

**Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting of
Hawthorn Community Consolidated District #73, Lake County, Illinois
841 W. End Ct, Vernon Hills IL 60061
7:00 p.m. on the 18th day of December 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

President Robin Cleek called the Board of Education meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The Board Secretary called attendance and the following members attended: Joel Finfer, Michael Engle, George Fievet, Robin Cleek, Karl Borchers, Julie Clifford and Wes Polen. Also in attendance were Asst. Supt. of Finance & Business Operations Ms. Jennifer Akin; Asst. Supt. of Student Services Ms. Alicia Corrigan; Asst. Supt. of Innovative Learning Dr. Karen Maturo; Asst. Supt. for Human Resources Mr. Adam Palmer; and Superintendent Dr. Pete Hannigan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board Secretary Mr. George Fievet publicly thanked the PTO for giving each board member a discount card to be used around the community. The Board expressed its appreciation for the PTO's continued support and efforts.

President Robin Cleek announced that the Cougar Athletic Boosters (CAB) is a volunteer, parent-run organization that raises funds to support athletic programs at Vernon Hills High School. All funds raised directly benefit the programs, funding items like technique classes for the dance team, uniform bags for wrestling, and a ball machine for tennis. CAB also sponsors team-building activities, travel fees, and summer camps. Membership is open to all, even those without students at Vernon Hills High School, at \$40 per year for families. Upcoming fundraisers include the CAB Bash on March 15 at Charlie's Hideaway, White Deer Run, featuring dinner, dancing, and a silent auction. For more information, follow CAB on Facebook at CougarAthleticBoosters.

RECOGNITION

Vice President Wes Polen and Board Member Karl Borchers spoke on behalf of the Recognition Committee to formally acknowledge exceptional Hawthorn staff and students. Congratulations were extended to Ms. Jen Katz, who was recognized for her outstanding dedication, innovative approach, and unwavering commitment to student growth and learning as a Speech-Language Pathologist at Hawthorn Elementary South. Quest employee Ms. Mitzy Diaz was also recognized for her positive impact at the Hawthorn School for Young Learners. Her commitment to knowing each student by name and need, engaging them with warmth and encouragement, and collaborating with staff exemplified the caring, student-centered spirit of the district. Both staff members were presented with certificates of recognition.

Additionally, the ILMEA student participants were recognized for their exceptional achievements in being selected to participate in the Illinois Music Education Association (ILMEA) District 7 Music Festival. Among more than 700 auditioning middle school students from 84 schools, these students demonstrated the hard work, dedication, and musical skill required to earn a spot in this prestigious event. Each student was presented with a medal of achievement and a certificate of recognition.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Board President Robin Cleek began her report by wishing Dr. Hannigan an early Happy Birthday. She also reminded the board to RSVP for the ED-RED Annual Dinner scheduled for January 26, 2025.

She continued her report by inviting board members who attended the Triple I Conference to share their experiences. Mr. Joel Finfer highlighted several sessions he attended, including those on Communications and the Role of the School Board. He noted that the Communications session reaffirmed Hawthorn's strong communications strategy and shared that it was refreshing to see Hawthorn used as an example during the presentation.

Ms. Clifford reported on highlights from the 2024 IASB Delegate Assembly at Triple I, noting that all recommended resolutions passed, including the resolution co-sponsored by the district to prevent mandatory school closures on election days unless a school serves as a polling location. Julie voted against a resolution recommending additional funding for charter schools, citing concerns about equity and the potential impact on public school programs. Despite this, the resolution passed. As a reminder to the community, the resolutions passed by the school districts simply grant IASB permission to lobby for these initiatives. The effectiveness of these resolutions is yet to be determined, as they do not constitute actual legislation from the delegate assembly.

Mr. Karl Borchers shared that he attended several sessions and he highlighted a session on student safety, sponsored by Lake Bluff School District 65, which focused on community engagement, roundtables on gun safety, and addressing challenges like technology use and anxiety in middle and high school students. Another session discussed “Fox Groups,” a mentorship initiative where K–5 students remain in small, multi-grade groups for five years, fostering relationships and community connections. Karl also attended a presentation on developing a teacher apprenticeship program, sponsored by Oswego 308, which emphasized strategic partnerships with Aurora University, onboarding programs for student teachers, and workshops to build a pipeline of future educators from within the community.

Mr. Michal Engle also attended the Role of the Board session, which emphasized the importance of board members recognizing their roles and legal responsibilities. He noted the scenarios used to illustrate key points, such as the reminder that board members always wear their “board hat.” Mr. Engle also attended a session with Dr. Hannigan titled “What Your Superintendent Wants to Tell You But Can’t.” This presentation provided insight into the daily stresses and challenges faced by superintendents, comparing their roles to those of CEOs. Attendees participated in interactive polls, and Mike remarked positively on the district’s alignment and collaborative approach.

President Cleek ended her report by wishing the community a restful winter break and looks forward to seeing everyone in 2025.

ED-RED REPORT

Mr. Joel Finfer reported that ED-RED will host its Annual Legislative Dinner on January 27. This year, the event will include invitations to the entire General Assembly, rather than being limited to legislators. A sell-out is expected, so those interested in attending are encouraged to notify Jessica to secure a ticket.

SEDOL REPORT

Mr. Michael Engle reported that the last Executive Board meeting was held on November 14, and the last Governing Board meeting took place on December 4. Updates on the four goals of the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) were presented, with each committee outlining completed tasks, ongoing projects, and future steps. These goals focus on delivering exceptional programs, establishing equitable financial structures, upholding high standards, and fostering collaborative team practices.

Dr. Lynn, Executive Board President, provided an update on the superintendent search timeline, recommending the extension of contracts for Dr. Thomas and Dr. Hackett through the 2025–2026 school year to allow for a more thorough hiring process.

The board also approved the amended FY25 budget. Dr. Johns detailed the factors leading to the revisions, including tuition rates set below actual costs, misaligned expense budgeting, and unanticipated construction and contract agency costs. These issues resulted in a nearly \$13 million shortfall. A one-time tuition rate increase of 15–17% is being considered for FY26, with plans for a restructured tuition model in FY27.

The next Executive Board meeting is scheduled for December 19, and the next Governing Board meeting will be held on March 5.

SITE & FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. George Fievet reported that the Site & Facilities Committee held its last meeting on December 10, 2024. The committee began by meeting with Quest to explore opportunities for enhancing district events and group lunches. Further discussions and potential tasting events are planned. Quest also shared updates on their work within the schools and highlighted the success of the recent pizza taste-off at the middle schools.

The committee reviewed the 2025 summer projects, bringing visuals to support the discussion. They are preparing to open bids this winter to ensure the projects can begin promptly at the start of summer. Transportation updates were also discussed, with a focus on the successful iPad pilot program at Lakeside and Aspen. This success sets the stage to expand the program district-wide, with transportation purchases on the evening’s agenda to equip the remaining buses.

Lastly, over the winter break, the wall between the commons and cafeteria at Elementary North will be replaced by the original vendor, inspected by the manufacturer, and updated with necessary safeguards. The work is expected to be completed before students return in January.

WELLNESS COMMITTEE REPORT

The next meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2025.

KEY TO 73 FOUNDATION REPORT

Ms. Julie Clifford reported on the Key to 73’s Foundation Report and the committee’s recent meeting, during which the board updated the mission statement and purpose. While no major changes were made, the updates aim to foster familiarity with the foundation’s objectives.

The revised mission statement reads: *"Advocate, promote, and fund initiatives to ensure the success of Every One, Every Day across District 73."* The updated purpose is: *"The purpose of the Key to 73 Hawthorn Education Foundation is to solicit, manage, and distribute supplemental funds for the principal purpose of supporting initiatives to ensure the District 73 community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged. This effort includes, but is not limited to, fostering community engagement and aiding educational programs that may not receive district funding. These funds are intended to supplement, not replace or alter, tax-based revenue. Donations from individuals, corporations, and other foundations are directed toward advancing Learning for All. Every One, Every Day initiatives."*

Ms. Clifford shared slides introducing the new foundation board, noting her role as the Hawthorn Board representative. She highlighted recent and upcoming events. This past week, the district hosted a successful gift-wrapping event, providing holiday cheer and gifts to over 100 families. The foundation also plans to collaborate with GLMV, a local business group, emphasizing the importance of expanding networks to support community needs.

Upcoming events include a Hawthorn Food Pantry Assortment Day and Distribution Day. The next foundation meeting is scheduled for January 7, and work on the new foundation website is underway, with an expected launch in February.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Superintendent Dr. Hannigan discussed the D73-D125 Data Sharing Intergovernmental Agreement and the 2025-2026 School Calendar. The revised agreement with Aldai E. Stevenson High School (District 125) aligns with updated student data privacy regulations. Similar updates with other feeder high schools are in progress.

Regarding the 2025-2026 school calendar, the Calendar Committee, which included District Administrators, Building Administrators, and HEA members, met on November 18 and December 10 to establish key parameters. The calendar will include 174 student attendance days, two parent-teacher conferences, and four teacher institute days. Staff input was gathered via a survey, with 79.7% of 369 respondents preferring to keep Fall conferences in November.

The proposed calendar has a staff start date of August 18, 2025, and a student start date of August 21, 2025. The tentative last day of student attendance is June 1, 2026, with June 8 if emergency days are used. The committee also recommends the District run an early release "student" schedule on Parent-Teacher Conference days to provide staff with additional time to run conferences.

Discussions on Lincoln non-attendance days are ongoing, with collaboration from Mundelein and Fremont to finalize the Lincoln calendar. Once completed, the calendar will be shared with staff and families.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Hannigan extended warm wishes on behalf of the entire school district, thanking Hawthorn staff, students, and the school community for their dedication and support throughout the year. He wished everyone a restful and joyful winter break and a wonderful holiday season.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1 Board Meeting Minutes from November 14, 2024
- 6.2 Closed Session Minutes from November 14, 2024
- 6.3 Mastercard Report from October 10, 2024
- 6.4 Amazon Expense Report from December 18, 2024
- 6.5 Expenditure Report from December 18, 2024
- 6.6 Treasurer's Report from October 2024
- 6.7 Personnel Report

7 New Hires:

7 Resignations:

7 Leave of Absence:

1 Change of Status:

7 New Hires: Scott Bass, Instructional Assistant, EN; Monica Condeza, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, DL; Juliana Felices Victor Da Silva, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, DL; Deniquia Fisher, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, EN; Krista Frazier, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, EN; Judith Navarro Sandoval, Student Secretary, EN; Sheila Stepanian, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, DL.

7 Resignations: Sai Teja Sri Bathina, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, TL, 11/11/2024; Pamela Duke, Instructional Assistant, EN, 11/29/2024; Cristina Gonzalez, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, AS, 09/13/2024; Meghan Mahler, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, TL; Sally

Nick, Instructional Assistant, MS, 11/25/2024; Shandey Reimann, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, AS, 11/22/2024; Johana Terrones, Instructional Assistant, EN, 12/20/2024.

7 Leaves of Absence: Christy Hunter, Principal, ES, 11/14/2024; Michael Cohen, SS/L.A. Teacher, MS, 11/4/2024; Cathay Gross, Library Media Specialist, TL, 12/13/2024; Samantha May, Music Teacher, MS, 10/28/2024; Rodney Erb, Safety & Security Supervisor, DO, 12/16/2024; Karen Langer, Instructional Assistant, MS, 11/6/2024; Aparna Soleti, Instructional Assistant, ES, 12/17/2024.

1 Change of Status: Carlos Mendoza, Maintenance 2, District, 12/23/2024.

Dr. Peter Hannigan reviewed Policy PRESS Issue 116. He reminded the board that The Policy Sub-Committee convened on November 7 to review policy updates included in PRESS Issue 116. The committee examined a total of six policies, which were also highlighted during our last board meeting.

Ms. Jennifer Akin shared the Summer 2025/2026 Design and Development Projects and the Approval for the purchase of Transportation Technology. The district sought approval for the construction bids for the 2025 summer projects, focusing on refreshing the North Middle School library and front office spaces, as discussed in the November meeting. Renderings were included in the board packet for review. A \$2.5 million placeholder for these projects is included in the 2024-2025 budget, and board approval is requested to proceed with the bids in January, with results to be presented in February.

Additionally, the district has been piloting Tyler GPS software and hardware on Aspen buses since November, which has shown significant benefits. The proposal is to fully implement this transportation technology across all Hawthorn routes. The estimated timeline for ordering and installation is 6 to 8 weeks, and board approval is requested to proceed with the purchase and implementation.

ACTION ITEMS

Policy PRESS Issue 116

MOTION: Wes Polen moved that the Board of Education approve the Policy PRESS Issue 116; Julie Clifford seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Robin Cleek, Karl Borchers, Wes Polen, Julie Clifford, Joel Finfer, George Fievet and Michael Engle.

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Summer 2025/2026 Design and Development Projects

MOTION: George Fievet moved that the Board of Education approve the Summer 2025/2026 Design and Development Projects; Michael Engle seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Robin Cleek, Karl Borchers, Wes Polen, Julie Clifford, George Fievet, Joel Finfer and Michael Engle.

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Purchase of Transportation Technology

MOTION: Karl Borchers moved that the Board of Education approve the purchase of Transportation Technology; Wes Polen seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Robin Cleek, Karl Borchers, Wes Polen, Julie Clifford, George Fievet, Joel Finfer and Michael Engle.

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Enrollment - Uploaded
 2. FOIA Log, Dr. Hannigan reported that the District has not received any FOIA requests since the last board meeting and has been responded to as identified in Section 8.2 of the Board agenda.
 3. Media Clips
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TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

No future topics at this time.

ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11) President Cleek *read the motion(s) to adjourn to CLOSED SESSION for the purposes of:*

Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2).

and

The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or a volunteer of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body 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. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

With no further business to discuss, George Fievet made a motion to adjourn to Closed Session, seconded by Wes Polen. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m. **All in favor? Yes.**

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Flores

Robin Cleek, President

George Fievet, Secretary

Date Minutes Approved: _____