

**ORION COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #223
1002 11TH AVENUE
ORION, ILLINOIS 61273**

**Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, November 19, 2025**

The meeting was called to order at the District Office, 1002 11th Avenue, Orion, Illinois, at 7:00 p.m., by Board President Hoftender. Present were members Abbott, Berg (via virtual), Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **ROLL CALL**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PLEDGE

Board President Hoftender announced that the Board had met in executive session at 6:06 p.m. – 7:10 p.m. to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors, or specific volunteers of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor or a volunteer of the District or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. However, a meeting to consider an increase in compensation to a specific employee of a public body that is subject to the Local Government Wage Increase Transparency Act may not be closed and shall be open to the public and posted and held in accordance with this Act; collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; and discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06.

**EXECUTIVE
SESSION
SUMMARY**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included approval of minutes of the October 15, 2025, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; October 15, 2025, 6:01 p.m., executive meeting; October 15, 2025, 7:10 p.m., regular meeting; October 21, 2025, 6:30 p.m., special meeting; October 28, 2025, 6:13p.m.; approval of prepaid bills: \$38,015.02; approval of October, 2025 Payroll Benefits: \$49,204.05; and approval of November, 2025 bills: \$1,303,099.65, totaling \$1,390,318.72; approval of October 30, 2025, payroll: \$343,677.38; approval of November 14, 2025, payroll: \$352,835.19; approval of activity fund financial statements from CR Hanna Elementary School, Orion Middle School, and Orion High School; approval of district financial reports; and approved the following middle school volunteer wrestling coaches: Talon Rodney, Caden Edmunds, Mason Anderson, Cole Perkins. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Continued

Superintendent Blessman recognized and thanked the Board of Education members for their service to the school district. CR Hanna Principal Lowe recognized Autumn Manning, CR Hanna Media Center Coordinator, for organizing a very successful book fair. OHS Principal DeBaillie presented Mason Hock with a certificate recognizing him as Orion High School Student of the Month, highlighting his strong leadership, responsibility, and integrity

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Tara Miller, OEA President, provided an update on a recent PERA/RIF Committee meeting.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Superintendent Blessman reported on the district's audit, E-learning days/emergency days/Act of God days, maintenance projects, district health insurance, and a tentative levy.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe provided updates on recent activities, including the September/October Student Leaders of the Month, the Student Hunger Drive, and Parent-Teacher Conferences. He noted the school's exemplary status and thanked staff and students for their hard work. He also shared information about the upcoming Thanksgiving program, which will be held at the high school.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie recognized Becky Nightingale, OHS Student Council Sponsor, for managing a very successful Student Hunger Drive. Mr. DeBaillie also provided updates on the upcoming Christmas for Kids fundraiser, a future Career Expo, and a recent FFA competition. He reported that the high school achieved exemplary status and thanked staff for their efforts in preparing students.

**PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Athletics/Activities Director Ashlee Amador provided updates on athletics, including the start of winter sports, a recap of fall sports with all-conference recognitions, a recent IHSA Student Leadership Conference, and the upcoming basketball tournament.

**HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETICS/
ACTIVITIES
DIRECTOR'S REPO**

Middle School Principal Bahnks provided updates on recent student activities, including the Student Hunger Drive, the Medieval Times field trip, and the 8th grade JA Career Fair. He reviewed the IAR test results, highlighting student growth, and expressed appreciation to teachers and staff for their efforts in preparing students.

**MIDDLE
SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to hire Alyce McConaghy as the STEM Teacher at C.R. Hanna Elementary for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE STEM
TEACHER**

Continued

Motion by Hepner, second by Nightingale to hire Chad Bahnks as the District Superintendent (beginning July 1, 2026). Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
The Board reviewed information from the District Insurance and Finance Committees, Orion PTA, and Orion Athletic Booster Club.	COMMITTEE NEWS
Motion by Abbott, second by Stockton to adopt Parent and Family Policy 8:95A as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	ADOPT POLICY
Motion by Abbott, second by Nightingale to adopt School Board Policy 2:230 as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	ADOPT POLICY
Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to select a tentative levy (2025 payable in 2026) for adoption at the December 17, 2025, Board of Education meeting. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	MOTION TO SELECT TENTATIVE LEVY
Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to approve up to \$50,000 of schooldistrict funds to match up to \$50,000 of school maintenance grant funds. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE MAINTENANCE GRANT
Motion by Hepner, second by Nightingale to approve Colton Drish be granted the authority to vote on the IASB resolutions at the 2025 IASB Delegate Assembly with his independent discretion based on the consensus of the Orion CUSD #223 Board on November 22, 2025, and any discussions had on each resolution at the 2025 IASB Delegate Assembly. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE DELEGATE VOTING ON RESOLUTIONS
The Board discussed the upcoming Board Conference on November 21-23, 2025. Secretary Abbott read three thank you notes.	BOARD REPORTS
Motion by Berg, second by Stockton to adjourn. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.
Wednesday, November 19, 2025