

MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie Avenue, Flossmoor, Illinois  
December 17, 2024

Mr. Pauling called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The following Board members were present for all or part of the meeting:

Mr. Anderson	Mr. Riedel
Ms. Jackson	Ms. Turnquest
Mr. Legardy	Mr. Pauling

Mrs. Hoereth was absent due to a family commitment. Student Board Representative Gabriel McKinney was not in attendance due to semester final exams.

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

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

Comments. Dr. Alexander introduced four IB Diploma Recipients from the class of 2024: Madison Leathers, Evelyn Malvestuto, Kevin Gibek and Undra Pillows who were recognized for earning International Baccalaureate Diplomas. Faculty member and IB Coordinator Ms. Libby Day spoke a few words on each student and stated that each earned the IB Diploma by demonstrating excellence in academics. She noted that Kevin Gibek is attending the University of Chicago studying chemical engineering; Evelyn Malvestuto is attending The Ohio University studying nursing; and Madison Leathers is attending Scripps College studying Organismal Biology. Undra Pillows is attending Yale University and was unable to make it this evening due to semester exams. A photo of the IB Diploma recipients was taken with the Board of Education. Mr. Pauling expressed that it is the board's honor to recognize the students this evening. He thanked them for being here this evening and added that the board is proud of their achievements and accomplishments and they look forward to hearing more in the future. He extended congratulations on behalf of the Board of Education to the 2024 IB Diploma recipients.

Mr. Gary Dabbit expressed his gratitude to the board for the work that they do and added that he knows that oftentimes it is thankless and not a lot of credit is given. He stated that he would put H-F up against any school in the state of what is offered to students here with a high level of excellence. He referenced an incident that occurred in 1994 at Lincoln-Way High School when a car drove through a chain link fence on campus onto the soccer field striking three students with one student unfortunately passing away. In an effort to prevent an incident like that happening at H-F, Mr. Dabbit requested that the board consider as part of any other future construction projects, a way of adding barriers along the boundaries of the campuses to lessen risk of injuries to students by vehicles that may go off the road onto campus. He added that if some consideration is given to his request he would be grateful and if something can be done he would be ecstatic. Mr. Pauling noted that a traffic study is currently being conducted and that Mr. Dabbit's recommendation has been heard.

HF freshmen students Sophia and Abigail O'Quin addressed the board on behalf of their parents Drs. Troy and Camille A. O'Quin. Unfortunately, due to other commitments, their parents could not attend tonight's meeting. Sophia added that their family is incredibly grateful for the unbelievable faculty and staff at H-F and so they have prepared the following holiday greeting:

*"Twas the first night of winter break, and all through the school, not a creature was stirring, not a teacher in view. The hallways were quiet, the classrooms were bare, the staff finally home, no lessons to prepare. All year long, HF teachers and staff give their all, Early mornings, late nights-they answer the call. From Monday to Friday, and Saturdays too, they guide and inspire, they know what to do. As a parent of freshmen, I've been awed and amazed, At the dedication that deserves to be praised. From clubs to athletics, from concerts to plays, There's something for all in so many ways. My daughters are thriving, they're eager to grow, Because of the passion these educators show. They mentor, they nurture, they challenge and care, HF's staff is extraordinary-beyond all compare. So tonight, as we pause*

*for a well-deserved rest, know that HF's teachers are truly the best. With gratitude and joy, my thanks I extend, Happy holidays to all-our heroes, our friends. Thank you!"*

Mr. Pauling extended the board's appreciation to Sophia and Abigail and asked them to deliver the board's thanks to their parents as well.

Pastor Doyle Landry of Positive Vision Communications, spoke on the difficulty this holiday season brings to many people, himself included. He explained that December is particularly hard for him because he is a widower of breast cancer for 24 years. He added that this will be his first Christmas Eve without his wife, dad and now his mother. Pastor Doyle also referred to the school shooting that occurred in Madison, Wisconsin recently with the shooter committing suicide after the mass shooting. He added that due to the African American population in the H-F community, he stressed that mental illness is something to be taken seriously. He called the board's attention to Mr. and Mrs. Finley who were in attendance with him this evening. He noted their oldest child is utilizing the study hours at Homewood Public Library in preparation for finals. He is hoping that if the same study opportunity for students preparing for exams is available this spring that he will see a large contingent of H-F students utilizing the library. Pastor Doyle provided copies of three publications for the board's information that contained articles of interest. He noted that he does not work or own any of the publications. The publications, *The Chicago Crusader*, *South Suburban News* and *South Suburban Citizen* contain articles on student financial aid, the passing of Nikki Giovanni, poet, author, and activist, and a full-page article highlighting H-F's new Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Norrell. Pastor Doyle extended holiday greetings and is looking forward to seeing everyone in January.

Mr. Jim Grisius, father of H-F junior Julian Grisius read a letter that he along with Mrs. Grisius wrote expressing their appreciation to the board, H-F faculty and staff for all that they do to support the IB program. He added that the IB program is something that they really value. He read the following: "My wife and I want to express our deep gratitude for the IB program and to share our thanks with H-F faculty, staff and administrators for all the hard work that you do to make this program available to the community. Our son is pursuing an IB diploma and has begun this semester with a full schedule of IB classes. Julian's experience thus far has been positive and he recognizes that the IB program will challenge him in new ways. My wife and I value the program's global perspective, holistic and rigorous education, curriculum structure and emphasis on critical thinking. We believe this program is going to prepare him well for college. Academically, Julian is a high performing student so we considered several options for meeting his educational and social needs before attending high school. These options included H-F with its IB program, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy and several schools in the Chicagoland area. Julian's first two years at H-F have been very positive and he has had some great teachers, a stable friend group and many happy memories. As we enter the next phase of high school, we are excited by the promise of the IB program. By offering the IB program, H-F has made it possible for our son, whose performance is outside the norm, to receive a high-quality education while maintaining a close connection to family, friends and community. Also, it allows our family to stay in Homewood where we have found community through neighbors, friends and active participation in local community organizations. So, in closing, I just want to share my family's gratitude and appreciation for all the work that you all are doing – you are much appreciated." Mr. Pauling thanked Mr. Grisius for his letter and being at tonight's meeting and wished Julian continued success.

HF Alumna and community member Beth Larocca stated that she would like a thorough description of the graduation requirement and the rationale for the change in Policy 6:300 being proposed.

Dr. Wakeley proudly shared that 46 H-F students were designated as 2025-2026 Illinois State Scholars based on their ACT or SAT test scores, the sixth semester class size, unweighted class rank and GPA. He noted these students are in the top 10 percent of students in the state of Illinois. He congratulated them on their outstanding accomplishment. Dr. Wakeley also shared that seven music students were selected by audition to participate in the Illinois Music Education Association (IMEA) All-State Music Conference. The IMEA conference will be held in Peoria from January 29 through February 1, 2025. The seven students will be participating with the best music students in the state. In addition, IB students recently participated in an IB Behavioral Science research trip and visited Mindworks at the University of Chicago. Mindworks is a working laboratory where students participate in and learn about behavioral science research. Dr. Wakeley stated these accomplishments speak to the well-rounded interests of our students that emulate the profile of a Viking. He extended his appreciation to H-F's faculty for the work they do to make these opportunities possible for our students.

Dr. Alexander expressed that it was a terrific first semester and everyone is finishing the semester strong. He noted students are thriving in and out of the classroom. Dr. Alexander added that could not happen without the support of the teachers, the administration and the board. Dr. Alexander stated they are riding high as they close the semester and he looks forward to starting a new year with a push in ACT preparation for juniors.

Dr. Cook stated that the district received its annual financial report for 2024 that indicated the district earned a score of 3.9 out of a possible 4 reflecting the district's strong financial health. Dr. Cook explained that the score is based on five categories and the district earned all 4's except in the long-term debt category in which the district

Comments (con't.) received a 3 due to its current dept capacity of 56%; 75% or greater debt capacity is required to earn a score of 4. He added the district received the highest score of "Recognition" which is the highest designation awarded by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Dr. Hester shared that teachers have been creating study guides and reviewing lessons to prepare students for finals week. She expressed appreciation to the teachers and students for their efforts and acknowledged the work of H-F's Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). She spoke on the availability of a full range of tutoring opportunities that are offered during the week and also during the weekends for students. She noted the tutoring sessions have been filled and thanked teachers for their service, as well as, the support of the board. Dr. Hester added that the winter concert series has been completed and students and teachers did a beautiful job, She acknowledged Mrs. Whitlock, Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Engrav, Mr. Sifner, Mr. Love and Ms. Helsel-Wilk for all the work they did to put on the concert series. Mr. Pauling asked HFEO President Noble to convey to the faculty the board's appreciation for their hard work and dedication this semester.

Mrs. Erdey spoke on the ribbon cutting for the Culinary and Design Labs that was held this evening. She noted that it was held in collaboration with the Southland Chamber of Commerce. She thanked the board for attending the ceremony and noted that the students did a great job with the food preparations. Mrs. Erdey also thanked the community for their support as well as the teachers who did a great job of showcasing the space. Mr. Pauling requested that plans be made for providing tours for the community to see the space.

Ms. Jackson stressed the importance of ensuring building safety and asked that consideration be given to strengthening the school entrance. She noted it is necessary to think about vulnerability at all times especially after another tragic school shooting that took place in Madison, Wisconsin this week. She stated that she recently attended the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) Triple I conference at which she served as H-F's delegate to the Illinois Association of School Boards Resolutions Committee. As a delegate, she voted on a number of proposed resolutions and all were adopted. There were a number of resolutions on the do not adopt appeal list and she is expecting them to come back next year. Ms. Jackson also attended the ribbon cutting event this evening and is super excited about the space and looks forward to more opportunities for the community to tour the spaces. She added, "it is a state-of-the-art facility that everyone should have an opportunity to see." Ms. Jackson extended Happy Holidays to everyone and shared the following message, "life is really short. This time of the year is not always the happiest, so try to make the best of it and love on your family and friends." Mr. Pauling expressed his appreciation to Ms. Jackson for representing the board as its delegate at the IASB Triple I conference.

Mr. Anderson thanked the staff for preparing students for the week of finals as this semester closes. He shared that he was a guest speaker to business students on Friday on personal finance. He stated that he asked every class about how they felt about the cell phone policy and the feedback from teachers was very positive in support of the policy with students being less happy about it. Mr. Anderson urged everyone to do what they can do to demand action regarding gun safety to protect students across the country. He added that the emotions when school shootings occur never change and he hopes in ten years that they will not still be asking for gun laws needed to protect students.

Mr. Legardy wished students, staff, faculty and his board colleagues very Happy Holidays! He agrees with Ms. Jackson that this time of year can be rough and he always uses this time to reflect. He stressed that a lot of good is happening, and a lot of good is happening inside this building and wished everyone the best. Mr. Legardy added that everyone should take some time to recharge their battery and enjoy loved ones. He noted that he recently had an opportunity to attend a Black Educators conference in Atlanta. He attended a breakout session on strategies to help black boys excel in math and what teachers, students and parents can do to support learning. Mr. Legardy encouraged continuing outreach with families and having greater articulation with the feeder districts. He added that he is excited and encouraged and he looks forward to the work continuing in 2025.

Committee Reports. Ms. Jackson reported that the Personnel Committee met on November 21, 2024. Drs. Gay and Kilrea gave a general HR update. She noted the substitute teacher pay rate is increasing to \$160 per day effective December 13, 2024, in an effort to make H-F more competitive in the market. In addition, Dr. Norrell has already been in the building and spent some time with the staff. The rest of the meeting was held in closed session.

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 subcommittee 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 the be removed from the consent agenda for further discussion. No agenda items were requested to be removed. Mr. Legardy moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the

Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda that included:

- 4.1 Regular Board Meeting Minutes, November 19, 2024
- 4.2 Approval of Expenditures, \$1,453,626.52
- 4.3 Approval of Imprest Fund, \$14,267.04
- 4.4 Ratification of November, 2024, Payroll, \$3,073,773.18
- 4.5.1 Extra Responsibility Contracts - Activity Assignments, \$1,917.00
- 4.5.2 Extra Responsibility Contracts – Athletic Assignments, \$10,417.38
- 4.5.3 Extra Responsibility Contracts - Sixth Assignments, \$71,367.54
- 4.5.4 Extra Responsibility Contracts – Auxiliary Contracts, \$3,000.00

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

Old Business. None

New Business

Tax Levy Adoption. Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Ms. Jackson, that the Board of Education adopt the General Tax Levy Resolution, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Dr. Cook stated that he explained at the November board meeting that the maximum increase the district could levy is 3.4% over the amount extended last year. He recommended that the district levy the cap for the following reasons: 1) While the CPI is trending downward, the cost of goods and services remains high, with a 3.4% increase last year, following a 6.5% increase two years ago, and a 7.0% increase three years ago. 2) The district has entered into a competitive contract agreement with its largest organization. And, 3) The adoption of a budget that spans two fiscal years. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Ms. Jackson, that the Board of Education adopt the Special Tax Levy Resolution for Working Cash, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Dr. Cook explained a small amount is levied in its working cash fund. The working cash fund can be used to transfer funds to the education, transportation or operations funds if needed. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Ms. Jackson, that the Board of Education adopt the Loss-Factor Resolution as presented and recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Dr. Cook stated that for the last 8 years, the district has collected roughly 94% of its tax levy due to delinquent payments, appeals and other adjustments. This is the primary reason for the recommended 6% loss factor. He noted that any adjustment will not exceed the capped levy amount. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Ms. Jackson, that the Board of Education adopt the Resolution authorizing the Reduction of Certain Fund Levies for the 2024 levy year, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Dr. Cook noted that in the event that reassessments or economic decline lead to a reduction in the total taxable base, the total amount for the district to levy decreases. He added that when this occurs, the district requests the county to reduce its levy in the education fund, which is the largest fund in the budget. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education authorize the President to sign the Certificate of Compliance with the Truth in Taxation Law, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and the Superintendent. Dr. Cook stated that by law, the district must certify that its proposed levy does not exceed the prior year's extension by more than 5%. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Property Tax Abatement due to the Property Tax Relief Grant Programs. Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Ms. Jackson, that the Board of Education approve the resolution to abate property taxes as a result of its participation in the Property Tax Relief Grant programs (PTRG) in the amount of \$1,430,000, as recommended by the Finance Committee, Chief School Business Official, and Superintendent. Dr. Cook shared this information was explained at the November Board meeting. His recommendation along with the Superintendent and the Finance Committee is abating debt services by \$1.43 million, which is equivalent to the 3.4% levy increase. This practice has been followed by the district since the 2022-2023 school year. Mr. Anderson stated that as a result of the district

Property Tax Abatement due to the Property Tax Relief Grant Programs (con't.) participating in this program that is available through the state, allows the taxing body to provide some tax relief to tax payers. Mr. Anderson pointed out that this is an optional action that the board is choosing to take and has taken in the past and noted that most districts choose not to provide the optional tax relief to its tax payers. Dr. Wakeley added that the district has abated almost \$20 million over the past several years back to the tax payers and congratulated the board for continuing to provide some tax relief back to the community. Roll Call: Ayes – Mr. Anderson, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Auditor Services Contract Renewal. Mr. Anderson moved, seconded by Ms. Jackson, that the Board of Education approves the execution of its option to extend the auditor services contract with Lauterbach & Amen for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2025; June 30, 2026; and June 30, 2027 as recommended by the Chief School Business Official and the Superintendent. The contract amounts are as follows:

- FY2025: \$17,500 (2.9% increase)
- FY2026: \$18,000 (7.14% increase)
- FY2027: \$20,000 (6.67% increase)

Dr. Cook stated that three years ago, the district entered into a contract with Lauterbach & Amen for auditing services at rates of \$16,000 for FY22, \$16,500 for FY23, and \$17,000 for FY24. These rates were much lower than those of the previous auditors, Legacy LLC, whose rate was \$25,000. Additionally, in March 2022, Dr. Cook contacted 17 other school districts, and their cost for auditing services ranged from \$23,000 to \$59,100, with an average rate of \$37,700. Dr. Cook recommended renewal at the proposed rate offered by Lauterbach & Amen and he strongly believes it is of great value for the auditing services that the district receives. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Policy 6:300 - Graduation Requirements. Mr. Legardy moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education amend Policy 6:300 to include updated language and to change the units of credits required for graduation in the discipline of Social Science from 3.5 units of credit to 3.0 units of credit starting with the graduating class of 2026, as recommended by The Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, the Principal, and the Superintendent. Dr. Hester stated that as a school district the social sciences and the skills that our students receive are valued. She explained that the state of Illinois requires 2 units of credit in social science. This change keeps HF's requirements above the state requirement while meeting the mandated needs. The district previously approved a semester-long course to meet the state requirement for consumer economics. Students still have the opportunity to take a year-long economics course if they choose. This topic was discussed at length at the recent Committee-of-the-Whole meeting. Dr. Hester added that this change will help create space in students' schedules for anticipated new state requirements as well as completing Career Pathways and provides student choice in the courses they take. Roll Call: Ayes – Ms. Jackson, Mr. Legardy, Mr. Riedel, Ms. Turnquest, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Pauling. Nays – None. Motion carried.

Before adjourning, Mr. Pauling extended Happy Holidays and he looks forward to seeing everyone in the New Year!

Adjournment. Mr. Legardy moved, seconded by Mr. Riedel, that the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:05 p.m. Motion carried.

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President

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Vice-President/Secretary