

**SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2025**

MINUTES

A meeting of the Sweet Home Board of Education was held on Monday, December 15, 2025, in the Norman C. Vergils Community Center. President of the Board, Mr. Bellanti, called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Mr. Bellanti led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PRESENT: Peter Bellanti, Marianne Jasen, Scott M. Johnson, Dirk Rabenold, Brian Laible, Amy Battaglia

ABSENT: Danyelle Anthon

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the Board of Education accepted the roll as called.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the meeting was adjourned to executive session at 6:06 pm for matters related to current litigation.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the following resolution was offered to come out of executive session at 6:44 pm. Action was not taken during executive session.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the following resolution was offered:

RESOLVED: That, the agenda set forth for the regular Board of Education meeting held Monday, December 15, 2025 is hereby adopted in its entirety.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the following resolution was offered:

RESOLVED: That, the reading of the minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, November 18, 2025 be waived and are hereby adopted in their entirety.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

COMMUNICATIONS

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**A. Counseling Plan**

Katie Barillari, Director of Pupil Services, will give a presentation to the Board of Education at the study session on Tuesday, December 9, 2025.

B. Portrait of a Graduate

Toyia Wilson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, will give an update to the Board of Education at the study session on Tuesday, December 9, 2025.

C. Superintendent Update

Michael Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, will give an update to the Board of Education at the study session on Tuesday, December 9, 2025.

D. Proposed Amendment to District Safety Plan – Desha's Law

Don Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Plant Services, will give an update to the Board of Education at the voting meeting on Monday, December 15, 2025.

E. Superintendent Update

Michael Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, will give an update to the Board of Education at the voting meeting on Monday, December 15, 2025.

OPEN SESSION: Agenda Topics – Policy 1510

None

NEW BUSINESS

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the following resolution was offered for agenda items A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H.

NEW BUSINESS-continued...**A. Special Education****1. Class placements for 2025-2026 – Policy 7613**

WHEREAS, Public Law 94-142, the Individuals with Disability Act, and Chapter 853, Laws of 1976 (New York State Education Act), requires Board of Education approval for all placements of students with disabilities, and

WHEREAS, the District Committee on Special Education has reviewed all placements, and

WHEREAS, all parents have approved said special education class placements, now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That, the 2025-2026 placements for students with disabilities be approved as recommended in a memorandum to Dr. Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, dated December 5, 2025

2. Preschool class placements for 2025-2026 – Policy 7614

WHEREAS, Public Law 94-142, the Individuals with Disability Act, as amended by P.L. 99-457, New York State Compliance, Chapter 243 of the Laws of 1989, requires Board of Education approval for all placements of preschool students with disabilities, and

WHEREAS, the District Committee on Preschool Special Education has reviewed all placements, and

WHEREAS, all parents have approved said special education placements, now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That, the 2025-2026 placements for preschool students with disabilities be approved as recommended in a memorandum to Dr. Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, dated December 5, 2025.

and be it further...

B. Monthly Financial Reports – Policy 2140

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accept the Investment Schedule, the Treasurer's Report, the Budget Appropriation Status Report, the Revenue Budget Status report, the Budget Transfer Report, and the Extra-Curricular Account Report as provided.

and be it further...

C. Comprehensive School Counseling Plan

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the Comprehensive School Counseling Plan for 2025-26 as presented.

and be it further...

NEW BUSINESS-continued...**D. Request for Proposal – Driver Education**

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education award the in-car instruction portion of the Driver Education RFP #2025-26-24 for the spring 2026 and 2026-207 school year to **Hoffman's Driving Academy** at the price of **\$879.00 per student**.

and be it further...

E. HELPS Program Resolution

Whereas, The Sweet Home Central School District board has the authority to manage the Sweet Home Central School District Personnel efficiently and effectively in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and collective bargaining agreements, including New York State Civil Service Laws and the Erie County Rules for the Classified Service; and

Whereas, New York State Civil Service Commission has developed and the Erie County Personnel Department has adopted the NYS HELPS (Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide) program, which allows for the inclusion of titles where qualified individuals may be appointed to a non-competitive version of a competitive title in order to gain permanent status without competitive examination and upon completion of a necessary probationary term be placed in the competitive class without further exam; and

Whereas, Erie County has recommended that the below resolve clause regarding the appointment process be approved to allow the Sweet Home Central School District to appropriately utilize the NYS Helps program in its most efficient form so as not to delay the ability of employees hired through the program to gain permanent status.

Now therefore be it resolved, that any individual appointed by this honorable body prior to or going forward which is afforded the opportunity to utilize the NYS Helps program, as approved and administered by The County of Erie, shall be, without further approval of this body, appropriately placed where possible into said program and upon completion of the minimum probationary term of the position and the requirements as outlined/approved by Erie County Civil Service, be afforded the rights of that of a competitive class appointment without further exam or approval by this body.

and be it further...

F. Acceptance of Donations

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accept a donation from The Fischer Family in the amount of \$100,000.00 for the specific purpose of constructing and outfitting a new multimedia classroom at the Sweet Home High School.

and be it further...

NEW BUSINESS-continued...**G. Handicapped Transportation Bid**

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education award the Contracted Handicapped Transportation bid #2025-26-23 to First Student, Inc. at a cost of \$425.00 per day from December 18, 2025 - June 26, 2026, for a total cost of \$48,875.00.

and be it further...

H. Settlement Agreement

RESOLVED: That, the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, authorizes the Superintendent to enter into a settlement with SHEA and employee 02195 and carry out the terms of its agreement.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

J. Coleman - During our past meetings that occurred toward the end of November and beginning of December, we have discussed more long-term plans we hope to achieve for the school year. We discussed our plans and ideas for the winter prep rally and the different games we want to have. We finalized our spirit week occurring this week, which leads up to winter break. Student Government continues to work towards our goals. At our meeting tomorrow, we plan to have Dr. Luchey in attendance to help move forward with our plans to execute mental health or therapy sessions provided for our students. Our Chair of the Athletics Committee, Sophia Guana, and Vice President, Summer Mack, brought their ideas together for this and are trying to provide sessions for our athletes monthly. Summer and I also discussed with Mr. Lucenti some key finalization points for senior tiles, although it will be pushed back as we wait for approval. We are also closely working with the Music and Arts Committee on this by putting together a flyer. Last week, the Technology Committee and I met with Mr. Lucenti and Mr. Szymendera to discuss tech related goals they'd like to see happen throughout the year. I also put together a digital suggestion box that Mr. Szymendera is helping with. I'd like to add this throughout the school and on the morning show, where students can fill out the form and add suggestions they'd like to see Student Government try and bring to life. The Food and Nutrition Committee touched base on some more food-related changes they would like to make in the cafeteria. Lastly, the Academics and DEI Committee are working to provide feminine hygiene products to bathrooms.

M. Jasen - I've been on vacation, but I have a request. Now that we've had a few months to, um, see how our electric buses are, could we just have a quick report maybe next month on how we're doing with usage and batteries and all that kind of stuff, just so we can see how we are doing?

D. Feldmann - We are going to get three more electric buses on Wednesday. That's three of the four that our public voted to allow us to purchase back in May. We met today with Wendel on submitting the next round of our chargers to SED.

S. Johnson - I attended the New York State School Boards Association's Annual Convention. I attended the following sessions which were offered at the convention:

- Why School Boards Matter - Adjunct Lecturer/Author Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Building Toward Biliteracy: The Junior Seal of Biliteracy Program - Presented by Vestal Central School District
- Informing School Staff About Autism - Don Mesibov - Founder/Director Institute for Learning Centered Education Autism Initiative

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS-continued...

- Opening Session: Achieving Dignity For All - Keynote Speaker - Tim Shriver Co-Creator "The Dignity Index"
- From Your Board to the Capitol: Engaging in NYSSBA's Advocacy Efforts – Presented by NSSBA
- Collective Bargaining Update – David S. Shaw, Esq., Norma G. Meacham, Esq.
- Electric Bus Pilot Program Implementation at Sweet Home CSD – Donald Feldmann, Sweet Home CSD and John Havrilla, Wendel Companies
- Artificial Intelligence in Education: From Policy to Practice – Amy DelCorvo – CEO/Executive Director NYSCATE, Julianna Sciolino – Chief Technology Officer Buffalo Public Schools, Moses Ojeda – Principal- Thomas A. Edison CTE High School New York City Public Schools
- Communications 101 for School Leaders – Adrienne J. Leon – Director of Engagement & Development Services Capital Region BOCES
- Student Board Representatives: More Than Just a Mandate – Sabatino Cimato, Superintendent Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District, Matthew Chimera Board President
- Kindness 101: Renewing a Passion for Education and Restoring Faith in Humanity – Steve Hartman, Correspondent – CBS News

On Nov 3, I went to the Sweet Home Alumni Board Meeting and the Sweet Home Education Foundation Meeting. On Nov 5, I went to the District Safety Committee Meeting and the Foreign Language Honor Society Induction for Spanish, French, and German. On the 13th, there was the Breakfast of Champions Awards for 8th Grade at Middle School that I went to, and the ECASB Legislative Dessert Forum with WNY State Legislators. I went to the Breakfast of Champions Awards for 6th & 7th Grade at Middle School on Nov. 14th. On the 18th, we had the open forum for Sweet Home Employees and the Board of Education Study and Voting Meeting. The 19th was the DEI Committee, where the main focus was the Strategic Plan update. I attended the Town Hall Meeting for the Capital Project at the High School on the 24th. On Dec 1, I went to the Sweet Home Alumni Board Meeting and the Sweet Home Education Foundation Meeting. On Dec. 9th, I did a tour of Willow Ridge Elementary with Danyelle Anthon and Dr. Ginestre. On Dec. 10th, I attended a Town Hall Meeting for the Capital Project at the Middle School.

A. Battaglia – No updates.

D. Rabenold – I spoke a bit about the one presentation, the first day, about dignity. It was very meaningful, just a way people today should provide a little bit of something to the person they're talking to or about, or just respect them when we try to understand their point of view. I thought that was great. I was probably the only heckler in the audience for the electric bus presentation. I did like the final statement from Wendel, I think that's my view of this from the beginning. It's an unworkable scenario for many school districts across the state. It's the same thing they've done recently with the electrification of buildings. It's just unworkable in my mind. Whether you're an environmentalist or a climate activist or whatever you want to call yourself, you have to deal with the reality of today. I think they're going to get there. It just may take a lot of push back from school districts and folks, to get at least a pause and maybe a longer runway to get this stuff done. I don't think anybody's opposed to a clean environment, but you've got to be realistic. You've got to use a little common sense in this. I didn't have anything wrong with the presentation. I thought, again, you did a terrific job. I just really wanted to hear from somebody up there, which we did, Wendell, that in reality it probably will be all of the above. I think hybrid makes sense. Heritage Heights had their meeting at the beginning of the month, and they talked a lot about the Merry Moose. They talked a lot about trying to get more members, which I guess is a bit of a struggle, and they also talked about the building project. They're excited about that. I did bring up the notion that one of our elected officials would try to promote the idea of a turning lane in front of Heritage Heights, and also a sidewalk. I guess that's not going anywhere. I don't know if you've heard anything from anybody on that. I'll keep pushing on my side if I can. I did want to also talk about a little bit about the portrait of graduate. There was a notice we posted online that the board approved this back in July. I don't see anything in our notes that was approved by us. So is this talking about the strategic plan from 2023 to 2025. I don't know what that is.

M. Ginestre – The Board of Regents approved this in July, Not the Sweet Home Board.

B. Laible – The MS PTSA did not have a December meeting. I did attend the concert for the gold band in 8th

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS-continued...

grade on December 3rd, and both did a great job. You can see the improvement made over the various grade levels. The younger students are doing a great job for their age and where they're at. Willow Ridge I attended the Willow Ridge and Maplemere concert on December 10th. Traditionally they will sing, "The Best Day is the Day Off of School." In the past three years they've had the next day off after singing this. They did not sing that song this year and they did not have a snow day. I think they'll be returning to that song next year. I also wanted to mention I did attend the parent-teacher conference, both in middle school a few weeks ago, and then for the grade school last Friday. I was happy to talk to a few teachers there, and two things that stood out. One is the teachers talking about the new phonics program that they've implemented this year, which is part the improvements in curriculum that we're making, and they've said it's been really well-received. It's nice to see all these improvements in curriculum. You're getting feedback as a parent with the positive results. They had shared that with pre-k, the kindergarteners felt even more prepared and ready, not just from an academic perspective but more than anything from a social-emotional perspective. They're used to the school. They're comfortable coming in. These are decisions you make 2 or 3 years ago, but it's nice to see the feedback and the results of those programs and what we're doing. The only other thing I would mention is that I still find a little bit of confusion between a 3 versus a 4. I think some other parents may at times feel the same way. In my own personal experience, with some teachers, a four comes down the road after a couple of semesters while they work towards it, and some are given a 4 in the first semester. I just think maybe that's something we can look at, because I think even as parents, you may have a kid in a subject getting really good grades, and they get a three, and then you're like, "Is it because it's the first semester? Is it because the criteria are different?" Maybe on that report, if that can just be delineated a little more on what a 3 is versus a 4, that would be helpful.

P. Bellanti- Last week I attended a town hall at the middle school and then a retirement get-together for Mr. Rozler. Willow Ridge did not have a PTA meeting in December.

OPEN SESSION: Policy 1510

Jonathan Makeley, Durham Drive - I would like to give some thoughts in regards to the upcoming vote for the capital project. For the first proposal for the capital project, you have much of that focusing on important upcoming repairs and renovations that need to be done to address things that are nearing the end of their usefulness. I figured I'd bring up a personal anecdote, how for much of my time growing up, my father was in management and maintenance for the trailer park I grew up in, and from that seeing how he worked I've come to see the importance of having proper funding and proactiveness for maintenance and repair and improvements to have a buildings good quality for people. Furthermore, what can happen when there isn't appropriate funding or repairs, you can end up with situations where these problems end up not being properly addressed. They get worse over time, and you end up having to spend even more money to fix a problem you could have gotten fixed earlier with less money, and at a time when it's more convenient for the people who will be affected by it. It would be best to get a roof on a building fixed before it breaks and you have rain coming down on students, or get the heat systems working properly before it's in the middle of the cold of winter. With the vote coming tomorrow, I would encourage people to go out and cast their votes on the matter.

PERSONNEL

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the following resolution was offered for consent agenda on personnel items I & II.

I. Teaching and Administrative**A. Regular****1. Discontinuance****a. Retirement**

RESOLVED: That, the *retirement*, in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Toyia Wilson	Michelle Iwankow	
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b. Resignation

RESOLVED: That, the *resignation*, in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Izeal Bullock III		
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2. Appointment**c. Encumbered**

RESOLVED: That, the *encumbered appointment*, in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Gabriella Farinacci		
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e. Continuing Activities**Building Leadership Team – Heritage Heights 2025-2026**

RESOLVED: That, the *continuing activities*, in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Melissa Campbell		
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g. Leave of Absence

RESOLVED: That, the *leave of absence* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Allison Radecke	Gabrielle Carrier	Lisa Brzeczowski
Jacqueline Stablewski	Keli Koran Luchey	

PERSONNEL-continued...**I. Teaching and Administrative****A. Regular****2. Appointment****h. Reinstatement from Leave**

RESOLVED: That, the *reinstatement from leave* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Dominique Dibble	Kamryn Barr	
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j. Co-curricular Activities**Co-curricular Activities – Middle School**

RESOLVED: That, the *co-curricular activities* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Jadon Wegrzyn	Katelyn Bechtel (Remove)	Samantha Carol Grawe
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B. Substitutes**2. Appointments****a. Long Term Substitutes**

RESOLVED: That, the *long term substitutes* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Timothy Arnold		
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b. Substitute teachers for 2025-2026 school year

RESOLVED: That, the *substitutes* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

c. Student teachers for 2025-2026 school year

RESOLVED: That, the *student teachers* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools

C. Interscholastic Activities**1. Interscholastic Appointments**

RESOLVED: That, the *interscholastic activities* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Patrick McNelis (chg.)		
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PERSONNEL-continued...II. **Service**A. **Regular**1. **Discontinuance**a. **Retirement**

RESOLVED: That, the *retirement* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Debbie Opala		
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b. **Resignation**

RESOLVED: That, the *resignation* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Katherine Rivera	Angelina Bruno	Mary Demmick
Samuel Gonzalez	Morgan Galusha	Shavindu Goonerathna

2. **Appointment**a. **Regular**

RESOLVED: That, the *regular appointment* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Leon Higbee	Shavindu Goonerathna	Elisabetta Antonacci
Shanika Smith	Emily Mrozek (chg.)	Cameron Millender

f. **Leave of Absence**

RESOLVED: That, the *leave of absence* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Stephanie Drabinski	Anjum Qadri	Donna Daniele
Nancy Dwyer	Lori Varney	

g. **Reinstatement from Leave**

RESOLVED: That, the *reinstatement from leave* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Jennifer Gradzewicz	Patricia Merrifield	
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PERSONNEL-continued...

- II. Service
B. Substitutes
2. Per Diem Substitutes

RESOLVED: That, the per diem substitutes in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 744 dated December 15, 2025** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by Mr. Laible, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

Falon Derion
Secretary, Board of Education
District Clerk
Sweet Home Central School District