



Lehigh Valley Area School District
Administration Building - Board Room
1000 Union Street, Lehigh Valley, PA 18235
July 16, 2026 at 7:30 PM - Special Board Meeting

1. Opening Exercises

1.1. Call to Order

Board President, A. Matika called the Board Meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

1.2. Opening Exercises

Opening Exercises include the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

1.3. 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	AB	Mr. Timothy Tkach

Also Present:

Mr. Jason Moser, Superintendent

Ms. Janine Partenio, Board Recording Secretary

Melissa Stough and Family, Justin Trefsgar and Family, Leann Thomas, Fred Kemmerer, Gretchen Laviolette, Sandra Michalik and Atty Beth Shore via Google Meet.

1.4. Purpose of Special Meeting

As per the advertisement in the Times News on Tuesday, July 14, 2026: ***"The Lehigh Valley Area School District will be holding a Special Board Meeting for hiring personnel on Thursday, July 16, 2026 at 7:30 PM, in the Administration Office Boardroom at 1000 Union Street Lehigh Valley, PA 18235."***

1.5. Public Comment - Only on the Board's Proposed Approval of the Agenda as Presented or as Modified

Public comment will only be permitted to discuss whether or not an item currently listed on the draft agenda that has been posted should be on the agenda or off the agenda. No discussion on the substance of the agenda item will be permitted since the discussion will be exclusively limited to whether or not an item should appear on the agenda.

None at the time.

1.6. Approval of Agenda

MOTION by H. Neff, SECONDED by J. Glaush, to approve the agenda as presented.

YES - 7 NO - 0 ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - 0

1.7. Public Comment - Traditional Public Comment Period on Agenda Items Only

None at the time.

2. Action Items

2.1. Candidates For Employment

MOTION by H. Neff, SECONDED by L. Frey, to approve the recommended candidates for employment in accordance with the respective contracts:

Jade Ferguson - Elementary Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year at a Step 1, Bachelor's degree, and a salary of \$55,500.00, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Jade Schleicher - Elementary Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year at a Step 1, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$55,500.00, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Maya Riffert - Elementary Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year at a Step 1, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$55,500.00, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Leanne Thomas - Special Education Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year or upon release from current employer, at a Step 4, Master's degree + 30 and a salary of \$65,400.00, to be prorated commensurate with start date contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Rachel Mark - Special Education Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year or upon release from current employer, at a Step 2, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$56,500.00, to be prorated commensurate with start date contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Kelly Sullivan - Special Education Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year, at a Step 1, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$55,500.00 contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Leah Figura - Special Education Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year, at a Step 1, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$55,500.00, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Melissa Stough - Middle School English Language Arts Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year, at a Step 1, Master's degree and a salary of \$58,700.00, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Chelsea D'Ulisse - Middle School English Language Arts Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year or upon release from current employer, at a Step 12, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$69,400.00 to be prorated commensurate with start date, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Justin Trefsgar - Middle School Technology Education Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year, at a Step 1, Bachelor's degree and a salary of \$55,500.00, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Laura Blessing - High School Biology Teacher with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year, at a Step 4, Master's degree and a Step 4, Master's with a salary of \$61,700, to be prorated commensurate with start date and contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

Gregory Swatt - High School Behavioral Interventionist with an effective date beginning the 2026-2027 School Year, with a beginning pay rate of \$25.95 per hour, contingent upon the completion of all necessary paperwork and clearances.

D. Bradley raised several objections regarding a lack of documentation, requesting account codes for benefits, advertising records, applicant lists, interview notes, and committee meeting attendance. He expressed concern over the Board's lack of involvement in the hiring process relative to decreasing student enrollment, and requested an existing staffing report detailing salaries, benefits, and financial impacts.

MOTION by D. Bradley, SECONDED by J. Glaush, to table the original motion until the requested information was provided and reviewed.

A brief discussion regarding state budget allocations ensued between D. Bradley, J. Glaush, and J. Moser, with J. Moser clarifying that the actual state budget allocation fell short of district projections by approximately \$30,000.

A. Matika called for public comment on the motion to table; hearing none, a roll call vote was requested. D. Bradley requested that the motion to table be read into the record, stating the item should be tabled until the Board's questions were answered and the Board had sufficient time for review.

Roll Call Vote to Table:

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

Vote: YES - 3 NO - 4 ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - 0

Motion Failed

D. Bradley questioned how Board members could vote on the personnel recommendations without having access to the background details. Superintendent J. Moser addressed the Board to correct claims that the district was expanding its staff beyond budgeted limits. He clarified that the district had experienced 14 teacher departures through retirements and resignations, and the 12 proposed hires (11 professional faculty and one support staff) represented a net reduction of three positions district-wide. He noted that the two new special education positions would be budget-positive by reducing costly outplacement tuitions, resulting in an overall personnel expenditure decrease of \$30,365. J. Moser explained that precise healthcare projections were unavailable as current year billing was reconciled based on prior year usage, though costs were expected to decrease with fewer employees. He detailed the multi-round interview process conducted by administration, affirmed that he personally attended all final rounds, and stated that specific reference checks and interview notes remained confidential personnel matters per Board policy unless a majority of the Board directed their release. He emphasized that delaying the hires would jeopardize classroom operations, as several candidates were bound by 60-day hold periods with current employers, potentially leaving 11 classrooms vacant for the first one to two months of the school year. He concluded by explaining that the timing of final interviews and reference checks prevented the candidates from being listed on the previous workshop meeting agenda.

D. Hartley expressed concern over the 24-hour window provided to review the candidate information prior to a special meeting, suggesting that postponing the vote by a week would allow full-time working board members and the public sufficient time to evaluate the financial impact. She requested specific metrics regarding classroom sizes and data on how many students would be brought back from the Behavioral Health Associates (BHA) program through the addition of the second autistic support teacher.

J. Glaush contended that the late delivery of information was permitted under current Board policy, which he called a past mistake that should have been revised to allow Board oversight during final interviews. L. Frey questioned whether the Board historically participated in teacher interviews; J. Moser responded that some Board members observed final rounds the previous year, but none did during the current cycle. D. Bradley argued that the recruitment process should have been managed through a visible committee structure or addressed during an executive session prior to the voting meeting.

A technical debate regarding budgeting ensued between D. Bradley and J. Moser, wherein J. Moser clarified that the Social Security and PSERS reimbursement rate offset gross salary figures by roughly 50%, resulting in a net cost of about 21% before healthcare expenses. He reemphasized that placeholders for these positions were already embedded within the approved budget. D. Bradley objected to enforcement of the three-minute speaking limit during his questioning. A. Matika indicated he would not enforce the time constraint on members asking logical, direct questions that benefited the public assembly, and J. Moser agreed to present the specific enrollment and classroom numbers requested by D. Hartley.

J. Moser provided a detailed breakdown of the proposed staffing positions and their operational justifications:

- **Elementary Classrooms:** The first three candidates on the list were slated as classroom teachers (two for first grade and one for kindergarten) to maintain a district target average of approximately 20 students per class. J. Moser and D. Hartley noted that failing to fill these roles would push class sizes up significantly, which would negatively impact early literacy instruction and student performance.
- **Special Education (Autistic Support):** The next two special education positions were designated to establish two new autistic support classrooms (one for grades K–1 and another for grades 1–3). Each classroom would serve four to five students. J. Moser explained that keeping these students in-district rather than outsourcing their placement to the Intermediate Unit (IU) or Behavioral Health Associates (BHA) would save the district between \$690,000 and \$1,000,000 annually in tuition and specialized transportation costs.
- **Special Education (Learning Support):** The following two special education teachers were designated for learning support vacancies at the middle school and elementary center, stabilizing caseloads at approximately 24 students per grade level based on a 19% special education population. J. Moser noted that this selection represented an overall reduction of one learning support position at the elementary center due to previous internal transfers and resignations.
- **Middle School English Language Arts (ELA):** Two positions were designated to replace recent vacancies caused by one retirement and one resignation. J. Moser stated that failing to fill these roles would expand middle school ELA class sizes from an average of 22–24 students up to 25–27 students, severely limiting the staff's capacity to deliver remedial support periods.
- **Middle School Technology Education:** J. Moser highlighted this newly created rotation position, which had been discussed and planned since the previous summer. The course was structured to provide highly sought-after, hands-on career and technical training while simultaneously balancing elective class scheduling.
- **High School Biology:** This position replaced two retiring high school science teachers, yielding a net reduction of one science position, which J. Moser estimated would increase general science class rosters by 33% to 50%.
- **High School Behavioral Interventionist:** The final candidate was recommended for a support staff role rather than a certified professional position. This position was reallocated from a previously budgeted high school emotional support vacancy to offer targeted behavioral interventions for four to five students recently transitioned back from out-of-district BHA placements, preventing future outplacement costs estimated at \$40,000 per student. D. Hartley emphasized that providing robust high school mentorship was critical to ensuring the returned students' academic success.

J. Glaush reiterated his support for the candidates and the strategic plan to return specialized education students to district facilities, but remained critical of the administrative shift that excluded Board members from participating in final interviews. L. Frey questioned past administrative practices, prompting J. Moser to clarify that while some Board members had voluntarily observed final interview rounds during the previous year, none had been included in the current summer hiring cycle.

D. Bradley challenged the hiring model, arguing that direct Board oversight during the interview process was a necessary check and balance to mitigate equal opportunity employment risks and prevent candidate filtering. He noted that the district historically lacked a statistically representative percentage of military veterans among its 160-person teaching staff, though J. Moser pointed out that one veteran was included on the evening's list of recommended hires. J. Moser defended the integrity of the process, confirming that every applicant for the specialized and secondary openings had been granted an interview, with filtering occurring only within the high-volume elementary applicant pool. D. Bradley concluded by asserting that exclusive administrative control over screening committees risked creating an echo chamber and limited ideological and background diversity within the faculty.

A. Matika asked for any final comments prior to the vote. D. Bradley reiterated his inquiries regarding when the Board would receive the foundational applicant data, emphasizing that the Board had a legal oversight responsibility under the State Supreme Court ruling *Smith v. Richmond* to be fully informed before voting. J. Moser explicitly declined to provide the confidential application materials unless a majority of the Board voted to compel their release. D. Bradley criticized A. Matika for dismissing these concerns without convening an executive session, while J. Glaush and D. Bradley noted that the administration's restrictions limited public and Board review.

A. Matika intervened to stop the discussion, stating that the speaking time threshold had been exceeded, and directed J. Partenio to conduct the roll call vote on the original motion to approve the recommended candidates for employment.

Roll Call Vote:

	Yes	No	Absent	Abstension
Ms. Joy Beers, Member	0	0	X	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
Mr. William Howland, Member	X	0	0	0
Ms. Heather Neff, Vice-President	X	0	0	0
Mr. Timothy Tkach, Member	0	0	X	0
Mr. Alex Matika, President	X	0	0	0
Mr. David Bradley, Member	0	X	0	0

H. Neff voted Yes, with an expression of gratitude to J. Moser and the administrative team for completing the essential recruitment work required to open the classrooms on schedule for the upcoming school year.

A. Matika voted Yes, offering congratulations to the new hires.

D. Bradley voted No, stating his opposition was based on the Board rubber-stamping administrative decisions in a rushed special meeting without independent oversight, executive session review, or answers to inquiries regarding advertising and application screening.

Vote: YES - 6 NO - 1 ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - 0

Motion Passed

A. Matika noted that a simple negative vote by D. Bradley would have been sufficient, prompting brief final cross-comments from D. Bradley and J. Glaush regarding Board discussion limits before transitioning the meeting to the next agenda item.

3. Communications

3.1. Board Comment

Opportunity for Board members to offer comments related to the agenda items.

A. Matika opened the floor for final Board comments. D. Bradley characterized the evening's proceedings as a disservice to the community, asserting that information had been deliberately withheld from the Board despite ample opportunity to share it prior to the session. A. Matika countered that a majority consensus of the Board was required to compel the release of such data, to which D. Bradley responded that a logical presiding officer should provide it automatically for the public good. D. Hartley extended congratulations and wished success to all the newly appointed personnel joining the school district team.

J. Moser thanked D. Hartley and introduced the new staff members present in the audience: M. Stough (Middle School English Language Arts Teacher), L. Thomas (Elementary Autistic Support Teacher), and J. Trefsgger (Middle School Technology Education Teacher), welcoming them to the district.

3.2. Public Comment

A. Matika noted that no public comments had been submitted and called for any additional floor comments. There were none.

3.3. Adjournment

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

YES - 7 NO - 0 ABSENT - 2 ABSTENTIONS - 0

The July 16, 2026 Special Board Meeting was adjourned at 8:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Karpowicz, Board Secretary
By Janine Partenio, Recording Secretary