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AUDITOR GENERAL

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Auditor General DePasquale Comments on Grand Jury Report on Penn Hills' Financial Catastrophe, Announces Plan to Hold Public Meeting

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today reacted to a new Allegheny County grand jury report on the cascade of bad decisions that left the Penn Hill School district in “catastrophic” financial condition.

“My 2016 audit of Penn Hills, which prompted the grand jury probe, found a shocking level of mismanagement and lack of oversight that led to the district’s enormous debt problem,” DePasquale said. “Although the grand jury did not recommend criminal charges, it agreed that the decisions made by former district leaders have had a disastrous impact on the district and the community.”

The district went deeply into debt to build a new high school and consolidate several elementary schools. As a result, the school board has repeatedly raised taxes and cut numerous teaching and administrative positions.

The state Department of Education recently placed the district into financial recovery status and will name a recovery officer to help guide the district back onto solid footing.

“At the current rate, it will take until 2043 to pay off the more than \$170 million the district now owes,” DePasquale said. “The fact that people who haven’t been born yet will be tax-paying adults before the district’s debt is resolved speaks to the urgency of finding solutions in Penn Hills.”

DePasquale also announced plans to hold a community meeting in late February to discuss ideas for turning around the troubled Penn Hills School District in Allegheny County.

“I want to give members of the community a chance to be heard and share ideas that could move Penn Hills forward and keep the focus on educating students,” DePasquale said. “Major decisions are being made that impact the entire community and I want to hear directly from the people who are most affected.”

The time and location of the Auditor General’s planned town hall meeting will be announced soon.

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