

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

**Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, December 17, 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, 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 6:04 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; collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; 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 Stockton to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included approval of minutes of the November 4, 2025, 5:30 p.m., special meeting; November 10, 2025, 5:25 p.m., special meeting; November 19, 2025, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; November 19, 2025, 6:06 p.m., executive meeting; November 19, 2025, 7:15 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$119,009.04; approval of November, 2025 Payroll Benefits: \$32,395.36; and approval of December, 2025 bills: \$144,637.65, totaling \$296,042.05; approval of November 28, 2025, payroll: \$335,594.28; approval of December 15, 2025, payroll: \$312,971.30; 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 Chip Filler as the high school head football coach, effective immediately; accepted the resignation from Adam Bohland as the high school assistant football coach, effective immediately; approved David Duyvejonck as a middle school wrestling volunteer Coach; and approved Charles Arnold as a high school wrestling volunteer coach. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Continued

A Public Hearing was held to receive public input and discussion on the proposed tax levy.

**PUBLIC
HEARING**

Motion by Stockton, second by Berg to adopt the tax levy as presented and authorize all documents necessary for the filing of the levy with the respective county clerks. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED**.

**ADOPT
TAX LEVY**

Superintendent Blessman recognized OHS Student of the month, Leo Nedved. Blessman also recognized the OHS Student Council and Orion School District Transportation Department for organizing fundraisers to help our local students/families. CR Hanna Principal Lowe recognized CR Hanna Music Teacher, Mrs. Moen. Mr. Lowe also recognized and thanked the Staff for their help with recent CR Hanna music festivals.

**STUDENT
AND STAFF
RECOGNITION**

Tara Miller, OEA President, expressed appreciation to the District Office and the Board for the staff spirit wear apparel. President Hoftender provided a reminder regarding the new Public Participation Policy. Superintendent Blessman recognized OMS student Liam Houser, who attended the board meeting in fulfillment of the requirements for earning the Boy Scouts of America Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge.

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

Superintendent Blessman reported on a recent Building and Grounds Committee meeting, upcoming facility projects, attendance of recent School Board convention in Chicago.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT**

Superintendent Blessman reviewed the OHS Principal's report which included a recent band and choir concert, an update on the number of Orion School District Facebook followers, final exams, and announced 13 Illinois All State Scholars from OHS.

**HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

CR Hanna Principal Lowe reported on a recent Cops and Kids event, Smart Lab, Holiday Concerts, color coding the school year calendar and updating the school website.

**CR HANNA
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

Middle School Principal Bahnks reported on Lego Robotics, Winter Fest Holiday Concert, Student Dress Up Days, athletics, upcoming Inservice Day, and a conference that he recently attended.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL'S
REPORT**

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

**REHIRE OHS
COACHES**

Motion by Hepner, second by Berg to hire Dominic Martin as the head wrestling coach at Orion Middle School for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

HIRE COACH

Motion by Abbott, second by Stockton to hire Ben Dunlap as the freshmen boys' basketball coach at Orion High School for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

HIRE COACH

The Board reviewed information from the Orion Music Boosters.

**COMMITTEE
NEWS**

Motion by Abbott, second by Berg to adopt the revised and updated Selection, Reconsideration, and Weeding Policy for the Orion School District as presented. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

ADOPT POLICY

IASB-IASA-IASBO Joint Annual Conference reports were given by those members who attended the recent conference.

**BOARD
REPORTS**

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.
Wednesday, December 17, 2025