Lehighton Area School District
Administration Building - Board Room
1000 Union Street, Lehighton, PA 18235
November 9, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Workshop Meeting Minutes



1. Opening Exercises

1.1 Call to Order
Board President, A. Matika called the Board Meeting to order at 7:16 PM.

1.2. Opening Exercises
Opening Exercises included the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

1.3. Roll Call
PR/AB

PR	**Ms. Joy Beers**	**PR**	**Mr. Jeremy Glaush**	**PR**	**Dr. Alex Matika**
PR	**Mr. David Bradley**	**PR**	**Ms. Denise Hartley**	**PR**	**Ms. Heather Neff**
PR	**Mrs. Lory Frey**	**PR**	**Dr. William Howland**	**PR**	**Mr. Timothy Tkach**

Also Present:
Mr. Jason Moser, Superintendent
Ms. Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary

Shalmar Herlihy-Mantz, Roy James, Xander Smith, Christina Haupt, Sandra Michalik, Gretchen Laviolette.

Atty. Tim Gilsbach via Google Meet

1.4. Public Comment
None at the time.

2. Academic Affairs Committee

2.1. Winter Credit Recovery
LAVA CREDIT RECOVERY DATES/TIMES:
Monday, February 1, 2027 - Tuesday, February 16th, 2027
- Excluding the following days—February 12th & 15th, 2027
- Snow day make-up days—February 17th and 18th, 2027

Session 1—2:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Credit Recovery courses will only be open to you during your session time. All work is to be completed within each of the three-hour sessions during the ten (10) day period.

J. Moser noted that this was a standard item designed to keep students on track toward matriculation.

2.2. Cedar Crest Dual Enrollment MOU
Recommendation to approve an MOU between the Lehighton Area School District and Cedar Crest College to provide students with expanded access to affordable college-level coursework and additional opportunities to meet graduation requirements while preparing for postsecondary success.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Lehighton Area School District and Cedar Crest College establishes an Integrated Online Dual Enrollment Program. This partnership will provide students with the opportunity to earn transferable college credits while fulfilling applicable high school graduation requirements.

The program will utilize an online instructional model with instruction provided directly by Cedar Crest College faculty. Per LASD Policy 204.2 students will take these dual enrollment courses in addition to their standard LAHS coursework. Cedar Crest College and students will be responsible for providing semester grades at the culmination of each semester.

Course Offerings: Students will have access to Cedar Crest College's Dual Credit Academy courses, which includes 23 potential courses at the time of the agreement.

Financial Considerations: Cedar Crest College will waive tuition for participating students. The only anticipated cost will be course materials:

- Three-credit course: $200 per student
- Four-credit course: $267 per student

https://policymain.org/lehighton-area-school-district/policies/349db049-1c60-4337- 93c4-70b182d0e853

J. Moser noted the cost-effectiveness of the transferable credits. In response to inquiries from W. Howland regarding course delivery and scheduling, J. Moser clarified that the courses were likely online and asynchronous—though potentially synchronous in a school setting—and confirmed that concurrent enrollment could be used to resolve scheduling conflicts or offer specialized coursework beyond the district's standard capacity.

2.3. Alvernia Affiliation Agreement
Recommendation to approve an affiliation agreement between the Lehighton Area School District and Alvernia University for the purpose of providing experiential learning for Education students.

Agreement to follow.

J. Moser clarified that the agreement was a standard boilerplate contract still being finalized to allow college students to complete in-person field experiences within the district. J. Glaush requested a comprehensive list of all active affiliation agreements approved over the past few years, which J. Partenio agreed to compile by the end of the week.

2.4. Public Comment
J. Moser commented on the evolving landscape of public high school education, emphasizing the value of expanding student pathways through dual enrollment, pre-apprenticeships, and work-based learning alongside the district's tiered diploma structure. D. Hartley inquired about how to proactively inform both students and parents—starting at the elementary and middle school levels—about these expanding opportunities. J. Glaush suggested improving district marketing through social media and video content, proposing that high school sports marketing students—noted as an active course by G. Laviolette—produce promotional videos highlighting district programs. J. Moser added that the district's guidance plan required counselors to meet with students at least three times annually beginning in middle school, and he advocated for hosting sustained parent engagement nights prior to annual course scheduling.

During public comment, S. Herlihy-Mantz shared that her son utilized the district's dual enrollment program, enabling him to graduate early from Duquesne University with a Spanish minor and law certificate before entering law school, and she supported using alumni video testimonials to promote the programs. D. Bradley confirmed for the public that students did not need to be classified as gifted to participate in dual enrollment, noting that previous misconceptions regarding eligibility had been corrected. S. Herlihy-Mantz did not recall hearing any previous misconceptions.

3. Policy Committee

3.1. First Reading of Policies
Policy 249 - Bullying/Cyberbullying

J. Moser noted that because the district had already updated the policy over the summer in alignment with state code, the PSBA recommendations consisted only of minor language refinements. During discussion, D. Bradley questioned why Policy 620 was listed under the Finance section rather than the Policy section, and the board agreed that formal policy discussions and revisions should be handled under the Policy Committee.

3.2. Public Comment
None at the time.

4. Finance Committee

4.1. Donations/Local Grants
Recommendation to approve the following Donations and/or Local Grants:

- Walmart grant in the amount of $1,000. Funds to be used to support students experiencing homelessness to address essential needs such as clothing, toiletries, school supplies, food, transportation assistance and other necessary items or services.
- A box of crayons for each Kindergarten student to be donated by The Lehighton American Legion Auxiliary.

J. Moser and members of the Board expressed appreciation for the contributions.

4.2. Monthly Financial Report
Discussion on Budget Transfers

J. Moser reported that a comprehensive list of necessary budget transfers was being prepared for formal board vote at the November legislative meeting. On behalf of Chris, who was absent, J. Moser also gauged the board's interest in transitioning the monthly financial report from a mid-month cutoff date to a true end-of-month cutoff (e.g., closing October on October 31 for the November meeting) to align better with condensed reports and bills payable.

D. Bradley objected to changing the cutoff date, asserting that the district operates on a cash basis and should rely on current figures up to the meeting date rather than retrospective month-end reports. D. Bradley further alleged that the district was violating Pennsylvania School Code provisions—specifically referencing Sections 609, 687, and 218—regarding budget transfers, overspending line items prior to transfer approval, and Annual Financial Report (AFR) deadlines, citing past findings from a 2020 state performance audit. J. Moser disputed the characterization of the district's actions, noting that the state had granted an AFR filing extension until November and explaining that state code does not define budget "classification" at the line-item level. As the debate became contentious and moved off the agenda item, A. Matika attempted to conduct a straw poll of the board and used the gavel to restore order with D. Bradley mocking the gavel.

Continuing the straw poll on transitioning the monthly financial report cutoff to the last day of the preceding month, D. Hartley, T. Tkach, J. Beers, H. Neff, A. Matika, L. Frey, J. Glaush, and W. Howland all voiced support for the end-of-month reporting schedule, while D. Bradley voted against it, resulting in an 8–1 consensus in favor of the change.

Following the poll, D. Bradley reiterated his objection, arguing that a majority vote did not authorize the board to bypass state financial codes and asserting that the district should provide reports current to the meeting date on a cash basis. J. Moser clarified that under the updated process, any required budget transfers would be listed on the agenda ahead of bills payable so the board could review and approve fund availability prior to authorizing payments. D. Bradley also questioned the status of the district's Annual Financial Report (AFR) under Section 218 of the Pennsylvania School Code, alleging it had missed an October 31 deadline; J. Moser explained that the state grants an automatic extension until November and noted he could not sign off on the filing until audited figures were finalized.

D. Bradley reiterated his contention that the district had violated Pennsylvania School Code Sections 609, 687, and 218—specifically citing restrictions on transferring funds during the first three months of the fiscal year and missing the October 31 statutory deadline for the AFR—and questioned A. Matika on whether the board would adhere to the 2020 Auditor General's findings. J. Moser clarified that under the proposed reporting schedule, necessary budget transfers would be presented on the agenda as needed—monthly or quarterly—prior to voting on bills payable.

Regarding the AFR, J. Moser explained that he could not legally sign off on the filing until the independent audit was complete, as the attestation requires verification by an auditor. He noted that public school auditing firms are scarce—with only one firm bidding on the district's contract—and stated that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) grants an automatic 30-day extension through November 30 precisely because districts across the state face similar audit delays. J. Beers and D. Hartley supported waiting for the audited figures rather than submitting an incomplete or premature report, with D. Hartley emphasizing that the board's obligation to the public was to ensure the financial report was filed accurately and properly once the audit concluded. D. Bradley asserted that the board should enforce contractual deadlines with its auditing firm to ensure statutory compliance and provide timely financial data for upcoming budget planning. A. Matika used the gavel to transition to Item 4.3.

4.3. Fund Balance and Board Policy 620
Discussion on Fund Balance and Board Policy 620

J. Moser presented an auditor recommendation regarding Board Policy 620 (Fund Balance). J. Moser explained that while Policy 620 directs the district to strive to maintain an unassigned fund balance of at least 5%—and pursue revenue increases or expenditure reductions to reach 8% if it falls below that threshold—the current unassigned balance of approximately $4.5 million fell short of the policy target by roughly $2.2 million to $2.5 million.

Although the auditors noted that Policy 620 could be interpreted as granting administration the authority to reallocate fund balances, J. Moser stated he would only move funds from the assigned balance to the unassigned balance via formal board resolution, noting that assigned funds (such as allocations for BHA and PSERS) were appropriately budgeted and not bloated. J. Glaush suggested seeking a legal opinion from the district solicitor, which J. Moser agreed to pursue after receiving final clarification from the auditors. J. Beers recalled that the original intent of Policy 620 was to prevent the accumulation of excessive, unbudgeted surpluses and suggested reviewing the policy language so it would not inadvertently compel unnecessary tax increases. J. Moser agreed to review the policy language for future alignment while recommending a formal board motion to reallocate assigned funds to satisfy current audit compliance. Throughout the discussion, D. Bradley questioned the scope of the Barbacane audit, criticized historical fund allocations and budget accuracy, and reiterated that the district must strictly adhere to Pennsylvania School Code provisions.

J. Beers and J. Moser noted that the policy's wording required revision due to grammatical ambiguities introduced during prior edits, with J. Beers suggesting J. Moser draft updated language prior to involving legal counsel. Regarding audit compliance, A. Matika proposed proportionally reallocating approximately $2.2 million from assigned fund balances into the unassigned fund balance to meet the policy threshold, which J. Moser and J. Beers supported as an appropriate accounting adjustment, while D. Bradley objected and argued that excess funds should be returned to taxpayers.

4.4. EIT Conversation
Discussion on EIT.

J. Moser presented an overview of the district's Act 511 local taxes—including the 1% EIT (split evenly between the district and municipalities and projected at $2.4 million) and the OAT (projected at $795,000)—highlighting outdated and inconsistent county occupational classifications dating back to 1994 that do not reflect actual earnings. J. Moser explained that under Act 24 of 2001, the board had roughly nine months to consider placing a voter referendum on the general election ballot to eliminate the OAT and offset the lost revenue by increasing the district's EIT share by an estimated 0.16% (bringing the total EIT rate to 1.16%). D. Bradley advocated for eliminating the OAT entirely without replacing the revenue via an EIT increase, which J. Moser confirmed was also an available option for the board to consider.

J. Moser detailed the financial impacts of the proposal. He noted that eliminating the OAT would remove the administrative burden on retirees who currently must apply for exemptions, confirmed that Social Security and pension income are exempt from the EIT in Pennsylvania, and estimated that approximately 98% to 99% of district residents (around 12,000 individuals earning roughly $321,725 or less) would experience a combined net tax decrease in the first year ranging from $1.33 to $147. J. Moser also explained that state law caps the first-year EIT increase strictly at the amount needed to offset lost OAT revenue—preventing a tax windfall—while projecting that a typical 3% annual wage growth rate would generate roughly $25,000 to $30,000 in incremental revenue per year thereafter.

Board members debated the fiscal and policy implications of eliminating the OAT with or without replacement. D. Bradley advocated for abolishing the OAT outright without a referendum or an EIT increase, arguing that the district holds sufficient surplus funds, faces declining enrollment over time, and should not tie future tax collections to residents' wage growth. Conversely, J. Beers, D. Hartley, and J. Glaush expressed support for pursuing the revenue-neutral EIT replacement referendum. J. Beers warned that creating an $800,000 revenue deficit without replacement could force future property tax increases and noted the district could lose its statutory window to replace the tax if it acted unilaterally, while D. Hartley and J. Glaush emphasized that shifting to an income-based tax distributes the burden more equitably across all wage earners and lowers taxes for the vast majority of residents. J. Moser concluded by noting that the board had approximately nine months before a final decision would be required for a general election ballot.

J. Moser outlined the statutory timeline for a voter referendum, noting that a board resolution would need to be submitted to the election office 90 days prior to a November municipal or general election, with any approved change taking effect in the 2028–2029 fiscal cycle. R. James expressed opposition to eliminating the OAT, voicing concern that reducing taxes on wage earners could eventually shift a heavier property tax burden onto retired and elderly homeowners. J. Moser and A. Matika clarified that shifting to the EIT would not negatively impact retirees—whose retirement income is exempt—and could help prevent future property tax increases. D. Bradley proposed mailing certified letters or sequentially numbered postcards to district households to poll taxpayers prior to a referendum, though J. Moser and G. Laviolette noted that mailing to roughly 7,000 households or 12,000 taxpayers would require an unbudgeted expenditure of $7,000 to $25,000. Instead, J. Moser and D. Hartley supported keeping the topic under old business and adding an online tax impact calculator to the district website to inform the public over the coming months.

4.5. BerkOne - Homestead/Farmstead Standard Application
Recommendation to approve the quote with BerkOne for the 2026-2027 Homestead/Farmstead Standard Application Agreement utilizing Option A - 2 pages, Simplex, and includes a return envelope.

The District's obligation, in accordance with Act 1 of 2006 the Taxpayer Relief Act, is to notify owners of residential properties who are not presently approved for homestead/farmstead real estate tax relief that they can apply prior to March 1 for the upcoming school district fiscal year. Notification is required no later than December 31 each year. Berkone coordinates with Carbon County to obtain the list of properties and prepares the mailing on behalf of the LASD. Last year 2,118 property owners received the required notification and application. The processing cost with Berkone was $890.41 and the postage expense of $1,263.48. The requirement is for using first class mail. Below is this year's time line with the County and Berkone in order to adhere to the December 31 deadline.

- All Carbon County files and the expected record counts must be sent to BerkOne by 12/4. *This is the responsibility of Carbon County.
- BerkOne will generate and provide the application samples to the districts within 5 business days of file receipt.
- All sample approvals must be sent to BerkOne by 12/15. -This is the responsibility of the districts

4.6. Mileage Contract
Recommendation to approve a transportation mileage agreement to reimburse a parent of a student for documented round-trip transportation at the current maximum IRS mileage rate, effective beginning with the first day of the 2026-2027 school year.

Reimbursement is subject to monthly mileage documentation and the terms outlined in the agreement.

D. Bradley voiced opposition to the contract, citing a lack of background details, concerns over potential legal ambiguities and liability exposure regarding drivers and vehicles, and the district's responsibility to provide transportation directly.

4.7. Public Comment
R. James inquired about the purpose of the proposed parent transportation mileage reimbursement given that the district already provides busing. J. Moser clarified that the arrangement involved a student requiring specialized transportation at the parent's request, and R. James recommended updating the contract's introductory language to specify that such agreements apply to students requiring specialized transport. D. Hartley noted she had requested that administration follow up with the family regarding insurance coverage prior to board approval. D. Bradley echoed concerns over legal ambiguity and liability if a parent effectively acts as a subcontractor, advising that the district discuss alternative transportation options with the family. J. Moser agreed to speak further with the parents and bring the matter back to the board at a future meeting, while J. Moser and the board affirmed their unanimous support for the student's needs.

5. Athletics Committee

5.1. Candidates for Athletic Coach/Manager
Recommendation to approve the following Candidates for Athletic Coach/Manager, pending any necessary paperwork:

Jacob Hoats - Volunteer Wrestling Coach

J. Glaush inquired about the short list of candidates. J. Moser and A. Matika clarified that most winter coaching positions had been approved at a prior meeting.

5.2. Public Comment
None at the time.

6. Buildings & Grounds Committee

6.1. Public Comment
None at the time.

7. Personnel Committee

7.1. Candidates for Employment
Recommendation to approve the following candidates for employment in accordance with the respective contracts, pending any necessary paperwork:

Kye Weidensaul - unpaid intern in the IT department for the 2026/2027 school year.

D. Hartley inquired about data security protocols for IT interns, and J. Moser clarified that interns handle routine tasks such as desktop support and wiping or reloading computers without accessing sensitive district data. G. Laviolette explained that the candidate, a district graduate whose parent is employed by the district, had proactively reached out for experience and would assist with bringing hardware repairs in-house.

D. Bradley and J. Beers raised concerns that accepting unsolicited internships without public advertisement could create perceptions of nepotism or unfair access, advocating for open recruitment across the community. J. Moser and D. Hartley agreed that the district should develop a formalized, structured internship program across various departments and post opportunities on the district website moving forward. During discussion, D. Bradley also proposed establishing a parent volunteer safety patrol under Pennsylvania School Code; A. Matika instructed him to submit the item in writing five days prior to the next meeting to be placed on the agenda as a director's concern.

7.2. Professional Development
Recommendation to approve the following Professional Development Opportunities:

Employees #775, #1843, & #1943 to attend the PMEA State Conference at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie, PA on April 14-17, 2027 at a cost not to exceed $600.00 for Registration.

In response to an inquiry from D. Bradley regarding potential travel expenses, G. Laviolette confirmed that registration was the sole expense covered by the district. J. Moser noted his support for the music staff's continued participation and, following a question from D. Bradley, confirmed that homeschooled students are permitted to participate in district music and academic programs by contacting the high school office.

7.3. FMLA Acknowledgment
Recommendation to acknowledge the following requests for FMLA:

- **Employee #1880** FMLA beginning on October 17, 2026
- **Employee #1174** Intermittent FMLA beginning on October 21, 2026.

7.4. Resignations for Retirement
Recommendation to approve the following resignations for retirement, with appreciation:

Diane Micheletti - High School Art Teacher effective at the end of the 2026/2027 School year after 31.93 years of service to the District.

A. Matika and J. Moser shared positive personal reflections regarding D. Micheletti's career and teaching impact. In response to an inquiry from D. Bradley regarding whether the position would be replaced, J. Moser stated that staffing determinations were pending the completion of his district-wide staffing projection plan—incorporating the November 1 retirement deadline, enrollment data, and student-to-teacher ratios—which D. Hartley noted was scheduled for completion prior to upcoming budget discussions.

7.5. Resignations
Recommendation to approve the following resignations, with regret:

Breanna Belcher - Part-Time Cleaner effective November 4, 2026.

J. Partenio clarified for the record that the employee's current name was B. Belcher (listed on the agenda under her maiden name, B. Keiser) and confirmed her position as a part-time cleaner rather than a full-time custodian.

7.6. Public Comment
None at the time.

8. Technology Committee
8.1. Public Comment
None at the time.

9. Safety & Wellness Committee
9.1. Public Comment
None at the time.

10. Miscellaneous
None at the time.

11. Communications
11.1. Public Comment
None at the time.

11.2. Adjournment
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by H. Neff, to adjourn the Meeting.

YES - 9 NO - 0 ABSENT - 0 ABSTENTIONS - 0

The November 9, 2026 Workshop Meeting was adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Karpowicz, Board Secretary
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary