

ORION COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #223
1002 11TH AVENUE
ORION, ILLINOIS 61273
Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, July 15, 2026

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

ROLL CALL

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PLEDGE

President Hoftender announced that the Board had met in executive session at 6:02 p.m. – 6:50 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; 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 June 17, 2026, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; June 17, 2026, 6:01 p.m., executive meeting; June 17, 2026, 7:05 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$18,266.81; approval of June, 2026 payroll benefits: \$25,300.69; and approval of July, 2026 bills: \$628,537.92; totaling \$672,105.42; approval of June 30, 2026, payroll: \$281,277.17 approval of July, 14, 2026, payroll: \$75,647.66; approval of July 15, 2026, payroll: \$183,279.10; 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 High School Volunteer Coaches: Football ~ Brian Arnold; Golf ~ Larry Comer and Ben Vanderheiden; Boys' Soccer ~ Vaughn Bernhardt; and Volleyball ~ Samantha Jankowski and Corbin Kane. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Superintendent Bahnks recognized staff for their assistance and support during the district's recent leadership transitions.

**STUDENT AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Superintendent Bahnks provided district financial updates and reported on ongoing summer maintenance projects. He shared middle school's 5Essentials Survey data and Discipline Report, and discussed an upcoming visit from the State Superintendent.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

Continued

Middle School Principal Thomsen thanked the custodial staff for their work and provided athletic updates. She also shared information about the upcoming Sports Physical Night held at OMS on August 5 and Backpack Night on August 11.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe thanked staff for their communication and collaboration with the custodial team during summer building projects. He reported on the STEM Lab setup, reviewed the 5Essentials Survey data and Discipline Report, and shared information about the upcoming Backpack Night and Kindergarten Parent Meeting.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie thanked the custodial staff for their work at the high school. He provided information about the upcoming Freshman Orion-tation Night and reviewed the 5Essentials Survey data and Discipline Report.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Athletic Director Amador shared information about the upcoming Booster Club Golf Outing, recent athletic camps, and announced that athletic registration is now open for student-athletes.

**ATHLETIC
DIRECTOR
REPORT**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to accept resignation of Colleen Ferry as the 6th grade Instructional Team Leader for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
RESIGNATION**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to rehire OHS fall coaches for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**REHIRE HS
COACHES**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to hire Brock Blessman as middle school assistant cross country coach for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE MS
ASSISTANT COACH**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to hire Morgan Schroeder as high school head country coach for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE HS
COACH**

Motion by Hepner, second by Nightingale to hire Ellen Thorndyke as high school special education paraprofessional for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE HS
PARAPROFESSIONAL**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to hire Grace Lily as an extended school program childcare provider for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE ESP CHILDCARE PROVIDER
Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to hire Christopher Thackrey as a full-time custodian. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE CUSTODIAN
Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve Wyatt Reed as a full-time custodian at CR Hanna. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE FULL-TIME CUSTODIAN
Motion by Hepner, second by Nightingale to approve Carolyn Pace as the 6th grade Instructional Team Leader for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE INSTRUCT TEAM LEADER
Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve to increase Myka Walljasper from half to full-stipend as the middle school Student Council Advisor. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE MS SPONSOR
Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve executive session Meeting minutes to be opened for public display (July 2025 through December 2025). Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	EX SESSION MINUTES OPEN FOR PUBLIC DISPLAY
Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve destruction of closed meeting audio recordings of June 19, 2024; July 17, 2024; August 21, 2024; September 25, 2024; October 16, 2024; November 20, 2024; December 18, 2024; and January 15, 2025. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	DESTRUCTION OF CLOSED MEETING AUDIO RECORDINGS
Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve quote from Midwest Computer Products, Inc. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE QUOTE
Motion by Hepner, second by Nightingale to approve the OHS 2026-2027 Extra-Curricular Coaches and Sponsors Handbook, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE HS HANDBOOK
Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve changes made to the OMS 2026-2027 Student Handbook, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE MS HANDBOOK

Motion by Hepner, second by Nightingale to approve designating Brecken Adamson (Accounting Manager) and Superintendent Bahnks to prepare the tentative school budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year in accordance with the Illinois School Code. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
DESIGNATING
PREP OF 26/27
TENTATIVE BUDGET**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve TMI to service rooftop units at CR Hanna Elementary School. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
QUOTE**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve the updated middle school athletic Admission fees, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE MS
ATHLETIC
ADMISSION FEE**

Board President Hoftender reminded members of the upcoming Board Retreat scheduled for Thursday, July 23, at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the upcoming school year with the new superintendent. Secretary Abbott read a thank-you note to the Board.

**BOARD
REPORT**

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.
Wednesday, July 15, 2026