the state at 4.7%; recognized a \$5,000 personal donation from Jennifer and Steven Mertz to the Palmerton music program; budget preparation is underway, awaiting a few items from external sources to finalize preliminary budget presentation, notably medical rates and updated assessment numbers; PSERS rates for 2026-27 will be 33.59%, down slightly from 34%; preliminary look at budget at March workshop, more comprehensive presentation at May workshop

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:

- Director Krawchuk-Boschen – *CCTI*: read Skills USA district competition results for Palmerton students who will go on to compete at the state level; new Science teacher; interim principal is Mr. Lesisko; principal interviews begin tomorrow

- Director Danielle Paules – *PSBA*: Gov. Shapiro will propose the 2026-27 state budget on February 3, following that, PSBA will provide coverage of the budget and stakeholder comments; webinar on February 6 that dives into greater details
- Director Haas – *CLIU*: special adaptive toys for students with limitations made in conjunction with LCTI to be shown next week. *Library*: seed library for spring; writers’ group twice a month; yoga; winter festival and character meet on January 25

OLD BUSINESS:

Director Earl Paules asked why we must wait for two years to see results from the moving of six teachers among our elementary schools; asked to know the benefits and gain of moving those teachers; should ask teachers and kids now to report on what is different.

Mr. Paules is concerned about increased cost of \$600k because of the unsuitable ground to build the district administrative office on. Asked where the money is going to come from; what are the costs of increase for additional staff needed to be required for each building, including benefits and insurance; what interest has been paid to date; what grants are available to use; wants to keep renting office space for administration.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- Constance Banko – read definition of censure of a school board member; need to move on from this issue and try to get along
- Richard Banko – asked what the adjusted index will be at next year; must be alternative way to save money on construction project
- Kris Schaible – expressed interest in returning as board member to fill vacancy made by Magin Gursky’s resignation; refocus efforts on student education
- Jenna McHugh – how was information leaked to newspaper before it was made public; Earl Paules being criticized and possibly censured for responding back publicly in the same way
- Kenneth Sutton – Board is clearly divided; hash out issues and do what is right for the students and not your own agenda; speak out directly
- Danielle Jones – this issue has gone on too long with wasted taxpayer money; read letter from Dr. Friebolin’s previous district pertaining to Title IX claim allegedly filed while she worked there and stated her previous district wrote that no records exist pertaining to her; rumors and fighting online are awful; need to protect our staff; vote yes to censure
- Mary Farquhar – Earl Paules has been targeted and works hard to save taxpayer money; lies are not true; move forward and stop bickering
- Lori Nemeth – asked about equipment and furniture costs for construction projects and will that be added expenses

MEETING MINUTES

Director Krawchuk-Boschen moved, seconded by Director Connell, to approve the board meeting minutes from November 25, 2025, December 6, 2025 (reorganization meeting), and December 6, 2025 (regular meeting).

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, 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

BUDGET TRANSFERS
CC TAX COLLECTION
DONATIONS

Approved budget transfers
Appointed Ryan Kish as 2026 delegate to the Carbon County Tax Collection Committee
Accepted the following donations:

<i>From</i> Tricia Wagner	<i>to</i> Aavidum Activity Club, IM of Tyler Kravetz	\$ 100.00
<i>From</i> Steven & Jennifer Mertz	<i>to</i> Towamensing Elementary Chorus	\$ 500.00
	<i>to</i> S. S. Palmer Elementary Chorus	\$ 500.00
	<i>to</i> High School Chorus	\$ 500.00
	<i>to</i> Towamensing and S. S. Palmer Elementary Band	\$1,000.00
	<i>to</i> Junior High Chorus & Band	\$1,000.00
	<i>to</i> High School Marching, Jazz, and Concert Bands	\$1,500.00
<i>From</i> PAHS Class of 2026 Parent Group	<i>to</i> help defray prom costs	\$3,000.00
<i>From</i> Palmerton Football Parents Club	<i>to</i> Gridiron Activity Club for purchase of 5 Man-S-Advantage sled	\$8,400.00

TUITION REIMBURSEMENTS

Approved tuition reimbursements

CUSTODIAN

Approved Mark Bles as Full-Time Custodian at an annual salary of \$32,970.00 prorated effective January 21, 2026. Shift differential, if applicable, will be paid in accordance with the PAESPA Collective Bargaining Agreement.

HORIZONTAL MOVEMENTS

Acknowledged the following horizontal movements effective the second semester of the 2025-2026 school year:

Jennelle Billingsby	Master’s +15 to Master’s +30
Michael Gombert	Master’s +45 to Master’s +60
Kathryn Malay	Master’s +30 to Master’s +45
Alexander Orr	Bachelor’s +24 to Master’s

FMLA

Approved the following for Family & Medical Leave:

Employee # 421	Effective on or about February 3, 2026, not to exceed twelve (12) weeks
Employee #180	Effective on or about May 1, 2026, not to exceed twelve (12) weeks
Employee #651	Effective on or about May 24, 2026, not to exceed twelve (12) weeks

UNCOMPENSATED LEAVES

Approved the following uncompensated leave requests:

Employee #456	Effective from January 27, 2026 through January 30, 2026
Employee #314	Retroactively additionally effective from January 5, 2026 through March 2, 2026

MENTOR

Approved retroactively the following Mentor for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year effective January 5, 2026:

Tanya Hess	<i>to</i> Amy Negley	\$1,520.00 prorated
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CLUB ADVISORS

Approved the following Club Advisors effective January 21, 2026:

Sean Hall	Stage Crew	\$2,144.00 prorated
Thomas McElhinny	Social Media	--
Kimberly Seiler	Environmental-JHS	--

COACHES

Approved the following Coaches for the 2025-2026 school year effective January 21, 2026:

Travis Fink	Track Assistant Coach (1/2)	\$1,413.00
Nellianne Parr	Track Assistant Coach (1/2)	\$1,413.00

SPRING EVENT WORKERS

Approved the following as Spring Event Workers at a rate of \$30.00 per event effective January 21, 2026:

Pamela Andrews	John Hrebik
Jeana Baumgardt	Alexander Knoll
Katherine Baumgardt	Paul McArdle
Craig Borland	Vicki McHugh
Jessica Cohen	Christine Owens
Austin Cseh	Nellianne Parr
Heather DeReamus	Andrew Remsing
Julia Dougherty	Kimberly Seiler
Darlene Dugan	Thomas Smelas
Robert Falkenstein	Brian Stevko
Travis Fink	Nicole Swartz
Kelly Heinrich	Kevin Wertz

RETIREMENT

Accepted the following retirement:

Darlene Smale	Instructional Assistant-Parkside	Effective August 1, 2026
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SUB REMOVALS

Removed the following from the Current Substitute list effective January 21, 2026:

Jessica Hansen	Substitute Teacher
Holly Sutterfield	Substitute Instructional Assistant

RESIGNATION

Accepted retroactively the following resignation effective January 7, 2026:

April Rehrig	Stage Crew Advisor
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WIDENER UNIV.

Approved the affiliation agreement with Widener University effective January 21, 2026

LIBERTY UNIV.

Approved the affiliation agreement with Liberty University from January 21, 2026 through January 20, 2027

JHS ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB

Approved the formation of Environmental Club-JHS as an extracurricular club at the Junior High School effective January 21, 2026

FIELD TRIP

Approved the following field trip request:

Video/Newspaper/ Yearbook Club	Penn State University, State College	March 15, 2026 through March 17, 2026
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CONFERENCE

Approved the following conference:

Daniel Heaney	PETE&C, Hershey	February 2, 2026 through February 4, 2026	Estimated cost of \$771.48
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**1st READINGS
320-335-336-343-
351-718**

Approved the first reading of the following policies:

- 1) Policy #320 Freedom of Speech by Employees
- 2) Policy #335 Family & Medical Leaves
- 3) Policy #336 Personal Necessity Leave
- 4) Policy #343 Paid Holidays
- 5) Policy #351 Controlled Substance Abuse
- 6) Policy #718 Service Animals in Schools

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

ACT 1 INDEX

Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Mazepa, to adopt the 2026-2027 Act 1 Resolution stating that the Palmerton Area School District will not increase taxes by more than its 2026-2027 adjusted index of 4.7%, as determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

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

**2026 CALENDER
OF MEETINGS**

Director Connell moved, seconded by Director King, to approve the 2026 calendar of regular monthly meetings and workshop meetings as presented.

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

**SCHOOL
DIRECTOR
RESIGNATION**

Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Connell, to accept the resignation of Magin Gursky as School Director of the Palmerton Area School Board effective January 18, 2026

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

**CENSURE
DIRECTOR-
Failed**

Director Krawchuk-Boschen moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to censure Earl Paules in his capacity as a member of the Board of School Directors for the following reasons: (1) disruption of meetings of the Board of School Directors; (2) disclosing confidential information; (3) interfering with the operations of the School District and School District staff; and (4) unethical behavior.

Aye Votes: Directors Connell, King, Krawchuk-Boschen, and Snyder.
Nay Votes: Directors Haas, Mazepa, Danielle Paules, and Earl Paules. Motion Failed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- Terry Kuehner – spoke against administration building construction; stated district and administration should be under investigation
- Brianna Sterling – asked about what district is doing about the water concerns in Palmerton and solutions for students
- Richard Banko – asked why previous lawyer left the district; thanked solicitor for asking at the last meeting if he wanted to relinquish some of his time for Earl Paules to speak during his public participation time; asked why extra security was here last meeting; no educational value to build an administration building; need revenue, fighting for township amusement tax
- Constance Banko – spoke of anonymous letter left in her mailbox and found out who placed it there; board member questioned them about it after last meeting was over

- Jenna McHugh – frustrated by some Board members focusing on allegations already investigated; why is administration building necessary and how does it improve education and safety of students; why is curriculum different at each elementary school; pay for substitute teachers should be increased; invest in our teachers and salaries must be competitive
- Kenneth Sutton – speaks for himself; Board should do their job which is what is best for the students; why Title IX accusations not addressed earlier; Board needs to be together and not divided; rearrange seating
- Lori Nemeth – are the dates for the board meetings set now and who is our solicitor going to be

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:

- Director Mazepa has a handbook from college which he thinks is good idea for the Board to complete. The workbook helps frame ideas, hone leadership styles, and build relationships to all become better leaders.

ADJOURNMENT

Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline McCandless
Board Secretary