REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING MINUTES
September 16, 2025

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on September 16, 2025, in the HKHS Community Room.

Board Member Attendance:

Board Member	Present	Absent	Board Member	Present	Absent
Joseph Centofanti		X	Corey Roberts	X	
Sonja Charpentier	X		Suzanne Sack	X	
Lisa Connelly	X		Ben Sodergren	X	
Jennifer Favalora	X		Jennifer Voegtli	X	
Shawna Goldfarb		X	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X	
Heather Pach	X				

Also Present: Interim Superintendent Paul K. Smith, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Miller, Director of Finance and Operations Karen Asetta, Board Administrator Victoria O'Connor, Director of Technology Chance Davis, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent Sarah Kaiser, HKHS Principal Donna Hayward

Visitors: 8

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board Chair Suzanne Sack called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Jennifer Voegtli **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to move item 6.B. Support Services Association Contract to item 9.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote by all members present.

Cougar Pride

Principal Hayward presented the Class of 2025 Graduate Report to the Board. She provided highlights of the graduating students' statistics. Some noted areas of significance were:

- A steady percentage of students (90%) choosing to continue their formal education
- A roughly 50/50 split between students continuing their education in Connecticut and those leaving their home state
- The very high success rate in Advanced Placement courses
- The close distribution among the most popular majors – STEM-related fields (22%), Health Sciences (21%), Humanities (20%), and Business (19%)
- The increase in students pursuing a career in education

Principal Hayward was recognized by the Board for her recent election to the National Association of Secondary School Principals' board of directors, and she was presented with a Certificate of Excellence.

Superintendent's Report

Provided a written report in the packet. No additional items to review.

Public Comment

None

FY25 Audit Governance Planning Communication

Superintendent Smith reported that he intends to have the auditing company, CliftonLarsenAllen LLP, come to a future meeting for the purpose of providing a report, communicating highlights, and addressing concerns regarding the results of the audit, once concluded.

Budget Planning FY27

Superintendent Smith presented the preliminary Budget Planning 2026-2027 and stated that it will be released to the public on September 17th through the Regional School District 17 website. The budget process will be moving forward by October 1st and in place for the new Superintendent's arrival in January 2026.

Review of Fire Tower Engineered Timber Report

Superintendent Smith reported on the status of the White Barn as provided by the consultant Fire Tower Engineered Timber, Inc. The report provided the Board with an initial assessment and information on next steps. The decision by the Board to demolish the barn or to repair the structure will be made in the future. The Board has sent the topic to the Facilities subcommittee to research the project and bring back recommendations to the full board.

High School Project Referendum Update

Board Chair Sack provided a summary and timeline of the High School project process to date. Board Chair Sack read the following statement into the minutes regarding the High School Project and October 7th referendum:

Statement by the RSD17 Board of Education September 16, 2025

The RSD17 Board of Education extends its sincere appreciation to the members of the school community, as well as the residents of Haddam and Killingworth, for their ongoing support of the educational programs serving our students. Addressing the needs of the aging high school facility has been a top priority for the Board. Following several years of studies and recommendations, the Board was presented with a proposal involving new construction while retaining the existing pool, field house, and auditorium. This project was subsequently approved by the Board to proceed to a referendum scheduled for October 7.

Earlier this month, the Board identified certain technical issues related to the project's bonding and referendum procedures. Given the proximity of upcoming elections and a deadline from the State to secure funding for the application that was submitted on June 30, the referendum timeline is not feasible at this time.

While the Board and the community are aligned on the need for substantial and urgent improvement of the Haddam-Killingworth High School, it seems that community sentiment for the current proposed project presents more questions than answers about why, what, how, and at what cost to complete it. Therefore, the Board has, by not taking action to remedy the earlier mentioned technical issues, put the October 7th referendum "on hold."

Because of the scope and urgency of the needs of the High School, the Board will reengage with a plan to move forward. While the current proposal emphasized new construction as the solution to the high school's needs, this pause affords the Board the opportunity to consider additional, alternative approaches.

Although the referendum is on hold, improvement to the Haddam-Killingworth High School remains an urgent and significant priority. Work will continue diligently, with careful consideration of the community's needs and preferences, recognizing that this project represents a substantial investment for the towns of Haddam and Killingworth.

We will communicate in the very near future with next steps and how the community can stay apprised of the Board's effort and actions.

Kathy Zandi **MOVED** and Ben Sodergren **SECONDED** a motion to terminate all proceedings related to a proposed referendum to approve funding for a school construction project to renovate Haddam-Killingworth High School, and

FURTHER MOVED that the Board directs the Interim Superintendent to post notice of this action on the district website.

Motion passed from the following roll call votes: 9-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Joseph Centofanti	ABSENT	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Sonja Charpentier	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Ben Sodergren	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Principal Hayward left the meeting at 7:06 PM.

Superintendent Smith paused for Board comments

None

Food Service Vehicle Purchase

Superintendent Smith has asked for a second district van for transporting food. Director of Finance and Operations Karen Asetta stated that the expense will come out of the Food Service Fund, budget line Cafe Equipment.

Lisa Connelly **MOVED** and Sonja Charpentier **SECONDED** a motion to approve the purchase of a Food Service vehicle not to exceed $25,000, to be charged to the budget line Cafe Equipment, account number 03.03100.730.606.000.5, contingent that the Board needs to approve it.

Motion passed from the following roll call votes: 9-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Joseph Centofanti	ABSENT	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Sonja Charpentier	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Ben Sodergren	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A

Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Consent Agenda

a. Enrollment Report

b. Personnel Report

c. Approval of Minutes from the August 19, 2025, Board of Education Meeting

d. Approval of Minutes from the August 28, 2025, Board of Education Special Meeting

Heather Pach **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion passed from the following roll call votes: 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	ABSENT	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Sonja Charpentier	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Ben Sodergren	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Personnel & Evaluations Subcommittee

Corey Roberts reported that the committee met regarding contract negotiations.

Policy Subcommittee

Heather Pach reported that the committee met and discussed legislative updates provided by Shipman. They reviewed the Reserve for Educational Expenditures Fund Regulation and Naming Policy that will be further discussed at the next meeting. She also reported that the committee began the review of the Board By-laws.

Communications Subcommittee

Lisa Connelly reported that the committee met just prior to this meeting. They reviewed the Board Handbook and the Bylaws. They also discussed the process of the Superintendent Search. There was a CABE update.

Curriculum Subcommittee

Kathy Zandi reported that the committee reviewed the following:

- PDEC update (mapped out mandatory training)
- Overview of the Summer Curriculum project and Curriculum Council
- New Teacher Orientation (18 new teachers).

Facilities Subcommittee

Superintendent Smith reported on the Food Service van and White Barn.

Finance Subcommittee

Superintendent Smith reported that there was a review of the financial reporting of FY25, needing to be closed. The committee also reviewed the current FY26 financial reports.

LEARN

Jenifer Favalora reported that there is talk of a Birth to 2nd Grade facility in Waterford (breaking ground in January); a 3-year plan for rolling out a Pre-K to 8th Grade magnet school system; legislative advocacy for magnet school funding; and reimbursement for special education.

HK Youth and Family Services

Heather Pach reported on the busy schedule ahead, including upcoming events:

- QPR Suicide Prevention Training (September 29th)
- Banana's Split, Too (October 6th)
- How To Motivate Your Kids to Perform Academically While Building Their Grit and Resilience webinar (October 9th)
- Can't Look Away: The Case Against Social Media (October 15th)
- Trunk Or Treat at the High School (October 18th)
- The launch of the school-year mentoring programs

Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department

Jennifer Voegtli reported on programs, grants, scholarships, and childcare.

Haddam Board of Selectmen

Heather Pach reported that the meeting topic focused on the date of the River Days event.

Killingworth Board of Selectmen

Lisa Connelly reported that there was a discussion about pickle ball courts and a request for updates on the High School project.

Support Services Association Contract – Possible Board Approval (discussion Proposed for Executive Session)

Jennifer Voegtli **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to enter into an executive session to discuss negotiation strategies, inviting the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Operations.

Motion passed from the following roll call votes: 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	ABSENT	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Sonja Charpentier	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Ben Sodergren	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

The Board entered into executive session at 7:39.

Sarah Kaiser, Victoria O'Connor, Chance Davis, and guests left the meeting.

The Board exited the executive session at 7:50 PM.

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to approve the contract agreement between the Regional School District No. 17 and the Support Services Association covering the period between September 10, 2025, through June 30, 2029.

Motion passed from the following roll call votes: 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	ABSENT	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A

Sonja Charpentier	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Ben Sodergren	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Adjournment

Board Chair Sack adjourned the meeting at 7:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria O'Connor
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

Approval: _____Date:_____
Dr. Kathleen Zandi, Board Secretary