MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
TYLER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 4, 2026

ALL TYLER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS ARE LIVESTREAMED ON YOUTUBE UNDER TYLER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

CALL TO ORDER:
The regular meeting for May 4, 2026, was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Tyler County Board of Education Office.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Katrina Byers, President
Larry Thomas, Vice President
Andy Shreves, Member
Scott Strode, Member
Diana Stender, Member

A. Shane Highley, Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT:
Stacey Roberts, Executive Secretary; Jeff Lancaster, Treasurer; Kelly Myers, TCEA Representative; Suzette Miller, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Melinda Walton, Director of Attendance and Special Education; Tricia Feldmeier, Director of Human Resources; Amanda Kimble, Director of Child Nutrition, Support Services and Safety; Deb Doig, Thomas Doig and Trad Dill.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:
1. April 21, 2026 Regular Meeting

PRESENTATIONS:
None

DELEGATIONS:

1. Kelly Myers, President of Tyler County WVEA, spoke in favor of the excess levy and outlined key points:

    a. **Safeguards in the levy:**
    Mrs. Myers thanks the board for adding a provision that lets them lower the excess levy rate if there's another high-revenue year like 2025. Emphasizes the tax rate itself isn't changing — it's the same as it has been for decades.

    b. **No state aid without levy:**
    Clarifies a common misconception: Tyler County Schools get zero state aid money, regardless of whether the levy passes. The state aid formula is based on assessed property values, not controlled by schools. If the levy fails, the district won't have enough funds to operate.

    c. **Consequences of levy failure:**
    Would force program cuts, benefit cuts, and loss of teaching positions. Cuts would likely start with employee incentives: academic coaching pay, medical benefit cards, and dental insurance — about $6,000/year lost per employee. This would make it harder to attract/retain qualified staff, who are already being recruited by neighboring counties. Result: larger classes, less qualified educators, and students as the "big losers."

    d. **Antero dominates levy funding:**
    Top 10 levy taxpayers are mostly Antero Resources — 9 of 10 spots — accounting for over $4M. If the levy fails, that oil/gas money leaves not just Tyler County, but West Virginia entirely. "Antero will be the big winner" if it doesn't pass.

Addressing misinformation:
Counter claims circulating on signs and at gas stations: the state doesn't mandate levy use or appoint board members — voters elect them. The school doesn't hide budget info from the public.

Closing ask:
Mrs. Myers urges Tyler County residents to vote yes on the excess levy, stressing that the school system is the heart of the community. Encourages people to review programs on the Tyler County Schools Facebook page and Jeff Lancaster's budget breakdown on YouTube.

Bottom line:
Without the excess levy, schools lose critical oil/gas funding, face major cuts, and risk losing staff — with kids bearing the brunt.

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Amanda Kimble provided the Summer Food Service Program News Release

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

1. The superintendent reviewed key bills from the 2026 WV legislative session affecting Tyler County Schools:

Student Safety & Personnel

- **HB 4395**: Creates a statewide website to track ongoing investigations of school personnel who transfer before cases close. Keeps kids safe by flagging pending allegations.
- **HB 4798 "Alyssa's Law"**: Requires schools to look into mobile alert buttons for teachers in emergencies. Funding through Homeland Security hasn't arrived yet, but Mrs. Kimble is researching options.
- **HB 4982**: Requires video + audio in special needs classrooms, with checks now every 30 days instead of 90.
- **HB 512**: Allows in-year staff moves within the first 2 months of school to address enrollment spikes, e.g. shifting teachers if a large family moves in.

Athletics & Discipline

- **HB 4425**: Returns transfer rules to WVSSAC. Juniors/seniors can't transfer schools without penalty unless they move districts; typically, must sit out a calendar year. Takes effect June 11, 2026.
- **HB 4999**: Makes crimes against athletic officials a chargeable offense, including battery/assault and potential fines for coaches/spectators following officials.

Academic & Operational Changes

- **SB 890**: *Big change* - Replaces 180-day requirement with 900 instructional hours starting 2027-28. Gives calendar flexibility for PD, breaks, start/end dates, but 200-day teacher contracts remain. Tyler's current longer days = ~144 days to hit 900 hours, but district doesn't plan major cuts.
- **HB 4765**: 3% across-the-board pay raise. Note: Since Tyler gets no state aid, the county pays for it locally.
- **HB 5438**: Lets unused 3rd Grade Success Act funds be reallocated to 5th grade reading support.
- **SB 155**: Allows adjunct teachers on 1-year permits with mentoring if no certified teacher applies for a vacancy.
- **SB 890+**: Teachers with 15 years' experience can be certified as principals at levels they've taught. Process still being developed by WVDE.

Other Notable Items

- **Workforce Development Act 2026**: Aligns child labor laws with apprenticeships for CTE programs at Mid-Ohio Valley & Wetzel.
- **Hope Scholarship**: Payments can now be quarterly vs. yearly; county pays these since there's no state aid.
- **SB 694**: Boards can now hire superintendents living more than one county away if they choose to remove that policy restriction.
- **Vetoed - SB 558**: Would have stiffened fines for passing stopped school buses, but was vetoed by the governor.

Bills That Failed
School aid formula changes, special ed funding increases, common statewide graduation requirements, and removing PE for student-athletes did not pass.

Next Steps: Superintendent will post the full presentation to the district website. Most bills take effect mid-June/July 2026, except the 900-hour rule which starts 2027.

2. **Superintendent's Excess Levy Update**

Correcting Misinformation:

- **Cuts *will* happen if levy fails** – Claim of "no cuts" is false. Without the excess levy, Tyler County Schools face an ~$18M budget hole.

Budget Breakdown:

- Operating budget: ~$34M/year, not including PEIA increases, state raises, or emergency repairs.
- Regular levy provides ~$16.4M. Federal funds add ~$2M, mostly for food service and Title I/special ed.
- No state aid. Without excess levy, district must cut $18M. Contingency of $35M wouldn't cover it over 5 years.

What the Excess Levy Funds:
School resource officers & nurses in every school, social workers, activity buses, free breakfast/lunch, $60K/year to local libraries, WVU Extension, and more. Listed in the public levy call.

Taxpayer Impact:

- Class 2 properties = Residents provide less than 10% of excess levy revenue.
- New levy keeps same rate and adds a provision: board can *lower* the rate if assessed values spike again.

Why Run It Now:

- Current levy runs through 2028; the new one would start after that.
- Running early avoids layoffs before personnel season. If it failed later, cuts would have to start before another election. Must run during a regular election.

Other Clarifications:

- **Can't build anything new** – District is bound by 10-year CFP. Any major project needs state approval, like the new elementary school did. There are NO plans to build Sports Facility.
- **State control** – Michelle Blatt, State Superintendent, approves decisions. No "state board" was appointed. Reasons for takeover are public in the "special circumstances review."

Superintendent's Stance:
The levy isn't just money – it creates opportunities. Tyler is a top 10 district, #1 rural district, with award-winning band and FFA programs. The district has been a good steward of funds, focused on kids. He urges the public to call the Board Office/Jeff Lancaster with questions and get facts, not vote based on misinformation.

PROJECT UPDATES:

1. **Tyler Consolidated Elementary School Construction**
    - Site work is underway on the hill. Trees were already cut before the March 31 deadline; no trees are being removed now to protect bats.
    - Current activity: burning previously cut trees at burn sites.
    - Earth-moving phase continues – expect more activity soon.
    - The old house and barn on site were demolished today. Some barn wood was salvaged and may be reused in the new school.
2. **Indian Creek Road**
    - Road is in "horrible shape" due to a slip; unsafe for school buses.
    - Buses are using alternative routes, which are time-consuming for students and residents. Road continues to deteriorate.
    - After initial disputes over funding, a fix is now planned to start early summer and run through summer.
    - Superintendent hopes repairs are done before school starts. For now, buses will continue alt routes. Parents, transportation director, and drivers have been accommodating with stop/time changes.

CURRICULUM UPDATES:

1. **Professional Development**
    - **Bid accepted**: Education System Solutions LLC for $42,000 to provide professional development for teachers and staff.
    - **Reason for selection**: Lowest bid and district has used them for a couple years with good results.
    - **Services provided**: Help with scheduling, special education issues, and other PD needs.
    - **Key benefit**: Company is West Virginia-based, so they understand WV teachers and students. Superintendent emphasized that local understanding is a "big deal" compared to out-of-state firms.
    - District is "very happy" with their service and excited to continue the partnership.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None

STAFF REPORTS:

None

FINANCIAL:

1. Approval of Preliminary Budget 2026-2027 – Treasurer Jeff Lancaster

Process & Timeline

- State has preliminarily approved the budget. Next steps: published in newspaper for 2 weeks, then public hearing + final adoption on May 18.
- Budget submitted early due to state control; no issues expected.

Budget Structure – Two Funds

1. **Special Revenue Fund (Fund 61): Restricted federal grants**
    - Total: $2.86M. Includes Title I, Title II, IDEA ~$855K; Child Nutrition federal share $960K.
    - Child Nutrition costs $1.8M total, so local share = $845K from excess levy.
2. **Unrestricted Fund (Fund 11): Main operating budget**
    - **Total budget: $41.6M**, balanced as required.
    - **Revenue sources**: $36M from taxes. Of that:
        - Regular levy: $16.4M = 39% of budget.
        - Excess levy: $19.6M = 47% of budget.
    - **State aid listed**: $4.3M, but it's "money in, money out" – sent directly for PEIA ($2M), retirement ($600K), and unfunded retirement liability ($1.7M). District receives *no unrestricted state aid*. This doesn't change with or without excess levy.

Impact of Excess Levy

- If excess levy failed, district would lose $19.6M.
- With only $16.4M from regular levy vs. $38.5M in expenses, cuts would be mandatory. Lancaster: "It is irresponsible of me to tell you that there will be no cuts."
- 43 WV counties have an excess levy because it's "almost impossible" to run an effective school system without it.

Bottom Line

Budget is balanced and state-approved. Without the excess levy, Tyler County Schools cannot cover $38.5M in expenses with only $16.4M from the regular levy, making significant cuts unavoidable.

POLICY REVIEW:

None

ATHLETIC SCHEDULES:

1. TCMS Football 2026-27
2. TCHS Football 2026-27
3. TCHS Volleyball 2026-27

TRIP REQUESTS:

a. Beth Andexler requests approval to take the TCMS Student Council to Texas Roadhouse and Skate Country Roller Rink in Parkersburg, WV, on May 8, 2026. The van and a county driver are requested for transportation.

b. Laura Minor requests approval to take her students in Room 82 to the Sistersville Park on May 8, 2026. Tiffany Michael, Miranda King and Karissa Buck will attend as chaperones. Bus transportation is requested. Wheelchair hook ups, lift, seat belts and bus restraint will be required.

c. Jennifer Stephens requests approval to take the NAHS Art Club to Genesis Healthcare in Sistersville, on May 6, 2026. The van and a county driver are requested for transportation.

d. Casey Goudy requests approval to take the Spanish Club from TCHS to Dos Hermanos in New Martinsville on May 15, 2026. Lillian Jones will attend as chaperone. Bus transportation is requested.

e. Debra Price requests approval to take the TCMS Jazz Band to the elementary schools to recruit band students on May 18, 2026. Matt Jennings will also attend. Bus transportation is requested.

f. Pam Stollings requests approval to take the Junior class with a few select Sophomores to Certainteed in Moundsville, WV, on May 6, 2026. Jacob Myer will attend as chaperone. Bus transportation is requested.

g. Lillian Jones requests approval to take the Sophomore Health class to the St. Mary's Correctional Center, The Station and Smith Candy on May 20, 2026. Bus transportation is requested.

h. Zach Willhoite requests approval to take the TCHS Astronomy/Physics to the Green Bank Radio Observatory on May 13, 2026. Tara Byard and Jake Myer will attend as chaperones. Bus transportation is requested.

i. Shayla Strawderman requests approval to take the Fourth Grade at SES to the HIVE at Meadowbrook Mall on May 11, 2026. Dan Wilson, Michelle Beaty and JoAnn Seckman will attend as chaperones. Bus transportation is requested.

OTHER REQUESTS:

a. Approval of requests to cross county lines to attend Tyler County Schools for the 2026-27 school year, as submitted.

PERSONNEL:

Consideration and possible action on the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the following personnel actions:

1. Resignations:
    a. Amanda Gist resigns from her position as Student Council Advisor, effective June 30, 2026.

    b. Jan Smitley resigns from her position as School Nurse, effective April 16, 2026.

    c. Zachary Heasley resigns from his positions as Special Education Teacher, Assistant Football Coach, Assistant Baseball Coach at Tyler Consolidated, effective May 4, 2026.

2. Employments or Transfers and Rescissions:
    a. Employ Jeffrey Wittmer and Michelle Weekley as Summer School Math Teachers at Tyler Consolidated High School, effective June 23, 2026.

    b. Employ Lori Franks as Summer School Science Teacher at Tyler Consolidated High School, effective June 23, 2026.

    c. Employ Teya Henthorn as Summer School Special Education Teacher at Tyler Consolidated High School, effective June 23, 2026

    d. Employ Megan Campbell as Summer School Math Teacher at Tyler Consolidated Middle School, effective June 23, 2026.

    e. Employ Angela Watts as Summer School ELA Teacher at Tyler Consolidated Middle School, effective June 23, 2026.

    f. Employ Melissa L Smith as Summer School Elementary Teacher at Tyler Consolidated, effective June 23, 2026.

    g. Employ Kendra Lydick as Facilitator/Tutor for Summer School at Tyler Consolidated High School, effective June 23, 2026.

    h. Employ Christina Ferrell and Cindi Greathouse as Summer School Special Education Teachers at Tyler Consolidated, effective June 23, 2026.

    i. Transfer Shayla Strawderman as Fourth Grade Teacher at Sistersville Elementary School to Third Grade Teacher at A.I. Boreman Elementary, effective the 2026-2027 school year.

    j. Employ Heidi Martin as Summer School Cafeteria Manager at Tyler Consolidated, effective June 12, 2026.

    k. Employ Angie Baker as Summer Food Cook at Tyler Consolidated, effective June 15, 2026.

l. Employ Chelsea Utt as Summer School Cook at Tyler Consolidated, effective June 15, 2026.

m. Employ Shawna Griffin as Summer Secretary at Tyler Consolidated, effective June 15, 2026.

PAYMENT OF THE BILLS:

Approval of the Payment of the Bills that were presented.

ADJOURNMENT:
Meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:
Monday, May 18, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.
To be held at the Tyler County Board of Education Office located at Dodd Street, Middlebourne, WV 26149

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Mrs. Katrina Byers, President Mr. A. Shane Highley, Secretary

***AGENDAS ARE APPROVED BY THE WV STATE SUPERINTENDENT, MICHELE BLATT, PRIOR TO THE MEETING.**