

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

**Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, October 15, 2025**

The meeting was called to order at the District Office, 1002 11th Avenue, Orion, Illinois, at 7:10 p.m., by Board President Hoftender. Present were members Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Kayser, 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 6:01 p.m. – 7:04 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 Berg, second by Hepner to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included approval of minutes of the September 24, 2025, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; September 24, 2025, 6:05 p.m., executive meeting; September 24, 2025, 7:00 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$27,066.89; approval of September 2025 Payroll Benefits: \$46,353.34 ; and approval of October, 2025 bills: \$119,978.32, totaling \$193,398.55; approval of September 30, 2025, payroll: \$337,009.26; approval of October 15, 2025, payroll: \$382,248.27; approval of activity fund financial statements from CR Hanna Elementary School, Orion Middle School, and Orion High School; approval of district financial reports; accepted the resignation from Josh Lilly as the high school assistant robotics sponsor, effective immediately; and approved the following high school volunteer coaches: boys' basketball - Casey Adamson, Payton Diamond, Ben Dunlap, Tanner Irey, Zach Irey; girls' basketball - Josh Carlson, Brycelynn Smith. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe thanked everyone involved with the recent Farm Night and 5th Grade Wax Museum event. OHS Principal DeBaillie recognized Carson Turnquist as the October Student of the Month. Carson was selected by the faculty and staff due to his academic excellence, leadership, integrity and responsibility within the classroom.

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Continued

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Tara Miller, OEA President, spoke on the upcoming Board Retreat meeting. Vice-President, Jon Stockton read a statement from the Board regarding public participation procedures.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Superintendent Blessman reported on a recent health/life safety inspection of school facilities. Mr. Blessman also reported on facility projects, upcoming Principals' Day, meeting with the school auditor, upcoming insurance meeting.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

Superintendent Blessman reported on the Middle School Student Council forming a Welcoming Committee to help new students adjust. (OMS Principal Bahnks was not in attendance.)

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe reported on Fire Safety Week, evacuation drills, upcoming Halloween parties, upcoming parent/teacher, conferences and a recent Grandparents' Night.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie reported on upcoming parent/teacher conferences, Student Hunger Drive, and high school band receiving Best Percussion at a recent competition.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie shared the high school athletic report. (Athletic Director Ashlee Amador was not in attendance.)

**ATHLETIC
REPORT**

Motion by Stockton, second by Abbott to hire Amanda Marshall as the High School Assistant Head Cook for the remaining 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE HS
ASSISTANT
HEAD COOK**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve request for a Leave of Absence under FMLA for employee # 10225. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
FMLA**

The Board reviewed district committee news from the Orion PTA and the Orion Music Boosters.

**COMMITTEE
NEWS**

Continued

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to approve overnight field trips for the 2025-2026 school year that are not part of the IHSA State Final Series, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
FIELD TRIPS**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve bid from Chenoweth Construction for the high school's greenhouse prep building. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
BID**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to approve the start of a softball program at the middle school during the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
MS SOFTBALL
PROGRAM**

The Board discussed the upcoming Board Retreat on October 28, 2025, the upcoming Board Conference on November 21-23, 2025, and scheduled a closed session special meeting on October 21, 2025 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

**BOARD
REPORTS**

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.
Wednesday, October 15, 2025