NEW PHILADELPHIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 17, 2026

The Special Meeting of the New Philadelphia Board of Education was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by President Schrock at the Administration Office with the following members present: Dr. Bachman, Ms. Fontana, Mr. Ricklic, Mrs. Schrock, and Mr. Zimmerman. Also present were Mrs. Erwin and Mrs. Wentworth. Mr. Williams was absent.

Approval of Agenda 26-26

Mr. Zimmerman moved, Mrs. Schrock seconded to approve the Special Meeting agenda including any additions or deletions to the agenda, including the addendum.

Roll call:	Ayes:	Zimmerman, Schrock, Bachman, Fontana, Ricklic	(5)
	Nays:		(0)

Motion carried.

Approval of the Letter of Intent 27-26

Mr. Ricklic moved, Dr. Bachman seconded to approve the Letter of Intent to purchase land on St Rt 39.

Discussion:

Prior to the vote on the proposed property purchase, a Board member Andrew Zimmerman requested the opportunity to make public remarks regarding the process and rationale for supporting the measure.

The member stated that the District previously attempted to pursue new facilities at two existing sites; however, both options were ultimately not supported due to concerns related to traffic congestion on the south side of town and the potential loss of homes near the current high school and middle school. The Board was subsequently made aware that a family farm property had become available for purchase, offering sufficient acreage to accommodate a consolidated campus comparable in scope to other area districts.

It was further noted that several alternative sites suggested by members of the community — including Howden Buffalo, Kent State, and the former mall property — are either not available for purchase or present additional limitations. As such, the Board's viable options are limited.

The member acknowledged that while the proposed site is not located downtown, it is in close proximity and provides adequate acreage to meet both current and future facility needs. The Board has established contingencies to ensure the suitability of the land. The property will not be purchased unless the levy passes in May, and there is no retainer agreement in place.

The member further stated that unanimous agreement within the community regarding facility funding and location may not be achievable; however, the Board has made efforts to listen to community concerns while continuing to pursue updated facilities for students.

Board member Amanda Fontana stated that the Board has taken all community questions seriously and has exercised due diligence in researching and addressing concerns from multiple perspectives.

The member emphasized the importance of listening to the community, noting that voters had previously expressed opposition to the original site selected under the prior plan. The availability of an alternative site was described as an opportunity to present another option to the community for consideration. The member stated that the Board should not impose a decision but instead allow voters to determine their preference. The Board has collectively examined potential concerns and remains committed to providing the community with the opportunity to decide.

Board member Kelly Ricklic expressed full support for constructing a new school and emphasized the importance of securing community backing for updated facilities benefiting students, teachers, and administrators.

The member reported conducting independent research regarding the proposed property and expressed concern about the purchase price of approximately $35,714 per acre without inclusion of mineral rights. While acknowledging that large-scale projects may command a premium, the member stated a belief that mineral rights should be included at that price.

The member contacted the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and spoke with the Ohio Abandoned Mine Land Program Administrator regarding available maps and records. Information reviewed indicated the presence of deep mines on the property, including a mine opening and a vertical mine opening approximately 12 feet in diameter and 4–6 feet deep.

Additionally, a soil survey completed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) rated portions of the property as "very limited" for certain uses, indicating potential limitations that may require significant soil modification, specialized design, or additional installation procedures. The member noted that while engineering solutions may address such challenges, those solutions would likely increase project costs.

The member concluded by reiterating support for new facilities while emphasizing fiscal and site-related concerns.

Board member Jane Bachman stated agreement with prior remarks regarding how the Board arrived at the proposed site. The Board had collectively determined that returning to voters with the previous plan was not advisable, based on prior community feedback.

The member expressed comfort with the contingencies associated with the property purchase, including required soil and traffic studies. It was noted that publicly available ODNR data may represent only a portion of the overall soil and subsurface analysis, and that further professional studies would provide additional clarity. The member also emphasized that development would not occur across the entire acreage and that additional safeguards remain in place prior to final purchase or construction.

The Board President Jennifer Schrock concluded the discussion by thanking all members for their work and commitment throughout the process.

Roll call:	Ayes:	Bachman, Fontana, Schrock, Zimmerman	(4)
	Nays:	Ricklic	(1)

Motion carried.

Presentation by the ECOESC regarding the Superintendent search.

-No Action Taken-

Professional Development Training by OSBA.

-No Action Taken-

Ms. Fontana left the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Mr. Ricklic moved, Mrs. Schrock seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Roll call:	Ayes:	Ricklic, Schrock, Bachman, Zimmerman,	(4)
	Nays:		(0)

Motion carried.

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President

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attest