

PALMERTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Palmerton, PA

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

An executive session was held April 7, 2026 after the board workshop for personnel matters.

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, April 21, 2026, and called to order at 5:30 p.m. President Haas presided. The meeting was viewable via livestream.

Pledge of Allegiance

ROLL CALL

Present: Directors Connell, Haas, Mazepa (arrived at 5:33 p.m.), Moyzan, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder

Absent: Director King

OTHER ATTENDANCE

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

STUDENT REPORTS:

Student Recognition – **Jacob Burger**: grade 5, Towamensing Elementary, honored with a certificate for rescuing a fellow student who was choking during lunch recently who showed great composure and commitment to the safety of others. Mrs. Kelli George, Towamensing principal, gave a detailed account of the event.

Sixth Sense Team: Sixth graders Jakob Gacki, Lincoln Nenscel, Samuel Ratzman, Jaxxon Hartman, Hailey Pisulak, and Cooper Crouch, were recognized for their first-place win in the recent competition. Elementary – select students were recognized for their leadership skills in the Leader in Me program with a certificate signed by the Superintendent and Principal: Oscar Green, Savannah Sutton, Bethany Bornhorst, Willow Heller, Alice Kemmerer, Margot Green, Clara Schaffer, and Marlie Moninghoff at Towamensing Elementary; Spencer Schweibinz, Alessia Briele, Evan Goodbred, Amelia Rapchak, Benjamin Mason, Cora Hawk, Lily Nenscel, and Riley Rivera at Parkside Education Center/S. S. Palmer Elementary.

Junior High School – Sophia Hedes, grade 8

- Track – season in full swing with 30 students on team; a few meets left before end of season invitational on April 30
- ACE Team – congratulations on third-place finish; team: Alexander Delich, Emma Hirt, Sophia Hedes, Harper Hahn, Lucas Beahn, Jace Farkas, Geovany Castillo Andrade, and Matthew Jahelka, as well as their coaches, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Hoffman
- STEM Team – attended K’Nex STEM Design Challenge at CLIU; designed a product using sustainable practices and prepared a prototype demonstration to showcase how the machine works using only K’Nex; members were Alex Delich, Jesse Fenkner, Sophia Hedes, and Mark Heydt
- Digital News Club – attended 4th Annual Journal Summit at LCCC, where they networked with students from other schools in areas of yearbooks, newspapers, broadcasting, and podcasting
- Band & Chorus– preparing for spring concerts on May 12 and May 18; will participate in Music in the Parks at end of May

High School – Catherine Morgan, grade 12

- Envirothon – first place team: Kate Fritz, Jake Walkowiak, Antonio Oller, Ezra Green, and Hunter Sell; third place team: Dillon Borger, Alex Beblavy, Parker Davis, Joey Solt, and Logan Stroup; and fourth place team: Denisha Amar, Eniessa Groller, Jesse Verba, Madison Sommers, and Audrey Longenbach

- PYEA – teaching small-group and full-class lessons; gaining classroom experience
- NHS – seniors volunteered at a nursery school on April 2; will volunteer at S. S. Palmer’s Earth Day
- Scholastic Scrimmage – continuing to practice for next year’s competitions
- Algebra 1 – completed their second round of Firefly practice tests in preparation for Keystone Exams, which will be administered online due to new state testing requirements
- Environmental Club – traveling to environmental center in Jim Thorpe and then volunteering for clean ups along Mauch Chunk Lake and D&L Trails concluding at Jim Thorpe Monument
- Athletics – Baseball team member Jason Carelli and softball team member Hailey Barry named Morning Call Athletes of the Week; Cameron Pengelly threw no-hitter against Tamaqua; tennis completed Colonial League tournament with Colton Ruzicka and Levi Johnson qualifying for District XI singles tournament
- FBLA – competed in State Leadership Conference in Hershey with 58 members attending; chapter earned sixth place in the William Selden Outstanding Local Chapter category; Sofia DeAngelis gained first place, Dillon Borger, fourth place, and Breonna Alvarado-Mutchler third place, which qualified them to attend the national conference in Texas at end of June. Director Mazepa attended as chaperone and spoke highly of the advisors and their leadership and of the positive behavior of the students at the event.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS’ REPORTS:

- *Dr. Heaney* – Safety: attended PA School Safety Institute’s Summit in Mechanicsburg with Trahn Thompson on March 26 with topics such as managing social media threats, postings, and misinformation in schools, legally keeping schools safe and secure, as well as other best practices in school safety and threat response; HR: working on filling substitute Spanish teaching position; anticipate multiple elementary teaching openings for next year as well as instructional assistant openings; applicants can apply on our website; Athletics: recognized wrestling teams members named to Times News All-Area wrestling team: Lea Schaible, Cassidy Merkel, Sophia Amorim, Nickayla Tomsic, and Paige Kibler, Dillon Anthony, and Connor Messinger
- *Mr. Kish* – positive things happening across campus and the momentum extends to our financial and construction project planning as well; recently notified by the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency that a grant application for \$134,252 was approved which will be used for security upgrades in all buildings; bids to construct the entire project came in \$112,827 below the budget presented by KCBA in December. The total project costs have dropped to \$14.9m, which includes the district administration office and multi-purpose board room at \$4.9m; agenda items such as UGI, geotechnical inspection, and mechanical testing are part of the soft costs already included in budget; proposed budget presentation at May workshop

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:

- Directors Snyder and Connell – *CCTI*: hired new principal, William Mack, starting June 1; many field trips happening; Christopher Garey received second place in the Lehigh Valley Automotive competition; Selena Hollis took first place in phlebotomy in HOSA competition and now will attend nationals; many Palmerton kids excelling there
- Directors Schaible and Danielle Paules – *PSBA*: Dir. Schaible-legislative platform focusing on parent and ethical funding, charter school reform, mental health, and safety improvements; changes sought on CBA and pension funding; many webinars available; Dir. D. Paules-encourages attending student events to better understand and celebrate student achievements, strengthen community, and gain insight into programs and operations; Board retains same right as community or parent who visits school buildings, expected to follow procedures; stated their role is governance, and classroom observation is not a function of their role, visits should be coordinated by superintendent and adhere to policy 907 to ensure consistency, respect for instructional time, and safety and security of students and staff
- Director Haas – *CLIU*: annual Pennsylvania IU Day on Capitol Hill on March 24 to advocate for early intervention, special education, and behavioral health; representatives participated in “Week of the Young Child” celebration, every child received a personalized book; special

recognition for Kelli Tremba, staff development facilitator, by PA School Press Association as a 2026 Friend of Student Journalism Award recipient; the 2026-27 general operating budget unanimously approved; golf outing to be held in June, go to website for information Library: National Library Week, special presentations all week; Earth Day presentation tomorrow and book signing; grab-and-go project bags; fundraiser event, bus trip to Longwood Gardens on May 16; Teens on Scene; cyber homeschool club; awarded Keystone grant at \$600k, kudos to Christine DeSousa for writing grant

- Director Earl Paules said budget for building project was \$15m, then another \$2m got added; when bid came in, it was under original budget, not at \$7m for DAO, but at \$4.9m; office rental is \$45,600/yr., so every five years is saving \$1m, and that savings almost pays for DAO; high school entrance will be safer, new nurse's office and classrooms; look to hire own security staff; bring the IU back here to teach our own kids; no reason to raise taxes because of building projects, it will be reasons like insurance; explained wording of construction motions

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- Kenneth Sutton – spoke of his opposition to construction costs and for administrative leave payout to be approved
- Richard Banko – spoke about budgeted cost of proposed building construction and fear of change orders and legal fees under personnel
- Deborah Kleckner – questioned fiscal responsibility regarding the building project costs with a projected budget deficit for next year; mentioned unstable ground for foundation compared to keeping a more affordable long-term rental or using a different building site
- Danielle Jones – criticized Director Earl Paules for departure of Superintendent Friebolin and its financial costs to taxpayers; blamed Board's dysfunction and Mr. Paules' misconduct for the need for contract buyouts and legal fees

MEETING MINUTES

Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to approve the board meeting minutes from March 3, 2026 and March 17, 2026.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Moyzan, 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

Approved budget transfers

BHA COST-SAVINGS

Approved the Cost-Savings Program with Behavioral Health Associates for the 2026-2027 school year

METZ CULINARY

Approved the renewal of the food service contract with Metz Culinary Management, Inc. for the 2026-2027 school year

DONATION

Accepted the following donation:

<i>From</i> Bowmanstown Rod & Gun Club Small Games of Chance	<i>to</i> Fishing Club-Activity for the 2026 Fishing Derby	\$200.00
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TUITION REIMBURSEMENTS

Approved tuition reimbursements

HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT

Acknowledged the following horizontal movement effective the first semester of the 2026-2027 school year:

Matthew Kosciolek	From Master's +15 to Master's +30
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FMLA

Approved the following for Family & Medical Leave:

Employee # 538	Retroactively intermittent leave for up to eleven (11) workdays effective March 16, 2026
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ADD'L. MENTORS

Approved retroactively the following Mentors for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year:

Randi-Jo Freed, Co-Mentor	for Lisa Heffernan	\$760.00 prorated	Effective April 13, 2026
Jennifer Harrison, Co-Mentor	for Lisa Heffernan	\$760.00 prorated	Effective April 13, 2026
Jennifer Strohl	for Jenifer Wargo	\$1,520.00 prorated	Effective April 20, 2026

ELEMENTARY SUMMER SCHOOL

Approved the following staff to work in the Elementary Summer School program from July 7, 2026 through July 30, 2026:

<i>Teachers at the Professional Services rate per the PAEA Collective Bargaining Agreement:</i>		
<i>Bronwyn Cseh</i>	<i>Jodi Kocher</i>	<i>Michele O'Neill</i>
<i>Felicia Fischer</i>	<i>Cindy Kuntzman</i>	<i>Jennifer Ramaly</i>
<i>Caitlin Hettler</i>	<i>Amy Negley</i>	<i>Sara Sook</i>
<i>Elizabeth Karb</i>	<i>Kimberly Nenscel</i>	<i>Emily Turek</i>
<i>Instructional Assistants at the contractual hourly rate per the PAESPA Agreement:</i>		
<i>Elizabeth Campbell</i>	<i>Darlene Smale</i>	<i>Victoria Smith</i>

ESY

Approved the following staff to work in the Extended School Year (ESY) program from July 6, 2026 through July 30, 2026:

<i>Teachers at the Professional Services rate per the PAEA Collective Bargaining Agreement:</i>		
Lindsay Fronheiser	Lisa Heffernan	Joey Roetz
<i>Speech Therapist at the Professional Services rate per the PAEA Collective Bargaining Agreement:</i>		
Tammy Hoffman		
<i>Instructional Assistants at the contractual hourly rate per the PAESPA Agreement:</i>		
Linda Crisanti	Melissa Fronheiser	Sharon Hettler
<i>Health Room Technician at the contractual hourly rate per the PAESPA Agreement:</i>		
Michelle Bisbing		

JH ESCAPE ROOM

Approved the following staff to work in the Junior High Summer Escape Room Program from June 25, 2026 through August 6, 2026:

<i>Teachers at the Professional Services rate per the PAEA Collective Bargaining Agreement:</i>	
Melissa Hoffman	Kimberly Seiler

eBRIDGES	Approved Andrew Remsing as summer program facilitator of the eBridges Course/Credit Recovery Program for students in grades 7-12 from June 15, 2026 through July 2, 2026 at the Professional Services rate per the PAEA Collective Bargaining Agreement		
HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION	Approved retroactively Kathryn Malay to teach (5) five hours a week of homebound instruction at the Professional Services rate per the PAEA Collective Bargaining Agreement for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year effective March 24, 2026		
ADD'L FALL COACHES 2026-2027	Approved the following additional Fall Coaches for the 2026-2027 school year:		
	Michael Hansen	Boys' Soccer Assistant Coach	\$2,854.00
	Carson Barron	Football Assistant Coach (1/2)	\$2,163.00
ADD'L SPRING EVENT WORKER	Approved retroactively Analise Yacone as additional Spring Event Worker for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year at a rate of \$30.00 per event effective March 31, 2026		
SUBS	Approved the following Substitutes at the prevailing substitute rate effective April 22, 2026:		
	Parker Beiler	Substitute Teacher	
	Dalton Rumfield	Substitute Teacher	
	Daryanne Bencoter	Substitute Food Service Worker	
SUB REMOVAL	Removed the following from the current Substitute list:		
	Christopher Rutz	Substitute Custodian	Effective April 3, 2026
2025-26 REVISED CALENDAR	Approved the revised 2025-2026 school district calendar (enclosure)		
BUS DRIVER	Approved retroactively Anthony Francomacaro as George's Transportation bus driver for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year effective March 23, 2026		
CLIU FACILITIES PLAN	Approved the CLIU #21 Facilities Plan Recommendations for the 2026-2027 school year		
CLIU TECH POOL LEGAL	Approved the CLIU #21 Technology Pool Legal Services Consultation Agreement for the 2026-2027 school year		
SAFEWAY DRIVING	Approved the agreement with The Safeway Driving School, Inc. for July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027		
LEADER IN ME	Approved retroactively the agreement with Leader in Me for the elementary schools effective August 20, 2026 through August 19, 2027 in the amount of \$33,968.69		
HEALTH eTOOLS	Approved the pricing agreement with Health eTools for documenting/tracking of nursing logs for the 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029 school years at a total cost of \$12,278.00		
THEATRE WORLD	Approved retroactively the Theatre World Backdrops lease/rental agreement for the Drama Club effective March 13, 2026		
LCCC (Shine)	Approved the Sponsor-to-Sponsor Agreement with Lehigh Carbon Community College from October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027		
LAROSE'S SKATING	Approved the party contract with LaRose's Skating Rink for junior high student council event on May 6, 2026		

<p>1ST READINGS 140-221-325-332-619</p>	<p>Approved the first reading of the following policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Policy #140 Charter Schools 2) Policy #221 Dress & Grooming 3) Policy #325 Dress & Grooming 4) Policy #332 Working Periods 5) Policy #619 District Audit
<p>END OF CONSENT AGENDA</p>	
<p>HS & DAO CONSTRUCTION BIDS:</p>	<p>Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to award the General Construction bid for the two-story high school addition with secure entrance, renovation of existing high school administration area, and new district administration office addition to E. R. Stuebner, Inc., Reading, PA at a cost of \$8,931,000.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>
<p>GEN'L CONTRACTOR- Stuebner</p>	<p>Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to award the Mechanical Construction bid for the two-story high school addition with secure entrance, renovation of existing high school administration area, and new district administration office addition to JBM Mechanical, Inc., Nazareth, PA at a cost of \$1,560,000.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>
<p>MECH. CONTRACTOR - JBM</p>	<p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Schaible, to award the Electrical Construction bid for the two-story high school addition with secure entrance, renovation of existing high school administration area, and new district administration office addition to Billitier Electric, Inc., Allentown, PA at a cost of \$1,764,618.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>
<p>ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR- Billitier</p>	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Connell, to award the Plumbing Construction bid for the two-story high school addition with secure entrance, renovation of existing high school administration area, and new district administration office addition to JBM Mechanical, Inc., Nazareth, PA at a cost of \$657,000.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>
<p>PLUMBING CONTRACTOR- JBM</p>	<p>Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to approve the geotechnical and construction quality control contract with David Blackmore & Associates, Inc., for third-party inspections for the construction and renovation projects at the high school in the estimated amount of \$90,528.68.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>
<p>INSPECTIONS- Blackmore</p>	<p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Mazepa, to approve the mechanical testing and air balancing contract with Optimum Performance Balancing, Inc., for the construction and renovation projects at the high school in the estimated amount of \$21,000.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>

MECH. TEST/AIR-Optimum	<p>Director Schaible moved, seconded by Director Moyzan, to approve retroactively the NPDES permit major amendment proposal from Keystone Consulting Engineers for the construction and renovation projects at the high school in the estimated amount of \$15,000.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Haas, Danielle Paules, Earl Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Directors Connell, Mazepa, and Moyzan. Motion Carried.</p>
NPDES PERMIT PROPOSAL-KCE	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Danielle Paules, to approve the Public Utility Right-of-Way Agreement with UGI Utilities, Inc., for a permanent easement on district property. In consideration of this agreement, UGI Utilities, Inc., shall provide a one-time payment to the district in the amount of \$23,375.00.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
RIGHT OF WAY-UGI	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Moyzan, to approve retroactively the mutual agreement for paid administrative leave for employee #735 effective April 2, 2026.</p> <p>Aye Votes: Directors Connell, Haas, Mazepa, Moyzan, Danielle Paules, Schaible, and Snyder. Nay Votes: Director Earl Paules. Motion Carried.</p>
PAID ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE	<p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to accept the retirement of Andrea Olock as Art Teacher at S. S. Palmer/Parkside effective June 9, 2026.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
RETIREMENTS	<p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to accept the retirement of Susan Pielmeier as First Grade Teacher at Parkside Education Center effective at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p> <p>Director Connell moved, seconded by Director Snyder, to accept the retirement of Gari Savage as Building Secretary at S. S. Palmer Elementary effective June 30, 2026.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
339 GUIDANCE PLAN	<p>Director Snyder moved, seconded by Director Moyzan, to approve the Palmerton Area School District’s K-12 Guidance Plan as required by the Chapter 339 Career and Technical Education Standards.</p> <p>Aye Votes: All Directors Present. Nay Votes: None. Motion Carried.</p>
	<p>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Horvath – read his account of details that occurred about his coaching status for cross country team; seeking accountability from district and athletic coordinator/HR regarding not hiring for next season • Jason DeWalt – disputed actions of field hockey coaches in dealing with his daughter’s medical condition; stated athletic coordinator ignored complaints and did not forward letter he wrote to the Board about the situation

- Leanne DeWalt – urged district to recognize medical accommodations and to foster an environment where student-athletes are judged on their skills and character; daughter will no longer play for district; make sure proper steps are taken in future so no student-athletes experience this situation
- Jamie Tomsic – asked for reinstatement as girls' assistant wrestling coach which he feels was retaliation for reporting a hostile work environment; requests formal investigation previously declined by district
- Mary Farquhar – saving money by spending money doesn't make sense; taxpayers thrown under the bus again
- Gina Rodrigues – called for investigation into decision not to renew coach Jamie Tomsic; lack of transparency in district; causing stress for student-athletes; will pursue legal action if this continues to affect daughter
- Bo Rodrigues – asked for transparency and open dialogue with the Board and administration regarding ongoing policy concerns; spoke about America250 celebration this June 14 featuring music, fireworks, and presentations; spoke of resolving issues and celebrating Palmerton's patriotic history
- Tiffany Jennings – spoke about wrestling coach, Jamie Tomsic, and his impact on girls' success and his dedication to team; spoke of unprofessionalism and lack of investigation on the issue
- Nick Masington – Board and administration should prioritize transparency and consistent procedures to address concerns regarding budgeting, building projects, and personnel issues; problem-solving requires seeing all sides to be productive
- Richard Banko – eliminate security at board meetings; do not time public participation
- Kenneth Sutton – Board fiscally irresponsible for proposed building projects and for superintendent's leave; spoke against superintendent's leadership and removal of pets in classrooms

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:

- Director Snyder thanked Mr. Sutton's for his concerns for her but stated she did not need it and is strengthened by her military service.
- Director Schaible acknowledged Kyle Sebelin, graduate, for his accomplishment in academics in college.
- Director Haas stated there was an executive session held on April 7, 2026 for personnel issues.

ADJOURNMENT

Director Danielle Paules moved, seconded by Director Moyzan, to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline McCandless
Board Secretary