

## Lehigh Valley Academy Charter looks to build (12)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Charter Schools, Education, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues February 16, 2019

*(12th in a series on Education and Charter Schools)*

*“Bethlehem Area Superintendent Joseph Roy, a vocal critic of charter schools, said he doesn’t see the need for the charter school to build a new school with taxpayer money.”*

*“Most of LVA’s 1,700 students come from Bethlehem Area. The district is paying more than \$12 million this year for 1,035 of its students to attend LVA.”*

BASD is trying to hold the line on a tax increase, though charter school tuition is increasing \$1m. Of the 12 charter schools that approximately 2100 BASD students attend at a taxpayer cost of approximately \$30m, 50% attend Lehigh Valley Academy Charter. LVA is “eyeing” a possibly \$45m building of its own and increasing enrollment. LVA needs BASD permission, but, if denied, can appeal to the state Charter School Appeal Board.

Gadfly is still looking through the web sites of the 12 charter schools listed in our last post on this charter school topic.

[Jacqueline Palochko, “Bethlehem Area School District looking at no tax increase.” \*Morning Call\*, February 12, 2019.](#)

“Facing one of its lowest deficits in recent years, the Bethlehem Area School District is aiming to hold the line on taxes for property owners in the 2019-20 budget. . . . Because of the low deficit, board President Michael Faccinetto said he’d like to see what the budget would look like without a tax increase. ‘I’m not saying it’s a done deal, but we’re in the position where we can at least entertain it,’ he said.”

“As has been the case in recent years for school districts, charter schools and employee pension payments are top cost drivers. Bethlehem Area is looking at an almost \$1 million increase in charter school tuition that would bring the district to paying almost \$31 million.”

Jacqueline Palochko, “Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter plans a \$45 million school building.” *Morning Call*, February 14, 2019.

“Wanting to get out of the business of paying rent, the Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School is looking to build a 200,000-square-foot building at a cost of \$45 million.”



LVA

*current rented space, 1560 Valley Center Pkwy*

“At its Jan. 16 meeting, the board approved a \$10 million sales agreement that could be for land. . . . ‘The LVA Board of Trustees recognizes that owning our own facility is significantly more cost effective, fiscally responsible, and sustainable in the long term,’ the news release states. The charter school needs the permission of both the Bethlehem Area and Saucon Valley school boards to change locations because it is a regional charter school.”

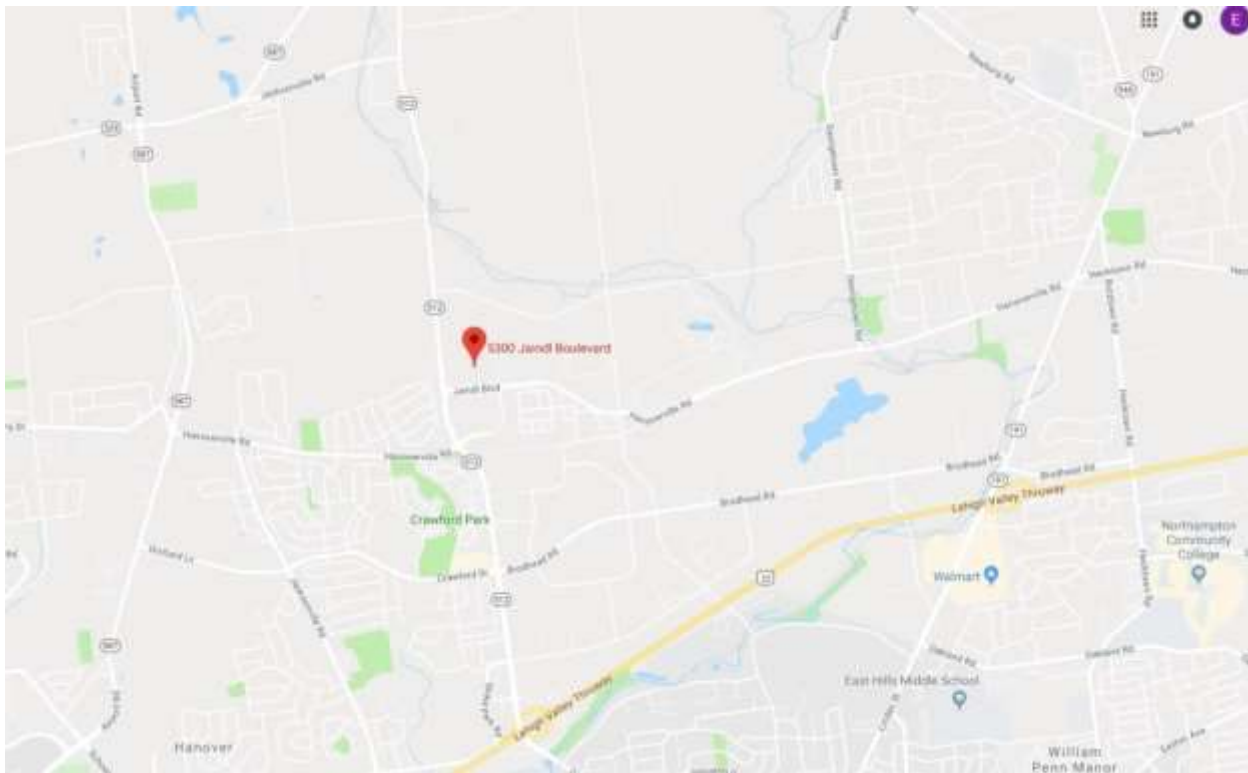
“Most of LVA’s 1,700 students come from Bethlehem Area. The district is paying more than \$12 million this year for 1,035 of its students to attend LVA. The news release says the new building would be for 1,950 students, suggesting LVA is looking to expand enrollment.”

“The charter school opened in 2002 and follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum, a globally focused program that requires students to take a series of demanding tests to receive an optional IB diploma.”

“LVA enrolls a diverse population; more than 30 percent of its students are Hispanic, 36 percent are white and 12 percent are black. Almost 50 percent are considered economically disadvantaged. The charter school has a 95 percent graduation rate, almost 10 percentage points above the state average.”

Jacqueline Palochko and Jon Harris, “Lehigh Valley Academy eyes Jaindl land for new charter school building.” *Morning Call*, February 15, 2019.

“Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School is eyeing 31 acres of Jaindl-owned land in Northampton County for its proposed 200,000-square-foot school. The charter school would pay \$10.9 million for the land at 5300 Jaindl Blvd. in Hanover Township, according to the seller’s agreement between the charter school and the estate of Frederick J. Jaindl. The land is near Route 512.”



LVA

*possible new building, 5300 Jaindl Blvd*

“Smith, the charter school’s board of trustees president, said LVA wants to own its own building because it’s more fiscally responsible than renting. The charter school pays more than \$3 million annually in rent, he said. LVA plans to take out a loan for the new school, Smith said.”

“The charter school needs the permission of both the Bethlehem Area and Saucon Valley school boards to change locations because it is a regional charter school. It serves grades kindergarten through 12th. LVA has not yet filed a formal request with Bethlehem Area for a move. Saucon Valley Superintendent Craig Butler declined to comment. If either school district does not approve the location change, the charter school can appeal to the state Charter School Appeal Board.”

“Most of LVA’s 1,700 students come from Bethlehem Area. The district is paying more than \$12 million this year for 1,035 of its students to attend LVA.”  
[Plans are to increase enrollment to 1,950 students.]