Meeting Story Practice Exercise4

You're covering a 7 p.m. meeting of the Harkensville School Board on the second Tuesday of the month. The meeting is being held in the auditorium of Woodrow J. Harkensville High School. Here are your notes from the meeting:

-Board begins with discussion of the cleanup at Fayetteville Elementary School. Two weeks earlier the dam for the hatchery at the Forke Weir broke, flooding the city's Parksburg and Fayetteville neighborhoods. Water gushed through several of the school's ground-floor classrooms, including the occupational therapy room. School Principal Jannetta Wohlinsky says repairs are proceeding on schedule but that they won't be finished before school lets out for the summer. The school's air conditioning unit for the ground floor needs to be replaced at a cost of $12,000. She says that the furniture, books and supplies in the rooms were ruined by the water and mud and also must be replaced. Estimated cost: $20,000. The OT equipment has been cleaned. Wohlinsky says the first- and second-grade classes in those rooms have been temporarily moved to the cafeteria. "The teachers are coping," she says. "It's all an adventure to the students." Newly elected school board president Jerome Sharp asks about the nonfunctioning air conditioning unit. Wohlinsky says some of the teachers are taking their classes outside in the afternoons to escape the buildup of heat in the cafeteria.

-Theodora Jenkins, principal of Woodrow J. Harkensville High School, gave an update on work on the school's new computer lab. She says the lab, which is being installed as an addition to the school's library, is behind schedule and won't be completed for two months. Estimated cost of the lab: $235,000. Sharp questioned the expenditure. He wanted to know why the school district was spending money on PCs rather than equipping classrooms with Chromebooks. Jenkins said the decision to upgrade the computer lab was approved three years earlier. Sharp: "But teenagers don't need a lab. They don't need stand-alone computers. What are they, Macs? This is what I mean by wrong-headed fiscal policy."

-Board hears a proposal from local resident Tamara Jackson, member of a group called Creation Science Ministry at the Harkensville Spiritual Life Center. Jackson presents the board with a petition bearing 800 signatures from Harkensville County residents asking that creationism be included in the science curriculum of all Harkensville County Public Schools. Jackson: "Evolution is just a theory. Students should be exposed to all the

major theories in the life sciences." Several people in the audience boo or applaud. At least 50 are sitting in the audience.

Richard Bohr, a science teacher at Woodrow J. Harkensville High School, jumps up and shouts to be recognized: "Creationism is pseudo-science and I will not teach it in my classes!" He is red in the face and visibly agitated. Angela Artesia, another science teacher at Cromwall Middle School, shouts from her seat: "Keep religion out of the schools!" Sharp starts banging his gavel to quiet the crowd. Sharp: "This is the 21st century, Ms. Jackson. Our students need STEM skills that will help our businesses and industries compete with companies from around the world. They won't be able to do that if we teach them nonsense." Sharp gets a mixture of boos and applause.

School board member Melinda DiCarlo interrupted Sharp: "This is not for us to settle. The state has to approve our curriculum." Michael Moretti, another member of the school board, responds: "Why do we need the state to dictate what we can and cannot teach in our classrooms?" The board votes 5-2 to table the matter for further discussion.

Your task:

Figure out the best news lead for a hard news story in the next morning's Harkensville Press newspaper and write about a 350-400-word news story about the meeting. Research and include background information on the use of Chromebooks or other mobile computing devices in the classroom, and on attempts to teach creationism in other school districts around the country.