

MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie Ave., Flossmoor
October 7, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:47 a.m.

In attendance for all or part of the meeting were:

Members

Dr. Jennifer Norrell, Superintendent
Dr. Ariana Leonard, Board Member
Mr. Gerald Pauling, Board President
Mr. Chris Riedel, Board Finance Chair

Participants

Dr. Jennifer Norrell, Superintendent
Dr. Lawrence Cook, CSBO

Dr. Leonard attended the meeting via telephone conference call.

Ms. Marilyn Thomas from the HF Chronicle was present as well as members of the public. Members of the Leadership Team including Mr. Asa Gordon, Ms. Jalitza Martinez, Mr. Steve Richardson and Mrs. Erdey were also in attendance. In addition, Raymond James Representative Ms. Elizabeth Hennessey, Managing Director Public Finance and PMA Securities, LLC Representative Mr. Robert Lewis, Senior Vice President, Managing Director were present. Also, in attendance were DLA Architects Mr. Edward Wright and Mr. Ryan Kelley.

Approval of Minutes. The August 5, 2025 Finance Committee meeting minutes stand approved as presented.

Comments

Ms. Barb Karstrom, an HF graduate and Flossmoor resident, followed up on two topics from last year: (1) how effectively HF has enforced residency rules and addressed non-resident cases, and (2) budget restrictions on staff travel. Dr. Cook explained that a process has long been in place requiring travel requests to align with the strategic plan or board goals. He added that those requests go through multiple levels of approval, including the Principal, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development and ending with the Superintendent. Dr. Norrell stated a residency update will be added back on future agendas.

Ms. Beth Larocca, Flossmoor resident and former board member, raised concerns about school safety, emphasizing the need for measures such as bulletproof windows and safer travel between campus buildings. She noted that while people may think a tragedy could never happen locally, it's important to act proactively to prevent it.

The committee approved Dr. Norrell's request to reorder the agenda, beginning with Item b — *Facilities Review: Future Capital Projects and Funding*. The discussion would focus first on the district's current financial position and bonding capacity, then move to identifying necessary and potential future capital projects.

Facilities Review – Future Capital Project Discussion

Ms. Elizabeth Hennessey and Mr. Robert Lewis presented a debt overview and funding options for the district. They highlighted HF's strong financial position, holding a Standard & Poor's AA+ bond rating which is just below its former 2013 AAA rating, making the district favorable in the bond market. Mr. Lewis reviewed financial data and then Ms. Hennessey outlined three borrowing options possibly issuing: Health Life Safety (HLS) Bonds, DSEB Bonds, or Debt

Certificates repaid from operating funds. She noted the possibility of combining or phasing these options exists. The committee discussed the implications of each scenario, including potential effects on future boards, debt extension length, property taxes, and uncertainty in future school funding. Dr. Norrell thanked Ms. Hennessey and Mr. Lewis for their debt overview and funding options presentation this morning. Mr. Pauling added that the minutes should note the committee's plan to identify necessary projects, explore funding methods, and assess financial feasibility without increasing the burden on taxpayers.

Revised Capital Improvement 5-Year Project

Dr. Cook presented the revised 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan, noting minor updates. Key ongoing or planned projects include recoating the stadium track, resurfacing the south tennis courts, and completing auditorium lighting upgrades already budgeted for this year. Top priorities (highlighted in orange) include roofing projects—next up are the library and cafeteria roofs—and the remaining \$1.3 million in punch list items for completion of the science addition. Equipment needs include a gator and tractor for maintenance and a leased shuttle bus at \$28,000 for 5 years was approved last year. Dr. Norrell estimated about \$2.5 million in top-priority work, potentially rising to \$3.5 million pending architectural assessments of the structural integrity of the tennis courts. The B Building project could begin around FY27, with higher costs due to HVAC needs. Architects will explore whether combining HVAC work for A and B Buildings could yield savings, potentially up to \$1 million, by doing both B and A buildings at the same time. Mr. Wright commented that it becomes an economy of scale, the smaller project the more money, as we scale up you can see savings across both projects perhaps up to \$1 million and reflected in that A Building may be added as an Alternate to the B Building project. Mr. Pauling confirmed that the FY25–26 total of \$5.22 million covers top and high-priority projects, as well as completed work, all within the budget. Dr. Cook noted that the additional \$1 million listed, pending architectural review, for tennis courts was not included. Discussion followed on the tennis court condition, with Mr. Kelley and Mr. Wright explaining that replacement may be needed depending on drainage and soil conditions, though prior work on the football field in 2008 suggested the ground may be stable. Mr. Kelley and Mr. Wright met with Math and CTE faculty and administrators to gather input on program needs and future vision. The group discussed strengths (experienced staff), challenges (limited space, inability to meet in groups), current programs, and how learning may evolve over the next 20 years. Key feedback centered on the need for more space, flexibility, and technology to support teaching and collaboration. Dr. Norrell highlighted the recently approved AP Cybersecurity pathway, which will integrate into math classrooms. Operational costs for technology will be considered in future planning, with infrastructure being built to support it. Mr. Wright noted leveraging existing spaces, such as hallways and locker areas, to maximize educational use. Mr. Kelley explained that the study produced a conceptual program for Math and CTE, comparing current and ideal space needs. The Math program currently has 12,730 sq. ft., with an additional 10,000 sq. ft. needed. CTE programs also require significant space for hands-on work and collaboration. Existing CTE classrooms number only four, though HF now has 13 approved pathways, the most in the state. Mr. Kelley spoke on the next steps that include developing conceptual floor plans for B Building and analyzing economic impact and return on investment for the pathways. The study is intermediate and exploratory, with more staff input and data needed before final planning. Mr. Riedel emphasized the importance of tying space needs and program expansion to measurable outcomes for community investment. Dr. Norrell and the team will provide this information as the process continues. Mr. Riedel expressed that he believes there are real numbers that can be tied to this when they look at the commitment from the community on this project and he feels having all of those numbers will be very impactful. Dr. Norrell will provide that information. Mr. Kelley noted that CTE is in the exploratory stage and will bring square

footage of the area needed back to the committee for their review. Mr. Riedel thanked Mr. Wright, Mr. Kelley and Dr. Norrell and her team for spearheading this exploratory phase.

Levy Timeline

Dr. Cook reviewed the Levy Timeline: the board will take action on the levy at the November 18 board meeting, with submission to the County Clerk's office by December 30. Dr. Norrell explained that, unlike previous years when this was handled in the November Finance Committee, the process will be expedited with the levy presentation as part of Dr. Grossi's October 21 presentation to the board. Moving forward, this schedule will continue annually, with Finance Committee review in October, presentation at the October board meeting, and board vote in November.

Service Contract – Illuminate Inc.

Dr. Cook explained that Illuminate Inc., led by Dr. Grossi, is contracted for \$19,600 per year, including a 20% discount offered to all schools he has worked with. Dr. Cook noted the district will benefit from this contract, as it replaces a \$26,000 software program that was not purchased this year, saving roughly \$6,000 and staff time. The software data will be accessed through Dr. Grossi, who will provide the same reports and offer additional global insights based on his expertise and state-level relationships. Dr. Norrell highlighted the value of Dr. Grossi's insights and the importance of tracking government actions. She informed the committee that Dr. Robert Grossi, president of Illuminate and recently retired Bloom Township Treasurer, will present a financial analysis at the October 21 board meeting, offering a broad fiscal perspective based on the district's current financial status particularly regarding the viability of issuing Debt Certificates repaid from operating funds. Dr. Norrell again emphasized the value of his guidance. The contract will be presented for board approval on October 21, with Mr. Pauling expressing the benefit to proceed this year to aid the transition from Dr. Cook to a new school business official. This item will be on the October 21, 2025 board agenda for approval.

Safety and security proposal

Dr. Norrell emphasized that safety and security are a top priority. She discussed hiring a consultant to assess HF's current safety state and recommend best practices. The consultant, whom she knows professionally, has already provided some unpaid initial input. The next step is for him to provide a detailed scope of work with a total project cost, covering exploratory and assessment phases, including recommendations and cost estimates for improvements. Mr. Pauling and Mr. Riedel stressed the importance of clearly defined phases, costs, and scope before approval. Dr. Leonard agreed. Dr. Norrell will ask the consultant to provide a detailed proposal with a fully mapped out scope of work and cost. Dr. Norrell noted this item will not appear on the October 21 board meeting agenda; instead, it will be revisited in the Finance Committee in November for more discussion and pushed to the second semester for full consideration.

Science Building Remembrance Request

Dr. Norrell shared plans to honor Ronald Simonson, a contractor who tragically lost his life while working in the science building. A tree will be planted in his memory, with the location selected in coordination with the Flossmoor Green Commission. The memorial will include a plaque and a small reception with refreshments. Mr. Simonson's family will be invited to attend. This item will be on the October 21, 2025 board agenda for approval.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 a.m.