

MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
OF THE SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND

A meeting of the Board of School Trustees of the School Town of Highland was held at the Administration Center, 9145 Kennedy Avenue, Highland, Indiana, on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

On call of roll, the members of the Board were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present: Mr. Patrick Krull, Mr. Robert Kuva, Mrs. Erica Smith-Gomez, Mr. Victor Garcia, and Mr. Richard Alyea

Also present were Dr. Brian Smith, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Ryan Erdelac, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Kim Fulton, Chief Financial Officer; and Mr. Rhett Tauber, Attorney.

Minutes of the Meeting of January 13, 2026. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to approve the minutes of January 13, 2026 as submitted. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Superintendent’s Report. Dr. Smith shared the following updates and extended his congratulations:

- ☐ The Highland girls basketball team and the girls swimming and diving team had outstanding seasons.
- ☐ Aleksandra Bastaic, Kennedy Stevens, and Melody Vazquez qualified for state in wrestling. Aleksandra was named State Wrestling Champion and received the Mental Attitude Award, and Kennedy Stevens placed eighth.
- ☐ Jordan Steele broke Highland’s all-time girls basketball scoring record.
- ☐ Best of luck to the boys basketball team as they prepare for Sectionals, and to the boys swimming and diving team in their upcoming competitions.

Treasurer’s Report. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve the treasurer’s report for the month of January as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Vouchers. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Alyea, to approve the vouchers as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Worthless Property Resolution. The administration presented a request to dispose of a Randell commercial cooling table display that is 15 years old, not working properly, and no longer used. The following resolution was presented for Board approval:

School Town of Highland Resolution
Resolution Declaring Certain Personal Property as Worthless

This resolution is adopted by the Board of Trustees of the School Town of Highland of Lake County, Indiana.

Whereas, the Board of School Trustees of the School Town of Highland has certain personal property that is deemed worthless, and it wishes to demolish, donate, and/or recycle the same:

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of School Trustees of the School Town of Highland in Lake County, Indiana:

1. That the School Town of Highland declares that personal property itemized on Exhibit “A” as worthless and that it may proceed to demolish, donate, or recycle said items of personal property.

2. That the Superintendent of Schools is hereby authorized and directed to demolish, donate or recycle said items of personal property.

Monies received from the scrapping/recycling will be deposited back into the Food Service account. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

ERATE Bid – Wireless Access Points and Bridges. The School Town participated in an ERATE bid to purchase and install new wireless access points, wireless bridges, and associated cabling and mounts at eligible locations (contingent upon the successful receipt of category 2E-rate funding of a 60% discount). The administration recommended the Moss bid in the amount of \$296,513.50 which meets all the requirements of bid specifications and scored the highest rating on the rubric. This project will be funded through the General Obligation Bond. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Donations. The following donations were received for the high school: \$500 from the Northern Trust Blackband Giving Fund for athletics; \$100 in gift cards from Jewel Osco and \$1,701.74 from Shelly Callegari for DECA; \$1,524 from various donors and \$7,875.14 from various businesses for the Student Council spaghetti dinner; \$100 anonymous donation for the middle school food service; and \$40 from Daniel Salmon for Johnston boys athletics. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to accept the donations presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Buildings and Grounds. Mr. Rusty McWilliams, Director of Buildings and Grounds, provided the Board with a written report related to the work that took place in and around all buildings over the last month.

Board Liaison Reports. Mr. Garcia reported that the Highland/Griffith Chamber recently hosted a presentation by Success Trek on Organizational Resiliency. In his role as legislative liaison, he encouraged Board members to review ISBA emails regarding bill tracking, particularly the five bills currently being monitored. Mr. Garcia also shared that he recently visited the Statehouse, where he met with the entire Highland delegation and discussed the anticipated challenges the School Town may face as a result of Senate Enrolled Act I.

Mrs. Smith-Gomez attended a meeting of the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative (NISEC). During the meeting, new officers were elected, and Mrs. Smith-Gomez was reelected as president. The December funding accounts were reviewed. She noted that state funding for special education has been reduced across all categories for the current year. She reported an increase of fifty-one students in the severe category

Title II Grant. Dr. Erdelac presented the Title II, Part A Grant for Board approval in the amount of \$85,067.35, with \$16,065.83 designated for nonpublic schools. The grant funds support activities such as professional development for principals and teachers, conferences, and curriculum development. Mr. Kuva moved to approve the grant as submitted, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez. All voted “aye.” The motion carried.

Title IV. Title IV, Part A is broken up into three main focus areas under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The School Town was awarded \$32,052.90, with \$4,899.86 earmarked for the non-public schools. Dr. Erdelac recommended Board approval of the grant as submitted. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Professional Leaves. The following were recommended for professional leave: **Jessica Dec** and **Hailey Tremain**, IASP ECA Workshop – March 4, 2026; **Amy Harrington**, Lake County safety meeting – February 3, 2026; **Kimberly Fabian**, Wida Access testing – January 30, 2026, February 5, 2026, and February 11, 2026; **Nick Ecsy**, Wida Access testing – January 20-21, 2026; **Ashli Cooper**, Spring Assessment Forum – April 8, 2026; **Kari Tolliver**, Fluency Building the Bridge – February 26, 2026; **Rose Vis**, PNW Advisory Board – February 9, 2026 and March 18, 2026 and Franciscan Dyer behavioral tour –

February 18, 2026; **Lauren Bastaic** and **Mark Maldonado**, state wrestling championship – January 16, 2026; **Courtney Condes**, Quarterly AD meeting – January 16, 2026; **Austin Pizer**, baseball coaches meeting – January 23-24; **Britni Luster**, FSD monthly meeting – February 11, 2026; and **Dominic Nieblas**, School Bus Summit Expo, March 16-18, 2026. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted “aye” Motion carried.

Termination/Retirements/Resignations. Dr. Smith recommended/accepted the following: the termination of **Dane Edmonds**, custodian/plumber - February 10, 2026; the retirements of **Kevin Beveridge**, Southridge principal - June 30, 2026 and **Dale Scheeringa**, high school custodian - January 30, 2026; and the resignations of **Mery Sanchez**, Title 1 aide - January 30, 2026, and **Cory Grinnell**, middle school custodian - February 27, 2026. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Appointments. Dr. Smith recommended the following for the 2025-2026 school year: **John Valiska**, high school girls track coach; **Edwin C. DeJesus**, JV head softball coach; **Kris Karlen**, Warren volunteer assistant basketball coach; **Edwin DeJesus Sr**, Assistant JV softball coach; **Kenneth Farkas**, substitute custodian - February 2, 2026; **Kimberly Gutekunst**, Title I paraprofessional - February 2, 2026; and **Tammy Thiel**, Johnston/Southridge custodian - February 9, 2026. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to approve the above recommendations as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Comments from the Audience. Comments followed regarding a survey sent home with students.

Comments from the Board. Members of the Board commended the Student Council for their work on the spaghetti dinner; congratulated all student athletes for a successful year; and extended their best wishes and thanks to the retirees.

Future Meetings. The Board will meet next in regular session on March 17, 2026 at 6 p.m.

Adjournment. There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to adjourn at 6:40 p.m. after the signing of claims in the amount of \$1,783,970.91 minutes, payroll file totals, etc. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.