

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

Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, May 20, 2026

The meeting was called to order at the District Office, 1002 11th Avenue, Orion, Illinois, at 7:00 p.m., by Board Vice President Stockton. Present were members Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. Absent was member Hoftender.

ROLL CALL

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PLEDGE

Board Vice-President Stockton announced that the Board had met in executive session at 6:02 p.m. – 6:48 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; the selection of a person to fill a public office, including a vacancy in a public office, when the District is given the power to appoint under law or ordinance, or the discipline, performance or removal of the occupant of a public office, when the District is given power to remove the occupant under law or ordinance; the purchase or lease of real property for the use of the District, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired; and discussion of minutes 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 Hepner to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included approval of minutes of the April 15, 2026, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; April 15, 2026, 6:03 p.m., executive meeting; April 15, 2026, 7:05 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$25,238.55; approval of April, 2026 Payroll Benefits: \$41,513.53; and approval of May, 2026 bills: \$192,846.28, totaling \$259,598.36; approval of April 30, 2026, payroll: \$316,329.81; approval of May 15, 2026, payroll: \$363,274.59; approval of activity fund financial statements from CR Hanna Elementary School, Orion Middle School, and Orion High School; approved Hannah Swope as middle school volunteer softball coach. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Continued

In Principal DeBaillie's absence, Principal Bahnks announced Kallen Franks as the OHS Student of the Month. Principal Bahnks also also thanked the PTA and Board for the staff appreciation items and recognized retiring OMS PE/Health teacher Natalie Weller. Principal Lowe thanked CRH staff for their efforts in organizing recent end-of-the-year activities.

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Tara Miller, OEA President, thanked the Board and PTA for the treats during Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Superintendent Blessman thanked staff for their efforts in preparing for the many end-of-the-year events across the district. He also reported on the upcoming retirement luncheon, expressed appreciation to retirees for their contributions to the district, provided updates on summer maintenance projects, and noted that spring coaches will be rehired at the June Board meeting.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe reported on Leaders of the Month assembly, field day, kindergarten, class lists, and STEM lab.

**CRH PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

OHS Principal DeBaillie was absent. His report included 5Essentials Survey results and a list of academic award recipients recognized at Academic Awards Night. The Athletic Report included updates on spring sports and upcoming summer camp information.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Middle School Principal Bahnks reported on the Fine Arts Festival, Student Council dance, Field Day, 8th Grade Promotion, Awards Day, and state track.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Motion by Berg, second by Hepner to accept Resignation for Reason of Retirement from R.C. Lowe as CR Hanna Elementary School Principal effective at the conclusion of the 2029-2030 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**ACCEPT
RETIREMENT
RESIGNATION**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to accept the resignation of Deb Lawyer as middle school paraprofessional. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**ACCEPT
RESIGNATION**

Motion by Abbott, second by Hepner to hire Ryan Lilly as a full-time custodian. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
CUSTODIAN**

Motion by Abbott, second by Hepner to hire Olivia McLaughlin as an Elementary School Counselor for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
ELEMENTARY
COUNSELOR**

Continued

Motion by Berg, second by Abbott to hire Joy Carter as a 1.0 FTE Spanish Teacher at the high school for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
TEACHER**

Motion by Berg, second by Abbott to hire Elizabeth Ray as the High School Assistant Volleyball Coach for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
COACH**

Motion by Hepner, second by Abbott to hire Justin Merrick as Middle School Softball Assistant Coach. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
COACH**

Motion by Berg, second by Abbott to hire Connie Jensen as the High School Color Guard Sponsor for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
SPONSOR**

The Board reviewed meeting minutes from the Orion PTA.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to approve the estimate from Costello Painting. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
BID**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve the bid from Gus Lining & Striping Business. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
BID**

Motion by Berg, second by Abbott to approve bid from Milan Blacktop to repair/seal coat the parking lots at the elementary, middle, and high school. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
BID**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to adopt the recommended policy revisions for the District's Board Policy Manual. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**ADOPT
BOARD
POLICIES**

The Board discussed the upcoming Retirement Celebration, the IASB Blackhawk Division Governing meeting on June 10, Statement of Economic Interest receipts, and the IASB Joint Annual Conference on November 20-22. Secretary Abbott read two thank you notes.

**BOARD
REPORTS**

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.
Wednesday, May 20, 2026