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Sargent's Court Reporting

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
SOUTHERN HUNTINGDON COUNTY SCHOOL
DISTRICT BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

* * * * *

IN RE: NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON
CONTEMPLATED SCHOOL CLOSING

* * * * *

BEFORE: DR. ALLEN MILLER, Chair
Hillary Lambert
(Superintendent), Member
Stacy Horn, Member
Nicole Reasner, Member
Fred Price, Member
Kylee Ruiz, Member
Nelson Nead, Member
Tara Grajeda, Member
Albert Filling, Member

Reporter: Lori A. Behe

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1 HEARING: Wednesday, January 14, 2026
 2 6:31 p.m.
 3 LOCATION: Southern Huntingdon County
 4 High School Auditorium
 5 10339 Pogue Road
 6 Three Springs, PA 17264
 7 WITNESSES: None

A P P E A R A N C E S

1
 2
 3 CARL P. BEARD, ESQUIRE
 4 Beard Legal Group
 5 3366 Lynnwood Drive
 6 Altoona, PA 16603
 7 Counsel for School Board
 8
 9 ALSO PRESENT:
 10 ADAM KERR
 11 STANLEY HALL
 12 RACHAEL SHOOP
 13 SARAH ROBINSON
 14 LEANN GILMORE
 15 SHIELA PARSONS
 16 RYAN ROBINSON
 17 RANDY WATKINS
 18 CAINE FARNUM
 19 SARAH ENYEART
 20 TANNER LOCKE
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

I N D E X

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E X H I B I T S

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Number Description	Offered
NONE OFFERED	

PROCEEDINGS

MS. LAMBERT:
Good evening. My name is Hillary Lambert, and I am the superintendent here at the Southern Huntingdon County School District. And I'd like to welcome you to our Section 780 school closure public hearing this evening. Our format for tonight's meeting will be opening comments, presentation on background and context, analysis of options for closing Shade Gap Elementary, public comment, and then, as an FYI, we do have a court stenographer who is keeping the minutes for the meeting. And the meeting is also being recorded. So after this evening's public hearing, the earliest the Board can vote on a

decision would be on or after April 15th, 2026. So your presenters this evening are myself. We have Attorney Mr. Carl Beard here with Beard Legal Group. That is the solicitor firm that represents the School District, and also Mr. Adam Kerr from EI Associates, which is the District's architect firm. So the purpose of the hearing this evening is to discuss the future of our elementary school and provide opportunities for public comment regarding this topic. The Board recognizes that these decisions are of great importance to the community and therefore values all public comment as essential feedback. In the interest of transparency, it is the intention of the Board to

provide as much information as possible throughout this process. So at this point in time, I will turn it over to Attorney Beard to explain the legalities --- excuse me --- of this evening's meeting.
ATTORNEY BEARD:
Good evening, everybody. Thank you for coming. As Ms. Lambert outlined, there's three people. I'm probably going to have the shortest piece. This is divided up into two parts. You'll hear three people talk. I'll be the shortest of the three. The rest of it will be statistical and informational in nature. Later on, we will move into the second part, which would be to receive comments from individuals in the audience. When we get to that point, I'll come back up here

and just say we'd like to keep it within a framework of so many minutes. You know, as you know, make your statement and you're wondering why we have court stenographer. I can tell you at the end of the day, the Department of Education requires that you have a stenographic record of this type of meeting. I could look at that slide. I'm not going to read that slide to you. That --- that section of the School Code. The School Code originally came around in 1949. Way back in the day, they decided that it's only fair if they had to build a school, you have to have what they refer to as an Act 30 --- Act 34 hearing. You've probably had those here in the past. And likewise the

1 legislature say it's only fair
 2 if you're going to consider
 3 closing or partially closing
 4 one of your schools
 5 permanently, you have to have a
 6 closing. And that's how they
 7 fashioned Section 780 of the
 8 School Code.
 9 When the superintendent
 10 spoke, she said no action can
 11 be taken until April 15th.
 12 Please note that Section 78 of
 13 the School Code doesn't say 90
 14 days. It actually says three
 15 months. They took into account
 16 that not every month has 30
 17 days.
 18 And, you know, that's an
 19 important thing to know. Also
 20 want you to be aware that this
 21 isn't stack. Once we go
 22 through and we share
 23 information, you make your
 24 comments. We will in fact hold
 25 this record open for at least

1 30 days. There is the clear
 2 intent to be open and
 3 transparent the whole way
 4 through this process.
 5 Because we intend to
 6 place the PowerPoint on the
 7 website. That doesn't mean ---
 8 because there's going to be a
 9 lot of Board meetings in
 10 between. If you feel that
 11 there's something important you
 12 did --- you left out, you can
 13 always communicate that to the
 14 Office of the Superintendent
 15 unless another person is
 16 designated.
 17 You can also show up at
 18 School Board meetings and say,
 19 you know, I was thinking about
 20 that on Wednesday, January
 21 14th. And there's a few other
 22 items I would like you to
 23 consider. So this piece of it,
 24 as far as advertising, putting
 25 it out there, letting you know

1 the stenographer, that's the
 2 formal part. And I'll just
 3 move in if I can borrow that
 4 clicker or you're going to move
 5 it. All right.
 6 This is the next
 7 relevant piece of the School
 8 Code. And of course this one
 9 is the important one. And this
 10 is the takeaway. It says the
 11 District met. And of course on
 12 account of a small number of
 13 school --- number of pupils in
 14 attendance, which talks about
 15 enrollment or the condition of
 16 that existing building and how
 17 you look at your capital
 18 structure, what it looks like,
 19 what it's going to take to
 20 upgrade something, a new roof.
 21 You know, what's the cost of
 22 just going on your overall
 23 operational cost, not only now
 24 and what in the future and what
 25 that really means or for the

1 purposes of a better gradation
 2 classification.
 3 We have a lot of schools
 4 that are out there that are K
 5 to 5 and then you go to a
 6 middle school concepts grade
 7 six, seven and eight. That's
 8 9, you know, 9, 10, 11, 12.
 9 And some schools say, you know,
 10 I'd rather have like a K to 2
 11 and I'd rather have this type
 12 of setup. I'd like to send the
 13 kids to secondary.
 14 It just means that this
 15 section of the School Code
 16 gives the School Board the
 17 flexibility to look at its
 18 local needs and make a decision
 19 that's in the best interest of
 20 the greater school community.
 21 And as you know, it's like
 22 anything else. People will
 23 have very strong sentiments
 24 about the upbringing of their
 25 children and the current

1 school. And they like the
 2 structure. And that's why we
 3 have to go through this
 4 process.
 5 And it says close any
 6 one or more of the public
 7 schools. And of course it
 8 really boils down to what was
 9 outlined in Section 78 of the
 10 School Code. It really boils
 11 down to permanently. So even
 12 though we have, and I just want
 13 to be once again upfront and
 14 transparent. Even though we
 15 have this hearing tonight, it
 16 doesn't necessarily mean the
 17 Board of School Directors on
 18 April 15th is make going to
 19 make a decision.
 20 As long as you have this
 21 hearing, it could go five
 22 months, it could go six months,
 23 it could go eight months, it
 24 could go a year. It all
 25 depends upon what is being

1 looked at and what is being
 2 weighed. Do you just want to
 3 go on to the next slide?
 4 This is where I believe
 5 this is getting turned over to
 6 you at this point. This is the
 7 historical piece where I said
 8 my role would be minimal. When
 9 we're all done, we'll morph
 10 into the second part of the
 11 proceeding. Thank you for
 12 coming. Despite the rain and
 13 the fog, and the objects that
 14 are laying on the road that I
 15 ran over on the way over.
 16 MS. LAMBERT:
 17 Thank you, Carl. All
 18 right. So let's get started on
 19 how we got here. So back in
 20 2019, EI Associates completed a
 21 feasibility study for the
 22 District with the intention of
 23 assisting the School Board of
 24 Directors, staff and community
 25 in the decision making process

1 regarding the future
 2 utilization of our facilities,
 3 mainly the three elementary
 4 buildings, aging elementary
 5 buildings that we have. I
 6 believe that meeting, the big
 7 one, was held in May of 2019.
 8 So then in August of
 9 2019, the School Board of
 10 Directors approved the
 11 resolution authorizing the
 12 administration to proceed with
 13 the schematic design phase for
 14 the project which was outlined
 15 for options two and three in
 16 that feasibility study. A few
 17 months later on October 2019
 18 --- in October of 2019, the
 19 School Board then approved
 20 option 3A of the feasibility
 21 study.
 22 Option 3A was the
 23 outlined as the new elementary
 24 school that was detached from
 25 the current high school middle

1 school and it had its own
 2 gymnasium and separate
 3 cafeteria. Fast forward a few
 4 months, that vote occurred in
 5 October. In March of 2020, we
 6 all know what happened.
 7 Everything shut down.
 8 COVID hit and we came to a
 9 standstill on basically
 10 everything, the project
 11 included. So there were some
 12 things that happened between
 13 COVID and then we fast forward
 14 to May 17th, 2022. And the
 15 School Board approved the
 16 construction document phase for
 17 the SHC Elementary School and
 18 authorized administration to
 19 put it out to bid.
 20 So if memory serves me
 21 correct, I believe the bids
 22 were released in early to mid-
 23 August. And on August 12th of
 24 2022 the injunction was granted
 25 to ORJMA and the District was

1 prohibited from adding any new
 2 connection to the authority's
 3 treatment system. And that
 4 injunction is still in place as
 5 of today.
 6 Two weeks later on
 7 August 30th, the Board voted to
 8 approve and place a temporary
 9 hold on the bid request by
 10 recalling and rescinding the
 11 District's request for bids.
 12 So they went out. EI contacted
 13 all the contractors and pulled
 14 back the bid request for that
 15 project.
 16 Fast forward a few
 17 months later, January 22nd,
 18 2023 the Spring Farms oil
 19 release occurred and all Spring
 20 Farm students were immediately
 21 relocated to the high school
 22 middle school campus. So that
 23 oil release occurred over the
 24 weekend. That Sunday we spent
 25 12 plus hours figuring out a

1 plan on what we were going to
 2 do with these kids.
 3 Monday, we took an
 4 emergency Act 80 day and that
 5 Tuesday we were back up and
 6 running Spring Farms. We moved
 7 180 kids into this building.
 8 Two months later, we held a
 9 public meeting to discuss the
 10 configuration for the following
 11 school year which was '23-'24.
 12 There were two options
 13 discussed that evening.
 14 The first one was move
 15 fourth and fifth grade to the
 16 high school middle school and
 17 that would turn Rockhill and
 18 Shade Gap at that point in time
 19 into a kindergarten through
 20 third grade building for each
 21 one of those. That option was
 22 not chosen. The Board decided
 23 to keep things the way they
 24 were and Spring Farms remained
 25 at this high school middle

1 school and we've done status
 2 quo since then.
 3 We have made
 4 improvements each year to make
 5 it more like an elementary for
 6 the students here. But they've
 7 been in this building. It'll
 8 be three years here next week.
 9 So then fast forward. Last
 10 year as we were working on
 11 putting the budget packet
 12 together with the business
 13 manager and myself, we were
 14 coming off looking in the
 15 future what --- when
 16 negotiations are coming on.
 17 We have --- are seeing
 18 health care costs skyrocket
 19 through the roof. The --- as
 20 we were putting that all
 21 together we decided we need to
 22 really look at a five year
 23 financial plan for the District
 24 and what is the sustainability
 25 of the model that we're running

1 now? Is that sustainable? So
 2 on November 3rd of this ---
 3 well, 2025, we held a public
 4 meeting to discuss the
 5 financial status of the
 6 District and possible
 7 reconfiguration or
 8 consolidation.
 9 So that's how we got
 10 here. Factors that are driving
 11 why we are here is declining
 12 enrollment, rising operating
 13 costs, building infrastructure
 14 issues, and limited revenue
 15 growth. And if you were here
 16 in the November meeting, a lot
 17 of the upcoming slides are a
 18 repeat of what was presented
 19 during the November meeting.
 20 So the topics of
 21 discussion are the current
 22 financial status of the
 23 District, our declining
 24 enrollment, the sewage
 25 restrictions that face the

1 District, options that have
 2 been considered,
 3 reconfiguration recommendation,
 4 renovations and improvement
 5 recommendations for the high
 6 school middle school for our
 7 elementary kids. The current
 8 financial status of the
 9 District.
 10 So we ended last fiscal
 11 year with a fund balance
 12 decrease of 180,000, which put
 13 our current fund balance at 6.6
 14 million. The School District
 15 collects revenue from three
 16 different buckets. So we have
 17 local, state, and federal. Our
 18 federal money is our title
 19 money. That's pretty stagnant.
 20 It only varies by, you know, 10
 21 to \$20,000 each year.
 22 The state money, when we
 23 had the meeting back in
 24 November, at that point, they
 25 had not passed a state budget.

1 So we had no idea what we were
 2 expecting. We had budgeted
 3 conservatively. We weren't
 4 sure what we were going to get.
 5 Since then, the budget has been
 6 passed. They did put more
 7 money into the budget than what
 8 Governor Shapiro had proposed
 9 back in February.
 10 So fortunately, we are
 11 going to be receiving more
 12 money from the state this year
 13 than what was budgeted. And
 14 then the third bucket is our
 15 local real estate taxes. So,
 16 each year the School District
 17 can raise taxes to the index.
 18 So that equates to two-and-a-
 19 half to three mils. So one mil
 20 that we raise each year
 21 generates an additional
 22 approximately \$106,000 for the
 23 District.
 24 So each year, even if we
 25 raise taxes to the index, we're

1 still limited on the revenue
 2 that we can get each year for
 3 that. Our expense drivers. So
 4 these are three year totals,
 5 except for the charter school
 6 line. I'll explain that in a
 7 minute. But our salaries over
 8 the last three years have
 9 increased 850,000 or 4.5
 10 percent each year.
 11 Our health care has
 12 increased 632,000 or 12.5. And
 13 we don't see that slowing down
 14 at any point. And then the
 15 last line is our charter school
 16 cost. So right now, on
 17 average, we are paying \$1.1
 18 million annually for charter
 19 school. And I believe this
 20 morning we took a look and we
 21 have 52 kids currently enrolled
 22 in cyber charter school. And
 23 probably the most important
 24 bullet on this slide is the
 25 last one, which says no capital

1 reserve or contingency funds
 2 are included in this school
 3 year's budget.
 4 So we refer to those as
 5 rainy day funds. Five years
 6 ago when we paid off the loan
 7 for the addition that was put
 8 on in the early 2000s, we kept
 9 that payment in the budget and
 10 either looked at transferring
 11 to capital reserve or we paid
 12 unexpected cost.
 13 For example, when we had
 14 the Spring Farms oil release we
 15 were then --- the Board had
 16 voted to check on make sure the
 17 tank at --- excuse me --- Shade
 18 Gap was okay. So again that
 19 money wasn't budgeted for, but
 20 we were able to cover it with
 21 the contingency funds or rainy
 22 day funds that were in the
 23 budget. That money no longer
 24 exists. So if an unexpected
 25 cost comes up this school year,

1 that money will now come out of
 2 our fund balance.
 3 This is just a graph
 4 showing the five year
 5 projection based on the current
 6 path that the District is on
 7 which shows that we --- it is
 8 unsustainable if we take no
 9 cost saving measures. So we're
 10 looking at 6.6 million at the
 11 end of this fiscal year.
 12 And if nothing changes,
 13 we will cut our fund balance
 14 almost in half over the next
 15 five years. We'll move on to
 16 enrollment. So the enrollment
 17 history, we're looking, the
 18 graph starts at 2019, 2020.
 19 The District was at 1132
 20 students. And over that period
 21 of time we're now sitting at
 22 950,000 --- sorry --- 957
 23 students for this school year.
 24 So this is the first year that
 25 we are under a thousand

1 students. And you can see the
 2 steady decline over the last
 3 six years. An elementary
 4 enrollment breakdown. So the
 5 first line is Spring Farms, the
 6 orange one.
 7 So same years, 2019,
 8 2020, they were at 222
 9 students. They're now sitting
 10 this school year around 151.
 11 Rockhill, which has been the
 12 most steady is the gray line.
 13 They were at 170. They're
 14 currently sitting at 151 as
 15 well. And then the third line
 16 is Shade Gap Elementary, the
 17 yellow orange-ish line. They
 18 were at 131 at the end of the
 19 2020 school year and are now
 20 down to 82. So the enrollment
 21 projection.
 22 So this information came
 23 straight from PDE's website.
 24 It shows the current enrollment
 25 at 957. And they're projecting

1 by 2031-'32 school year that
 2 we'll be down under 800
 3 students. I'm not sure that
 4 we'll get that low, but I do
 5 believe within the next three
 6 to four years we'll be under
 7 900 students. So our ninth
 8 through 12th grade classes are
 9 averaging anywhere from 80 to
 10 90 students.
 11 Our incoming
 12 kindergarten classes are
 13 between 60 and 65. So as we
 14 graduate those next few
 15 classes, we're going to be
 16 losing on average anywhere from
 17 20 to 30 kids for the next at
 18 least three years. Sewage
 19 restrictions. So in 2015,
 20 Cromwell expanded their lines.
 21 DEP then required the District
 22 to abandon our onsite treatment
 23 facility plant and we had to
 24 connect to Cromwell.
 25 On August 12th, 2022,

1 the injunction was granted to
 2 ORJMA and the District is
 3 prohibited from adding any new
 4 sewer connection to their
 5 system. And as I stated
 6 previously, that injunction is
 7 still in place. We are still
 8 under that ruling and to our
 9 knowledge, there has been no
 10 movement for that lawsuit to be
 11 resolved. Moving on to the PDE
 12 total student capacity that has
 13 been approved. So for this
 14 building, PDE has approved us
 15 at 926 students.
 16 We are currently at 724.
 17 And that does include the 150
 18 students from Spring Farms
 19 Elementary. So we're currently
 20 200 kids under our PDE student
 21 capacity for this facility.
 22 Rockhill's PDE total student
 23 capacity is 250 and their
 24 current enrollment is 151. So
 25 they're 100 students under

1 their approved capacity. An
 2 update on Spring Farms
 3 Elementary.
 4 So if you were here in
 5 November, at that point we had
 6 not received a final report
 7 from DEP letting us know the
 8 status of Spring Farms
 9 Elementary. Three days later,
 10 we did receive that report on
 11 November 6th, and DEP
 12 disapproved that report based
 13 on two deficiencies. The first
 14 deficiency was the groundwater
 15 beneath the site has not been
 16 adequately characterized and
 17 did not meet the requirements
 18 of Chapter 250.
 19 And the second bullet
 20 deficiency was the vapor
 21 samples were over 18 months old
 22 and DEP recommended at least
 23 one additional round of testing
 24 for the vapor samples. So our
 25 engineers and DEP were in close

1 contact with that report and
 2 they wanted to know what DEP's
 3 recommendations were to address
 4 these deficiencies.
 5 So our engineers DEP's
 6 recommendations were to install
 7 two additional monitoring wells
 8 on the property to try and
 9 locate the heating oil. So the
 10 wells are to be installed here
 11 early in 2026. And they'll be
 12 sampled with the rest of the
 13 monitoring wells for at least
 14 two quarters. And then DEP's
 15 recommendation for the second
 16 deficiency was to complete one
 17 more additional round of soil
 18 and indoor air samples and that
 19 has already taken place.
 20 So based on the estimate
 21 from our engineers to address
 22 these deficiencies, resubmit a
 23 final report and then DEP has
 24 their 60 day comment period.
 25 They say our engineers

1 estimated a minimum of one at
 2 least one year. So to
 3 summarize, Spring Farms
 4 Elementary site is or will be
 5 unavailable or we won't know
 6 the outcome of that until at
 7 least late 2026. Options that
 8 have been considered.
 9 So some of these
 10 proposals have been from the
 11 Board of Directors, and a few
 12 have also been from the public.
 13 So we took the ones from the
 14 public and provided financial
 15 information to those. So
 16 option number one, which has
 17 and continues to be the Board's
 18 number one option, which is
 19 unfortunately not feasible,
 20 would be adding the elementary
 21 wing to the high school middle
 22 school with the cafeteria
 23 gymnasium.
 24 The annual operational
 25 savings for that option one

1 would be 842,500. But again,
 2 that's not feasible due to the
 3 sewer injunction that we're
 4 currently under.
 5 Option number two, which
 6 was proposed by the public,
 7 would remove all Spring Farm
 8 students from the high school
 9 middle school building, would
 10 move them into Rockhill, and
 11 then Rockhill would then be
 12 split, and probably half of the
 13 students that are currently at
 14 Rockhill would then go to Shade
 15 Gap.
 16 So then those two
 17 buildings would become
 18 kindergarten through fifth
 19 grade. The annual operational
 20 savings for that option is
 21 \$75,000, which is what it's
 22 currently costing us to operate
 23 Spring Farms. The estimated
 24 cost of upgrades would be 7.2
 25 million. We would be doing

1 upgrades to both Shade Gap and
 2 Rockhill.
 3 So the challenges for
 4 that option are there's no real
 5 operational savings, and we're
 6 also vacating 10 to 12 empty
 7 --- or we're leaving 10 to 12
 8 empty classrooms here in this
 9 building, which are already
 10 paid for. Option three, which
 11 has also been brought to us by
 12 the public, was
 13 remodel/additions to Shade Gap,
 14 and it would become a
 15 kindergarten through third
 16 grade building, and fourth and
 17 fifth grade would move to the
 18 high school middle school.
 19 So this option would
 20 look at closing Rockhill. The
 21 annual operational savings of
 22 that would be 653,000. The
 23 estimated cost of upgrades
 24 would be six million. And
 25 those upgrades/additions would

1 be for Shade Gap only.
 2 So currently, Shade
 3 Gap's not large enough to house
 4 kindergarten through second
 5 grade. This --- this option
 6 was kindergarten through third
 7 grade. So both additions and
 8 renovations would need to be
 9 completed at that building.
 10 The challenges for this option
 11 is location.
 12 Shade Gap's not
 13 centrally located, and also
 14 it's too small. Currently, it
 15 has nine classrooms. And then
 16 the final option, which was
 17 discussed in detail in
 18 November, is Rockhill becomes a
 19 kindergarten through second
 20 grade building. Third through
 21 fifth will come to the high
 22 school middle school, and
 23 upgrades will be performed to
 24 Rockhill and the high school
 25 middle school.

1 The annual operational
 2 savings would be 842,500. This
 3 option would involve closing
 4 Shade Gap Elementary. The
 5 estimated cost of upgrades are
 6 3.9. And those upgrades are
 7 specifically for Rockhill.
 8 That estimate is for Rockhill.
 9 The District has not looked in
 10 detail to doing anything
 11 specifically here at the high
 12 school yet around the idea of
 13 the school within a school.
 14 So whatever --- if we do
 15 go down that path, those costs
 16 are not included in the 3.9.
 17 And the challenge of this
 18 option is renovations will be
 19 needed if Rockhill is a long-
 20 term solution. So the
 21 reconfiguration recommendation
 22 for next school year. Based on
 23 the sewer restrictions that we
 24 face, the District faces will
 25 be turned Rockhill into a

1 kindergarten through second
 2 grade building. 190 students.
 3 The average grade size
 4 is 63 students per grade. And
 5 we would look at doing four
 6 classes per grade, 15 to 17
 7 students per class. Third
 8 through fifth grade would come
 9 to the high school middle
 10 school, 193 students. And the
 11 average grade size is 65. And
 12 we would look at doing three
 13 classes per grade, 21 to 22
 14 students for the intermediate.
 15 So this reconfiguration
 16 plan allows the District to
 17 stay under our PDE approved
 18 student capacity for both
 19 Rockhill and the high school
 20 middle school, and also
 21 provides us with educational
 22 benefits. So the educational
 23 benefits include curriculum
 24 consistency and alignment.
 25 This would allow for

1 grade level collaboration among
 2 the faculty. This could happen
 3 daily, weekly. Also, vertical
 4 alignment supports consistent
 5 learning progress across grades
 6 and enhances student
 7 achievements and outcomes.
 8 This would also allow us to
 9 specialize instructional focus.
 10 So our faculty can
 11 either specialize in primary or
 12 intermediate. Our reading
 13 specialists and special
 14 education faculty can have a
 15 more narrow focus. Some of
 16 those folks on a daily basis
 17 service kids anywhere from
 18 kindergarten to fifth grade.
 19 And then this would allow us to
 20 also departmentalize for grades
 21 third through fifth.
 22 So currently we are
 23 allowed --- we can do this at
 24 Spring Farms and Rockhill for
 25 fourth and fifth grade because

1 we have two classes per grade.
 2 So our kids here, for our fifth
 3 graders here will go to one
 4 teacher for science and math
 5 and then walk across the hall
 6 and get their ELA from the
 7 other teacher. So this also
 8 allows a more narrow focus for
 9 our intermediate teachers as
 10 well.
 11 This would also provide
 12 balanced class sizing and
 13 staffing flexibility. So
 14 currently our class sizes range
 15 anywhere from 10 to 20 students
 16 per class. The yearly
 17 operating cost or savings that
 18 the District would realize
 19 would be ---. And when I say
 20 operating costs, I mean
 21 electricity, fuel, garbage,
 22 anything that we pay on a daily
 23 basis to keep these buildings
 24 running and open.
 25 So at Shade Gap

1 Elementary, the savings would
 2 be 227,500. And that number
 3 does include support staff
 4 costs. So I want that to be
 5 clear. That's the operational
 6 cost and also the support staff
 7 cost. Spring Farms Elementary
 8 is currently costing the
 9 District approximately \$75,000
 10 a year right now to keep that
 11 building open and at whatever
 12 temperature it needs to be so
 13 pipes don't freeze.
 14 And then the staffing
 15 savings that we would realize
 16 through this consolidation or
 17 realignment would be estimated
 18 at 540,000. So that would
 19 bring us to a total yearly
 20 savings of 842,500. So at this
 21 point in time, I'm going to
 22 turn it over to Mr. Adam Kerr
 23 from EI and he will touch
 24 briefly on the proposed
 25 upgrades to Rockhill

1 Elementary.
 2 MR. KERR:
 3 All right. Thank you.
 4 Appreciate it. So, yeah, to
 5 quickly run through what's
 6 being discussed and potentially
 7 proposed here at Rockhill, you
 8 know, with a recommended
 9 option, we'll kind of walk down
 10 through the scope here of the
 11 major bullet points of what we
 12 would, you know, typically
 13 anticipate on a project like
 14 this.
 15 So new electrical
 16 service. So that would be all
 17 of the new switch gear for the
 18 building. So which would be
 19 the main service coming in.
 20 Also panel boards throughout
 21 the building, as well as
 22 wiring. It's all, you know, a
 23 lot of it's original. So we're
 24 proposing essentially, you
 25 know, really kind of replace

1 that electrical system in
 2 general.
 3 There will be some
 4 associated fire alarm work as
 5 part of that electrical as
 6 well. So that is another
 7 aspect that's really kind of
 8 included under the electrical.
 9 What's labeled there as zoned
 10 DOAS system. That's
 11 essentially air conditioning.
 12 So DOAS stands for
 13 dedicated outdoor air system.
 14 So essentially that's new air
 15 conditioning throughout the
 16 classrooms and multipurpose
 17 room throughout the building in
 18 general. So mentioned the air
 19 conditioning. Obviously, new
 20 lighting throughout.
 21 A lot of the lighting
 22 is, you know, higher energy
 23 use. So one thing we'd be
 24 looking to do is put new LED
 25 lighting throughout the

1 building. We would also look
 2 to, on the exterior of the
 3 building, be doing some
 4 repointing on the brick veneer
 5 as well as some sealants in and
 6 around what's mentioned there
 7 as possibly new windows and
 8 entrances into the building.
 9 Again, some dated
 10 elements there. So really, you
 11 know, primarily, you know, a
 12 renovation project. Again, no
 13 additions are being proposed.
 14 The one thing I'll mention
 15 that's not on this list,
 16 because it's still under
 17 warranty, is the roof. Roof
 18 still has a number of years
 19 left under warranty. So that
 20 is not included on this list
 21 currently in that scope of
 22 work.
 23 So what we've done is
 24 we've put together, based upon
 25 that scope and some other

1 comparable projects that we've
 2 recently done, is we put
 3 together a budget of that \$3.9
 4 million, which is what we would
 5 think for that scope of work
 6 that would cover in today's
 7 dollars.
 8 So again, looking at, I
 9 think there's some figures
 10 there for 15 year, et cetera,
 11 so for payment. So that's the
 12 scope of the project in
 13 general. Again, there's some
 14 other related work, but those
 15 are the major bullet points
 16 that we discussed in relation
 17 to that project.
 18 MS. LAMBERT:
 19 Thank you, Adam. Okay.
 20 A few more slides guys. So the
 21 financial status. This shows a
 22 graph of what the --- our fund
 23 balance would look like
 24 estimated based on if we move
 25 forward with this

1 consolidation. And that would
 2 include the Rockhill upgrade.
 3 So this graph takes into
 4 consideration the annual
 5 savings of 842,500, but also
 6 the potential for the loan
 7 payment of almost \$400,000 a
 8 year. So the high school,
 9 middle school improvements for
 10 third through fifth grades.
 11 Last time in November we had
 12 talked about the relocation of
 13 the playground. The new
 14 playground that has --- was put
 15 out at Shade Gap Elementary
 16 last year. So since that time,
 17 Mr. Hall got a quote on what
 18 the cost would be to relocate
 19 that playground.
 20 And for a little bit
 21 more money the District could
 22 purchase a brand new playground
 23 and we will be able to leave
 24 Shade Gap. We would be able to
 25 leave the playground at Shade

1 Gap. So if this were the
 2 direction that we were to move
 3 into, the District would just
 4 purchase a new playground for
 5 the area that we had talked
 6 about in November which is back
 7 in that corner.
 8 And the playground at
 9 Shade Gap would remain as is.
 10 We would look at adjusting the
 11 morning entrance and breakfast
 12 procedures. So currently
 13 everybody comes into the aux
 14 gym and the elementary students
 15 do and that's what where they
 16 get breakfast. We believe we
 17 have a way for our intermediate
 18 students to get to their
 19 classroom, serve breakfast up
 20 in that end. And we could
 21 avoid the auxiliary gym
 22 altogether in the mornings.
 23 We would have a
 24 dedicated classroom for art,
 25 music and library which we

1 currently do not have. We have
 2 no open classrooms because we
 3 are housing kindergarten
 4 through fifth grade. And then
 5 the last bullet point is, which
 6 is still under consideration,
 7 is the school within a school
 8 concept that was presented by
 9 the public back in November.
 10 Again, we have not
 11 gotten into the nitty-gritty of
 12 that really until we see what
 13 direction we're moving. So at
 14 this point in time, I will turn
 15 it over to Mr. Beard to outline
 16 the parameters for the public
 17 comment section.
 18 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 19 Even though I had that
 20 white sheet of paper, I don't
 21 think there's a need to read
 22 from it. I mean, this ---
 23 we're into part two at this
 24 time. As I said, we do have a
 25 court stenographer here.

1 It would be afford you
 2 an opportunity to stand up and,
 3 you know, outline what your
 4 feelings are if you have any
 5 thoughts. Remember, still
 6 going to be open for 30 days.
 7 You can still submit written
 8 comments.
 9 I believe for the
 10 purposes of the stenographer,
 11 she would like you to at least
 12 state your name and if she has
 13 any questions and you'll see
 14 her waving back there. She's
 15 talking into that thing, she
 16 might ask you to spell your
 17 name. I would just ask that
 18 we're, you know, courteous to
 19 those people who are speaking.
 20 I know from having been
 21 here for a solicitor for almost
 22 a 20 year period of time. This
 23 is a great community and we
 24 will have a Christian way of
 25 respect those. I'm going to

1 tell you what on some of the
 2 cities people were doing.
 3 They're not throwing anything,
 4 but they're booing.
 5 We just want everybody
 6 to speak from the heart and
 7 outline what their issues and
 8 concerns might be so we have
 9 them under consideration. This
 10 isn't like a question and
 11 answer kind of format. It
 12 would be like you came, you
 13 heard and things like that.
 14 But those questions that
 15 you ask will probably be
 16 reduced to writing by Mrs.
 17 Lambert. And ultimately those
 18 questions will be presented
 19 with answers to the Board or at
 20 least outline in some format
 21 that people will have access to
 22 see this was asked and this is
 23 the response.
 24 So at this point in time
 25 I didn't have a signup sheet

1 and I don't really believe it's
 2 really necessary for purposes
 3 of having a stenographic
 4 record. Are you good?
 5 COURT REPORTER:
 6 As long as they state
 7 and spell their first and last
 8 name. That's all.
 9 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 10 All right. So here's
 11 the rules straight out of the
 12 Marine Corps. You got to state
 13 your name first and last and
 14 spell it and just confirm that
 15 you're a resident of the
 16 District. And we'll loosely
 17 time up to five minutes for
 18 your comments.
 19 So any brave volunteers
 20 to go first? Anybody?
 21 MS. SHOOP:
 22 I'll go first.
 23 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 24 Thank you.
 25 MS. SHOOP:

1 Hello, my name is
 2 Rachael Shoop. R-A-C-H-A-E-L,
 3 S-H-O-O-P, and I am a resident
 4 of Shade Gap. So the last
 5 meeting, I had asked the Board
 6 numerous questions and tonight
 7 I'm hoping that you guys can
 8 provide me with some answers.
 9 I had handed you a paper
 10 with my questions. I looked at
 11 it over the past month. So one
 12 of my questions are, why are we
 13 being given estimates instead
 14 of real broken down quotes on
 15 renovations?
 16 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 17 Even though I said there
 18 wouldn't be answers. But if
 19 the --- indulgence to the
 20 Board. Adam Kerr, he could
 21 answer that question for you.
 22 Right?
 23 MR. KERR:
 24 Yeah.
 25 ATTORNEY BEARD:

1 She could answer it too.
 2 MS. LAMBERT:
 3 They're estimates at
 4 this time based on we haven't
 5 went out to bid or anything so
 6 we would not have any final
 7 numbers. So until we went out
 8 --- would go out to bid, we're
 9 referring to them or
 10 referencing them as estimates.
 11 MR. KERR:
 12 Do you want me to come
 13 around?
 14 MS. LAMBERT:
 15 Yeah.
 16 MR. KERR:
 17 Yeah. So as mentioned
 18 to date we haven't prepared any
 19 formal designs. So what we
 20 provided in that sort of the
 21 budget for that 3.9 million is
 22 an opinion problem cost based
 23 upon some other comparable
 24 projects that we've recently
 25 done.

1 So if we get --- if we
 2 were commissioned further then
 3 at that point, yeah, we have
 4 more refined costs that could
 5 be more detailed and obviously
 6 when you go out to bid then you
 7 get the true cost of the
 8 project. So ---.
 9 MS. SHOOP:
 10 Well, I asked that
 11 question because we only have
 12 three months until you guys
 13 make a vote on whether or not
 14 to close Shade Gap. That's
 15 information that I think the
 16 community needs and deserves to
 17 be able to say.
 18 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 19 Well, the process that
 20 they follow is best estimate.
 21 This would be no different.
 22 You buy a piece of property and
 23 say you want to build a house
 24 and the builder comes to you
 25 and say I think it's this. And

1 then, well, while the price ---
 2 until then you don't really
 3 know. It's a well taken point.
 4 We'll just have to see
 5 where this thing goes. As it
 6 relates to the rest of your
 7 questions if they have them.
 8 We may not be able to answer
 9 each one of these questions as
 10 they come up, but they can
 11 certainly answer them at the
 12 next School Board meeting or on
 13 the website.
 14 MS. SHOOP:
 15 My next question is if
 16 Shade Gap is sold, will deed
 17 restrictions be applied, like,
 18 a ---? Will deed restrictions
 19 be applied to Spring Farms
 20 also? And will any of these
 21 deed restrictions prohibit a
 22 future charter school?
 23 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 24 Well, I'll just simply
 25 state you can always put those

1 in there. The question is
 2 whether somebody would litigate
 3 that particular issue. But
 4 it's always the desire of every
 5 School District face with a
 6 challenge from either a brick
 7 and mortar school to make a
 8 decision as to whether we're
 9 going to give up real estate or
 10 let that turn into something
 11 that comes into the community
 12 and will draw in a rolling away
 13 from the school.
 14 So we'll just cross that
 15 bridge because even though you
 16 might close the school it
 17 doesn't necessarily mean that
 18 you're going to sell it off.
 19 Sometimes you do and sometimes
 20 you don't. So let's see how
 21 that ---.
 22 MS. SHOOP:
 23 For our community, it's
 24 a very important question.
 25 ATTORNEY BEARD:

1 I've been asked that and
 2 you may have attended one of
 3 the School Board meetings where
 4 they specifically asked me that
 5 question. And I believe I
 6 answered that before virtually
 7 in the same manner.
 8 MS. SHOOP:
 9 Are any grants being
 10 looked into for renovating
 11 these schools? If so, how much
 12 are they for? And why aren't
 13 you looking into it? And why
 14 aren't they being included in
 15 these estimates?
 16 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 17 I will tell you that
 18 there's no plan comp right now.
 19 If there are grant monies, they
 20 will certainly do that.
 21 MS. SHOOP:
 22 I believe that there is.
 23 Hillary, didn't you tell me
 24 that there was grants out there
 25 for renovating older schools?

1 MS. LAMBERT:
 2 Yeah, there's a facility
 3 improvement grant that's
 4 available right now, which if
 5 we were to pursue the
 6 renovations at Rockhill, we
 7 would definitely apply. Yeah,
 8 I believe that grant ends.
 9 Their application's due in
 10 March.
 11 MS. SHOOP:
 12 It could be applied to
 13 Shade Gap too if it was be
 14 renovated?
 15 MS. LAMBERT:
 16 Yeah, it --- it could.
 17 We would have to have solid
 18 numbers. You have to submit an
 19 estimate with that grant from
 20 --- from an architect.
 21 MS. SHOOP:
 22 So we would need a
 23 breakdown of the estimate to
 24 submit to get the ---
 25 MS. LAMBERT:

1 Yeah.
 2 MS. SHOOP:
 3 --- grants. Okay.
 4 This is a very important
 5 question that I have and I
 6 really would like to have an
 7 answer tonight. What will
 8 happen to Shade Gap baseball
 9 field if the property is sold?
 10 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 11 I would say the Board
 12 will cross that. But ---.
 13 MS. SHOOP:
 14 I asked this question
 15 maybe a month ago.
 16 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 17 I --- I wasn't here a
 18 month ago. But all I can tell
 19 you is that some of the other
 20 schools have been sold by other
 21 Districts along the way. They
 22 have made arrangements with
 23 other groups, made it with the
 24 municipalities as to retaining
 25 green spaces for use.

1 I believe the Board
 2 can't make a decision about
 3 we're going to sell the school
 4 and what we're going to do.
 5 But that's an excellent
 6 question. We'll cross that.
 7 Keeping into consideration
 8 there's never enough green
 9 space and other activities for
 10 children in the community, and
 11 you want to keep those viable
 12 as best as you can.
 13 MS. SHOOP:
 14 Well, the community has
 15 donated significant amounts of
 16 money, materials and times to
 17 that baseball field, and that
 18 needs to be discussed. And
 19 currently there's businesses
 20 that are supplying materials
 21 and time to run electric to
 22 that ball field.
 23 Currently doing this,
 24 like, currently. So it's ---
 25 it needs to be answered and it

1 needs to be written and say,
 2 why should these companies
 3 continue --- these people
 4 continue to put money and time
 5 into this field if that school
 6 is going to be sold?
 7 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 8 I can only answer your
 9 question. When we went through
 10 this in another school
 11 District, question is, what's
 12 going to happen when we close
 13 the schools? And that was two
 14 months out before there was
 15 even a process.
 16 MS. SHOOP:
 17 But we have three
 18 months. You said April 15th,
 19 they close the school.
 20 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 21 I don't know if they're
 22 going to do that. I don't know
 23 if the decision is going
 24 to ---.
 25 MS. SHOOP:

1 Doesn't seem like
 2 anybody knows anything.
 3 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 4 I think people will know
 5 a lot of things as what's going
 6 on.
 7 MS. SHOOP:
 8 What about the parking
 9 at the school? Because that
 10 ball field needs that parking
 11 at that school. And also they
 12 need to have a right-of-way.
 13 That needs to be provided to
 14 that ball field. Our community
 15 has that playground and that
 16 ball field. That is what Shade
 17 Gap has. We don't have
 18 anything else, but it's very,
 19 very important. I'm really,
 20 really, really disappointed
 21 that I don't have an answer.
 22 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 23 I don't think any Board
 24 member came in here tonight to
 25 say that they're going to vote

1 to close the school because
 2 they can't do that. That means
 3 it was all predetermined and
 4 improper. That is a good
 5 question that will have to be
 6 answered in time.
 7 But I can assure you in
 8 at least three or four schools
 9 that have dealt with their
 10 elementary schools, they have
 11 made arrangements with the
 12 municipalities and other groups
 13 to ensure that those ball
 14 fields were still available for
 15 the public.
 16 MR. HALL:
 17 Mr. Beard, can I speak?
 18 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 19 Yes, Stanley.
 20 MR. HALL:
 21 Whenever that field was
 22 first being discussed, Mr.
 23 Northcraft and myself met with
 24 the very first committee that
 25 was designing the ball field in

1 the upstairs of the fire hall
 2 out there. At that time, we
 3 listened to what the people had
 4 to say. They had the same
 5 exact question.
 6 And the superintendent
 7 at that time told the people,
 8 more than likely the Board at
 9 that time, when it crosses that
 10 bridge, it can be deeded off
 11 and given to the public for
 12 that ball field. But the
 13 people needed to be understood
 14 at that time that it is up to
 15 the Board whenever the decision
 16 is made.
 17 So the people that was
 18 on that committee originally
 19 knew it from the very beginning
 20 because Mr. Northcraft told him
 21 there is discussion of
 22 buildings in the pipeline and
 23 that's where it was left at.
 24 And I'm pretty sure there's
 25 people in the public sitting

1 here that was at that meeting.
 2 Thank you.
 3 MS. SHOOP:
 4 My next question is, how
 5 much will it cost to run a
 6 sewer line in Three Springs? I
 7 see that you guys are throwing
 8 that around as an idea.
 9 MR. HALL:
 10 We do --- we discussed
 11 that with the East Broad Top
 12 and from here to Three Springs
 13 municipality. Almost every bit
 14 of the right-of-way would not
 15 be wide enough to go along the
 16 East Broad Top. So the
 17 District would have to purchase
 18 right-of-way off of every
 19 property owner between here and
 20 Three Springs, plus your water
 21 crossings for sewage and water.
 22 CHAIR:
 23 So I add one thing to
 24 that. It was suggested that an
 25 alternative to going up the

1 railroad track because of what
 2 Mr. Hall just stated where the
 3 right-of-way narrows and you
 4 have to cross public property.
 5 An alternative would be to run
 6 a line down along the road, the
 7 highway between Three Springs
 8 and the school.
 9 We never got to a
 10 specific cost like we have
 11 anything else because it's not
 12 a legitimate option that we're
 13 pursuing right now in detail.
 14 If it becomes an option,
 15 obviously we'll get a cost for
 16 it. But the railroad right-of-
 17 way was not --- the EBT folks
 18 didn't think that was feasible,
 19 but they did think that it
 20 would be feasible along the
 21 highway.
 22 MS. SHOOP:
 23 So my next question is,
 24 any of you that have young
 25 elementary children or

1 grandchildren at this high
 2 school, is this truly the
 3 environment you want for them,
 4 especially with the increased
 5 amount of bullying?
 6 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 7 I don't think you're
 8 going to get an answer to that.
 9 Everybody knows that is a
 10 legitimate question, needs to
 11 be balanced. But I believe we
 12 need to move on. They can
 13 certainly consider that as part
 14 and parcel. And there are
 15 schools and other communities
 16 that have complexes similar to
 17 the makeup that is being
 18 contemplated. Nobody has a
 19 magic bullet for the issue of
 20 bullying.
 21 You don't have that
 22 magic bullet when you ride
 23 buses as well. We can only do
 24 the best that we can that we
 25 have. But it's well taken.

1 There are studies that look at
 2 those types of things. Mrs.
 3 Lambert is well aware what
 4 those studies say.
 5 MS. SHOOP:
 6 Do you truly think that
 7 this high school is providing
 8 the real elementary type of
 9 environment a young child needs
 10 and deserves? If you had to
 11 pick, would you rather your
 12 young elementary children go to
 13 an actual elementary school or
 14 would you want them to come to
 15 the high school? That is a
 16 common sense question.
 17 MS. LAMBERT:
 18 No. So my child attends
 19 school here every day. I have
 20 a kindergartner in this
 21 building and I know I'm sitting
 22 up here as a superintendent
 23 right now, but I'm also a
 24 mother. And those of people in
 25 the audience that know me

1 personally also know how long
 2 it took me to become a mother.
 3 So I obviously put my
 4 child and his needs first and
 5 foremost. And if I thought it
 6 was inappropriate or unsafe for
 7 him to be here, he wouldn't be
 8 here. I have my --- my
 9 babysitter lives in another
 10 elementary zoning, so I easily
 11 could assign the transfer
 12 papers, taken him to the
 13 babysitter every day and he
 14 could be going to Rockhill
 15 Elementary.
 16 But I see how it's ran
 17 up here on a daily basis and I
 18 know a lot of you in the
 19 audience do not have that
 20 opportunity to see that. But
 21 if I felt that way, my child
 22 wouldn't be here. And he's
 23 here every day participating
 24 recess, lunch and he's
 25 thriving.

1 MS. SHOOP:
 2 And I'm not saying that
 3 you would put these children in
 4 an unsafe environment. My
 5 thing is, is it a real
 6 elementary type of environment
 7 that a young child needs with a
 8 playground that is close, with
 9 an actual cafeteria where they
 10 don't have to eat in a
 11 gymnasium? This isn't a high
 12 school. This is not an
 13 elementary school. This is a
 14 high school.
 15 MS. LAMBERT:
 16 If you met my child, you
 17 would probably want to walk
 18 three times to and back from
 19 the playground. He's got a lot
 20 of energy, so I don't think it
 21 hurts him at all to --- to get
 22 down and up and down the
 23 hallways.
 24 MS. SHOOP:
 25 What about when it's

1 pouring down rain and it's
 2 snowing and they got to walk
 3 all the way out there in the
 4 rain and snow?
 5 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 6 In all due respect,
 7 we've given you a lot of
 8 latitude on this. You're
 9 clipping close to 10 minutes.
 10 I know that you sent those
 11 questions and normally we don't
 12 answer them, but we've been
 13 more than fair.
 14 And if there's any other
 15 questions you feel that need to
 16 be answered, let Mrs. Lambert,
 17 by all means, address those and
 18 present those to the Board.
 19 Put them on the website and
 20 afford somebody else to comment
 21 on what has been presented here
 22 this evening.
 23 MS. SHOOP:
 24 Well, I do have one more
 25 question. These elementary

1 MR. HALL:
 2 Yes. Yes. This whole
 3 building's up to code.
 4 MS. LAMBERT:
 5 The whole building? The
 6 area where they put bathrooms
 7 they can use is ---?
 8 MR. HALL:
 9 They are.
 10 MS. SHOOP:
 11 Thank you for not
 12 answering all my questions that
 13 you had a month.
 14 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 15 Thank you for your
 16 comments. Thank you. Anyone
 17 else? You can present, in
 18 other words, a handout for the
 19 Board.
 20 MS. ROBINSON:
 21 Yes.
 22 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 23 I'll take it. And I
 24 promise I will pass it down.
 25 Just remember, name last, first

1 children, if they do remain
 2 here, do they have separate
 3 bathrooms or will they
 4 have ---?
 5 MS. LAMBERT:
 6 Yeah.
 7 MS. SHOOP:
 8 They will?
 9 MS. LAMBERT:
 10 They have separate
 11 bathrooms that are only
 12 accessed by the elementary
 13 teachers that have keys.
 14 MS. SHOOP:
 15 Okay.
 16 Are they up to code?
 17 Because elementary students,
 18 there shall be one flush toilet
 19 and one washbowl for every 15
 20 students in grade first through
 21 third and for every 20 students
 22 in the grades fourth through
 23 eighth. So do they have the
 24 appropriate number of sinks and
 25 toilets?

1 spelling. Yes, the resident of
 2 District.
 3 MS. ROBINSON:
 4 My name is Sarah
 5 Robinson. S-A-R-A-H,
 6 R-O-B-I-N-S-O-N. So I do have
 7 some comments on other things
 8 that were mentioned. So the
 9 estimates haven't increased in
 10 six years. I find it hard to
 11 believe that when the
 12 feasibility study was done in
 13 2019 that things haven't
 14 increased drastically since
 15 2019. So the estimates we're
 16 given are the same ones that
 17 were stated in 2019?
 18 MR. KERR:
 19 Yes. So that 3.9
 20 million we showed is a separate
 21 estimate from what the
 22 feasibility study. So
 23 understood. Yeah. Those
 24 numbers from now, almost
 25 six-and-a-half years ago are

1 much different.
 2 MS. ROBINSON:
 3 Thank you. So good
 4 evening Board members, fellow
 5 parents, teachers, community
 6 members. My name is Sarah.
 7 I'm here tonight to share some
 8 deep concerns and opinions
 9 about the proposed closure of
 10 Shade Gap Elementary.
 11 I've listened carefully
 12 to the discussions and the
 13 online comments from our School
 14 Board that have since been
 15 deleted. And I have to say
 16 that I'm profoundly
 17 disappointed. It's not just in
 18 the decision making process,
 19 but it's the way our children's
 20 futures are being treated with
 21 like mere line items on a
 22 budget sheet. So let's start
 23 there. Because this isn't just
 24 about facts and figures.
 25 It's about real lives,

1 real families and the heart of
 2 our community. So someone on
 3 the Board said we should get
 4 our facts right and question
 5 how we can justify keeping a
 6 school open for just 80
 7 students. He called them a
 8 small minority from Shade Gap.
 9 As if that's somehow separate
 10 from the rest of the Southern
 11 Huntingdon County schools.
 12 So let me be crystal
 13 clear. These are not just
 14 numbers. These are kids. My
 15 kids. Our kids. They're
 16 bright eyed kindergarteners
 17 learning their ABCs for the
 18 first time. Second graders
 19 discovering the joy of reading.
 20 And fifth graders building
 21 friendships that could last a
 22 lifetime. These are children
 23 with names and dreams whose
 24 families chose this community
 25 because of the small value and

1 the small state nurturing
 2 schools. I didn't want to be
 3 in this county. I wanted to be
 4 in Franklin. And I wanted them
 5 to go to Fannett-Metal.
 6 So dismissing them as a
 7 small minority is not only
 8 short-handed, it's heartbreaking
 9 and dehumanizing. How can we,
 10 as adults that's interested in
 11 their education, reduce them to
 12 statistics? Every single one
 13 of those 80 students matter
 14 deeply.
 15 They deserve the same
 16 opportunities, the same
 17 attention, the same commitment
 18 as any other students in the
 19 District. If 80 doesn't
 20 matter, tell me what is the
 21 number that's worth fighting
 22 for? Is it 100? Is it 150?
 23 Or does it only count when it's
 24 the majority? It's the mindset
 25 that sends a dangerous message

1 that these kids aren't worth
 2 saving and they're expendable.
 3 We should all feel ashamed of
 4 that.
 5 The legacy that we're
 6 leaving them. And let's talk
 7 about why this process has been
 8 pushed so aggressively. The
 9 Board president claimed he
 10 wanted to hear the opinions of
 11 the community. And that
 12 started --- and that starting
 13 the closure process was the way
 14 to do that.
 15 That's like throwing us
 16 into the fire just to see how
 17 we react. But if our voices
 18 truly matter, why didn't you
 19 seek them out before initiating
 20 this? We started this journey
 21 feeling like our concerns were
 22 an afterthought anyway. They
 23 were dismissed from the onset,
 24 and if you generally wanted to
 25 listen and take heed, you

1 wouldn't have rushed it to
 2 start it all.
 3 If you've held town hall
 4 meetings, surveys or open
 5 forums dedicated solely just to
 6 gathering input without the
 7 looming threat of the closure
 8 hanging over us in three
 9 months. Instead, we're
 10 scrambling to respond while the
 11 wheels have already been set in
 12 motion.
 13 As one of the Board
 14 members wisely pointed out the
 15 last meeting, why couldn't we
 16 have just waited a year? Why
 17 is this the urgency that's
 18 forced to us to do this next
 19 year, especially when safety is
 20 far from guaranteed? This
 21 timeline feels reckless.
 22 It prioritizes speeding
 23 over the wellbeing of our
 24 children as it is the decision
 25 that was --- it's as if the

1 decision was already made. And
 2 I can tell you that many people
 3 in the community feel that way.
 4 They feel you've made your
 5 minds up. We don't matter.
 6 And in this process it's
 7 just a formality to check a
 8 box. That doesn't build trust.
 9 It erodes it. Now, on the
 10 topic of safety, I passed out
 11 some figures. I've heard the
 12 claim that this merger had led
 13 to very few write-ups, painting
 14 a picture of improved
 15 discipline and harmony.
 16 But look at the actual
 17 data from the District's own
 18 incidents report spanning from
 19 2018 to 2024. While academic
 20 and code of conduct incidents
 21 in one narrow category stayed
 22 low, the overall story is
 23 alarming. Total incidents
 24 jumped from 147 in the full
 25 post-merger year 2023-2024.

1 That's up almost 100 from the
 2 previous year and higher than
 3 pre-merger peaks.
 4 Incidents per 100
 5 students reach 14.18, the
 6 highest record. They nearly
 7 doubled from some pre-merger
 8 rates. Local law enforcement
 9 have hit 23 cases last year.
 10 They had to come here 23 times
 11 and the most outside of COVID
 12 affected periods indicating
 13 there's more severe problems
 14 and they require police
 15 intervention and arrests.
 16 They were nonexistent
 17 before the elementary students
 18 came here. And since there
 19 were six in the partial merger
 20 year and three in the full year
 21 that they were here.
 22 Alternative education
 23 assignments assigned persistent
 24 behavioral issues have also
 25 ticked up constantly

1 post-merger. If the merger was
 2 supposed to make things safer,
 3 why are we seeing an escalation
 4 in serious infractions, police
 5 calls and arrests?
 6 This may be fewer write-
 7 ups, but this is a spike in
 8 chaos. It could point to an
 9 increase of violence and
 10 unrest. Forcing even more
 11 students into that will only
 12 amplify these risks and turn
 13 schools into a pressure cooker.
 14 So the safety concerns don't
 15 stop at discipline data.
 16 Let's address the
 17 elephant in the room, the
 18 construction at Rockhill
 19 Elementary. If we push ahead
 20 and start renovations this
 21 summer, what happens if it's
 22 not completed by fall? The
 23 Board said, well, we'll just do
 24 it the next summer. But do you
 25 really think contractors will

1 just halt everything and just
 2 stop and then pick it up where
 3 they left off the next summer?
 4 Of course not.
 5 That's not how this
 6 works. They'll plow ahead with
 7 students still in the building,
 8 navigating around active
 9 construction zones, meaning
 10 dealing with hazards like noise
 11 and dust. And worst of all,
 12 asbestos abatement. Special
 13 systems contain asbestos fibers
 14 don't come cheap. They'll
 15 drive cost ---.
 16 They'll drive costs up
 17 almost three times now because
 18 of protecting the children in
 19 real time, not working in an
 20 empty site. We're talking
 21 about potential health risks,
 22 exposures, toxins that could
 23 affect our kids' lungs and
 24 long-term wellbeing. Is that a
 25 gamble that we're willing to

1 save just to save --- or to
 2 take just to save a few
 3 dollars?
 4 And what happens if
 5 something goes catastrophically
 6 wrong? What if delays pile up
 7 in supply chain issues or
 8 foreseen problems arise when
 9 we've already closed Shade Gap
 10 and possible other schools?
 11 Forcing all students into
 12 Rockhill leaves no plan B, no
 13 alternative building to fall
 14 back on.
 15 And we have hundreds of
 16 displaced children with nowhere
 17 to go, scrambling for temporary
 18 solutions like trailers or
 19 splitting classes across
 20 makeshift places. That's not
 21 responsible planning. That's a
 22 recipe for disaster. Our
 23 children deserve stability, not
 24 uncertainty. So why risk it
 25 when waiting a year could allow

1 for the proper planning and
 2 proper preparations through
 3 safety assessments and a true
 4 community buy-in?
 5 Moreover, if cost saving
 6 is truly the driving force
 7 behind this closure, why
 8 haven't we explored simple low
 9 effort costs to keep Shade Gap
 10 viable without major overhauls?
 11 Take the furnace for example.
 12 Data shows it's running
 13 outside the proper heating
 14 range, well above where it
 15 should be. By simply adjusting
 16 it to the appropriate
 17 temperature levels, no
 18 renovation, no new equipment,
 19 we could conservatively save
 20 3,000 to 10,000 more a year.
 21 And that's based on trimming
 22 just 10 to 25 off heating and
 23 cooling portions of the bill
 24 with even higher potential if
 25 overheating is as severe as it

1 is indicated on the study that
 2 was done in 2019.
 3 And if fuel costs
 4 dominate winter usage, as
 5 evident in the energy graphs
 6 also from the feasibility
 7 study. That's not even
 8 counting the non-energy
 9 benefits. It improves
 10 students' focus because they're
 11 in comfortable classrooms.
 12 Better overall health from
 13 avoiding excess heat and cold.
 14 Because my child gets to school
 15 and she's so hot she really
 16 can't focus.
 17 This is straightforward.
 18 It keeps our community school
 19 open. It saves money long-
 20 term. It prioritizes the kids'
 21 wellbeing. So why rush to
 22 close when solutions like this
 23 are just right in front of us?
 24 In my opinion, closing Shade
 25 Gap isn't a solution.

1 It's shorthanded cut
 2 that undermines the very
 3 foundation of our District. We
 4 choose Southern Huntingdon for
 5 its community focus, its small
 6 classes and safe environment.
 7 Let's honor that by exploring
 8 better alternatives. Investing
 9 in Shade Gap to modernize it.
 10 Redistributing resources. Our
 11 kids aren't pawns in some
 12 budget game.
 13 They're the reason our
 14 District exists. I urge you to
 15 pause the process and to
 16 listen, truly listen to the
 17 community and prioritize every
 18 child, no matter how small or
 19 minority their group is before
 20 it's too late. Let's choose a
 21 path that builds up our schools
 22 and doesn't tear it down. And
 23 on the handout I gave you there
 24 are grants and other things
 25 that could help raise money for

1 the renovations which I'm sure
 2 you guys have already had.
 3 And I will say that I am
 4 glad to hear that somebody does
 5 have a child that goes to the
 6 elementary school. However,
 7 I'm not willing to do that. I
 8 will take my four kids and we
 9 will go to Fannett-Metal. And
 10 18 other parents have signed
 11 and said that they will take
 12 their children and they will go
 13 elsewhere.
 14 And if you're not
 15 listening to that portion of
 16 parents, you're not listening
 17 to the community and I'm
 18 disappointed. So thank you for
 19 your time and I appreciate all
 20 of you guys listening.
 21 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 22 Thank you. Somebody
 23 else like to comment?
 24 MS. GILMORE:
 25 Hello. My name is Leann

1 Gilmore. L-E-A-N-N. Last name
 2 G-I-L-M-O-R-E. I have two
 3 students that attend Shade Gap
 4 Elementary currently. I am
 5 here tonight to speak not from
 6 sentiment but from a practical
 7 long-term perspective about the
 8 proposed closure of Shade Gap
 9 Elementary School and the
 10 consequences this decision will
 11 have on our District and our
 12 community.
 13 For months many of us
 14 have spoken about what Shade
 15 Gap Elementary means to us
 16 emotionally. Tonight, I ask
 17 that we set that aside and
 18 examine this decision strictly
 19 through the lens of data,
 20 outcomes and long-term impact.
 21 Shade Gap Elementary currently
 22 serves 84 students. Next year,
 23 we have 24 to 25 known incoming
 24 kindergarten students
 25 projected.

1 These are not numbers of
 2 a collapsing school. Yet the
 3 District is relying on a five
 4 year enrollment projection
 5 which are estimates, not
 6 certainties. And while summary
 7 data has been shown, the
 8 assumptions and methods behind
 9 these projections have not been
 10 openly or clearly explained.
 11 When projections raise
 12 more questions than answers,
 13 they prompt further evaluation,
 14 not a rushed and permanent
 15 decision. Closing Shade Gap
 16 Elementary will not merely
 17 respond to enrollment decline,
 18 it will create it. In rural
 19 communities, an elementary
 20 school stabilizes property
 21 values, attracts young families
 22 and protects the local tax
 23 base.
 24 When a school is
 25 removed, families stop buying

1 homes, existing families leave
 2 and enrollment drops further.
 3 That decline is then used to
 4 justify the original decision.
 5 This is a self-fulfilling
 6 outcome and once it begins,
 7 it's nearly impossible to
 8 reverse. If Shade Gap's
 9 enrollment decline after this
 10 closure, it should be clearly
 11 understood that this decline
 12 was not inevitable. It was
 13 manufactured by this decision.
 14 Many viable alternatives
 15 have been presented to this
 16 Board, including redrawing or
 17 redistricting attendance
 18 boundaries, applying for state
 19 and private grants,
 20 commissioning a full structural
 21 evaluation of Shade Gap
 22 Elementary to determine the
 23 true renovation cost, and
 24 exploring phase solutions, and
 25 completing a full building

1 evaluation before making an
 2 irreversible closure decision.
 3 None of these options
 4 have been fully evaluated or
 5 transparency disclosed. Yet
 6 the Board is attempting to
 7 force a final decision in three
 8 months. I ask plainly, how can
 9 an informed decision be made
 10 when alternatives have not been
 11 completely explored? Questions
 12 still remain and the
 13 information presented raises
 14 more uncertainty than clarity.
 15 The impact of this
 16 closure extends beyond
 17 academics. Shade Gap
 18 Elementary is an economic
 19 anchor for our community. Its
 20 loss will affect property
 21 values, local investment and
 22 long-term community
 23 sustainability. Our baseball
 24 field is one clear example.
 25 Families have

1 fundraised, volunteers have
 2 given countless hours, Valley
 3 Rural Electric donated
 4 materials and labors to install
 5 a score board. All based on
 6 the understanding that Shade
 7 Gap children would continue to
 8 live, learn and play here.
 9 Closing the school eliminates
 10 access to that space and erases
 11 the value of that investment.
 12 The consequences of this
 13 decision will not be borne
 14 equally across the District.
 15 They will fall solely on
 16 Shade Gap's children, families
 17 and our taxpayers. Let the
 18 record reflect that this
 19 community is not asking for
 20 special treatment. We are
 21 asking for due diligence,
 22 transparency, time, and above
 23 all, answers. Once a rural
 24 school closes, it rarely
 25 reopens. That reality demands

1 caution, not speed. So I
 2 please ask you to take your
 3 time in making this decision
 4 considering all the options
 5 fully. Because we are not just
 6 a school. We are people.
 7 We are part of the tax
 8 paying community. You've got a
 9 bunch of people standing behind
 10 me saying this is not what we
 11 are wanting. We are wanting
 12 further options. We are
 13 wanting answers.
 14 Because right now, I
 15 don't know how anybody can make
 16 an informed decision without
 17 getting all the answers to
 18 questions. With that being
 19 said, I'd like to thank you for
 20 your time and consideration in
 21 placing these concerns on the
 22 public record.
 23 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 24 Thank you. And that's
 25 also a reason why the framers

1 of this provision of the School
 2 Code built in a mandatory three
 3 month period to give pause for
 4 reflection and answer
 5 questions. That was
 6 statutorily incorporated into
 7 School Code provisions. Do we
 8 have a fourth taker?
 9 MS. PARSONS:
 10 My name is Shiela
 11 Parsons. S-H-I-E-L-A
 12 P-A-R-S-O-N-S, resident of
 13 Southern Huntingdon School
 14 District. Shade Gap Elementary
 15 School is vital to our area,
 16 township and borough. It keeps
 17 our local job base for our
 18 community and keeps our student
 19 bus rides in a more reasonable
 20 amount of time.
 21 Shade Gap School has
 22 been important to our community
 23 since 1956 and still has a lot
 24 of life to give. The location
 25 of Shade Gap School and the

1 improvements that have already
 2 been made makes it a valuable
 3 site in the Southern Huntingdon
 4 School District. I'm concerned
 5 about increased busing time,
 6 loss of students, loss of
 7 families, loss of jobs in our
 8 area and the numbers you give
 9 tonight do not reflect the loss
 10 of students. It is my
 11 sincerest hope and plea that we
 12 would exhaust all possible
 13 options before continuing with
 14 any process to close this
 15 school, please.
 16 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 17 Thank you. Somebody
 18 else?
 19 MR. ROBINSON:
 20 My name is Ryan Robinson
 21 from Shade Gap. I have a few
 22 comments here. Any of my
 23 numbers are off, feel free to
 24 correct me.
 25 ATTORNEY BEARD:

1 I'm not the numbers guy
 2 but I'm quite sure some will be
 3 off.
 4 MR. ROBINSON:
 5 I'm sure they're
 6 somewhat close.
 7 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 8 Sure.
 9 MR. ROBINSON:
 10 Good evening, everyone.
 11 I hope you all had a wonderful
 12 Christmas and a happy new year.
 13 My name is Ryan Robinson. I'm
 14 here tonight as a parent and
 15 former student of this District
 16 to speak about keeping Shade
 17 Gap Elementary open.
 18 We've had a lot of
 19 discussions about the Shade Gap
 20 School and I want to focus on
 21 why closing --- closing it
 22 would be a mistake not just for
 23 the kids in Shade Gap but for
 24 every student in the Southern
 25 Huntingdon County School.

1 In the last meeting, we
 2 talked about serious concerns
 3 with asbestos and updating the
 4 --- of the school while
 5 children are still there.
 6 That's a real safety issue and
 7 deserves careful attention
 8 before any major changes or
 9 consolidations happen. On the
 10 financial side, we've heard a
 11 lot about costs and savings
 12 from closing the Shade Gap
 13 School.
 14 But let's talk about
 15 charter schools which are a big
 16 part of our school's budget.
 17 Right now, the District is
 18 spending around 700,000 on
 19 online charter school tuition.
 20 With the new 2025-2026 state
 21 budget, Governor Shapiro signed
 22 into law there are historic
 23 reforms to cyber charter school
 24 funding. These changes
 25 redefine the tuition formula

1 allowing Districts to deduct
2 more costs not incurred by the
3 cyber charge and the closed
4 loopholes saving public schools
5 across Districts across
6 Pennsylvania an estimated 175
7 to \$178 million statewide this
8 year.

9 While exact savings for
10 our small District won't be
11 fully clear until next year's
12 figures come out, this has real
13 potential to reduce our charter
14 expenses by hundreds of
15 thousands of dollars annually.
16 We've talked a lot about money,
17 how closing Shade Gap School
18 might help the District save
19 --- even accumulate \$8 million
20 over the next five years.
21 That's great on paper,
22 but in the presentations I've
23 heard, I didn't hear a single
24 clear benefit mentioned for the
25 children themselves. That's

1 what we're all supposed to be
2 here for. The kids' education,
3 their safety and their
4 wellbeing, not just balancing
5 the books.
6 With a \$20 million
7 budget, I would argue that our
8 school with 87 kids, which I
9 guess it was 84, we bring in
10 roughly 14,000 per student,
11 which equals over \$1.2 million
12 in state funding. And our
13 school costs \$875,000 to run.
14 I don't think it's the
15 financial problem.
16 Our school generates
17 between 3 to \$400,000 in
18 positive revenue. I would
19 argue that this building we're
20 currently standing in is using
21 \$18 million in the budget that
22 needs looked into for the
23 budget issues.
24 There are practical
25 issues that make me worry about

1 the environment in a larger
2 consolidated setting, like
3 locking the bathrooms so high
4 schoolers can't get in. So all
5 the students have to use the
6 bathroom at the same time.
7 That disrupts class. And not
8 every child needs to go to the
9 bathroom on the same schedule.
10 I can imagine multiple
11 trips throughout the day
12 pulling kids out of learning.
13 You know, where the bathrooms
14 aren't locked at the grade
15 schools, where the children are
16 safe and where they belong. It
17 was mentioned that all our
18 students would take the younger
19 ones under their wings.
20 In some cases, I'm sure
21 that's true, and there are
22 truly amazing kids and people
23 out there. But I went to this
24 school and I saw a different
25 reality. I witnessed our

1 principal get hit with a hoagie
2 in the cafeteria.
3 I saw students get
4 bullied and beaten up. In
5 seventh grade, I got beaten up
6 by a ninth grader right on the
7 ramp before the cafeteria in
8 front of the guidance office.
9 And no one was there to stop
10 it. They reviewed it on the
11 camera and later called us in
12 the office. So no, I don't
13 fully trust the idea that we
14 can just shut the door and
15 prevent students from mixing in
16 ways that can lead to problems.
17 Kids still cross paths
18 when going to the office or the
19 nurse's office, cafeteria, gym
20 class. In a bigger school,
21 those interactions can escalate
22 quickly, especially when
23 supervision is spread thin. In
24 my opinion, closing the Shade
25 Gap isn't the answer.

1 It risks creating
 2 larger, more chaotic
 3 environments that could harm
 4 academic performance, safety,
 5 and the sense of community our
 6 younger students need. With
 7 the potential savings coming
 8 from state charter reforms, the
 9 positive revenue Shade Gap
 10 generates, and the real safety
 11 concerns on the table, we have
 12 better options. Invest in
 13 keeping Shade Gap open and
 14 prioritize what's best for all
 15 of our kids, not just the
 16 budget.
 17 Thank you for listening.
 18 I appreciate the Board's hard
 19 work and I hope we can find a
 20 way to keep our small school
 21 strong for the children who
 22 need them most. Thank you.
 23 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 24 Thank you for your
 25 comments. Somebody else? I

1 don't want to be like an
 2 auctioneer.
 3 MR. WATKINS:
 4 Thanks for the
 5 opportunity to be here. My
 6 name is Randy Watkins. I'll
 7 speak on two fronts quickly.
 8 COURT REPORTER:
 9 I'm having a hard time
 10 hearing you.
 11 MR. HALL:
 12 Can't hear you.
 13 MR. WATKINS:
 14 Is that better?
 15 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 16 Yes.
 17 MR. WATKINS:
 18 My name is Randy
 19 Watkins. I'm going to speak on
 20 two fronts. Five minutes or
 21 less. I'll try. First, I'm
 22 here as a District resident as
 23 well as a former employee. I
 24 taught here for 20 some years
 25 and so I know the ins and outs

1 of all the buildings because
 2 I've been in all of the
 3 buildings. I don't think it's
 4 really the building that makes
 5 the school based on my
 6 experience being here.
 7 I think it's the
 8 teachers, the admin, but more
 9 so the teachers. When I walked
 10 in here, I ran into a teacher
 11 that I taught with 15, 20 years
 12 ago, and she's still teaching
 13 here and she was great. And
 14 behind me are sitting some
 15 teachers. When they go into
 16 the classroom, they make it
 17 work for the kids. It doesn't
 18 matter what it looks like, you
 19 know, on the outside of the
 20 building. It matters what's on
 21 the inside of the classroom.
 22 And so I think a lot of
 23 times that we, you know, we
 24 don't see that. I hope that my
 25 grandkids, when they get here,

1 which is going to be in two
 2 years, you know, if this is
 3 where they're at, Spring Farms
 4 isn't reopened, which doesn't
 5 sound like it. Having taught
 6 there in 95 to 100 degree heat,
 7 doesn't bother me at all if
 8 they would come down here.
 9 It's a newer building
 10 and I have complete faith in
 11 Ms. Lambert and the Board that
 12 they're going to look at the
 13 kids' best interest. You know,
 14 her five-year-old comes here.
 15 I'd be very happy with my
 16 grandchildren coming here if it
 17 worked out like that.
 18 So that's the part that
 19 I wanted to address with that.
 20 I've been all over getting
 21 myself and several other ones
 22 getting a --- I don't want to
 23 call it a petition. It's not
 24 that. It's more of like a care
 25 package. Care statement. Now

1 I'm talking to people beginning
 2 in Trough Creek, Saltillo, Zion
 3 Church, Shore Valley, up and
 4 down asking them what their
 5 thoughts were and sharing what
 6 I knew about the situation.
 7 I can tell you that in
 8 Trough Creek they went through
 9 the same deal not too long ago.
 10 Was very upset. I read about
 11 the possibility of closing
 12 their small little school. It
 13 happened. They adjusted. The
 14 number one comment I heard when
 15 I was over there was, well, if
 16 they do close those two
 17 schools, they better not give
 18 them away for a dollar like
 19 they did Trough Creek.
 20 I think that is what
 21 happened with Trough Creek if
 22 I'm not mistaken. I told him I
 23 didn't know what would happen
 24 with it, but I couldn't see
 25 that they would do something

1 like that. Especially with the
 2 acreage that's at Spring Farms.
 3 I mean, I talked to several
 4 people.
 5 They would like to buy
 6 that if it did. I agree with
 7 the lady that spoke earlier
 8 about if it does close at Shade
 9 Gap. You know, there's a huge
 10 concern out there that I'm
 11 hearing about the ball field,
 12 you know and I think that would
 13 be a really good thing if the
 14 District was able to deed that
 15 off to these families out
 16 there. If that happened.
 17 I mean, I think that
 18 would be the right thing to do
 19 so that these kids had
 20 something out there to go and
 21 play with because there's not
 22 enough green space as you said.
 23 And a lot of the other
 24 areas that I want to speak and
 25 I think we're up to about 200

1 and some people had signed this
 2 then. Besides Trough Creek's
 3 concern about not giving away
 4 the building and the ground for
 5 free, more or less, the other
 6 one was that if they're going
 7 --- if this would happen, then
 8 they need to also make sure
 9 that there are other cuts that
 10 if there are non-state mandated
 11 positions those need to be
 12 looked at seriously.
 13 They're concerned with
 14 --- it seems like there's
 15 always a tax increase every
 16 year, but they don't ever hear
 17 and I'm sure that happens
 18 knowing, you know, what I know
 19 when I taught here and Ms.
 20 Leonard every --- well, it's
 21 not Ms. Leonard. Ms. Wade.
 22 You know, I'm sure they
 23 look at all of that, but
 24 they're not hearing that.
 25 They're not hearing anything

1 about what's been cut or what's
 2 been done to try to save. All
 3 they're seeing and really
 4 focusing on, I think, is the
 5 one mil tax hike the last two
 6 years in a row and then a
 7 potential larger one coming
 8 down the pipe maybe.
 9 They're hearing that.
 10 They're seeing all that, but
 11 then they also see what we just
 12 hired another person from
 13 another District or we just
 14 hired two more teachers. Why?
 15 They want to know why
 16 are we hiring all these people
 17 when we can't afford to have
 18 them? So that's something that
 19 they shared with me as well.
 20 So I guess in conclusion, what
 21 I want to say is that I
 22 appreciate what everyone's
 23 doing and going through this
 24 process. I'm sure it's not
 25 easy. I --- I love Spring

1 Farms.
 2 I really liked it when I
 3 taught there. But I understand
 4 that, you know, we don't live
 5 in an age anymore where, you
 6 know, we can have these small
 7 areas with almost like a, I
 8 don't want to say a private
 9 feel to it. That's not the
 10 right word, but an area where,
 11 you know, other schools around
 12 us have gone away with, you
 13 know, years ago. And so that's
 14 what I wanted to say. So thank
 15 you very much for your time. I
 16 appreciate it.
 17 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 18 Thank you. Anybody else
 19 like to comment?
 20 MR. FARNUM:
 21 Evening. My name is
 22 Caine Farnum. C-A-I-N-E F-A-R,
 23 N as in Nathan, U, M as in
 24 Matthew. My biggest concern
 25 about closing down Shade Gap

1 Elementary School or any of the
 2 other schools that you guys
 3 have is consolidation of
 4 students. I came to the last
 5 Board meeting that you guys
 6 held in here in November. It
 7 was talked about running the
 8 schools at a closed capacity,
 9 meaning there isn't much
 10 expansion here.
 11 So Mr. --- Dr. Allen,
 12 you said yourself schools run
 13 one of two states, state
 14 decline or state increase.
 15 Right now we're in a state of
 16 decline. If we close these
 17 schools down, go back into a
 18 state of increase and we sell
 19 off Shade Gap and Spring Farms,
 20 then there's nowhere else for
 21 these kids to go. I don't want
 22 to see us here in another 10 to
 23 15 years sitting right back
 24 here again.
 25 Going, what are we going

1 to do with all these kids?
 2 Where are we going to be? So I
 3 would like you guys to really
 4 seriously consider not getting
 5 rid of these schools yet.
 6 Looking at the options, maybe
 7 look further down. Instead of
 8 five years, look 10 years, 15
 9 years.
 10 I just don't want to be
 11 sitting back here in this room
 12 again saying, boy, if only we
 13 had this ground, this land,
 14 then we could do this or we
 15 could do this. I don't want to
 16 see the District have to spend
 17 a bunch of money now and look
 18 down another 10 years and say,
 19 boy, now we got to spend 30,
 20 \$40 million to build an
 21 additional building because we
 22 have no room.
 23 So it's just something I
 24 want you guys to consider
 25 before getting rid of these

1 extra buildings, closing
 2 schools. It's also a concern
 3 of mine effect on the
 4 construction of Rockhill
 5 Elementary while the students
 6 are there. I know you guys try
 7 to do most of it through the
 8 summer months, but I saw one
 9 slide where you guys want to
 10 try and move the Shade Gap kids
 11 in there this next coming
 12 school year.
 13 So I just want
 14 everything to be considered
 15 before students removed,
 16 buildings are closed and
 17 property is sold. So that's
 18 pretty much all I have to say.
 19 Thank you.
 20 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 21 Yes, ma'am?
 22 MS. ENYEART:
 23 Hello, my name is Sarah
 24 Enyeart. S-A-R-A-H
 25 E-N-Y-E-A-R-T, resident of the

1 District. And I just wanted to
 2 say that we had some big new
 3 elections here when --- the
 4 start of the school --- the
 5 start of the year. And I know
 6 for myself and I hope others
 7 out there, when we cast our
 8 vote, we're looking to choose
 9 representatives that would
 10 represent us and our interest.
 11 I believe that's what you're
 12 called to do for us as the
 13 District.
 14 And as a resident of the
 15 District, I'm asking you to
 16 look for ways to save our
 17 neighborhood schools. That's
 18 how you could represent me.
 19 And I hope others share their
 20 ways or the others. Because
 21 while it seems like there's a
 22 lot of feedback from people
 23 from the Shade Gap side, I know
 24 there's others back there with
 25 opinions. But mine is that I

1 would like my representatives
 2 to find ways to save our
 3 neighborhood schools. Thank
 4 you.
 5 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 6 Thank you. Any others?
 7 I thought for a second ---.
 8 MS. LAMBERT:
 9 He does have a lot to
 10 say.
 11 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 12 I believe it.
 13 MR. LOCKE:
 14 Name is Tanner Locke.
 15 T-A-N-N-E-R L-O-C-K-E. I live
 16 in Shade Gap. I don't got no
 17 kids in the pool. I just got a
 18 little concern, that's all.
 19 Stanley, actually, maybe you
 20 can answer some of this. State
 21 or Spring Farms school when it
 22 was closed for the oil spill in
 23 order to open it back up. I
 24 know there's a large multi-
 25 million dollar cost to open

1 that school back up.
 2 Does that involve more
 3 than just the oil part? You
 4 have to bring that building
 5 back up to code before you can
 6 open that because it was quote
 7 unquote closed?
 8 MR. HALL:
 9 Yeah, it'd have to be
 10 brought up to code. You also
 11 have to put in your mediation
 12 for your drinking water. The
 13 wastewater treatment facility
 14 has been setting since the day
 15 the school shut down. It has
 16 some major issues. Right now
 17 I'm basically using it as a
 18 holding tank.
 19 MR. LOCKE:
 20 Understood. So it makes
 21 my point. If we were to close
 22 Shade Gap down and we're going
 23 to a Rockhill Southern
 24 Huntingdon two-school
 25 operation, what's to say

1 something don't happen to the
 2 Rockhill Elementary School as
 3 did Spring Farms School?
 4 We have a catastrophic
 5 failure, then kids need to be
 6 moved as quick as Spring Farms
 7 was. Sorry, Lambert, ma'am.
 8 You said does the high school
 9 don't have the --- the acronym
 10 for the sewer --- capacity to
 11 hold all kids in the District.
 12 Correct?
 13 MS. LAMBERT:
 14 We --- we are borderline
 15 pushing all students. We could
 16 maybe next year bring all kids
 17 here, but we have no --- we do
 18 not have the room.
 19 MR. LOCKE:
 20 Sure. So it fluctuates.
 21 It's on the borderline. So if
 22 something does happen to
 23 Rockhill, catastrophic failure.
 24 You don't have any other
 25 schools to move them grade

1 school kids into while you're
 2 fixing Rockhill? They can't
 3 come to the high school. Is
 4 there a plan where them kids
 5 are going to go? Is there a
 6 plan for that, ma'am? Would
 7 you know?
 8 MS. LAMBERT:
 9 At this point, no.
 10 MR. LOCKE:
 11 So definitely you're
 12 going to want to think about
 13 it. You don't want to sell
 14 your assets and restrict
 15 yourself if something does
 16 happen to Rockhill, Heaven
 17 forbid. I mean, we weren't
 18 planning on nothing happened to
 19 Spring Farms and it did.
 20 But you sell Spring
 21 Farms, you sell Shade Gap.
 22 Spring Farms ain't going to be
 23 ready for how many years,
 24 potentially. Now you're
 25 restricting yourself and really

1 putting yourself up the creek
 2 without a paddle because you
 3 don't got nowhere to put them
 4 kids if something happens. So
 5 with that, I do recommend
 6 please keep Shade Gap open.
 7 I went there myself. I
 8 know when it was time for me to
 9 come to the high school as a
 10 fifth grader. I wasn't too
 11 happy about it. Being a fifth
 12 grader, you come to high
 13 school, it's a bigger school, a
 14 lot bigger kids.
 15 You know, you're a
 16 little teeny tiny tot. That
 17 ain't the most funnest thing to
 18 come to a school. You know,
 19 five foot, six foot kids up
 20 here. Let alone you looking up
 21 to. Let alone bring up here at
 22 a three-year-old --- excuse me
 23 --- third grade level. That's
 24 my recommendation. Not the
 25 best choice. Mr. Todd Rice

1 back here taught me well,
 2 fourth and fifth grade.
 3 I appreciate it fella.
 4 Thank you. But I mean, common
 5 sense to me should have got me
 6 to stay. And we need to
 7 continue to grow our kids in
 8 these small communities that we
 9 have and continue with what we
 10 have. The financials of it
 11 definitely need looked into.
 12 And with that, I'll yield back
 13 and I'll appreciate y'all time.
 14 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 15 Thank you. Anyone else?
 16 I see people back there
 17 looking to the left and right
 18 see if anybody wants to talk.
 19 My grandkids love storage
 20 boards. I don't want to say
 21 going once, but I'll just talk
 22 for a few just in few seconds
 23 here.
 24 If we don't have any
 25 other takers, we want you to be

1 aware that we will put on the
 2 website where these additional
 3 comments can be submitted. I
 4 like the fact that we have a
 5 stenographic record. I
 6 appreciate the fact that people
 7 gave handouts and there's
 8 questions. All good thoughtful
 9 comments tonight.
 10 You know, about
 11 transportation and, you know.
 12 But this will all be taken
 13 under advisement. And the only
 14 thing I could say to anyone is
 15 continue to come to School
 16 Board meetings during a public
 17 comment period and free to
 18 share any additional questions
 19 or submit them in writing and,
 20 you know, down the road we'll
 21 see where this goes.
 22 But this is the
 23 opportunity for reflection and
 24 allows additional time to look
 25 at estimates, costs, what are

1 the challenges on what has been
 2 proposed. So thank you all for
 3 coming out tonight. I didn't
 4 know if Mrs. Lambert wants to
 5 make any closing comments, but
 6 I would just say be safe.
 7 I ran over something and
 8 I'm not really sure. Almost
 9 blew me off the side of the
 10 road so I wasn't real happy but
 11 either way I think it was a
 12 great exercise. There's no
 13 intent to rush a decision.
 14 Unfortunate, we need the School
 15 Code. The state requires us if
 16 we're going to do anything
 17 along these lines and I would
 18 just comment really, really
 19 good time to undertake a
 20 process like this, but it is
 21 designed to be collaborative.
 22 And I thank you all for
 23 coming tonight. I can't see
 24 that clock back there, but I
 25 know the stenographer has a

1 watch. What time is it?
 2 MR. KERR:
 3 8:03.
 4 COURT REPORTER:
 5 8:01.
 6 ATTORNEY BEARD:
 7 8:01. We didn't plan it
 8 that way, but is the Board good
 9 with closing this down? Okay.
 10 Well, thank you very much for
 11 coming. Drive --- drive safe
 12 and enjoy the rest of your
 13 week. Thank you very much.
 14 * * * * *
 15 HEARING CONCLUDED AT 8:02 P.M.
 16 * * * * *

1 CERTIFICATE

2
 3 I hereby certify, as the stenographic
 4 reporter, that the foregoing proceedings were
 5 taken stenographically by me, and thereafter
 6 reduced to typewriting by me or under my
 7 direction; and that this transcript is a true
 8 and accurate record to the best of my ability.
 9 Dated the 19th day of Jan 2026

10
 11 
 12 Lori A. Behe



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