Community Report Summary

August 21, 2026

The Berwick Area School Board values the teachers and other professional employees who serve our students every day. The Board's goal in collective bargaining is to reach a successor agreement that fairly compensates employees, helps the District recruit and retain excellent educators, protects the District's long-term financial stability, and preserves the educational programs and services our students deserve. At the same time, the Board has an obligation to the entire Berwick Area community because employee wages and benefits are paid with public funds and must be sustainable for the families and taxpayers who support our schools.

Where Negotiations Stand

The Board and the Berwick Area Education Association have held 16 bargaining sessions since negotiations began. The parties met on December 4, 2025; January 8, 15, and 22; February 5, 19, and 26; March 17; April 8 and 22; May 6, 12, and 27; June 1; July 16; and August 13, 2026. Additional bargaining dates are being scheduled.

The parties have reached agreement on numerous provisions for a successor collective bargaining agreement. Important economic issues remain unresolved, including salaries, longevity compensation, and retirement benefits. The Association presented its Final Offer on June 8, 2026. The Board presented its Best & Final Offer on June 16, 2026, followed by two additional salary options on August 13, 2026, as the Board continued to negotiate in good faith.

Three Compensation Alternatives

All three Board offers maintain the District's current health-care structure while providing different choices for allocating available compensation dollars.

Offer 1 maintains the current health-care program and retirement incentive and increases the longevity payment to $2,000 for each year of the contract.

Offer 2 eliminates the longevity payment and phases out the contractual retirement incentive over five years, placing additional compensation into salary schedules. The retirement incentive would be reduced by 36.5% if sunset at the end of Year 2, 57.7% after Year 3, 68.2% after Year 4, and 74.6% after Year 5; sunset after Year 1 results in no reduction.

Offer 3 maintains the current health-care program while eliminating both the longevity payment and contractual retirement incentive and placing still more compensation directly into salary schedules.

The Entire Compensation Package Matters

Salary is only one part of the compensation provided to professional employees. The agreement includes health, dental and vision insurance; $40,000 in group term life

insurance; paid sick and personal leave; educational benefits; paid sabbaticals; additional compensation opportunities; professional expense reimbursement; PSERS retirement benefits; and additional contractual retirement benefits.

The District's base contribution for some family health plans exceeds $2,300 per month, and the contract requires the District to pay its established contribution plus 80% of annual increases in medical-plan costs. Employer health-benefit costs nationally are projected to increase 6.7% in 2026, while insurers in the small-group market have sought a median 14% premium increase for 2027. The Board's proposals preserve the existing health-care structure under which the District bears the great majority of these increases.

The agreement provides a 185-day work year and a 7½-hour workday, including a 30-minute duty-free lunch, as well as a daily planning period.

The District's Financial Reality

The District's current Market Value/Personal Income Aid Ratio is 0.6308, placing Berwick Area School District third from the bottom of the 16 districts in the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) when assessing local wealth. A higher aid ratio reflects lower local wealth and a more limited ability to generate revenue from the local tax base.

The Board must therefore consider not only the immediate cost of a proposal, but its recurring cost over the life of the agreement and beyond. Salary increases become part of future salary bases, step movement increases individual salaries, health-care costs continue to rise, and PSERS obligations are tied directly to payroll. These obligations compete for the same public resources needed for classroom instruction, special education, transportation, student services, staffing, facilities, and other educational responsibilities.

The Board's Commitment

Although significant economic issues remain, negotiations have produced substantial progress. The Board believes the remaining differences can be resolved through continued bargaining and remains prepared to meet for that purpose.

The Association has notified the District of work-to-rule initiatives. The Board respects the Association's right to advocate for its members, while believing the parties' remaining differences are best resolved at the bargaining table. The District is planning accordingly and will take the steps necessary to maintain appropriate student supervision, transportation, and the orderly operation of its schools.

Sixteen bargaining sessions demonstrate the considerable time both sides have devoted to this process. The Board will continue to bargain in good faith, protect the District's long-term financial stability, and keep the community informed. The goal remains a fair and sustainable agreement—one that recognizes and rewards Berwick's educators, protects educational opportunities for students, and respects the ability of Berwick families and taxpayers to pay for it.