

MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES  
OF THE SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND

A meeting of the Board of School Trustees of the School Town of Highland was held at the Administration Center, 9145 Kennedy Avenue, Highland, Indiana, on Tuesday, August 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

President Kuva opened with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silent reflection.

On call of roll, the members of the Board were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present: Mr. Robert Kuva, Mr. Victor Garcia, Mr. Patrick Krull, Mrs. Luanne Jurczak, and Mrs. Allencia Ballard

Also present were Mr. Brian J. Smith, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Sherri Mitchell, Assistant Superintendent for Academics/Student Services; Mrs. Cynthia Adams, Chief Financial Officer; and Mr. Jared Tauber, Attorney.

**Minutes – Regular Meeting of July 20, 2021 and Special Meeting of August 4, 2021.** Mr. Krull moved, seconded by Mrs. Ballard, to approve the minutes of July 20, 2021. Mr. Kuva abstained from voting since he was absent from the meeting. Mr. Garcia, Mr. Krull, Mrs. Jurczak, and Mrs. Ballard voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Mrs. Ballard moved, seconded by Mrs. Jurczak, to approve the minutes of the special meeting of August 4, 2021. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

**Superintendent’s Report/Public Hearing.** Mr. Smith thanked all for a successful school start. He encouraged attendance at the *Battle of the Trails*, a community event featuring Highland/Griffith football, which will be held Thursday, August 19 at Main Square. Proceeds for this event will go to the Athletic Department.

The Chair opened the meeting for a public hearing on Collective Bargaining. Mr. Smith stated that the hearing was being held in accordance with IC 20-29-6-1(a) regarding teacher compensation and collective bargaining. The administration will be meeting with representatives of the Highland Classroom Teachers Association (HCTA).

Aline Berdine, HCTA President, and Greg Gier spoke on behalf of the Association regarding teacher concerns. Hearing no other comments from those present, the Chair closed the public hearing. The administration will be meeting with representatives of the Highland Classroom Teachers Association.

**Board Liaison Reports.** Mr. Krull attended a meeting of the Highland Redevelopment Commission. Discussion centered on property that the Commission owns on Jewett that is or will be up for sale. The next Highland *Restaurant Crawl* will be August 31 from 4-8 p.m.

Mrs. Luanne Jurczak attended the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative meeting. She reported on the raises for the school psychologists and speech and language pathologists in an effort to make their salaries more competitive with the private sector.

Mr. Garcia attended the Highland/Griffith Chamber where the guest speaker was Lori Phelps of the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center. She described the various programs available that support entrepreneurs and small businesses in our community. As legislative liaison, Mr. Garcia reported that the federal agencies in charge of SNAP benefits announced a net increase of 7%, which would help Highland families in need.

**Treasurer’s Report.** Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mrs. Jurczak, to approve the treasurer’s report as printed. All voted “aye.” Motion carried

**Vouchers.** Mrs. Jurczak moved, seconded by Mr. Krull, to approve the vouchers as printed. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

**2022 Corporation Budgets.** The Board received information on the 2022 Corporation Budget, which includes the Education Fund, Operations Fund, and Debt Service Fund. The Capital Projects and Bus Replacement Funds will be posted on the School Town website and uploaded to Gateway ten days prior to the public hearing. Mrs. Jurczak moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve to advertise on Gateway and post on the School Town website. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

The Public Hearing for the Annual Corporation Budget, the Capital Projects and Bus Replacement Plans will be held on September 21, 2021.

**Donations.** The following donations were received: \$1,000 anonymous donation for the Football Practice Packs; \$1,650 for the Cheer Fund from Strack’s can donations; and \$50 for the Sapphire’s Dance Fundraiser from Bossman Tacos. Mr. Krull moved, seconded by Mrs. Jurczak, to accept the donations. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

**Special/Support Services.** Mr. Michael Sukta, Manager of Buildings and Grounds, provided the Board with a written report relative to the ongoing maintenance work over the past month.

**NEOLA Policy Revisions, Volume 33 Number 2.** The administration presented NEOLA Board Policy Revisions and Additions, Volume 33, Number 2 for second reading and approval. Mrs. Ballard moved, seconded by Mrs. Jurczak, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion Carried.

**Professional Leaves.** The administration recommended professional leave for **Ashli Cooper** to attend a virtual High Ability meeting August 2-6, 2021 and **LuAnn Keltner** to attend monthly Title II Reading Specialist meetings. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mrs. Ballard, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

**Resignations.** The Superintendent presented the following resignations: **Megan Banashak**, high school mathematics teacher effective August 5, 2021; **Bea Kozlowski**, high school Spanish teacher effective August 7, 2021, and **Mary Hurtt**, Warren instructional aide effective August 10, 2021. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

**Appointments/Transfers.** The Superintendent presented the following recommendations effective for the 2020-2021 school year: **Heather Grace**, middle school supervisory aide; **Lori Russo**, Southridge Title I aide; **Jessica Vemmer**, Johnston instructional aide; **Mary Colbert**, Johnston Title I aide; **Patricia Bernal**, Southridge instructional aide; **Tanya Welbourne**, Warren Dependent Care aide; **Marcia McAleer**, Warren instructional aide; **Tanisha Gant**, regular routed bus driver; **James McCormack**, temporary high school Spanish teacher; **Laura Powers**, high school science teacher; **Robert Young**, substitute custodian effective August 11, 2021; and the transfers of **Joseph Fabian** from a science position to a math position at the high school and **Percy Martin Jr.** from a regular routed bus driver position to a substitute bus driver.

**Comments from the Audience.** Some of the following concerns were shared with the Board and the administration by members of the audience:

- CRT and “Parents Bill of Rights.”
- Standards for graduating.
- Possible change in Title I Program.
- Standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Mask mandate vs. parents’ choice.
- Thank you for the Title I program and the mask mandate for the elementary students.
- Keeping kids safe in school and school open.
- Communication limited with the masks.
- Masks being worn in PE.
- No reason to wear masks.
- Thank you to the administration and the Board for their proactive approach.

**Comments from the Board.** The Board thanked everyone for all their feedback and concerns and noted that of the twenty-one who spoke, it was split down the middle as to how they feel about masks.

The Superintendent provided information on the graduation standards, CRT (not approved curriculum); summer school programs and credit recovery; his reasoning for masking elementary children; and thanked everyone for expressing their different opinions in a civil manner.

**Future Meetings.** The Board will meet for a budget work session on August 24, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. and in regular session on September 21, 2021.

**Adjournment.** There being no business to come before the Board, Mr. Krull moved, seconded by Mrs. Ballard, to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. after the signing of claims in the amount of \$1,916,896.14 minutes, payroll file totals, etc. All voted "aye." Motion carried.