

MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie Avenue, Flossmoor, Illinois

November 19, 2024

Mr. Riedel called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The following Board members were present for all or part of the meeting:

Mrs. Hoereth	Mr. Riedel
Ms. Jackson	Ms. Turnquest
Mr. Legardy	Mr. Pauling

Mr. Legardy attended the meeting via Zoom video conference. Mr. Pauling attended the meeting via telephone audio conference call for a brief period of time until his arrival. Mr. Anderson was absent due to an out of town work commitment. Student Board Representatives Gabriel McKinney was also in attendance.

The presence of a quorum was noted and the meeting declared duly convened. Superintendent Wakeley, Chief School Business Official Cook, Communications and Community Engagement Director Erdey and Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development Director Hester were in attendance. Principal Alexander and Interim Human Resources Directors Gay and Kilrea were absent.

Representatives of the Homewood-Flossmoor Chronicle, League of Women Voters and HFEO were present, as well as members of the public.

Dr. Wakeley noted that due to work commitments Mr. Pauling would be available via telephone audio conference until his arrival and Mr. Legardy would be attending tonight's meeting via Zoom video conference.

Comments. Dr. Wakeley congratulated three HF seniors honored in the National Merit Scholarship Program. He noted Noelle Dolan and Frances Smith were named National Merit Commended Students. He also extended congratulations to Everett Van Til who was named a National Merit Semi-finalist placing him among the top 1% of the test takers in the nation. Dr. Wakeley stated Everett is also on the chess team and could not be here this evening. Dr. Wakeley extended his congratulations and appreciation to all three students for their involvement and contributions to HF. A picture with the Board was taken with Frances Smith who was in attendance this evening. Dr. Wakeley also congratulated the HF Special Olympics Soccer teams and their coaches. The teams have earned three state championships in three years. He stated that a portion of the teams' players were present tonight and extended his appreciation to them for what they have accomplished for HF. Coach Garland introduced assistant coaches Katie Rice, Tiffany Mucha who were present this evening and Katie Nieckula who was not in attendance. Coach Garland expressed his pride in the team and their sportsmanship and stated that the players exemplify what it means to be a Viking. A photo was taken of the soccer teams' players and coaches with the board.

Pastor Doyle Landry of Positive Vision Communications stated that there is a need for Pharmacy Technicians and distributed a handout regarding a Pharmacy Technician Certificate Program at Prairie State College (PSC) for qualified individuals which he stated is a step toward becoming a Doctor of Pharmacy from Chicago State University. He noted that there is an opportunity for some HF students to complete their Associate Degree by the time they leave HF and then move on to complete a Doctor of Pharmacy Degree through Chicago State University by the age of 22. He expressed his sympathy regarding the passing of Officer Enrique Martinez whose funeral was held at St. Rita on the south side recently and was saddened as he watched the officer's mother Rosa go through the motions. Pastor Landry stated that he did his research and he found that 20% of HF students are not residents. He also shared that a directive from the board was given to Principal Alexander to follow up with him after the last board meeting and as of November 8, he has not heard from Dr. Alexander. Pastor Landry commented that many students from various high schools are not reading at the college level. He introduced Dr. Lajeane Grinnage, Founder and Owner of Rite of Passage Project LLC to provide her impression of HF students' college readiness.

Comments (con't). Dr. Grinnage stated that she has worked with students for the last 20 years and during the last 10 years she has worked specifically with ACT prep and college readiness. She stated that when working with students, she conducts a four-hour assessment of the student, that includes a mock writing assignment, to evaluate where that student is with ACT and SAT. She has found that consistently students are having problems with fundamentals. She has been successful with helping students achieve their goals as well as being successful in increasing their ACT and SAT scores due to the services her company provides to students.

Dr. Wakeley shared his pride in our students who are being nationally recognized and added that he is just as proud of our students in Special Olympics who are achieving at very high levels. He added that we have really great kids who are doing really great things. Dr. Wakeley noted our teachers are doing an exceptional job during a very challenging time across the country. Dr. Wakeley stated that he spoke with faculty members at Prairie State College yesterday regarding the partnerships that they can build to enable HF students earn college credit while still in high school through dual credit. His dream is for every child to leave with a transcript. Dr. Wakeley pointed out that they have an opportunity to offer many other courses that are to the level and to the rigor that can give HF students college credit and it is an opportunity that Dr. Hester has been working on with Prairie State College.

Dr. Cook shared that the student committee regarding food service met where they sampled potential menu items and provided feedback. They also shared their thoughts about portion size and pricing. Dr. Cook explained that school food service is not immune to the pricing increases seen throughout the country. He also shared that the Steppers Showcase this past weekend was a great success with a phenomenal performance. Dr. Cook also highly recommends everyone attending next year's Showcase.

Dr. Hester stated that she wanted to highlight the work of our teachers adding that a lot has been asked of them and they are highly engaged in the work related to SBL, PLCs, and on various curricular committees. She noted that this is in addition to their excellent work in the classroom every day. Dr. Hester also pointed out that HF has a rigorous assessment program in place for students.

Mrs. Erdey also attended the Steppers Showcase and agreed with Dr. Cook's remarks, stating that it was an amazing afternoon and possibly the highest energy she has ever seen. She added that students from around the country did a phenomenal job of representing their schools and their art forms.

Gabriel McKinney, Student Board Representative, expressed how appreciative the students are of all the events the board provides. He noted the Lip Sync competition is tonight and is looking forward to the many other additional events coming up soon. He shared that the musical casting was announced this week and that he has been cast as a lead in one of the upcoming musicals.

Ms. Jackson noted that she is an IASB delegate and the annual Tri-Conference is this weekend. She stated that she will be reaching out to the board members individually for input regarding IASB resolutions that she will be voting on as a delegate on behalf of the board. She expressed that she wanted to take an opportunity to make some comments regarding the last board meeting regarding the proposal for a new course – LGBTQ+ Lives and Literature. She stated the following "at our last board meeting, a proposal for new course (LGBTQ+ Lives and Literature) was brought forward by our Curriculum Director and English department. As someone who values process and data when making decisions, my priority has always been to enhance academic achievement for all students at HF and elevate our school's standing within the community. I typically do not feel the need to explain my votes in detail, as they are usually guided by my inquiries during discussions. However, in this instance, I feel compelled to provide clarity on my decision-making process. Before this year, we lacked a clear procedure for introducing new courses. Consequently, our Planning committee devoted substantial time to refining the selection process and gaining insight. In my opinion, the decision on which courses to propose should be informed by factors such as data and evidence, including the potential student interest, outcomes at other schools, and the impact on academic achievement, as well as adherence to state mandates and cost considerations. The recent survey, which solicited feedback from 9th, 10th, and 11th graders, was a positive step towards inclusivity and understanding student interests. Interestingly, the survey revealed that there were several courses, like Aviation, Certified Nursing Assistant, Cosmetology and Barber, Construction Trades, Welding, Law Enforcement, Cybersecurity, Computer Repair/Networking, Esports, Sports Medicine, Physical Therapy, Diesel Mechanics, Advanced Manufacturing to name a few. These courses garnered significantly more interest from students compared to the proposed new

Comments (con't). course. Therefore, in the interest of prioritizing courses with higher student demand and potential for academic success, I could not support the approval of the new course at this time. I am committed to working collaboratively to enhance academic achievement for all students at HF. When I think of cutting edge, what first comes to mind is being competitive which means raising our state standards and school ranking. Thank you."

Mr. Legardy offered an apology for not attending tonight's meeting in person due to his business travels. He stated that he wanted to wish administration, staff, students and his board colleagues a very Happy Thanksgiving and hopes that everyone enjoys their holiday time with friends and family.

Committee Reports. Ms. Jackson stated that the Finance Committee met on November 14, 2024. Joining the committee were district partners from DLA Architects who spoke on construction projects and also Alliant who spoke on benefits. She highlighted the following that will be voted on this evening that include: Employee benefits, Property Tax Relief Grant (PTRG), and Natatorium Boiler. She stated that the committee at this time of year looks at insurance benefit renewals and pointed out that Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) PPO will increase by 34% based on an increase of claims, HMO will remain the same with a 0% increase. She added the committee will consider going to bid next year in the marketplace. She noted that Alliant has been a good partner to the district and they negotiated down the increase by 2 or 3%. Ms. Jackson shared that Dr. Cook will be giving a tax levy presentation as well as provide information regarding the PTRG. DLA architects shared that our culinary is complete with a small punch list that has almost been completed and also shared that the science building is 90% outside closure complete with some minor issues and pushing the facility usage date back a little but overall the project remains on time. She noted a ribbon cutting will be held on December 17 for the Culinary area at 5:00 p.m. DLA is also working on a traffic study that will redirect traffic flow and the committee gave them the ok to proceed. She pointed out that they are not far along enough to share any substantiate information at this time, but will in the future. Associate Principal Jim Schmidt spoke on residency, addressing a concern from the committee. Ms. Jackson would like residency added to future Finance Committee agendas as a standing item.

Consent Agenda. Mr. Pauling stated that our adopted rules of Parliamentary Procedures, Robert's Rules and Bylaws, provide for a consent agenda listing for approval of the Board by a single motion. Most of the items listed under the consent agenda have gone through board subcommittees' review and recommendation. Documentation concerning these items has been provided to all board members and the public in advance to assure an extensive and thorough review. Items may be removed from the consent agenda at the request of any board member. Mr. Pauling asked if any board member requested any item on the consent agenda be removed from the consent agenda for further discussion. Mr. Legardy requested that Consent Agenda items 4.4 - Regular Board Meeting Minutes, October 15, 2024 and 4.5 - Acceptance of the Hearing Officer's Findings regarding Student Discipline Matter - Suspension Hearing – Student #31511, be removed for some minor issues with each. Mr. Legardy moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda that included:

Special Board Meeting Minutes, October 15, 2024

Special Board Meeting Minutes, October 24, 2024

Special Board Meeting Minutes, November 7, 2024

Extended Field Trip – Yerkes Observatory

Athletics – Out-of-State Travel

Approval of Expenditures, \$3,697,790.43

Approval of Imprest Fund, \$27,014.68

Ratification of October, 2024, Payroll, \$3,567,399.98

Administrator Retirement, Carla Erdey, Director of Communications & Community Engagement, effective June 30, 2029

Extra Responsibility Contracts – Athletic Assignments, \$285,298.71

Roll Call: Ayes – Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None.
Motion carried.

Regular Board Meeting Minutes, October 15, 2024. Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of October 15, 2024. Mr. Legardy referred to page 5 Regarding the motion for English 4: Global Voices. He noted a typo in the roll call vote with two “ayes” being listed and asked that the second “aye” be changed to a “nay.” Mrs. Gnaster responded that the error was changed prior to this evening’s board meeting and the board would be voting on the corrected minutes this evening. Roll Call: Ayes – Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Acceptance of the Hearing Officer’s Findings regarding Student Discipline Matter - Suspension Hearing –Student #31511. Mr. Riedel moved, seconded by Ms. Turnquest, that the Board of Education accept the Hearing Officer’s Findings regarding Student Discipline Matter – Suspension Hearing – Student #31511. Mr. Legardy expressed that the student’s grades were not included in the district’s evidence packet provided to the board and would like the student’s grades included for the board’s information in the future. Dr. Wakeley stated that the hearing officer can only take into account the activity and indicators that led to the incident that took place and whether the consequence was appropriate and adhered to the district’s policies and handbook. However, he will encourage the associate principals to include the students grades in the future. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mr. Pauling stated that before moving on with business that he wanted to congratulate Mrs. Erdey on her retirement in 4.5 years and extended his congratulations for this milestone and almost being there.

Old Business - None

New Business

2024 Estimated Tax Levy. Dr. Cook presented on the estimated tax levy. He noted he usually presents on this in December but he is providing information now to give board members a longer period of time prior to voting in December. After board approval, Dr. Cook will then submit the levy to the County Clerk’s office by December 31st as required. Dr. Cook provided a breakdown of FY 2025 Budget revenues: Real Estate Taxes - 55%; State grants - 7%; Federal Grants -1%; Other Local – 6%; and Evidence-Based Funding – 31%. He noted that CPI was at 3.4% in 2024 and noted that Real estate tax revenue growth is capped by lessor or rate of inflation or 5%. In 2022 and 2023 the tax revenue growth was capped at 5%. Dr. Cook recommended to adopt a tax levy that will capture the 3.4% growth in the district’s limiting funds above its prior year maximum allowable extension and create a zero percent increase in total tax levy by abating an amount equal to the 3.4% increase (\$1,430,000). In addition, he recommended that the district continue with the second-year abatement associated with the FY24 Property Tax Relief Grant (PTRG) of \$1,910,000 and apply for the FY25 PTRG, which will generate an additional \$1,903 million in tax abatements beginning in this 2024 levy year bringing the district’s abatement up to \$5,243 million of tax relief. He noted that this has been the process the district has followed since 2021. A total capped fund levy of \$47,740,000 (before tax abatements), which is 3.4% above the 2023 extension of \$46,170,213 (before tax abatements). Any additional dollars above 3.4% will be a direct result of new property growth within the district’s property tax base. The district has abated back \$29,397 million in tax relief due to PTRG and action taken by the board. The district will get 97% of the \$1.9 million from the state if the district abates back to the tax payers. The proposed 2025 PTRG has a two-year abatement required. Dr. Cook then spoke on new legislation, the Public Act 103-0394 Report. He stated that the district must report the annual average expenditures of its operational funds for the previous three fiscal years and the district’s reserve balance cannot exceed 2.5 times this amount. He noted the district’s fund balance average expense is 0.85. Dr. Cook noted that he is required to present this report to the board. Dr. Wakeley stated the Dr. Cook has done a great job on managing this and being fiscally responsible but also congratulated the board on their choice to participate in the PTRG. He added that not all school districts, not all boards, do it even though it abates money back to the tax payers. Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education adopt the Resolution determining the estimated amount of money to be raised by taxation for 2024 in accordance with the requirements of the Truth in Taxation Law, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Fiscal Year 2025 Property Tax Relief Grant Application. Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mrs. Hoereth, that the Board of Education, authorize the Administration to submit an application for the Fiscal Year 2025 Property Tax Relief Grant with the Illinois State Board of Education, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Benefits Insurance Renewal. Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Legardy, that the Board of Education contract for specific excess stop-loss health insurance coverage with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, with a monthly rate of \$297.29 per covered employee (single and family) for calendar year 2025 as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education contract for excess aggregate stop-loss health insurance coverage with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois with a monthly rate of \$5.51 per covered employee (single and family) for calendar year 2025, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Mr. Pauling noted that all the motions regarding benefits have been presented to the committee for their review and discussion. Dr. Cook noted that the number of employee enrollments has increased from 268 to 327 in addition to an increase in large claims. Roll Call: Ayes – Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education contract for PPO participation with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois with a monthly rate of \$69.09 per covered employee (single and family) for calendar year 2025, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois for Medication Finder, a digital prescription cost saving tools, with a monthly rate of \$1.28 per covered employee (single and family) for calendar year 2025, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education contract with third party administrator Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois at \$5.25 per covered employee per month for dental, \$75 per month for COBRA administration, \$10 per COBRA notification, and \$10 per month per active COBRA participant as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Legardy, that the Board of Education contract with Voya for Group Life and Long-Term Disability coverages with a Life rate of \$0.105 per \$1,000 of benefit; an AD&D rate of \$0.020 per \$1,000 of benefit; and a LTD rate of \$0.226 per \$100 of covered monthly payroll as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

FY2025 Natatorium Boiler Plant Replacement Project. Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mrs. Hoereth, that the Board of Education approve the bid for the FY2025 Natatorium Boiler Plant Replacement Project to Precision Controls of Griffith, Indiana in the amount of \$1,313,900 as recommended by Director of Operations & Management, Chief School Business Official, and Superintendent. Mr. Patterson stated the pool boilers are over 20 years old and need to be replaced. This project will require an extensive shutdown of the heating systems serving the pool and surrounding areas. Temporary heating or cooling provisions, such as HVAC equipment rental, gas piping, or installation labor, are not included in this proposal because the project will be completed during the summer and therefore will not be needed. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Turnquest, Mrs. Hoereth, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Closing Comments. Dr. Cook noted that the board will vote to pass a resolution to abate in March or April and historically the board has voted in favor of abating back to the tax payers. Mr. Legardy stated that Dr. Cook pointed out in his tax levy presentation this evening that 1% of the district's revenues is dedicated to federal grants. He asked if there is a concern about any funds from the federal government moving forward. Dr. Cook responded that there is not real concern because the district receives such a small amount of federal funds. Dr. Wakeley added that specifically for HF, the Title 1 Grant is based on low income and it is not significantly going to move the needle as far as funding the district receives. He added that they will make sure that our most vulnerable students, the low income and special needs students, are taken care of. Dr. Wakeley spoke on the possible dissolution of the Department of Education that is being rumored in the news. He would like to see that it is not going to happen especially the affect it may have on special programs such as special education. However, he has heard that funding could be pushed down to the states with sending education back to the states which may not be a bad thing. Mr. Legardy cautioned that there is going to be a bit of hysteria in terms of what they are hearing in the news. He requested that communication be managed so our parents, community, staff and students can be updated on any changes that may occur that would affect HF.

Adjournment. Ms. Jackson moved, seconded by Mrs. Hoereth, that the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:21 p.m. Motion carried.

President

Vice-President/Secretary