

Big Spring School District

Newville, Pennsylvania

Board Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2025



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1. Opening Meeting: Call to Order/Pledge - President John Wardle

The Board of School Directors for the Big Spring School District met in the Big Spring Middle School Auditorium at 7:32pm with nine (9) Board of School Directors present: John Wardle, President; Michael Hippensteel, Vice-President; Lisa Shade, Treasurer; Julie Boothe, Secretary; Seth Cornman, David Fisher, Kenneth Fisher, Frank Myers, and Robert Over.

Absent: No Absences

Others in attendance: Nicholas Guarente, Superintendent; Nadine Sanders, Assistant Superintendent; Cristy Lentz, Business Manager; Thomas King, Solicitor; Donna Minnich, Board Minutes; Rob Krepps, Director of Technology; and Darin Baughman, Technology Support.

President Wardle led all individuals present in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. Student/Staff Recognition and Board Reports – Nothing Offered

3. Reading of Correspondence – Nothing Offered

4. Recognition of Visitors - 49 visitors signed in for the meeting

5. Public Comment Period

Michael Deihl offered a prayer for the students, staff, Board, administration, and community.

Rosie McCrea expressed concern for comments made by a Board member at the February 18 meeting related to the psychological services agreement and asked the Board to put more trust in our teachers.

Lara Kauffman offered comments on Operation Lost Sheep which was renamed the Disenrollment Investigation and Grievance Committee, said the committee met its stated responsibilities and asked the Board to vote to add an agenda item to dismiss the DIG Committee since it has met its responsibilities as approved at the February 20, 2024 meeting.

Mike Byers offered comments of concern for agenda item 9g and said students receiving mental health services are protected by federal laws and violating those laws could expose the district to possible law suits. He said monitoring students receiving services would be an extraordinary overreach and asked the Board to protect the rights of students and their parents.

Tiffany Warner offered comments of concern for agenda item 9g and said students lose less instructional time because services are provided at school and students don't lose travel time to and from appointments. She said students do not miss out on learning during therapy sessions and receive their instruction at a different time.

5. Public Comment Period (continued)

Adam Oldham offered comments on bullying and said we are already committed to keeping students safe, teaching strategies which are reviewed annually with students, and we offer anti-bullying initiatives. He said the Board receives an annual report about bullying incidents as well as prevention and intervention measures being taken.

Deborah Keen offered comments on the importance of school policies and shared a story about a student from Colorado and said it is important to have policies and rules in place to protect students. She said it is incumbent on our School Board to make sure formal written policies are in place to protect innocent students and said written rules and policies should not be controversial.

6. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the [DIG Committee](#), [Committee of the Whole](#) and [Board Meeting Minutes](#) for February 18, 2025 as presented?

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mrs. Shade

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

7. Old Business – Nothing Offered

8. New Business Personnel Items - Actions Items

Unless there is an objection, we will combine all New Business Personnel Action Items listed under #8 into one motion.

8.a. Recommended Approval of Resignations

Dr. Guarente, Superintendent, received the following resignations:

- Allenna Fahnestock provided a resignation from the position of High School Paraprofessional effective June 30, 2025 for the purpose of retirement.
- Karen Hamilton provided a resignation from the position of High School Paraprofessional effective May 29, 2025 for the purpose of retirement.
- Robert McClure provided a resignation from the position of High School Physics Teacher effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year for the purpose of retirement.
- Judith Schreiber provided a resignation from the position of High School Paraprofessional for Aquatics effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year for the purpose of retirement.
- Trica Wolfe provided a resignation from the position of High School Special Education Teacher effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year for the purpose of retirement.

Dr. Nadine Sanders, Assistant Superintendent, provides the following employment update:

- Employment for Mount Rock Elementary School Custodian Summer LaFrance has concluded with Big Spring School District.

Scott Penner, Director of Athletics and Student Activities, received the following resignation:

- Dylan Johnson provided a resignation from the position of Assistant Baseball Coach.

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the conclusion of employment and resignations as presented.

8.b. Recommended Approval of Athletic Volunteers

Scott Penner, Director of Athletics and Student Activities, recommends the following volunteers:

- Mark Graham as a Volunteer Coach for the Baseball Program.
- Benjamin Motter as a Volunteer Coach for the Baseball Program.
- Scott Oburn as a Volunteer Coach for the Track Program.

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the volunteers as presented.

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mr. Cornman to combine and approve all items in New Business Personnel Action Items 8 (a) through 8 (b) as outlined and recommended above.

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

9. New Business - Actions Items

9.a. Recommended Approval of Updated Job Descriptions

The administration has updated the job descriptions listed below:

- [707 - Maintenance Technician - Facilities Systems](#)
- [709 - Maintenance Technician - Electrical & Security Systems](#)
- [710 - Maintenance Technician - General Maintenance & Plumbing](#)

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the updated job descriptions as presented.

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mrs. Shade

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

9.b. Request to Apply for a Grant

Mrs. Clarissa Nace, Middle School Principal, received a request from the following teacher to apply for a grant:

- Rebecca Whigham, Middle School Family and Consumer Science Teacher is requesting permission to apply for the [Explore.Act.Tell Grant](#) which engages young people in a project-based learning process where they will learn about and act on solving hunger and food insecurity.

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve Mrs. Whigham's request to apply for and participate in the grant as presented.

Motion by Mr. Cornman was seconded by Mr. Myers

Mr. Cornman asked if this is the exact same grant that was approved last year and Dr. Guarente said that is correct and Mrs. Shade said she reviewed it and it is the same.

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

9.c. Recommended Approval of Community Event and Building Utilization

Rebecca Whigham, Family and Consumer Science Teacher, is requesting permission to host a Community Meal Prep Event on April 6, 2025 in the FCS Classroom at the Middle School. Because the utilization request is on a Sunday, Board action is necessary.

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the event and building utilization as presented.

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mrs. Shade

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

9.d. Recommended Approval of Fundraisers

Scott Penner, Director of Athletics and Student Activities recommends approval of the following fundraisers:

- Community Discount Card Sale from May 19 - December 1, 2025 to benefit the Cheer Program.
- [Marianna Sub Sale](#) from May 19, 2025 to June 2, 2025 to benefit the Cheer Program.
- Build Your Own Succulent Pots Workshop offered by [Grayce Gardens](#) on July 17, 2025 from 1 pm to 3 pm in the High School Commons to benefit the Cheer Program.
- Bulldog Kickoff Bash on August 23, 2025 from 11 am - 3 pm at Bulldog Stadium. Vendors, car show, food trucks, chicken BBQ will be onsite and sales will benefit the Athletic Boosters.
- Bingo November, 2025 to be held at Penn Township Fire House to benefit the Athletic Boosters.

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the 2024-25 and 2025-2026 fundraisers as presented.

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mrs. Shade

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

9.e. Recommended Approval of Capital Project Fund Payment

The following invoice is for payment within the Capital Project Fund:

- Lobar Associates Inc. - [Invoice 241083-2F](#) - 1/27/25 - \$12,770.44

The administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the invoice to be paid from the Capital Project Fund. This project was approved at the April 8, 2024 Board meeting.

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mrs. Shade

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

9.f. Requested Form for Billing Services

Julie Boothe recommends that all businesses providing and billing for services provided in our schools provide our business manager with a statement that they give no financial or material benefit to any person associated with Big Spring School District, and are unaware of any financial connections to anyone from the district, other than the specific payment required by the contract to the district, paid through the business manager's office. A standard form should be developed.

Motion by Mrs. Boothe was seconded by Mr. Cornman

Mrs. Shade stated we currently have Policy 827 Conflict of Interest that already requires this process and said the Business Manager is planning to roll out reminder communications to the staff. Mr. Over said we may not need this policy and Mr. Cornman said that is correct.

Mr. Cornman withdrew his second to the motion to approve. No other second to the motion was offered so the motion was not considered for lack of a second.

9.g. Request for a Monitoring System

Julie Boothe recommends assurance of quality and best use of resources, by a monitoring system for each student enrolled in therapy services which utilize class time, so a report can be given to the board annually by administration showing improvement of measures for the students enrolled. Measures should include items monitored by the state such as attendance, PSSA and other educational benchmark measures used. The board needs data to ensure that the sacrifice of class time is showing a measurable benefit.

Motion by Mrs. Boothe was seconded by Mr. Cornman

Mrs. Shade stated she reached out to school counselors and believes the recommendation could violate HIPPA. She also said the counseling department rotates the classes students are pulled from in order to minimize academic disruption. Mr. Hippensteel asked is it in the school's interest to determine who is receiving therapy and said this is something we shouldn't be asking. Mr. Over offered a comment on his opinion and Mr. Cornman stated a point of order. Mr. Cornman said class time is being utilized and our primary goal is to educate students so he believes there should be some kind of monitoring. Mr. Over said he disagrees and believes schools are a safe place, kids need help, and this may be the only place to get the help. Mr. D. Fisher said the primary purpose of schools is education and he asked where do we draw the line. Mr. Over said he has a different philosophy and feels the first thing should be whatever kids need. Mrs. Boothe said this is a stop gap between not having a policy, said we haven't looked into if this is or isn't helping, and said if there is no monitoring system in place there is no way to know. Mrs. Shade said she has a problem with the wording measurable benefit and asked is it the districts place to define measurable benefit. Mr. Cornman said yes, it is and said our number one goal is to provide education and if academic performance is suffering, there should be a measurement. Mrs. Boothe said would it be harmful for a gathering of data for the students involved. Mr. Wardle asked if she was suggesting the administration implement a monitoring system and Mrs. Boothe said yes, specifically designed for them to gather some type of data.

Mrs. Boothe made a motion to amend the wording of the recommendation which was seconded Mr. Cornman to remove measures should include... and change to measures should be determined by administration according to our educational goals.

9.g. Request for a Monitoring System (continued)

Mrs. Kauffman stated an objection based on Act 65 saying the motion is too vague. Solicitor King said what is presented is clear and is appropriate for the Board to vote as it sees fit. Dr. Oldham offered an objection stating the motion is not worded as described by Mr. King.

Mrs. Shade made a motion to table the agenda item which was seconded by Mr. Cornman. Mr. D. Fisher said there seems to be a common understanding and Mr. Hippensteel said it may not be understood. Mr. D. Fisher said tabling is not necessary.

Voting Yes to table agenda item 9g: K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Voting No: D. Fisher, Cornman, and Boothe

Motion Carried. 6-3

9.h. Approve 2025 Summer Capital Projects

The Administration is recommending approval of the following projects to be approved so procurement may begin now to complete the projects during the Summer of 2025.

Building	Project	Budget	Quote Status	Funding Source	Description/Notes
Technology Dept.	Security Cameras	\$50,000	Not to exceed \$50,000	Grants/Capital Reserve Fund	Replace oldest security cameras
Newville Elem.	Main Sewer Line in Hallway Repair	\$15,880	Mann Plumbing	Capital Reserve Fund	Repair sewer line in hallway under floor, pipe has separated
High School & Mount Rock Elem.	Sealcoating, Line painting, Repairs	\$96,630	DB Krieg	Capital Reserve Fund	Routine maintenance
District Admin. Office	Update, Add New Wall Packs (8)	\$14,225	DeRock Electric	Capital Reserve Fund	Outside lighting, COSTARS
High School	Sidewalk Repair/Slab Jacking	\$60,000	Central PA Concrete Leveling	Capital Reserve Fund	Repairs to level up sidewalk to reduce tripping hazard and replace old fail expansion joints, COSTARS
High School	Brick Repair, Caulking, Flashing Repair, Mortar Joint & Water Repell.	\$22,945	Houck	Capital Reserve Fund	East side wall, second floor water getting behind Brick, COSTARS
Mount Rock Elem.	Hot Water Heater Replacement	\$22,750	Stouffer	Maintenance Budget	Replacement will be more energy efficient, eliminate mixing valve, and free up space in mechanical room
TOTAL		\$282,430		Note: Capital Reserve Account Balance as of 12/31/2024 = \$10,866,747.29	

9.h. Approve 2025 Summer Capital Projects (continued)

The Administration recommends the Board of School Directors approve the projects listed above and payment via the funding source noted above.

Motion by Mr. Myers was seconded by Mrs. Shade

Mr. Hippensteel said the original summer project list included speakers at Newville Elementary School and Dr. Guarente said we are not voting on that this evening but it may be included in the future.

Mr. King asked if there was a quote for security cameras and Dr. Guarente said we are approving the dollar allotment then will purchase the security cameras.

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

10. New Business - Information Item – Nothing Offered

11. Board Reports

11.a. Athletic Council - Ken Fisher, Mike Hippensteel, Frank Myers, and John Wardle – Nothing Offered

11.b. Building and Property Committee - David Fisher, Mike Hippensteel, Robert Over, and John Wardle – Nothing Offered

11.c. Capital Area Intermediate Unit - Seth Cornman [CAIU](#) – Nothing Offered

11.d. Cumberland Perry Area CTC - John Wardle and Mike Hippensteel – Mr. Wardle said he and Mr. Hippensteel attended the last meeting, said updated bids are expected for the new construction project, and said hopefully we will be able to move forward with the project.

11.e. DIG Committee - Julie Boothe, Chair Seth Cornman and Lisa Shade – Mrs. Boothe said the committee is prepared to pass items discussed this evening along to the Board, said they voted to add meetings March 31 and April 14 at 6 pm, and said the committee welcomes everyone who has suggestions or ideas for the group.

11.f. Finance Committee - Julie Boothe, Frank Myers, Robert Over, and Lisa Shade – Nothing Offered

11.g. Future Ready Comp Plan Board Reps - Ken Fisher and Lisa Shade - Nothing Offered

11.h. Policy Review and Development Committee - Seth Cornman, Julie Boothe, David Fisher, and John Wardle – Mr. Cornman said he hopes to see everyone at the March 17 meeting.

11.i. South Central Trust - Seth Cornman – Nothing Offered

11.j. Tax Collection Committee - David Fisher – Nothing Offered

11.k. Wellness Committee - Seth Cornman – Mr. Cornman said they are waiting to hear back from the stakeholders with suggested meeting dates and times.

11.l. Future Board Agenda Items – Nothing Offered

11.m. Superintendent's Report - Dr. Nicholas Guarente said the High School Musical is approaching, said a sneak preview was given to the Newville Elementary students who enjoyed it, and said tickets are available online for the March 13 – 16 shows.

Dr. Guarente shared that Newville Elementary School students participated in cross-curricular activities with High School students and enjoyed a cultural mini-festival including Spanish bingo and salsa dancing. He said High School students were great teachers and younger students also benefitted from STEM lessons focused on ice cream which highlighted solid and liquid substances. Dr. Guarente shared a Shout Out to Mrs. Oldham and Mr. Donaldson for their efforts on this successful academic venture.

Dr. Guarente said our district hosted the Bill Gillet Special Olympics swimming experience and there were lots of smiling Big Spring and consortium kids who enjoyed this great experience.

Dr. Guarente stated the Transportation RFP is open until March 14 and the mandatory pre-bid meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

12. Meeting Closing

12.a. Business from the Floor/Board Member Comment

Mr. D. Fisher said policies involving parent consent were discussed this evening and he reminded the Board he requested a policy to get ahead of this issue. He expressed surprise and concern for Big Spring's test scores. He said it is not his intention to be negative, but he wants to find out how to make this better.

Mr. Cornman said he wanted to point out places we are doing really well and mentioned extra-curricular, Business Department, and FFA accomplishments. He said Big Spring is great but said we do need to take a hard look at what and how we're teaching.

Mr. K. Fisher thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting.

Mr. Over said Big Spring rocks, asked Mr. Brown about monetary donations for SPY, and said we're still the best.

Mr. Myers said he agrees Big Spring rocks, said we have some boys and girl's wrestlers going to states, boys Basketball is playing at Valley View so he wished them luck, and said we also have swimmers going to states. He said teaching is what we're here for, we have to look at our staff and all the work they're putting in, and said he believes teachers are doing all they can to make our kid the best they can be.

Mrs. Shade said she asked questions about Orange Frog which was recently mentioned by Dr. Guarente and said she wanted to educate herself to form her own opinion. She described the book, the author, and shared an excerpt from the story. Mrs. Shade said happiness fuels success and brains become more productive, said being positive is addictive, and encouraged everyone if they are unfamiliar with something to dig in and do their own research.

12.a. Business from the Floor/Board Member Comment (continued)

Mrs. Boothe said there has been a lot of good discussion this evening and said she believes we can improve test scores and said pretending they aren't important would be overlooking one of our main responsibilities. She said family and community involvement are essential to each child's education, said we need to involve parents and communicate more with them, and said she believes in a district-wide accountability system and wants to see more of it. She said she recently spoke with a parent about bullying and said she knows we can do better.

Mr. Hippensteel thanked Mr. Brown, said he lit a spark in his daughter who wasn't sure what direction she was going after graduating, said he is seeing something that he likes as she makes decisions and wanted to thank Mr. Brown for that. Mr. Hippensteel shared his experience participating in the blood drive and said he can't wait to hear the numbers but it was a big success. He said he hopes following tonight's discussion on monitoring, we can come together with administration and Dr. Oldham and collaborate on creating something beneficial.

Dr. Guarente provided an update on the Blood Drive and said there were 46 participants, 37 pints of blood collected for the Central PA Blood Bank to benefit 111 local patients.

Mr. Wardle thanked Mr. D. Fisher for bringing test scores to our attention, said we don't want to be last, but said we have a percentage of students with IEP's and students receiving free and reduced lunch. He said he has given the algebra exam and challenged each of us to take the test. He said real world skills are things we thrive in and are equally important but said we have room for improvement. He closed by saying we are a community and here tonight because we care about each other and our students and we can never lose sight of that.

Dr. Guarente said we have been focused the past two years on growth and growth is an individual metric. He said proficiency is just a benchmark that somebody in a lab decided to concentrate on. He said Act 158 Pathways puts only a small measure on proficiency, said proficiency is highlighted as a negative but is in conflict with the state metrics in Act 158 Pathways which has a composite score where you don't have to be proficient in all 3 scores to be successful. Dr. Guarente said we will define our level of success as it relates to the individuals we serve and said it is extremely important that our academic achievement is representative of the students next pathway. As a staff and an administration, he said we are searching what that ceiling is without compromising the development of our students. He said our staff and administration have been hard at work trying to formulate what the next five years looks like in a comprehensive plan which will be rolled out when it is ready.

12.b. Adjournment

Motion by Mrs. Shade was seconded by Mr. Myers

Voting Yes: Boothe, Cornman, D. Fisher, K. Fisher, Hippensteel, Myers, Over, Shade, and Wardle

Motion Carried unanimously. 9-0

Meeting adjourned at **9:01 pm, March 3, 2025**

Next scheduled meeting is **March 17, 2025 at 7:30 pm**

