Minutes Regular Meeting March 26, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: 6:32 PM

FLAG SALUTE

NOTICE OF MEETING:

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided as follows: by having the time, date and place of the meeting posted on the bulletin board in the Administration Building January 6, 2026; by sending a copy of the meeting notice to the Star Ledger Newspaper and The Local Source on January 12, 2026; and by filing a copy with the Township of Hillside and Hillside Public Library January 6, 2026.

ROLL CALL:

Best	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.	Shapiro	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.
Egwaikhide	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.	Hargrave	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.
Estremera	7:16 p.m.	9:12 p.m.	Dr. Howard	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.
Horton-Givens	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.	Dr. Pérez	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.
Okai	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.	Hamlin	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.
Parks	6:44 p.m.	9:12 p.m.	McNeil	6:32 p.m.	9:12 p.m.

Announcements - None

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent provided an update on district initiatives, programs, and recent events, highlighting efforts to support student achievement, staff engagement, and overall school community development.

Student Representative Report

Student Council Representative, Jada Farera, presented an overview of student activities, initiatives, and events occurring across the district.

School Presentation

Principal Davis of Ola Edwards Community School presented on school programs, student progress, and instructional initiatives.

Student Performances

Students from Ola Edwards Community School performed for the Board.

Tentative Budget Presentation

School Business Administrator Dwayne McNeil presented the tentative budget, outlining key financial considerations, revenue projections, and expenditure priorities.

Motion to open public comments at 7:19 p.m.

Motion by Ms. Best, seconded by Mr. Estremera

Public Comments – Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

1. Melissa Kia and an additional Hillside High School student (name not provided), both student athletic trainers, advocated for the completion of renovations to the athletic trailers.
2. Paul Skelton announced upcoming international student trips and requested district support.
3. Auruna Mathura announced a Daddy Daughter Dance scheduled for May 30 from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
4. Jill Sica, Union Representative for paraprofessionals, requested district action to resolve contract-related matters.

Motion to Close Public Comment at 7:29 p.m.

Moved by Ms. Best, seconded by Mr. Estremera.

Motion carried. Unanimous voice vote.

Committee Reports

Finance – Mr. Shapiro
Buildings and Grounds – Ms. Egwaikhide
Education – Mr. Okai
Policy – Ms. Horton-Givens
Labor Relations – Ms. Best

Executive Session

Motion to Enter Executive Session at 7:31 p.m.
Moved by Ms. Best, seconded by Mr. Estremera
Motion carried. Unanimous voice vote.

(Board returned from Executive Session)

<u>Organization Items</u>

1. Motion to declare that Citizens Bank shall be the depository for the following accounts, with all signatories per each account as indicated and that all disbursements shall be made by check as of March 27, 2026.

Account Name/Number	Signatories
Deanna Taylor Academy #XXXXXXX00955	Graham/McNeil/Nunes Principal/Bus. Adm./Secretary

Organization Items (continued)

Motion: Hargrave Second: Best

	Yes	No	Ab.		Yes	No	Ab.
Best	X			Okai	X		
Egwaikhide	X			Parks	X		
Estremera	X			Shapiro	X		
Hargrave	X			Dr. Howard	X		
Horton-Givens	X						

Motion 1 carried. 9 Yes 0 No 0 Abstentions

FINANCE – Shapiro/Egwaikhide/Hargrave

1. Motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on February 26, 2026.
2. Motion to approve line-item transfers.
3. Motion to approve the payment of bills subject to the availability of funds.
4. Motion to approve December 2025 Board Secretary's Report.
5. Motion to approve the December 2025 Cash Report.
6. Motion to approve the Superintendent as an additional authorized signatory on all student activity accounts to serve in the absence of the Principal, with all disbursements requiring at least two authorized signatures, and to authorize the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary to update all necessary banking documentation to effectuate this approval.
7. The Superintendent recommends approval to adopt the Tentative Budget for FY 2026-2027:

   BE IT RESOLVED that the tentative budget be approved for the 2026-27 School Year using the 2026-2027 state aid figures and the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary be authorized to submit the following tentative budget to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for approval in accordance with the statutory deadline:

	Budget	Tax Levy
General Fund	74,824,504	33,688,503
Special Revenue	4,293,285	0
Debt Service	0	0
Total Base Budget	79,117,789	33,688,503

And to advertise said tentative budget in the Star Ledger in accordance with the form required by the State Department of Education and according to law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a public hearing be held at the Hillside Innovation Academy Board Room located at 1100 Woodruff Avenue on March 26, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on the budget for the 2026-2027 School Year.

FINANCE – Shapiro/Egwaikhide/Hargrave (continued)

8. Motion to approve the following Resolution:

Travel and Related Expense Reimbursement 2026-2027

WHEREAS, the Hillside Board of Education recognizes school staff and Board members will incur travel expenses related to and within the scope of their current responsibilities and for travel that promotes the delivery of instruction or furthers the efficient operation of the school district; and

WHEREAS, N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.3 et seq. requires Board members to receive approval of these expenses by a majority of the full voting membership of the Board and staff members to receive prior approval of these expenses by the Superintendent of Schools and a majority of the full voting membership of the Board; and

WHEREAS, the Hillside Board of Education established $31,641 as the maximum travel amount for the 2025-2026 school year and has expended $ 18,257.55, as of this date; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education approves travel and related expense reimbursements in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.3, to a maximum expenditure of $62,875 for the 2026-2027 school year.

Motion: Egwaikhide Second: Parks

	Yes	No	Ab.		Yes	No	Ab.
Best	X			Parks	X		#7
Egwaikhide	X			Shapiro	X	#7	#8
Estremera	X			Hargrave	X		
Horton-Givens	X			Dr. Howard	X		#7
Okai	X						

- Ms. Parks abstained from Item 7
- Mr. Shapiro: Yes to Item 3 with abstentions on POs 26-002317, 2363, 2369, 2391, 2392; No on Item 7; Abstained on Item 8
- Dr. Howard abstained on Item 7

Motions 1 to 8 carried.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS – Egwaikhide/Best/Okai

1. Motion to approve the following resolution for the Auditorium HVAC Upgrades at Hillside High School. Based upon bid results received and analyzed on February 19, 2026:

   Whereas the Hillside Board of Education advertised for bids for the Auditorium HVAC Upgrades at Hillside High School, and

Whereas on December 16, 2025 the Board received six bids for the Project; and

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS – Egwaikhide/Best/Okai (continued)

Whereas upon review of the bids, the Board on January 29, 2026 rejected all bids as non-responsive or exceeding the Board's budget and estimates for the Project and authorized re-bid of the Project; and

Whereas the Hillside Board of Education re-advertised for bids and on February 19, 2026 the Board received five bids for the Project ; and

WHEREAS the low bidder, Centralpack Engineering Corp. submitted a bid with the low Base Bid amount of $1,145,227.00, along with the following alternate: Alternate Price #1 Deduct Balcony, Projection Booth and Fan Room Work $172,435.00 Deduct,

WHEREAS the bid submitted by Centralpack Engineering Corp. is responsive in all material respects and within the Board's budget and estimate, and it is the Board's desire to award the contract for the Project to Centralpack Engineering Corp. for the Base Bid work,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board hereby awards the contract to Centralpack Engineering Corp. for a total contract sum of $1,145,227.00.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the award is expressly conditioned upon the Contractor furnishing the requisite insurance certificate, performance bond, AA 201 Project Manning Reporting, and executed contracts, as prepared by the Board Attorney, within ten (10) days of the date hereof.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board Attorney is hereby directed to draft the agreement with the successful contractor consistent with this Resolution and with the terms contained in the bid documents approved by the Board for the Project. The Board President and the Board Secretary are hereby authorized to execute such agreements and any other documents necessary to effectuate the terms of this Resolution.

2. Motion to approve an Emergency Evacuation Agreement between the Hillside Board of Education and Bright Munchkins Learning Center for the use of Hurden Looker Elementary School as an emergency evacuation and meeting location.

   The agreement shall be effective March 26, 2026 through June 30, 2027, with automatic renewal unless terminated by either party with sixty (60) days written notice. No fee shall be charged, and Bright Munchkins Learning Center shall indemnify the Board and provide proof of insurance naming the Board as an additional insured.

   The Business Administrator/Board Secretary is authorized to execute the agreement.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS – Egwaikhide/Best/Okai (continued)

Motion: Okai Second: Estremera

	Yes	No	Ab.		Yes	No	Ab.
Best	X			Parks	X		
Egwaikhide	X			Shapiro	X		#1
Estremera			X	Hargrave	X		
Horton-Givens	X			Howard	X		
Okai	X						

Motions 1 & 2 carried.

EDUCATION - Horton-Givens/Best//Okai

1. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the Training and Seminars, Conventions and Conferences for the district. The board has determined that the travel is directly related to and within the scope of the employees' duties or responsibilities; that participation in the program or event is critical to the instructional needs of the district or furthers the efficient operation of the district; and that the travel is in compliance with the district policy on travel.
   (Attachment ED#1-03/26)

2. Motion to accept the Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB): six (6) cases for February 26, 2026, through March 26, 2026.

3. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the Special Education request for Related Services/Out of District Placements as attached. (Attachment ED#2-03/26)

4. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the Hillside Public Schools District School-Based Fundraisers. (Attachment ED#3-03/26)

5. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the Hillside Public Schools District Class Trip Requests. (Attachment ED#4-03/26)

6. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve a professional development workshop presented by Jenna Maneri for the Adult ESL Tutors who teach beginner to intermediate level classes in the ESL Adult Academy. The workshop will take place on April 16, 2026, at Walter O. Krumbiegel Middle School, at a total cost of $735.30. (Attachment ED#5-03/26)
   [Title III Funding]

EDUCATION - Horton-Givens/Best//Okai (continued)

7. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the agreement between the Hillside Public Schools District and NJ Teacher-to-Teacher, LLC for Professional Development, including peer coaching, mentoring, modeling, focus on instructional best practices, reflection, articulation, and feedback for five (5) full days with two (2) presenters per day for a total of $10,000. Effective March 2026, through June 2026. (Attachment ED#6-03/26)

8. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and apply for the 2026 Plant A Seed Program: Union County Kids Dig In!: A School Garden Grant and Fruitful Futures Tree Grant to inspire the next generation of Hillside Public Schools District students to think holistically about their food, their environment, and the health of our planet. (Attachment ED#7-03/26)

9. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the School Board's first reading of the Social Studies Curriculum Guides for the Hillside Public School District (K - 12). (Attachment ED#8-03/26)

10. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the Title I (ESEA) Parent and Family Engagement Notifications, Parent Involvement Policies for School Districts, and Title I School-Parent Compacts (for each district school). (Attachment ED#9-03/26)

11. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and approve the registration fee of $750.00 for the Hillside High School Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS) to compete in the annual National TEAMS (Testing of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics, and Science) STEM competition taking place in Washington, D.C. from June 22 – 26, 2026.

Motion: Horton-Givens Second: Mr. Okai

	Yes	No	Ab.		Yes	No	Ab.
Best	X			Parks	X		
Egwaikhide	X			Shapiro	X		#9
Estremera	X			Hargrave	X		
Horton-Givens	X			Dr. Howard	X		
Okai	X						

Motions 1 to 11 carried.

POLICY – Parks/Horton-Givens/Estremera

FIRST READINGS

1. The Hillside Board of Education acknowledges the following policies/regulations: (PO#1-03/26)

   a) Policy 2510.1 Use of Movies and/or Videos for Classroom Instruction

Motion: Estremera Second: Best

	Yes	No	Ab.		Yes	No	Ab.
Best	X			Parks	X		
Egwaikhide	X			Shapiro	X		
Estremera	X			Hargrave	X		
Horton-Givens	X			Dr. Howard	X		
Okai	X						

Motion 1 carried. 9 Yes 0 No 0 Abstentions

LABOR RELATIONS – Best/Shapiro/Hargrave

Resignations/Retirements/Terminations

1. Motion to terminate Employee #2435 effective March 27, 2026 as a result of job abandonment. (D.O.H. 11/4/24)

Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools:

Appointments – For all new hires, employment is conditioned upon completion of a criminal history background check pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 of N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1(b)

2. **WHEREAS,** this Board of Education accepts the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, and approves the appointment of the listed personnel for the 2025-2026 School Year and that these appointments shall be charged to the appropriate line-item account pursuant to the negotiated agreement with the Hillside Education Association; and

   WHEREAS, these appointments are subject to criminal history background checks, effective as indicated, and subject to sixty (60) day termination notice; and

   WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.6 et seq., requires school districts to review the employment history of prospective employees to ascertain allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct; and

   WHEREAS, the following prospective employees in the Hillside School District have provided the necessary information regarding his/her employment history for review by the district in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.7; and

   WHEREAS, the Hillside Board of Education has commenced, but not concluded, a review of these employees' employment history; and

   WHEREAS, these employees have provided a written certification/statement concerning his/her employment history as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.7; and

   WHEREAS, these employees have received notice that if he/she has willfully provided false information or willfully failed to disclose any information required by N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.7, et

seq., he/she is subject to all penalties provided by law, including, but not limited to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.8.

LABOR RELATIONS – Best/Shapiro/Hargrave (continued)

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hillside Board of Education hereby appoints the following employees to their respective positions in the district, subject to the above enumerated conditions:

Certificated

~~a) Darnell Grant, Math Teacher for Hillside High School, at an annual salary of $66,220 Step 4, BA Guide prorated for the period to be determined through June 30, 2026, pending completion of all required pre-employment clearances, including receipt of fingerprints. (Replacing C. Dunlap)~~

b) Janna Alexandrov, Special Education Teacher for Ola Edwards Community School at an annual salary of $69,720 Step 4, MA Guide prorated for the period to be determined through June 30, 2026, pending completion of all required pre-employment clearances, including receipt of fingerprints. (Replacing A. Gossett)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Board hereby approves the extension of a provisional offer of employment to each of the aforementioned individuals for a period not to exceed ninety (90) days pending complete review of his/her employment history pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.10.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that notwithstanding the above provisions, no prospective employee shall begin work in the district without completion of the criminal history background check.

3. Motion to extend the appointment for Obinna Emenaka as Acting Principal for Hillside High School through June 30, 2026 per HAA contract. (Subject to adjustment based on operational needs)

4. Motion to extend the appointment for Eric Boateng as Acting Vice Principal for Hillside High School June 30, 2026 per HAA contract. (Subject to adjustment based on operational needs)

5. Motion to appoint Dominique Watkins as a Paraprofessional for APM/ECC at an annual salary of $38,195 Step 6, HAP Guide prorated with an effective date to be determined through June 30, 2026 pending completion of all required pre-employment clearances, including receipt of fingerprints. (Replacing T. Branch)

6. Motion to appoint the following coaches for Hillside High School during the 2025-2026 school year at the stipends listed below: (**Pending receipt of all required pre-employment clearances, including receipt of fingerprints.)

a)	**Jason McQuay	Head Boys Track Coach	$8,077.98
b)	**Chidimma Igwe	Asst. Girls Track Coach	$6,257.16
c)	Adam Pantastico	Asst. Softball Coach	$6,749.88
d)	Kirsy Acosta	Asst. Softball Coach	$6.749.88
e)	Stephanie Smith	Cheer-Spring	$3,491.19

7. Motion to appoint the following coaches for middle school during the 2025-2026 school year at the stipends listed below: (**Pending receipt of all required pre-employment clearances, including receipt of fingerprints.)

a)	Andre Jackson	Head Boys Volleyball Coach	$4,038.99
b)	Zeinab Arafa	Asst. Asst. Track Coach	$3,374.99
c)	Madeha Arafa	Head Track Coach	$4,038.99
d)	**Osayi Idemudia	Asst. Basketball Coach	$3,374.99
e)	Shafflyn Kallon	Asst. Volleyball Coach	$3,374.99

8. Motion to appoint the following Elementary Basketball Coaches during the 2025-2026 school year at a stipend amount of $3,000.00:

LABOR RELATIONS – Best/Shapiro/Hargrave (continued)

a) Karwana Palmer
b) Craig Epps Jr.
c) Jonathan Fanning
d) Jimal Crump
e) Papie Roberts
f) Kevin Miller

9. Motion to appoint the following Elementary Soccer Coaches during the 2025-2026 school year at a stipend amount of $3,000.00:

a) Basil Ehikwe
b) Samuel Ojeda
c) Gabriella Rosamilia

10. Motion to appoint the following as substitute teachers for the 2025-2026 school year at a rate of $200.00 per day, effective upon completion of all required pre-employment clearances, including receipt of fingerprints:

a) Nakiesha Blue
b) Dr. Musa Abdullah
c) Nakyyia Douglas
d) Chelsea Antwi
e) Tamya Gillespie
f) Gina Kincey
g) Dawnasia Hayer
h) Ridwan Adewusi

11. Motion to appoint Jacqueline Tettey-Lokko as a Teacher Pre-Apprentice Coordinator at a stipend of $5,000.00 during the 2025-2026 school year.

12. Motion to appoint RaJanee Fuller as the anti-bulling specialist for HIA during the 2025-2026 school year.

13. Motion to appoint the following staff members as school climate members (school safety team) for HIA during the 2025-2026 school year:

a) Adam Pantastico
b) Saif Plant
c) Tiffany Grant
d) Madeha Arafa
e) Haova Rokatoarivo

14. Motion to appoint the following advisors of club(s)/program(s) for HIA Middle School effective February 2026 at the prorated stipends below:

a) Madeha Arafa (Replacing A. Gabriel)	Student Governor Advisor	$2,724.48
	My Sister's Keeper	$1,556.25 (Replacing A. Gabriel)
b) Zeinab Arafa (Replacing E. Houssam)	STEAM	$1,556.25
	Debate Team Coordinator	$2,724.98 (Replacing A. Gabriel)

15. Motion to extend the appointment of Kristian Kleiber as a Technology Assistant – Leave Replacement for Hillside High School, at an hourly rate of $36.11 effective April 2, 2026 through June 30, 2026.

LABOR RELATIONS – Best/Shapiro/Hargrave (continued)

Transfers/Amendments

Leaves

16. Motion to extend medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #0511 effective February 17, 2026 through March 6, 2026 utilizing accumulated days.
17. Motion to extend unpaid medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #3474 effective March 3, 2026 through March 9, 2026.
18. Motion to extend medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #1026 effective March 2, 2026 through April 2, 2026 utilizing accumulated days.
19. Motion to extend unpaid medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #3158 effective March 4, 2026 through March 30, 2026.
20. Motion to extend unpaid maternity leave for Employee #3767 effective March 9, 2026 through March 27, 2026.
21. Motion to extend unpaid medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #3589 effective March 2, 2026 through March 6, 2026.
22. Motion to approve a leave of absence under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #3561 effective January 20, 2026 through February 11, 2026 utilizing accumulated days.
23. Motion to approve a leave of absence under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #0279 effective February 26, 2026 through April 7, 2026 utilizing accumulated days.
24. Motion to approve maternity leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Employee #3162 effective May 4, 2026 through October 7, 2026 utilizing accumulated days.
25. Motion to approve maternity leave for Employee #3840 effective May 22, 2026 through June 30, 2026 utilizing accumulated days.
26. Motion to approve maternity leave for Employee #2784 effective March 30, 2026 through November 13, 2026 utilizing accumulated days. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will cover the period beginning March 30, 2026 through June 19, 2026 and NJFLA will cover June 19, 2026 through September 11, 2026.
27. Motion to approve an unpaid leave of absence for Employee #3645 effective March 16, 2026 through April 17, 2026.
28. Motion to approve maternity leave for Employee #2133 effective May 14, 2026 through January 27, 2027 utilizing accumulated days. The NJFLA will cover the period beginning September 1, 2026 through November 20, 2026.

Other

29. Motion to rescind the appointment of Larissa Wade as a Paraprofessional for APM/ECC. (11/20/25 Board Action)
30. Motion to rescind the appointment of Derrick Norelus as substitute security officer effective March 16, 2026.

LABOR RELATIONS – Best/Shapiro/Hargrave (continued)

Motion: Best Second: Shapiro

	Yes	No	Ab.		Yes	No	Ab.
Best	X			Parks	X		
Egwaikhide	X			Shapiro	X		
Estremera	X			Hargrave	X		
Horton-Givens	X			Howard	X		
Okai	X						

Motions 1 to 30 carried. 9 Yes 0 No 0 Abstentions

Motion to adjourn.

Motion: Horton-Givens Second: Hargrave

Motion carried. Unanimous voice vote.

Time: 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dwayne McNeil, Business Administrator/Board Secretary