

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

**Board of Education Minutes of
Wednesday, August 20, 2025**

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 6:01 p.m. – 6:59 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 Hepner to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included approval of minutes of the July 16, 2025, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting; July 16, 2025, 6:01 p.m., executive meeting; July 16, 2025, 7:00 p.m., regular meeting; approval of prepaid bills: \$194,065.22; approval of July, 2025 Payroll Benefits: \$23,642.74; and approval of August, 2025 bills: \$445,522.12, totaling \$663,230.08; approval of July 30, 2025, payroll: \$181,686.46; approval of July 31, 2025, payroll: \$106,940.79; approval of August 14, 2025, payroll: \$141,143.16; approval of August 15, 2025, payroll: \$181,687.62; 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 Alec Noyd, as the Middle School Cross Country Coach and Assistant Track Coach effective immediately; approved the following Middle School Volunteer Coaches for the 2025-2026 school year: football ~ Brandy Taets and Jacob Endress; Girls' Basketball ~ Dave Pavlik.
Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**APPROVE
CONSENT
AGENDA**

Continued

Principal Bahnks recognized Mrs. Burgert for organizing the middle school's Charge Time Program. Principal Lowe thanked all of the school staff for a great start to the new school year.	STUDENT AND STAFF RECOGNITION
Tara Miller, OEA President, welcomed new staff members and discussed upcoming committee meetings.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Travis Noyd, Orion Athletic Booster Club President, spoke on membership, recent golf tournament, and Fall Sports' Preview Night.	BOOSTER CLUB
Various audience members addressed concerns regarding a staff member.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Superintendent Blessman reported on the school audit, the tentative budget, and summer facility projects.	SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT
Middle School Principal Bahnks reported on middle school student enrollment, a recent teachers' institute, Backpack Night, STEM lab, and invited Cammie Heald to speak on possibly offering a middle school softball program.	MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S REPORT
CR Hanna Principal Lowe reported on CR Hanna new student registration, student enrollment, and the recent Backpack Night.	CR HANNA PRINCIPAL'S REPORT
High School Principal DeBaillie reported on the recent Open House, student enrollment, Black Hawk College classes and Homecoming.	HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S REPORT
Motion by Stockton, second by Berg to hire Joy Seys as a part-time Childcare Provider of Extended School at CR Hanna for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE ESP CHILDCARE
Motion by Berg, second by Hepner to hire Sydney Adams as the Social Media Coordinator at C.R. Hanna for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR
Motion by Stockton, second by Berg to hire Rachel Reynolds as a part-time Paraprofessional at C.R. Hanna for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE PARAPROFESSIONAL
Motion by Abbott, second by Stockton to hire Kevin Roling as the middle school Cross Country Coach for the 2025-2026 school year. AYES: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftener, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE COACH

continued

Motion by Stockton, second by Berg to hire Feryl Cutkomp as a Lego Robotics Sponsor at the middle school for the 2025-2026 school year. AYES: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE SPONSOR
Motion by Berg, second by Abbott to hire Myka Walljasper as the middle school Social Media Sponsor for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE SPONSOR
Motion by Hepner, second by Stockton to hire Kennedy DeBaillie as a 7th Grade Volleyball Coach at the middle school for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE COACH
Motion by Stockton, second by Abbott to hire Gayle Grundstrom as a ½ stipend Fall Spirit Squad Coach for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE COACH
Motion by Hepner, second by Stockton to hire Sarah Marshall as a ½ stipend Fall Spirit Squad Coach for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE COACH
Motion by Stockton, second by Abbott to hire Brian Cookson as a 1.0 FTE Spanish Teacher at the high school for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE TEACHER
Motion by Stockton, second by Hepner to hire Elizabeth Werner as a part-time (4 hours per school day) cook at the high school for the 2025-2026 school year. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	HIRE COOK
The Board reviewed the tentative annual budget for year, beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.	REVIEW FY26 BUDGET
Motion by Stockton, second by Hepner to place the annual budget on 30 day display and hold a public hearing on September 24, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., in the District Office, to adopt the final budget. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	PLACE FY26 BUDGET ON DISPLAY/SET PUBLIC HEARING
Motion by Berg, second by Stockton to approve the Orion School District's participation in Black Hawk College's Transitional English Program. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton. <u>MOTION CARRIED.</u>	APPROVE PROGRAM

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Motion by Stockton, second by Abbott to approve switching from Northwest IL School Food COOP to LaSalle County COOP. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender, Nightingale, and Stockton.
MOTION CARRIED.

**LUNCH
PROGRAM**

Motion by Berg, second by Stockton to table approving estimate from Costello Painting. Ayes: Abbott, Berg, Drish, Hepner, Hoftender and Stockton. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**TABLED
APPROVAL**

The Board reviewed information on the traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall.

REVIEW

The Board discussed the upcoming committee assignments meeting and safety concerns regarding disinfecting wipes and children. Board Secretary Abbott read one thank you note.

**BOARD
NEWS**

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

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.
Wednesday, August 20, 2025