

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

**Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, September 24, 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, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. Absent was member Berg. Time: 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PLEDGE

Board President Hoftender announced that the Board had met in executive session 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; 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 Stockton to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included approval of minutes of the August 20, 2025, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; August 20, 2025, 6:01 p.m., executive meeting; August 20, 2025, 7:05 p.m., regular meeting; August 27, 2025, 7:02 p.m., executive meeting; September 4, 2025, 6:06 p.m., special meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$87,684.16; approval of August, 2025 Payroll Benefits: \$29,424.21; and approval of September, 2025 bills: \$459,302.83, totaling \$576,411.20; approval of August 28, 2025, payroll: \$121,293.45; approval of August 29, 2025, payroll: \$181,686.45; approval of August 30, 2025, payroll: \$2,082.38; approval of September 15, 2025, payroll: \$336,571.66; approval of activity fund financial statements from CR Hanna Elementary School, Orion Middle School, and Orion High School; approval of district financial report. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

A Public Hearing was held to discuss the FY2026 budget.

**PUBLIC
HEARING**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to adopt the FY2026 budget, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**ADOPT
FY2026
BUDGET**

Continued

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Superintendent Blessman recognized district employees who recently received years of service pins. Middle School Principal Bahnks recognized the middle school girls' cross country team and their coaches. Team members shared highlights of their successful season. OHS Principal DeBaillie recognized Allison Taets as the September Student of the Month. Allison spoke about her experiences at the high school along with advice for younger classmates.

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Tara Miller, OEA President, spoke about a recent Labor Relations meeting and shared highlights from an IEA Region meeting that she recently attended. A parent addressed the Board regarding a previous matter they had brought to their attention, expressing appreciation for the Board's time and consideration in reviewing the issue.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Superintendent Blessman provided updates on completed safety drills, a recent Labor Relations meeting, the upcoming School Board convention and Health, Life, and Safety Inspections.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie provided updates on class enrollment, Student Council activities, the recent Homecoming, and upcoming FFA event.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe thanked Osco Church for the staff treats. Mr. Lowe recognized the September Student Leaders of the Month, provided updates on a recent VIP Day held at C.R. Hanna, a recent SIP in-service, changes made to the school website and highlighted new social media posts keeping the community informed.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Middle School Principal Bahnks recognized the middle school's Social Media Coordinator for student highlights, including Student of the Week posts, and provided updates on a recent SIP in-service, athletics, and band and choir enrollment.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Activities Director, Ashlee Amador, reported on the recent Homecoming Week, Fall athletic teams' upcoming Senior Nights and Regionals.

**HIGH SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve a Leave of Absence for employee #91025 in accordance with FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act). Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
FMLA
REQUEST**

Continued

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to hire Sara Kershaw as a Social Media Coordinator at the high school for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE HS
SOCIAL MEDIA
COORDINATOR**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to hire Natalie Parrett, a Special Education Teacher at the high school, for the remaining 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE HS
SPECIAL EDUCATION
TEACHER**

The Board reviewed information from the Orion Music Boosters.

**COMMITTEE
NEWS**

Motion by Stockton, second by Abbott to adopt the following policy: 7:180 Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**UPDATED
POLICY
7:180**

Motion by Stockton, second by Hoftender to approve the Superintendent vacancy posting. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender and Stockton. Nays: Nightingale. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
VACANCY
POST**

The Board discussed the recent IASB Blackhawk Division event.
The Board scheduled the annual Board Retreat on October 28, 2025.

**BOARD
REPORTS**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to adjourn. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.
Wednesday, September 24, 2025