

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, May 19, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

President Krull opened the meeting of the Board of School Trustees with the Pledge of Allegiance and 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 Smith, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Ryan Erdelac, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Kim Fulton, Chief Financial Officer, and Ms. Tara Tauber, Attorney for the Board.

Minutes of April 21, 2026. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve the minutes of April 21, 2026 as printed. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Superintendent’s Report. Dr. Smith noted that the last day of school for teachers and students is May 28. Commencement ceremonies for the Class of 2026 will be held on June 2nd in the Monbeck Auditorium. He expressed his appreciation to all for a great school year and extended his best wishes to the graduating seniors.

Board Liaison Reports. Mr. Garcia attended a meeting of the Highland/Griffith Chamber of Commerce. The guest speaker was Erica Rios-Corbin of the Griffith Police Department, who presented on SAFE, an organization dedicated to combating substance abuse through support services and educational resources designed to protect both adolescents and adults.

Mrs. Smith-Gomez attended the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative (NISEC) meeting. She reported that there has been a cost increase in Worker’s Compensation due to inflation and a minor uptick in incidents. Marsha Horn has resigned as NISEC Director effective July 24, 2026. A panel of three superintendents and two NISEC board members interviewed eligible candidates last week.

Mr. Patrick Krull attended a meeting of the Highland Park Board. They have been conducting interviews for a new superintendent in the parks department. He also reported on the “Bridges Over Ditches” project, a major pedestrian and bicycle trail linking Munster and Highland over Hart Ditch and Cady-Marsh Ditch. It is not officially open yet and is awaiting state approval, which is about three or four weeks away. Lastly, the new playground at Main Square is now open.

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

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

Donations The high school received donations totaling \$900, including \$500 from McFarland Homes, \$250 from Tauber Law, \$50 from Larry Samples for boys’ basketball, and \$100 from Peoples Bank/Randy Walker for athletics.

The middle school received \$51.20 through Box Tops for student activities and T-shirts valued at \$750 from Region Sports Network for spring football. In addition, the Southridge PTC donated \$100 to the school library, while the Warren PTO donated playground picnic tables and door window decals valued at \$8,596.39 to Warren Elementary School. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to accept the above donations as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Paving Bids. Paving bids were advertised in the *Post Tribune* and *The Times* on April 22 and April 29, 2026. A committee opened the following bids on May 13, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. at the Administration Center:

Company	Base Bid
Site Services	\$1,248,641
Milestone Contractors North	\$1,560,500
Rieth-Riley Construction	\$1,648,437

The Skillman Corporation recommended awarding the contract and issuing a Notice to Proceed to the low bidder Site Services in the amount of \$1,248,641. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve the bid of Site Services as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Minutes of a Regular School Board Meeting – Page 2
May 19, 2026

Property/Casualty/School Board Legal Insurance Policies. The administration recommended the following policies totaling \$393,162 for the 2026-2027 school year:

Property/Casualty	Church Mutual	\$240,359
Workers Comp	IN Public Employers’ Plan	\$ 89,934
School Board Legal	Church Mutual	\$ 28,629
Cyber Liability	Underwriters at Lloyd’s	\$ 13,730
Terrorism	Lloyds of London	\$ 20,510

Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve the above policies as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Building and Grounds. Mr. Rusty McWilliams, Director of Buildings and Grounds, submitted a report regarding repair and replacement projects completed for the past month throughout the district.

Professional Leaves. Dr. Erdelac presented the following professional leaves for approval: **Rachel Jennings** and **Kris Pilewski**, Nurturing High Ability Learners - May 14, 2026; **Stacy Steele**, Read-A-Thon Banquet – May 20, 2026; and **Kari Tolliver**, Breaking Down K-2 Math – May 7, 2026; **Mark Maldonado**, Silver Clinic Coaches – May 11-12, 2026, and **Dominic Nieblas**, STAI Annual Conference – June 22-25, 2026. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve the above professional leaves as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Retirements/Resignations. The Superintendent presented the retirements of **Wendy Ross**, corporation bus driver – April 28, 2026 and **Laura Viveros**, high school custodian – July 17, 2026, and the resignations of **Molly Wagner**, English teacher and department chair – May 28, 2026; **Mark Boer**, 7th Grade math teacher – May 28, 2026; **Claire Hays**, 7th grade math teacher – May 28, 2026; **Leanne Owens**, middle school yearbook sponsor – May 28, 2026; **Olivia Ochoa**, Dependent Care aide – May 15, 2026; and **Kumphas Kev**, Johnston instructional aide – May 28, 2026. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to approve. The administration and Board thanked Ms. Ross and Ms. Viveros for their many years of service. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Appointments/Transfers. The Superintendent presented the following appointments effective for the 2026-2027 school year: **Briah Strezo**, varsity assistant volleyball coach; **Madison VanderMeer**, 7th Grade mathematics teacher; **Camden Scheidt**, 6th Grade mathematics teacher; **Caitlin Kovalan**, 7th Grade mathematics teacher; **Angie Ramirez**, corporation bus driver – May 14, 2026; **Lydia Lopez**, Merkley Dependent Care aide; **James Lichtle**, substitute custodian and **Christopher Anderson**, maintenance/groundskeeper- May 13, 2026. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Alyea, to approve the above appointments as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Comments from the Audience. Comments from previous meetings were referenced.

Comments from the Board. Board members congratulated the graduates and student-athletes, expressed appreciation for the donations and everyone involved in the Senior Walk, and extended their best wishes for a safe, enjoyable summer.

Next Meeting. The Board will meet in Executive Session on May 28 at 5:30 p.m. and for a regular Board meeting on June 16, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment. There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to adjourn at 6:45 p.m. after the signing of vouchers in the amount of \$1,949,835.70, minutes, payroll file totals, etc. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

