Lehighton Area School District
Administration Building - Board Room
1000 Union Street, Lehighton, PA 18235
October 26, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Board Meeting Minutes



1. Opening Exercises

Board President, A. Matika called the Board Meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

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

1.3. Meeting Announcements
A Board Meeting was held on September 28, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the District Administration Board Room.
An Executive Session was held on October 13, 2026 at 6:30 PM in the District Administration Conference Room for Personnel, Legal and Safety discussions in accordance with Title 65 Section 708 (a) 1, 5 and 7.
A Workshop Meeting was held on October 13, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the District Administration Board Room.
An Executive Session was held on October 13, 2026 at 7:21-7:29 PM in the District Administration Conference Room for Personnel discussions in accordance with Title 65 Section 708 (a) 1.
A Board Meeting is being held on October 26, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the District Administration Board Room.
A Workshop Meeting will be held on November 9, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the District Administration Board Room.
A Board Meeting will be held on November 23, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the District Administration Board Room.

1.4. Roll Call
PR/AB

AB	**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, Nicole Collier, Amanda Honchell & Family, Walter Zlomsowitch, Roy James, Fred Kemmerer, Reagan Abelovsky, Adam Danner, Aiden Dugan, Jarrad Hedes, Xander Smith, Christina Haupt, John Orsulak, Sandra Michalik, Gretchen Laviolette

Chris Lionetti & Atty. Tim Gilsbach via Google Meet.

1.5. Presentations/Recognition
None at the time.

1.6. Public Comment - *Only on the Board's Proposed Approval of the Agenda as Presented or as Modified*
None at the time.

1.7. Approval of Agenda
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by H. Neff, to approve the agenda as presented

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

1.8. Public Comment - *Traditional Public Comment Period on Agenda Items Only*

A. Matika opened the traditional public comment period and called upon C. Haupt, a district educator, parent, and primary handler of the district's therapy dog, Angelo. C. Haupt publicly thanked the community members, staff, students, and parents who submitted testimonials and expressed support for the therapy dog program. Addressing recent requests from the October 13 workshop meeting for data documenting the program's success, C. Haupt noted that data collection was never requested at the program's inception and is not currently required under Policy 151 or the Handler Handbook. Instead, she electronically provided the Board with heartfelt testimonials detailing the program's positive impact. C. Haupt suggested that if the Board decides to revise Policy 151 to require data collection moving forward, it should first gather the appropriate assessment tools, noting that Janine had compiled a resource list of scales, inventories, and reading systems. She also questioned whether similar documented evidence has been required of other district-approved programs and urged the Board to maintain the therapy dog program for the benefit of students and the community. A. Matika thanked C. Haupt for her comments and closed the public comment period.

1.9. Reports

Reports will be given at this time.

1.9.A. Student Board Representatives Report

A. Danner shared academic updates, noting that the high school hosted SAT testing on October 3, the first marking period will conclude on October 28, and National Honor Society application letters were recently distributed to eligible students. A. Danner also reported that science students and teachers gathered at the stadium early on the morning of October 15 to observe the International Space Station pass overhead. A. Dugan provided an athletics and community recognition update, congratulating the fall sports teams—including cross country, field hockey, and soccer—on qualifying for districts and recognizing seniors honored during fall senior nights. He added that winter sports practices had begun following an informational meeting on October 6, the field hockey team honored their favorite teachers prior to their October 1 game, and the volleyball team hosted its annual charity match on October 15. R. Abelovsky reported on recent school activities, highlighting the October 22 pep rally and picture retakes, the October 23 homecoming game, and the October 24 homecoming dance, which featured a "Neon Moon Hideaway" theme and sets built by the student council. She also noted that a Jostens representative visited in October to discuss class rings with sophomores and cap and gown orders with seniors. Following the report, A. Matika thanked the representatives, and W. Howland extended appreciation to retired teacher Mr. Borowski, Mr. Bond, and other staff members for dedicating their personal time to help construct the homecoming sets.

1.9.B. Business Administrator Report

C. Lionetti stated that year-to-date, the district received $20.7 million (40.3%) of its $51.4 million general fund revenue budget, compared to $16.9 million (33.9%) during the same period in the prior fiscal year, attributing the $3.8 million variance to previous delays in state budget funding. Regarding general fund expenses, the district incurred $14.6 million (28.2%) of its $51.5 million budget, compared to $13.7 million (27.3%) the prior year, an anticipated difference of approximately $861,000 primarily driven by contractual wage, salary, and benefit increases. Following the report, D. Bradley questioned C. Lionetti regarding the Condensed Board Summary Report, noting that several individual budget line items—including on pages 8, 24, 33, 37, and 38—exceeded 100% of their budgeted allocations without prior fund transfers. D. Bradley asserted that expending funds in excess of budgeted line items without prior Board authorization violates Section 609 of the Pennsylvania School Code. D. Hartley and D. Bradley requested guidance from Solicitor T. Gilsbach on how to legally remediate the over-expended line items, while public commenter W. Zlomsowitch interjected during the exchange. T. Gilsbach stated that while Section 609 does not specify a penalty, he would review the financial reports and provide the Board with formal guidance on proper remediation steps. Board members L. Frey, T. Tkach, J. Glaush, and D. Hartley discussed the oversight of incoming bills, the timing of when the discrepancies were first noticed, the role of the contracted business services firm (EDM), and the need to inform the full Board promptly when financial concerns arise. To resolve the issue moving forward, Superintendent J. Moser confirmed that he would coordinate with T. Gilsbach, C. Lionetti, and Board Treasurer L. Frey to establish a mechanism ensuring funds are formally transferred prior to exceeding any budgeted line item.

1.9.C. LCCC Representative Report
October 2026 President's Desk Newsletter

A. Matika noted that LCCC Representative Mr. Krause was not in attendance and did not submit a report.

1.9.D. CLIU Representative Report

- Vision Services Video

J. Glaush reported on recent Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit (CLIU) presentations covering Curriculum and Instruction Services as well as Vision Services, which included a hands-on braille deciphering activity for board members. He also shared that CLIU recently hosted a Variety Bike presentation, attended by Palmerton Area School District representative S. Haas, during which eight students received adapted bicycles at no cost. J. Glaush then presented an informational video highlighting CLIU's Vision Services program, featuring orientation and mobility training, braille instruction, assistive technology, and the use of a therapy dog (Gemma Sky) to help visually impaired students develop tracking and academic skills. Following the video, J. Glaush noted that the therapy dog had also attended the CLIU presentation and expressed his intention to share a video of the adapted bike presentation next month.

1.9.E. CCTI Representative Report
CCTI Promotional Video

H. Neff provided an update on behalf of Carbon Career and Technical Institute (CCTI) and Mr. Reinbold, reminding the Board that ninth-grade tours are scheduled for November and are open to administrators, staff, and teachers. She announced the recent hiring of Mrs. Mauer as the new Adult Education Site Supervisor and Mr. Van Norman as the new Administrative Director, effective January 4, 2027. H. Neff also reminded the community that the Harvest Cafe will be open to the public for its final session of the year on November 13 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. via online RSVP, noting that she and Superintendent J. Moser recently attended and praised the culinary arts students. She then shared a promotional video featuring CCTI's 14 technical programs—including auto collision repair, carpentry, engineering, cosmetology, electrical, and healthcare—and the post-secondary career, apprenticeship, military, and college pathways available to students. Following the video, J. Glaush suggested that the district consider producing similar promotional videos for its elementary, middle, and high schools to highlight Lehighton Area School District's offerings.

1.9.F. Lehighton Memorial Library Representative Report
D. Hartley stated that there was no new report from the Lehighton Area Memorial Library and encouraged community members to check the library's page for upcoming activities for both youth and older adults.

1.9.G. Superintendent Report
J. Moser began with the monthly Safe2Say Something update covering September 26 through October 26, reporting a total of 16 tips: three threats against a person, three unknown tips, two instances of bullying/cyberbullying, two drug distribution reports, two inappropriate online communications, one report of depression/anxiety, one hate crime/discrimination report, one smoking report, and one report of suicide ideation. He confirmed that the most serious matters were addressed and closed, and noted that the administration will conduct quarterly reviews to identify trends. In response to a question from D. Bradley regarding whether the district tracks whether tips originate from students, staff, or parents, J. Moser explained that the program's anonymity prevents tracking the source, though it provides a vital avenue for students to report concerns confidentially. J. Moser next provided updates on upcoming budget preparations for the 2027–2028 fiscal year, noting that the district is awaiting mid-November state award announcements for its $1.9 million Pennsylvania School Facility Improvement Grant application (with a 25% district match) to fund a high school roof recoating project. He added that the administration is analyzing multi-year enrollment projections, course demand, and academic intervention needs alongside upcoming November 1 early retirement incentive notices to develop a concrete staffing plan. Finally, J. Moser clarified the Annual Financial Report (AFR) submission process, explaining that while the statutory deadline is October 31, the Pennsylvania Department of Education automatically grants a 30-day extension to November 30, and administrative submission awaits preliminary verification from the district's auditors. D. Bradley commented on the Board's oversight responsibilities regarding the AFR deadline, requested more user-friendly formatting for preliminary financial spreadsheets, and inquired about approximately $250,000 coded under "extra salary" (codes 10-1110-122/123) across district buildings. J. Moser and C. Lionetti indicated that the category likely includes contractual stipends, class coverage, and voluntary after-school professional development, and agreed to verify the exact breakdown and provide a definitive response to the Board.

The discussion continued regarding the Annual Financial Report (AFR) submission timeline, with J. Moser reiterating that he would not sign the AFR verification form until the district's auditors preliminarily confirm the accuracy of the figures, noting that the state provides an automatic 30-day extension past October 31. D. Bradley asserted that the Pennsylvania School Code provides mechanisms to amend filings after submission and expressed concern regarding Board oversight of ongoing budget discrepancies, leading to a brief exchange with L. Frey, T. Tkach, and W. Zlomsowitch.

J. Moser then presented a preliminary financial analysis of the 2025–2026 AFR data, reporting that actual revenues came in approximately $343,930 below the original $49,756,162 projection—refuting past assertions that the administration intentionally underestimates revenues—and that the report anticipates an overall deficit of approximately $3.1 million. J. Moser explained that nearly $2.7 million of the deficit stemmed from two primary drivers: an initial $355,000 deficit resulting from a tax reduction adopted with the final budget, and approximately $2.3 million in unanticipated special education (1200-level) outplacement tuition, related services, and transportation costs through the Intermediate Unit and BHA. To address and reduce this deficit moving forward, J. Moser detailed targeted measures taken by the administration, including expanding in-district special education staffing and professional development, which has successfully reduced outplacement tuitions from 47 students to 24. He praised district staff for adapting to these programmatic changes to support both students and the district's long-term financial sustainability.

J. Moser concluded his presentation on expenditure monitoring and opened the floor for questions. D. Bradley inquired about returning students and the source of funds used to cover a $2.3 million budget deficit. J. Moser estimated that approximately 27 to 28 students had returned through BHA and the Intermediate Unit, and clarified that the $2.3 million covered monthly student tuition costs for outside services. Following a brief exchange with W. Zlomsowitch regarding local taxation, D. Bradley emphasized the need for fiscal restraint, tax reductions, and aligning staffing levels with a roughly 10% decline in enrollment over recent years. J. Moser agreed that enrollment was projected to remain steady over the next five years.

D. Bradley then asked C. Lionetti about the district's current fund balance. C. Lionetti stated that when the budget was passed in July, the anticipated starting fund balance across all four categories for the 2026–2027 school year was $9.5 million, which accumulated over prior years primarily from local revenues exceeding expenditures. In response to a question from A. Matika regarding the remaining $450,000 variance, J. Moser noted that he and C. Lionetti would continue analyzing the data, though the primary drivers had already been identified.

W. Howland asked about the projected deficit for the current fiscal year compared to the prior year's $3.1 million deficit and the originally budgeted $70,000 figure. J. Moser explained that while salary expenses were tracking higher than originally budgeted, savings from reduced outplacement tuition costs and prior staffing adjustments were expected to more than offset the increase, though future budget transfers would be required. He added that while a year-end deficit remained likely, it was projected to be significantly lower than $3.1 million—potentially under $300,000—and C. Lionetti concurred with this assessment. Finally, D. Bradley asked about potential changes to the district's assessed property values and mentioned a commercial assessment appeal involving Walmart in Mahoning Township. C. Lionetti confirmed that updated county projections would not be released until January, and noted that he and the Superintendent were actively monitoring commercial assessment appeals, including the Walmart challenge.

1.10. Minutes
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by H. Neff, to approve the Minutes of the September 28, 2026 Board Meeting and the October 13, 2026 Workshop Meeting.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2. Financial Matters

2.1. * Consent Agenda
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by W. Howland, to approve Consent Agenda Items *2.2-*2.3

Roll Call Vote:

	Yes	No	Absent	Abstension
Ms. Heather Neff, Vice-President	X	0	0	0
Mr. Timothy Tkach, Member	X	0	0	0
Ms. Joy Beers, Member	0	0	X	0
Mr. David Bradley, Member	0	X	0	0
Ms. Lory Frey, Treasurer	X	0	0	0
Mr. Jeremy Glaush, Member	X	0	0	0
Ms. Denise Hartley, Member	X	0	0	0
Dr. William Howland, Member	X	0	0	0
Dr. Alex Matika, President	X	0	0	0

Vote: YES - 7 NO - 1 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.2. * SkyCiv Structural Analysis and Simulation
Approve the purchase of SkyCiv Structural Analysis and Simulation Software for use by LAHS Science Olympiad students participating in structural design and engineering competitions at a cost of $50 paid out of the LAHS Science Olympiad Budget.

Sky Civ is a simulation software package that allows students to test structural designs before actually building them for competition. This will allow them to design and test several models and fine tune before construction. This is a valuable tool to eliminate hours of trial and error.
https://skyciv.com/olympiad/#content

2.3. * Bluewave Technology Group
Approve a Non-Disclosure Agreement with Bluewave Technology Group, enabling the District to provide Accounts Payable and vendor invoice data for a no-cost Rapid Technology Assessment to identify potential operating expense savings across the District's IT and telecommunications infrastructure.

Bluewave Technology Group serves as an independent technology advisor and sourcing partner that helps school districts optimize their IT, cybersecurity, cloud, and telecommunications operations focusing on potential operating expenses reductions. Depending on the size of the school district, Bluewave projects annual expense savings in the 3 to 10 percent range by informing the school district of potential billing errors, eliminating redundant services, and perhaps renegotiating vendor contracts across connectivity, voice systems, cloud, and wireless plans.

Bluewave provides a no-cost, risk-free Rapid Technology Assessment through the evaluation of 12 months of expense data within 7 to 10 business days following the financial data collection. There is minimal time commitment from district staff. The district retains 100% of all identified savings; Bluewave does not take a contingency fee or percentage of cost reductions.

To execute the rapid assessment, the Board of School Directors is requested to approve a non-disclosure and authorization agreement. Once approved, the school district provides the following simple steps to initiate the review: 12 months of Accounts Payable (AP) data for IT and telecom expenditures, one month of recent vendor IT/telecom invoices and a brief discovery conversation with the district's IT Director. Upon completion, Bluewave delivers a detailed Summary of Findings, and potential actionable recommendations to reduce total cost.

2.4. Donations/Local Grants
MOTION by D. Hartley, SECONDED by , to accept the following donations:

- $989.28 from the Carbon County Commissioners to cover the remaining expenses from the 2026 BRAVE Camp. The camp was fully covered by the Carbon County Opioid Settlement Funds.
- Various Hula Hoops from Giant Food Stores to the Elementary Center to be used for Health/Wellness/Physical Education.
- Various school supplies to be donated by Walmart to the Elementary Center.
- Aqua Style Creations (certified aquascape contractor- Robert Anthony) to donate time and resources to do repairs to the Middle School pond as well as Winter closure and Spring maintenance to reopen the pond in order to keep the fish safe and the pond looking its best. *(Winterizing the pond helps to protect the equipment, fish, and water quality during colder months. They will also repair and replace any damaged equipment. Estimated total repairs and maintenance is likely to exceed the allotted amount for winter closure and the company has offered to donate their services and materials.)*

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

J. Glaush and J. Moser gave appreciative remarks for the donations.

2.5. Food Service Transfers
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by H. Neff, to make the following transfer from the General Fund to the Food Service Fund as per the Reimbursements from the Commonwealth:

September 2026
NSLP Lunch Federal $101,997.74
NSLP Breakfast Federal $36,308.15
NSLP State Lunch $3,731.84
NSLP State Breakfast $12,455.56
CACFP Child & Adult Care Food Program $6,482.08

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.6. EDM Financial August 2026 Itemized Invoice
MOTION by D. Bradley, SECONDED by J. Glaush, to approve the itemized invoice for EDM Financial for August 2026 that was pulled out from the September 28, 2026 Board Meeting Payment of Bills.

J. Moser confirmed whether the expanded detail met the board's expectations, and A. Matika affirmed it was sufficient.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.7. EDM Financial September 2026 Itemized Invoice
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by D. Hartley, to approve the September 2026 itemized invoice for EDM Financial for payment to be printed and sent on October 27, 2026.

In response to a question from L. Frey regarding why it was listed as a standalone action item rather than under payment of bills, J. Moser explained it was separated to allow the board to review the new formatting without delaying other bills, noting future invoices would return to the standard bills payable list.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.8. Greatmats - EC Safe Room
MOTION by D. Hartley, SECONDED by H. Neff, to approve the quote with Greatmats for 32 safety wall pads and 4 cut out inserts to be utilized in the Elementary Center Safe Room.

The recommendation is to go with Greatmats due to the ability to have them customized to fit our wall appliances (ex. outlets, thermostat ect.).

W. Howland inquired about usage protocols, staffing, and policies for the room. J. Moser stated the district would follow Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recommendations and develop administrative regulations, noting the room would be accessible from the hallway and staffed by trained behavioral technicians. S. Michalik added that staff were trained in de-escalation and restorative practices, and explained that the space would serve both as a sensory room and a preventative, cushioned environment to keep physically aggressive students safe without resorting to restraints. Following a question from public attendee W. Zlomsowitch regarding the room's purpose and an inquiry from L. Frey about funding—which J. Moser confirmed would be covered by ACCESS funding rather than the general budget.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

Before moving to the next item, D. Bradley remarked that the itemized EDM invoices reflected just under 100 hours of work per month, praising the cost efficiency compared to past staffing, while L. Frey noted the recent monthly bills still exceeded $15,000. Finally, under item 2.9, D. Bradley moved to approve the per capita and occupational tax exemptions, which passed unanimously, and suggested publishing an announcement to inform retirees of their eligibility for the tax break.

2.9. Per Capita/Occupational Tax Exemptions
MOTION by D. Bradley, SECONDED by J. Glaush, to approve the Per Capita and/or Occupational Tax Exemptions.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.10. Per Capita/Occupational Tax Refunds
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by L. Frey, to approve the Per Capita and/or Occupational Tax refunds.

-Georgine Shupp - 2025 & 2026 Occupation Tax - $245.00 - Retired

D. Bradley requested that J. Moser and the district solicitor post information on the district website to notify residents of available tax exemptions and refunds, which J. Moser noted.

J. Glaush suggested creating a dedicated section on the website for taxpayers—similar to existing sections for students and parents—to inform residents of their rights and streamline the refund process. D. Bradley agreed, noting that providing clear information on retirement exemptions, job changes, assessment appeals, and payment assistance could help residents avoid delinquent tax collections through Portnoff Law Associates, which currently involved 89 active cases. A. Matika added that information on the Homestead/Farmstead exclusion could also be helpful, and D. Bradley volunteered to compile a concise list of items for the website rather than lengthy text, which J. Glaush supported along with potentially including financial charts.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.11. Activities Funds
MOTION by L. Frey, SECONDED by H. Neff, to approve the Lehighton Area High School and Lehighton Area Middle School Activities Funds for September, 2026.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.12. Financial Reports
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by L. Frey, to approve the Financial Reports for September 2026.

September 2026
Condensed Board Summary
Expenditure Report
Revenue Report
Treasurer's Report
Fund Summary

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

2.13. Payment of Bills
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by L. Frey, to approve the following payment of bills for October 2026:

October 2026

General Fund:	
--Non-Negotiable	$ 23,865.87
--Regular Checks	$2,655,204.52
--Credit Card	$ 0.00
Debit Card:	$ 1,645.51
Payroll (Month):	$1,550,596.61
Food Service Fund:	$ 149,966.87
Total:	**$4,381,279.38**

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

3. Personnel

3.1. * Consent Agenda
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by H. Neff, to approve Consent Agenda items *3.2-*3.6.

J. Glaush expressed gratitude on behalf of the board to the retiring teachers and staff listed under item 3.4. A. Matika echoed this appreciation, noting that the retiring employees represented nearly 200 combined years of service to the district.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

3.2. * Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager
Approve the following Candidates for Athletic Coaching/Manager positions:

2026-2027 Fall Season
Anthony Thomas - Volleyball Announcer at $40.00 per game.

2026-2027 Spring Season
Gwen Remaley - Assistant Track and Field Coach at a stipend of $3,925.07.

3.3. * Candidates for Extracurricular Activity Advisor Positions
Approve the following Candidates for Extracurricular Positions:

Lydia Weller - Extracurricular Stage Manager at a stipend of $1,700.00.

3.4. * Resignations for Retirement
Approve the following resignations for retirement with appreciation:

Bernard Nalesnik - Middle School Social Studies Teacher effective at the end of the 2026-2027 school year after 31.93 years of service to the District.
Rhonda Zerbe - Elementary Center Teacher effective at the end of the 2026-2027 school year after 32.89 years of service to the District.
Rebecca Tite - Middle School Librarian effective at the end of the 2026-2027 school year after 14.88 years of service to the District.
Diane Brownmiller - Elementary Center Librarian effective at the end of the 2026- 2027 school year after 19.81 years of service to the District.
Ann Shoenberger - Elementary Center Paraprofessional effective at the end of the day on January 4, 2027 after 26.84 years of service to the District.
Julie Willet - Elementary Center Paraprofessional effective at the end of the day on January 4, 2027 after 26.84 years of service to the District.

3.5. * Professional Development
Approve the following Professional Development Opportunities:

Employees #532, #1852, and #1928 to attend the 2026 SAS Institute in Hershey, PA, December 7-9, 2026, at total cost not to exceed $3,000 to be paid out of the 2026/2027 professional development budget.

3.6. * Requests for FMLA Leave
Acknowledge the following employee requests for FMLA, not to exceed 12 weeks:

Employee # 927 - FMLA beginning September 7, 2026.

3.7. Candidates for Employment
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by W. Howland, to approve the following candidates for employment in accordance with the respective contracts, pending any necessary paperwork:

Melena Koutch - long-term substitute for speech and language therapist at a Step I Master's Degree and a salary of $58,700, prorated for the 2026-2027 school year, effective October 6, 2026, pending any necessary documentation.
Joseph Zarelli - mentor for Melena Koutch Long-Term Substitute Speech Therapist

In response to a question from D. Hartley regarding compensation for Joseph Zarelli, J. Moser clarified that mentor compensation is already established under the existing contract. D. Bradley noted the retroactive start date of October 6 for Melena Koutch, and J. Moser explained that he had issued an emergency hiring letter under district policy to ensure student services continued without exceeding state-mandated caseload limits. L. Frey also inquired whether the district would replace a paraprofessional retiring on November 2; J. Moser stated the administration was conducting a full staffing review before making any replacement decisions after the holidays, a cautious approach D. Bradley commended.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

3.8. Candidates for the Substitute List
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by H. neff, to approve the following Candidates for Substitute Positions, pending any necessary paperwork:

Devin Dunwoodie - Substitute Behavioral Technician at the Substitute Teacher daily rate.
Lori German - Substitute Nurse (Substitute Teacher daily rate) & Substitute Secretary (Substitute Support hourly rate)
Susan McHale - Substitute Paraprofessional & Substitute Secretary
Destany DeLorenzo - Substitute Paraprofessional
Brianna Borosh - Substitute Paraprofessional
Julia Spencer - Substitute Lunch Aide
Sara Zaino - Prospective Teacher Substitute (according to PDE Act 86 of 2016)

D. Bradley inquired about how substitute usage impacts the budget and emphasized that strong staff attendance both saves money and ensures consistent student instruction, with which J. Moser agreed. D. Hartley then asked for clarification regarding PDE Act 86 of 2016 in reference to the prospective teacher substitute role. J. Partenio and J. Moser explained that the legislation allows student teachers to serve as paid substitute teachers for up to 10 days exclusively within the classroom where they are completing their placement.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

3.9. Pre-Approval of Employee Continuing Education Programs/Courses
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by T. Tkach, to approve the following requests for pre-approval of Courses/Programs of Study for employee continuing education:

Employee #1936 - January 11-May 5, 2027/Science of Reading Certificate Program (DeSales University - up to $602.00 per credit for up to 6 credits).

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

4. Programs

4.1. Middle School Enrichment Journeys– Academic, Extracurricular Approved Clubs, Band and Chorus Performance, and CCTI Exploration Visits for 8th grade
MOTION by J. Glaush, SECONDED by W. Howland, to approve 2026-2027 off-campus Middle School learning trips for invited classes, clubs, and student groups visiting local educational, artistic, civic, and industry sites.

These experiential learning visits provide students with direct exposure to career pathways, civic processes, regional history, and hands-on scientific concepts that extend classroom instruction into real-world settings. Students will be transported either by walking, school vans, or buses funded through LAMS budget projections and activity funds. All outings will be fully chaperoned by district faculty and staff with required permissions and safety protocols maintained prior to each trip. Any additional chaperones required will follow the appropriate Board Policy.

Purpose:
To support student engagement in community service, artistic performance, and academic enrichment through meaningful, real-world experiences that promote leadership, civic responsibility, and intellectual growth and to provide meaningful experiential learning opportunities that promote physical wellness, mental health awareness, and student leadership development.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

4.2. School Enrichment Journeys
MOTION by D. Hartley, SECONDED by H. Neff, to approve the following School Enrichment Journey requests:

- **LAMS Gifted/WSCM (Anna Leigh Conway)** - *(Retroactive)* October 21, 2026 - 8:00 AM-2:00 PM - Manufacturer Location TBD - To film and conduct interviews for What's So Cool About Manufacturing? Competition.
- **LAMS FBLA (Kevin Kotch)** - *(Retroactive)* October 21, 2026 - 7:30 AM-2:30 PM - ESU Innovation Center - Regional Leadership Workshop.
- **LAHS Physics Class (Doug Bowman)** - May 20, 2027 - 8:00 AM-7:00 PM - Knoebels Grove - Amusement Park Physics Labs at Knoebels.
- **LAEC Student Leadership/Gifted (William Schoener)** - Date TBD - 8:45 AM-1:00 PM - PBS39 @ Univest Public Media Center - Broadcasting, Communication, Teamwork & Leader.
- **LAMS 6-8th (Carrie Kenny)** - October 28 & November 3, 2026 - 8:30-11:30 AM - Apollo Farms - Intro to farm, benefits of working with animals.
- **LAHS Life Skills (Amanda Yusella)** - November 3, 2026 - 7:30 AM-1:30 PM - DaVinci Science Center - Fab Lab with OVR.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

4.3. Use of School Property
MOTION by H. Neff, SECONDED by D. Hartley, to approve Use of School Property for the following requests:

- **LAHS Jazz Band (Bryan & Brenda Buffington)** - November 20, 2026 - 3:00-4:00 PM & 5:30-8:30 PM (Set up)/November 21, 2026 - 1:00-9:00 PM (Set up & Dinner)/November 22, 2026 - 1:00-9:00 PM (Rain/Snow Date) - Elementary Center Cafeteria & Classroom - Jazz Band Spaghetti Dinner.
- **LABC (Richard Fronheiser)** - January 17, 2027 - 6:00 AM-4:00 PM - High School Gym - Home Wrestling Match.
- **LABC (Richard Fronheiser)** - December 13, 2026 -6:00 AM-4:00 PM - High School Gym - Home Wrestling Match.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

5. Miscellaneous

5.1. Superintendent Goals
A. Matika explained that following recent discussions with J. Moser, the board and superintendent collaboratively developed a set of five objective performance standards—covering strategic planning, academic achievement, facilities, academic growth, and Act 13 indicators—to be incorporated into Standard Nine of the superintendent evaluation for the 2026–2027 academic year. Although this was listed as an informational item, A. Matika wished to formally add and approve the Superintendent Goals.

MOTION by A. Matika, SECONDED by J. Glaush to add and approve the Superintendent goals that were posted and agreed upon for the 26-27 school year.

During board discussion, W. Howland thanked J. Moser for voluntarily agreeing to the more detailed standards, noting they were not required under his existing contract, and J. Glaush clarified that approving them would establish a memorandum of understanding. D. Bradley noted that incorporating objective standards was necessary to ensure statutory compliance and thanked J. Moser for accepting them. J. Glaush and A. Matika both praised the collaborative process, noting it effectively aligned the district's needs and vision and resulted in an exceptionally thorough set of goals compared to neighboring districts. Before calling for a vote, A. Matika opened the floor for public comment on the motion, and attendee W. Zlomsowitch expressed support for J. Moser's performance.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

6. Old Business

6.1. Therapy Dog
A. Matika thanked C. Haupt for her advocacy and for collecting student and family testimonials demonstrating the program's positive emotional and academic impact. While acknowledging that therapy dogs are not ideal for every student, A. Matika recommended continuing the program—deferring the operational timeline to the administration—while revisiting and tightening the governing policy. J. Glaush agreed with incorporating C. Haupt's suggestions and adding formal reporting mechanisms, noting that certain oversight details may have been overlooked when the program was initially launched.

A. Matika then invited D. Hartley and D. Bradley to share whether their prior questions to J. Moser had been adequately addressed. D. Hartley stated that while she supported the concept of therapy dogs, the district's implementation did not align with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD) framework, which operates as a volunteer organization whose insurance applies strictly to volunteer work. C. Haupt interjected to clarify that she maintains her own personal liability insurance in addition to her ATD certification for this reason. D. Hartley argued against passing dogs among multiple staff handlers, maintaining that paid teachers and staff should focus on instructing students rather than caring for animals, and raised concerns regarding students with dog allergies or fears avoiding areas such as the nurse's office or the school police station. She recommended utilizing an outside professional therapy dog organization instead. D. Bradley echoed concerns that deviating from ATD best practices led to a recent incident in which a young student was bitten in the face. He urged the board to prioritize core academics and essential needs over discretionary programs, and requested that ATD guidelines be distributed to the board and public.

C. Haupt requested the opportunity to respond, though D. Hartley stated she preferred hearing directly from ATD representatives. N. Collier clarified that the dog involved in the bite incident (Ruger) had only one handler—a paraprofessional rather than a teacher—and noted that the secondary handlers for C. Haupt's dog (Angelo) were primarily administrators and a social worker rather than classroom teachers. D. Bradley asserted that the board was receiving conflicting information and called for a formal fact-finding hearing to review documentation, witness accounts, and dog ownership records prior to making any policy decisions. D. Hartley noted that according to ATD records, C. Haupt's husband was listed as the primary licensed handler for Angelo and C. Haupt as the secondary owner, which C. Haupt confirmed while noting she had just received her updated 2027 ATD handler's manual.

After A. Matika restored order during interruptions from the audience, C. Haupt addressed the board at length. She agreed with holding a formal hearing and explained that staff handlers were part of the program's original board-approved design, noting that dogs were often handled during prep periods, lunch breaks, or by non-instructional staff. She detailed the rigorous ATD certification process—which requires evaluations across public and medical facilities by a certified observer—to refute claims that staff handlers lacked professional credentials. C. Haupt further explained that while her ATD insurance covered outside volunteer work, she and her husband carried private insurance covering school incidents in compliance with District Policy 151. In response to a question from J. Moser regarding whether her private policy extended to Angelo's additional handlers, C. Haupt stated she would verify the exact policy language, recalling prior reviews conducted with district legal counsel.

A discussion ensued regarding the conflation of C. Haupt's certified dog (Angelo) with the dog involved in the bite incident (Ruger), which C. Haupt confirmed was owned and handled at the time of the incident by paraprofessional Rachel Atwood. D. Bradley questioned whether R. Atwood's certification, medical records, incident history, and daily schedule had been provided, and raised additional questions regarding the extent of the student's injuries, union notifications, insurance carriers, and Dog Warden reports. J. Moser stated that many of those answers had already been provided to the board via email, and A. Matika cautioned against disclosing confidential personnel or student details in public session before calling the meeting to order to hear public comment. C. Haupt added that those questions had previously been addressed at the October 13 board meeting, which D. Bradley disputed.

A. Matika yielded the floor for public comment, and parent and district alumna A. Honchell addressed the board. She first expressed dismay over D. Bradley's earlier reference to the audience as a "peanut gallery" in front of her second-grade daughter, before sharing how the therapy dog program had helped her daughter overcome a severe fear of dogs and sensory challenges. A. Honchell noted that she had signed a parental opt-in release form for her daughter to interact with the therapy dogs, which provided vital emotional support during a difficult first-grade year, and urged the board not to eliminate the program. In response to a question from D. Bradley regarding a comment she made about a prior issue with a teacher, A. Honchell confirmed the matter had been formally addressed with the building principal and school staff.

J. Glaush asked A. Honchell how the impression spread that the board intended to terminate the program, clarifying that the board's goal was to refine and strengthen the program rather than eliminate it. C. Haupt explained that at the October 13 meeting, J. Moser had outlined three possible options—continuing the program as is, continuing with modifications, or discontinuing it entirely—and maintained that sharing all possibilities with the community was a matter of transparency. J. Glaush criticized C. Haupt for unnecessarily alarming families and students, while D. Hartley contended that C. Haupt's advocacy represented a conflict of interest as a paid district employee. Both J. Glaush and D. Bradley emphasized that the board wanted the program to succeed safely, and N. Collier and A. Honchell clarified for D. Bradley that parents were already required to affirmatively opt in to the program through annual school registration forms.

Before concluding her remarks, C. Haupt recommended that if the board held a formal hearing, it should also examine the hourly cost of hiring an outside therapy dog provider. D. Bradley questioned C. Haupt on how a teacher balances instructional duties with supervising a therapy dog, to which C. Haupt responded that her dog remained on a "place" command without physical contact during instruction, though she acknowledged that a single staff member held responsibility for both the students and the animal. D. Bradley argued that safety required separating those roles by using a dedicated handler, drawing a comparison to his preference for dedicated school security personnel over sworn police officers who arrest the students, and suggested that students with specific needs could pursue individual accommodations through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). A. Honchell maintained that the program benefited the broader student body, and D. Bradley reiterated his call for a transparent, fact-based hearing rather than emotional appeals. A. Matika restored order following another brief exchange over the "peanut gallery" remark, confirmed that program logistics would be addressed during the upcoming policy review, and opened the floor for one final public comment on the topic.

P. Searfoss, a district parent, taxpayer, and teacher, addressed the board to request factual clarification regarding how the therapy dog program relates to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and student eligibility. She also challenged J. Glaush's earlier implication regarding how rumors of the program's elimination spread, stating she had not shared misinformation on social media and asking him to clarify his "rabble-rousing" comment. During a tense exchange in which D. Bradley argued that public advocacy pushes the board in the right direction, A. Matika used the gavel to restore order after P. Searfoss objected to being interrupted by D. Bradley. N. Collier and D. Hartley briefly debated whether paid district staff could simultaneously act as unpaid volunteers, prompting J. Moser to intervene and ask the board for clear direction on next steps.

D. Bradley moved to schedule a formal hearing to swear in witnesses and collect all facts surrounding the recent incident. H. Neff opposed a formal hearing, instead suggesting a special public meeting to review data calmly once additional information was gathered, which A. Matika echoed. D. Hartley then directed legal questions to Atty. T. Gilsbach regarding the liability and employment status of a paraprofessional whose dog bit a student while on duty, as well as how board and insurance policies would apply to teachers handling a dog during school hours. Atty. T. Gilsbach stated he needed more factual details and documentation before rendering a definitive legal opinion. D. Bradley added questions regarding whether the board had formally authorized the paraprofessional as a handler and which insurance policies covered the incident. D. Hartley emphasized that while the community supported the program, a negative incident had exposed gaps in the original policy that needed to be corrected before moving forward, including verifying C. Haupt and B. Haupt's private insurance coverage.

J. Moser recommended against continuing the status quo, stating that the overlapping roles of paid school employees and dog handlers created blurred lines of responsibility. Instead, he proposed transitioning to a strictly volunteer-based model in which outside, non-employee volunteers bring certified therapy dogs into the buildings on a targeted, scheduled basis, eliminating concerns over employee supervision and compensation while accommodating students who prefer to avoid dogs. C. Haupt agreed with recruiting certified community volunteers, and J. Moser noted the board could pursue this forward-looking framework without holding a formal hearing on past events. D. Bradley disagreed, arguing that transparent governance required collecting all data and holding a public hearing or listening session—citing past district controversies as cautionary examples—before drafting policy changes.

J. Glaush countered that the community overwhelmingly supported saving the program and that the board should focus on revising its policies rather than holding a large public hearing. D. Hartley noted that contacting organizations such as Alliance of Therapy Dogs to recruit outside volunteers could take several months and urged the board to begin outreach promptly. J. Glaush asked whether C. Haupt could bring her dog on a targeted basis or meet with students outside of school while the policy was being updated; N. Collier noted that therapeutic support cannot always be scheduled in advance, while C. Haupt and D. Hartley noted that C. Haupt already volunteers once a month at the local library. D. Bradley reiterated his call for a formal listening session with stakeholders prior to writing new policy, and A. Matika concluded the discussion by noting the board was forming a framework to move forward.

6.2. Traffic Signal

J. Glaush requested an update regarding the status of the traffic signal project. J. Moser reported that the district and its legal representatives—including McNees and formerly Fox Rothschild—had made seven separate inquiries to the state seeking a status update. He clarified that the district does not contest its obligation to install the signal and is eager to proceed, noting the district holds a $230,000 Automated Red Light Enforcement (ARLE) grant earmarked for the project and faces rising construction costs each year the project is delayed. J. Moser explained that the installation plans submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) had stalled without either formal approval or denial, preventing the district from beginning construction or making necessary revisions. He added that the administration would continue pressing PennDOT and reaching out to the district's state representative and state senator to prompt a response.

During board discussion, W. Howland suggested the delay could be tied to PennDOT's own roadway reconstruction plans and remarked that St. Luke's should contribute to the project costs. J. Moser, D. Hartley, and J. Glaush noted that the original traffic study was outdated because it was conducted prior to the construction of the nearby St. Luke's facility and before changes to elementary center attendance and busing patterns. J. Moser, D. Bradley, and W. Howland expressed concern that installing a signal under the old parameters without adequate turning and stacking space could cause severe traffic backups onto Route 443. D. Bradley and J. Glaush agreed that a new traffic study was warranted and suggested having legal counsel look into requesting one, while J. Moser reiterated that the district simply needed PennDOT to issue a formal decision on the pending plan so the district could either proceed or address required revisions.

D. Hartley asked whether State Representative D. Heffley had helped secure funding and could follow up with state agencies on the signal's status, to which J. Moser clarified that the ARLE grant covered only a fraction of the total project cost. W. Howland then asked whether the district could petition to have the traffic signal obligation dismissed altogether given the prolonged state delay and escalating expenses. J. Moser confirmed that estimated project costs had roughly tripled from approximately $300,000 to around $900,000, and J. Glaush agreed that the board should explore the feasibility of revisiting the obligation.

7. New Business for Discussion

None at the time.

8. Communications

8.1. Director's Concerns

None at the time.

8.2. Public Comment

J. Orsulak, Director of Safety and Security, addressed the board to clarify earlier remarks regarding the school police department, emphasizing that the officers' primary mission is ensuring student safety, building relationships, and mentoring students rather than making arrests. D. Bradley asked whether J. Orsulak would consider relinquishing arrest authority so school officers could focus strictly on security—relying on local municipal police if an arrest became necessary—so students and staff could seek assistance without fear of arrest. J. Orsulak maintained that district students already felt comfortable approaching school police officers for support without fear. T. Tkach echoed this statement, noting that students frequently interact warmly with the officers at sporting events, extracurricular activities, and community parades, viewing them as trusted figures rather than intimidating enforcers. D. Bradley reiterated his belief that school security personnel should operate without arrest powers, citing 13 student arrests during the previous school year. A. Matika thanked J. Orsulak for the clarification and expressed the board's appreciation for the department's work.

8.3. Adjournment
MOTION by H. Neff, SECONDED by L. Frey, to adjourn the Meeting.

Vote - YES - 8 NO - 0 ABSENT - 1 ABSTENTIONS - 0

The October 26, 2026 Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Karpowicz, Board Secretary
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary