

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

**Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

The meeting was called to order at the District Office, 1002 11th Avenue, Orion, Illinois, at 7:05 p.m., by Board President Hoftender. Present were members Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. Absent were members Abbott and Hepner.

ROLL CALL

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PLEDGE

Board President Hoftender announced that the Board had met in executive session at 6:02 p.m. – 7:02 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 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 February 18, 2026, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; February 18, 2026, 6:02 p.m., executive meeting; February 18, 2026, 7:23 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$10,025.90; approval of February, 2026 Payroll Benefits: \$31,770.52; and approval of March, 2026 bills: \$381,326.49, totaling \$423,122.91; approval of February 27, 2026, payroll: \$338,808.77; approval of March 13, 2026, payroll: \$341,739.90; 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 the following OHS Assistant Football Coaches: Pharaoh Gay, Kramer Matzen, and Dylan Schultz, effective immediately; accepted the resignation from Feryl Cutkomp as the OMS Lego Robotics Sponsor, effective immediately; and approved the following High School Volunteer Coaches: Baseball - Payton Diamond, Dan Foster, Brent Hamerlinck, Zack Irey, Bruce Laleman, and Cody Peterson. Softball - Shelly Hutton, Alyssa Kunert, and Tori WerkHeiser. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Continued

Principal DeBaillie announced the February & March Students of the Month. Principal Bahnks recognized Mrs. Weller for organizing the Blood Drive. Principal Lowe recognized staff for their efforts in preparing for the upcoming Fine Arts Festival.

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Alyce McConaghy, OEA Vice-President, reported that there was no new information to share this month.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Superintendent Blessman provided an update on upcoming spring and summer projects and discussed potential recommendations for the 2026–2027 school year. He also expressed appreciation for a successful Gala and thanked all those who contributed to the event.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie reported on a successful FFA Pancake Breakfast and expressed appreciation to the community for their support. He shared highlights from a recent Student Council Convention. He also noted plans for an upcoming egg hunt for OHS students, with donations currently being accepted. Additionally, he reported on the success of the recent school play and announced upcoming events. He also shared that students recently advanced to the state finals in a FFA competition.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Ashlee Amador, High School Athletics/Activities Director, reported on Spring sports participation numbers and an upcoming group signing event. She also stated a new school record was set in the high jump.

**HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETICS
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Middle School Principal Bahnks reported on athletics including wrestling state qualifiers and both 7th and 8th grade volleyball teams qualifying for state. He also shared that students participated in a recent 7th/8th grade PLC Choir Festival and expressed appreciation for the opportunity for middle school students to participate in the OHS play. He noted upcoming events.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe reported on Kindergarten registration and recent website enhancements. He also noted updates to the district's policy manuals and shared that Field Day is scheduled for May 21. It was also noted that custodial staff plan to install a pergola over spring break.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to rehire tenured teachers for the 2026-2027 school year, as presented. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**REHIRE
TENURED
TEACHERS**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to rehire non-tenured teachers for the 2026-2027 school year, as presented. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**REHIRE
NON-TENURED
TEACHERS**

Continued

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to hire Joy Carter as the High School 1.0 FTE Spanish Teacher for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE
TEACHER**

Motion by Nightingale second by Stockton to hire Logan Kane as a Special Education Teacher at the Middle School (pending successful completion of his licensure) for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
TEACHER**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to hire Amber Cashen as the Transportation Director for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
TRANSPORTATION
DIRECTOR**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to hire Brent Hamerlinck as the Maintenance Supervisor for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE
MAINTENANCE
SUPERVISOR**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to hire Dawn Carlson as the Middle School Head Softball Coach for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE
COACH**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to hire Greg Ford as a High School Assistant Football Coach for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE
ASSISTANT
COACH**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to hire Carolyn Pace as the Middle School Assistant Track Coach for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE
ASSISTANT
COACH**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to hire Mark Pace as the Middle School Assistant Track Coach for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE
ASSISTANT
COACH**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to approve the inter-district transfer of Katrina Adams from Head Cook at CR Hanna Elementary School to fulfill the Head Cook position at Orion High School for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
INTER-DISTRICT
TRANSFER**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to authorize the District to seek bids for bread and milk for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**SEEK BREAD
AND MILK
BIDS**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to approve the PRESS Policy revisions, as presented. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
POLICY
REVISIONS**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to renew Orion High School's membership in the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**RENEW
IHSA
MEMBERSHIP**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to approve bid from Correct Digital Displays for basketball shot clocks at the high school (billed after July 1, 2026). Ayes: Berg, Drish, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
BID**

The Board discussed a recent IASB Blackhawk Division meeting. Vice-President Stockton read two Thank You notes.

**BOARD
REPORTS**

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.
Wednesday, March 18, 2026