

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

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, August 19, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

President Krull opened with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silent reflection. 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 J. Smith, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Ryan Erdelac, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Cynthia Adams, Chief Financial Officer; and Mr. Rhett Tauber, Attorney.

Minutes – Regular Meeting of July 15, 2025. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve the minutes of July 15, 2025. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Superintendent's Report. Dr. Smith remarked on the following:

- ☐ Construction update on the high school parking lot, Johnston playground, roof top units, and chillers.
- ☐ Remaining staffing vacancies will be filled this evening.
- ☐ Welcome back to all returning students and staff members, as well as students and staff members new to Highland.
- ☐ Congratulations to Mark Maldonado 2025 ISWA Women's wrestling coach of the year.
- ☐ The first football game is with Griffith on Friday night.

Board Liaison Reports. Mr. Garcia attended the Highland/Griffith Chamber meeting. Phil Taillon, President of South Shore Convention Authority, was the guest speaker. He shared information on the tourism and events that benefit the economy in Northwest Indiana. It was noted that the West Lake Corridor project, an extension of the South Shore Line, will now be referred to as the Monon Corridor.

Mr. Kuva attended a meeting of the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative (NISEC). He reported on the recent cuts in funding and the strategies NISEC has implemented to address these budget reductions. He also commended Highland staff members involved in the Best Buddies Program.

Treasurer's Report. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve the treasurer's report as printed. All voted “aye.” Motion carried

Vouchers. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve the vouchers as printed. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

2026 Corporation Budgets. The Board received information on the 2026 Corporation Budgets, which includes the Education Fund, Operations Fund, and Debt Service Fund. These budgets will be advertised on the DLGF's website, Gateway, ten days prior to the public hearing. The Capital Projects and Bus Replacement Funds must be posted on the School Town website at least ten days prior to the public hearing. The administration requested to advertise on Gateway and to post to the School Town's official website. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried. The public hearing for the 2026 Annual Budget, the CPF Plan, and the Bus Replacement Plan will be held on September 16, 2025. The 2026 Annual Corporation Budget, the Capital Projects and Bus Replacement Plans along with the associated resolutions will be adopted at the October 21, 2025 Board meeting.

Donations. The following donations were received: The high school received the following: \$300 from the Stiglitz family for girls soccer; \$2,500 from Dick's Sporting Goods for boys baseball; \$500 from Highland Rotary Club for cross country and \$2,700 from the Football Mom's Booster for football shoulder pads. Johnston School received a \$7,600 reimbursement for staff supplies and field trips from the Johnston PTO. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to accept the donations as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Special/Support Services. Mr. Michael Sukta, Manager of Buildings and Grounds, provided the Board with a written report regarding the ongoing maintenance work over the past month.

NEOLA Policy Updates: EDGAR UGG and July 25 Special Update. Dr. Erdelac presented for second reading NEOLA policy updates for the Board's review. The first set, Education Department General Administration Regulations (EDGAR) and Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), covers policies relating to grants and finance. The second set, a July special update, is in response to the latest legislation from the Department of Education effective July 1, 2025. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted "aye." Motion carried.

Professional Leaves. The following were recommended for professional leave: **Kari Tolliver**, WVEC Reading Specialist Group - September 2, 2025; **Kathryn Bailey**, **Amy Harrington**, and **Lisa Kelly**--IPLI - September 23, 2025; **Troy Eriks**, Technical Training – July 14-18, 2025. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted "aye." Motion carried.

Termination/Resignations. The Superintendent presented the following: **Rosa Torres** terminated effective August 13, 2025; and the following resignations: **Stephen Duke**, high school custodian - July 29, 2025; **Zackery Pizer**, social studies teacher - July 29, 2025; **Rachel Paplomatas**, middle school PLTW teacher/7th Grade Volleyball/Spartan News - August 5, 2025; **Nancy Shelton**, Merkley instructional aide - July 21, 2025; **Suzanne Rodriguez**, Merkley Math Bowl - July 21, 2025; **Adriane Powell**, middle school nurse - July 21, 2025; **Lesley Shimkus**, Merkley nurse - July 26, 2025; **Klarissa Szdafranski**, Merkley instructional aide – July 29, 2025; **Duane Sieb**, school bus aide – August 4, 2025; and **Mishelle Alvrez**, Johnston instructional aide – August 1, 2025. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to accept the above resignations as presented. All voted "aye." Motion carried.

Appointments/Transfers. The Superintendent presented the following appointments effective for the 2025-2026 school year: **Kaitlyn Lopez**, Southridge elementary teacher; **Mark Boer**, middle school math teacher; **Dylan Foster**, middle school social studies teacher; **Kelley Rak**, middle school business teacher; **Elisa Michel**, JV girls volleyball; **Julia Anton**, assistant varsity volleyball; **Mattea Ochoa**, Johnston Dependent Care aide; **Kenneth Sperry**, assistant varsity football coach; **Vanessa Lopez**, Johnston Title I aide; **Stephanie Hendrixson**, Merkley instructional aide; **Mary Wajvoda**, high school supervisory aide; **Rebecca Raycroft**, middle school volleyball coach; **Alyssa Geringer**, Merkley Dependent Care aide; **Amber Clement**, high school Pathfinder aide; **Abigail Kraupner**, high school National Honor Society; **Ashli Cooper**, freshman class sponsor; **Mary Sassano**, special needs bus aide; **Criselda Torres**, bus driver; **Selena Rodriguez**, Merkley instructional aide; **Mya Santiago**, Merkley instructional aide; **Elizabeth Biggs**, Southridge Spell Bowl; **Fabian Galindo**, high school night custodian – July 21, 2025; **Alan Montano**, sub custodian – August 1, 2025; **John Cook**, transfer to groundskeeper – July 28, 2025; **Judy Ehlin**, sub custodian to full time custodian – August 11, 2025; **Bryce Fulkerson**, sub custodian to full time custodian; **Valerie Sipes**, middle school nurse – August 5, 2025; and **Laura Steyer**, middle school nurse – August 8, 2025. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve. All voted "aye." Motion carried.

Comments from the Audience. A comment was made regarding the enrollment of out of district students for the 2026-2027 school year. It was noted that the School Town is only concentrating on this school year and has made no decisions with regard to 2026-2027

Comments from the Board. The Board commented on the following:

- ☐ Welcome students and staff as you start the new school year.
- ☐ Thank you for the outstanding donations presented this evening.
- ☐ Congratulations to Coach Mark Maldonado.
- ☐ Noted the budget cuts coming in the next few years.

Future Meetings. The Board will meet for a budget work session on August 26, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. and in regular session on September 16, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment. There being no business to come before the Board, Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to adjourn at 6:35 p.m. after the signing of claims in the amount of \$3,255,443.91 minutes, payroll file totals, etc. All voted "aye." Motion carried.