

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

Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, April 15, 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 Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, 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 6:03 p.m. – 6:57 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 March 18, 2026, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; March 18, 2026, 6:02 p.m., executive meeting; March 18, 2026, 7:05 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$14,364.02; approval of March, 2026 Payroll Benefits: \$30,307.44; and approval of April, 2026 bills: \$170,580.92, totaling \$215,252.38; approval of March 30, 2026, payroll: \$328,126.94; approval of April 15, 2026, payroll: \$323,312.50; approval of activity fund financial statements from CR Hanna Elementary School, Orion Middle School, and Orion High School; approval of district financial reports; approved the date, time, and location of OCUSD #223 regular Board of Education meetings for the 2026-2027 school year, as presented; accepted resignation from Justin Catour as the middle school wrestling coach, effective immediately; accepted the resignation from Michelle DeLoose as a paraprofessional, effective end of the 2025-2026 school year; approved David Voorhees as high school volunteer coach for the spring season. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Principal DeBaillie recognized Grace Lilly as the April Student of the Month for being a positive example and demonstrating enthusiasm, respect, and kindness. Principal Bahnks recognized Libby Jones and Liam Houser as recipients of the Illinois Principals Association Student Leadership Award. Principal DeBaillie recognized Kyler Owens and Abigail

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Continued

Kayser as recipients of the Illinois Principals Association Student Leadership Award. Principal Lowe recognized the March Leaders of the Month, thanked the 2nd grade class and staff for a successful Flat Stanley Night, and reported on a fantastic 3–5 grade Music Festival.

Tara Miller, OEA President, reported that preparations are underway for upcoming negotiations. She also shared that recent elections were held, with her returning as President and Alyce McConaghy serving again as Vice President.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Travis Noyd, Orion Athletic Booster Club President, spoke with the Board about recognizing former student athletes who have gone on to play professionally. The Booster Club is willing to fund the recognition and is seeking guidance regarding possible locations for a plaque or sign, such as the playing fields, the school commons, or another location in the community.

**ATHLETIC
BOOSTERS**

Superintendent Blessman reported on milk bids and sign-ups for the Joint Annual Conference. He noted that a recent Finance Committee meeting was productive. He also provided updates on maintenance projects and shared that the IT Department is pricing options for replacing promethean boards at OMS and purchasing new computers for staff.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

Middle School Principal Bahnks reported on student testing and various upcoming end-of-the-school-year events, including an upcoming track & field meet. He also shared that a recent Institute Day was held at Menno Haven, where staff from all three buildings participated in team-building activities.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe reported on the Consolidated District Plan that will be recommended for Board approval. He also shared updates on student testing, thanked the PTA for providing treats to staff, noted that students are enjoying the recently installed pergola on the playground, and mentioned various upcoming end-of-the-year events.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Principal DeBaillie thanked those who contributed to the successful Easter egg hunt and announced an upcoming blood drive scheduled for April 30. He also noted several upcoming end-of-the-year events.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

High School Athletics/Activities Director Report included updates on track and field, softball, baseball, and girls' soccer. The Scholastic Bowl teams recently wrapped up their season with winning records.

**HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETICS
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Motion by Stockton, second by Berg to accept the resignation of Joy Carter as the High School Spanish Teacher for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**ACCEPT HS
TEACHER
RESIGNATION**

Continued

Motion by Stockton, second by Nightingale to approve the Separation Agreement with Galen (Chip) Filler, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.

MOTION CARRIED.

**APPROVE
SEPARATION
AGREEMENT**

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

**REHIRE
CLASSIFIED
EMPLOYEES**

Motion by Hepner, second by Abbott to hire Dylan Jones as an half assistant football coach for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.

MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE HS
ASSISTANT COACH**

Motion by Nightingale, second by Stockton to hire/transfer Michele Weston as the Head Cook (full-time) at CR Hanna Elementary School for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE
HEAD COOK**

Motion by Abbott, second by Hepner to hire Kayla Jones as a full-time secretary at the middle school for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.

MOTION CARRIED.

**HIRE MS
SECRETARY**

Motion by Hepner, second by Abbott to hire Tyler Wilburn as a classroom teacher for the 2026-2027 school year at CR Hanna Elementary School. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**HIRE CLASSROOM
TEACHER**

Motion by Abbott, second by Hepner to transfer Myka Boyd to full-time secretary at the middle school for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**TRANSFER MS
SECRETARY**

Motion by Hepner, second by Stockton to rehire middle school winter coaches for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.

MOTION CARRIED.

**REHIRE MS
WINTER COACHES**

Motion by Abbott, second by Stockton to rehire high school winter coaches for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Drish, Nightingale, and Stockton. Nays: Berg, Hepner, Hoftender

MOTION CARRIED.

**REHIRE HS
WINTER COACHES**

The Board reviewed meeting minutes from the Orion Music Boosters.

**DISTRICT
COMMITTEE NEWS**

Continued

Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve milk bid from Enyeart Distributing for the 2026-2027 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE MILK BID
Motion by Nightingale, second by Berg to place the amended budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, on 30-day public display and hold a public hearing on June 18, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., to adopt the amended fiscal year 2026 final budget. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	PLACE FY26 AMENDED BUDGET ON DISPLAY & HOLD PUBLIC HEARING
Motion by Hepner, second by Abbott to approve membership into IESA for Orion Middle School for the 2026-2027 school year, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	IESA MEMBERSHIP
Motion by Nightingale, second by Hepner to approve raising middle school officials pay in volleyball, basketball, and football. Ayes: Abbott Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE MS OFFICIALS PAY
Motion by Nightingale, second by Abbott to approve the 2026-2027 Consolidated District Plan. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT PLAN
Motion by Abbott, second by Hepner to approve PRESS policy revisions, as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE PRESS POLICY REVISIONS
Appointed the following Board members for middle school promotion certificate distribution on Thursday, May 21, 2026: Berg, Hoftender and Stockton.	PROMOTION CERTIFICATE DISTRIBUTION
Appointed the following Board members for high school graduation diploma distribution on Sunday, May 17, 2026: Abbott, Hoftender, and Nightingale.	GRADUATION DIPLOMA DISTRIBUTION
The Board discussed Statement of Economic Interest forms, Board Committee Appointments for the 2026-2027 school year, and an upcoming Policy Committee meeting. President Hoftender reported on a recent meeting with local School Board Presidents. Secretary Abbott read two thank you notes.	BOARD REPORTS
Motion by Berg, second by Hepner to adjourn. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.
Wednesday, April 15, 2026