

**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 17th day of December 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

President Robin Cleek called the Board of Education meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She welcomed Superintendents for the Day, Grace and Michael Maki from Elementary North, who earned this opportunity through the silent auction at the 2025 Key to 73 and PTO Golf Outing. Superintendent Grace led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cora Wright, a freshman at Vernon Hills High School and former Middle School North student, addressed the Board regarding the foreign language program. She expressed concern about the cancellation of Vernon Hills High School's German 1 class due to low enrollment, and shared that increasing communication regarding all available foreign language options prior to high school registration is important, as it impacts student choice, program sustainability, and future opportunities.

RECOGNITION

Vice President George Fievet and Board Member Karl Borchers had the pleasure of recognizing student and athletic achievements. Saranshi Yadav, Middle School North athlete, was recognized for representing Hawthorn at the IESA State Girls Golf Tournament in Metamora, Illinois. Saranshi competed against 87 golfers statewide and finished 32nd with a score of 96 in her first state appearance. Coach Harris commended her perseverance, dedication, and sportsmanship. Saranshi received a certificate and medal of excellence.

Middle School South Track and Field athletes were recognized for qualifying for and competing in the IESA State Track and Field Meet. Coach Harris congratulated the team on the athletes' accomplishments. The team received a certificate and medal of excellence.

Middle School North Track and Field athletes were also recognized for qualifying for and competing in the IESA State Track and Field Meet. Coach Chase Leonardi shared remarks highlighting the athletes' achievements. The team received a certificate and medal of excellence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President Cleek announced that Dr. Hannigan's birthday was upcoming and wished him a happy early birthday.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Cleek started her report by inviting Board members who attended the IASB Triple I Joint Conference to share highlights from the sessions they attended. Vice President George Fievet reported on sessions focused on the school improvement process, emphasizing the importance of continuous data collection and the use of state-level resources to support both improving and high-performing districts. He also attended a session on effective board-superintendent relationships, highlighting the value of communication and feedback. Additionally, he represented the Board at the IASB Delegate Assembly, where all previously discussed resolutions were approved. He noted the election of a new IASB President and Vice President and a change to a single two-year leadership term. He also shared that IASB remains financially stable and has launched its first statewide member survey.

Board Member Julie Clifford shared takeaways from sessions related to artificial intelligence and community engagement. She discussed the potential for AI to support instructional practices and efficiencies while emphasizing the importance of responsible use and data privacy. She also highlighted strategies for strengthening community engagement, including early career exploration opportunities for students and ensuring feedback aligns with the district's overall mission.

Board Member Stephanie Peters summarized sessions on recruiting, hiring, and retaining diverse leadership, noting the importance of promoting the district as an employer and ensuring district communications reflect student demographics. She also attended a session on superintendent evaluation practices, which explored tools and approaches to improve the evaluation process.

President Cleek reported on an upcoming Ed-Red Dinner scheduled for January 26 at 5:00 p.m. Those interested should contact Jessica for registration. She also shared updates from the Green Oaks-Libertyville-Vernon Hills Health Networking Committee,

which focuses on mental health resources. Highlights included information on Kids Rank, a local resource supporting children of military families; the Cougar Closet at Vernon Hills High School, which accepts donations of new clothing items; a new Libertyville facility, Careval, providing early intervention services for young children with autism; and Illinois DocAssist (<https://illinoisdocassist.uic.edu/>), a provider-to-provider consultation resource for school mental health professionals. President Cleek concluded by wishing everyone a happy holiday season and a pleasant winter break.

ED-RED REPORT

Board Member Joel Finfer emphasized the importance of early registration for the ED-RED Legislative Dinner scheduled for January 26, noting that the event is expected to sell out quickly. He also reported on legislative activity discussed at the ED-RED meeting, including Senate Bill 1873, which proposes a statewide cell phone ban in schools. He shared that ED-RED has taken a neutral position on the bill and raised concerns regarding enforceability, limitations on disciplinary consequences, and ambiguity surrounding liability protections for school staff. He noted that ED-RED continues to advocate for reasonable, practical legislation by providing an educator perspective throughout the legislative process.

SEDOL REPORT

Mr. Engle reported that the Executive Board met on November 13 and the last Governing Board meeting was on December 3. He shared that the Governing Board approved the Executive Board's recommendation to employ Dr. Jennifer Thomas as the new superintendent of SEDOL, effective July 1, 2026. Mr. Engle also reported that the Governing Board approved a new tuition funding model beginning with the 2026–2027 school year. Under the new model, direct and indirect tuition costs for SEDOL programs will be paid by member districts based on actual student usage. Administrative costs will be allocated using a formula based on district equalized assessed valuation, district enrollment, and average daily enrollment. Draft financial projections are expected to be shared in April and June. A question was raised seeking clarification regarding how enrollment fluctuations would be addressed under the new model. Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Alicia Corrigan explained that tuition will be billed monthly based on student enrollment, similar to private therapeutic day schools, and that average daily attendance will be used to calculate administrative costs over quarterly periods, which are not expected to fluctuate significantly as Hawthorn does not have a large SEDOL population. The next Executive Board meeting is scheduled for December 18 and the next Governing Board meeting is scheduled for March 4.

SITE & FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Board Member Stephanie Peters reported that the Site & Facilities Committee met on December 8. The committee discussed several topics, including an energy review conducted in collaboration with ComEd, which has been completed at the North Campus, with the South Campus review to follow. The review confirmed that recent investments in building automation systems and energy efficiency efforts have been effective, with only minor recommendations that would not impact building comfort. Ms. Peters also reported that the Middle School South library and office area project is currently in the bidding process, with bids expected by January 14 and a review planned for January 15. She announced that Quest has hired a new permanent head chef, Chef Anita, and expressed enthusiasm about her joining the district. Additionally, she reported that follow-up discussions have continued with Lakeside regarding bus routes and iPad deployment issues. An in-person meeting with Lakeside is planned for next month to address ongoing concerns. She noted that the district has continued the use of bus aides due to ongoing student behavior needs.

WELLNESS COMMITTEE REPORT

No report at this time.

KEY TO 73 FOUNDATION REPORT

Board Member Julie Clifford reported that the Key to 73 Foundation continues to actively support district students and families. She shared that the foundation approved funding to maintain Eagle Net, the hotspot program providing internet access to students in need. She also noted that the foundation is planning to fund scholarships in support of Hawthorn's summer programs. Ms. Clifford encouraged community members to support the foundation through volunteering or financial contributions and invited them to visit keyto73foundation.org for more information. She also reported that planning is underway for the annual golf outing scheduled for June 5, with continued opportunities for sponsorships, volunteers, and donations.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Business Jennifer Akin presented an overview of the district's copier refresh. She reported that the current multifunction copier fleet, purchased in November 2021 under a three-year maintenance agreement, has reached the end of its term and is requiring increased service. Ms. Akin explained that the Business Office issued a formal Request for Proposal to identify a long-term solution and established a standardized copier deployment model to promote consistency and efficiency across schools. The RFP process resulted in seven vendor proposals, which were evaluated by a staff committee using criteria including cost, functionality, service, and overall value. Based on the evaluation, Ms. Akin reported that Impact was determined to provide the best overall value. She requested Board consideration to enter into a three-year copier lease agreement with a four-year maintenance agreement with Impact.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Michael Maki shared highlights from his experience participating with his sister as Superintendents for the Day. He reported visiting classrooms across the district, observing positive student behavior, and learning about the responsibilities of the superintendent role. He noted that his favorite part of the day was making an announcement over the intercom requesting Dr. Hannigan report to the office. He concluded by sharing that if he were superintendent, he would declare Pajama Day every day.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1 Board Meeting Minutes: November 13, 2025
- 6.2 Expenditure Report: December 17, 2025
- 6.3 Amazon Expense Report: December 17, 2025
- 6.4 Mastercard Report: October 21, 2025
- 6.5 Treasurer's Report: October 2025
- 6.6 Disposal of Surplus Property
- 6.7 Personnel Report

New Hires: 4

Leaves of Absence: 8

Resignations: 3

4 New Hires: Vandanaben Brambhatt, Lunch/Recess Supervisor, DL, 11/17/2025; Carmen Cerillo-Cuzmanko, Instructional Assistant, Lincoln, 11/17/2025; Karolina O'Malley, Principal Secretary, TL, 11/17/2025; Darlin Tino, Instructional Assistant, HSYL, 12/01/2025.

8 Leaves of Absence: Lauren Sachs, Building Assistant Supervisor, TL, 05/04/2026; Jenna Jacoby, 2nd Grade Teacher, ES, 12/01/2025; Anne-Michelle Julius, OT, MN/MS, 03/09/2026; Sarah Lawless, 1st Grade Teacher, ES, 12/02/2025; Chase Leonardi, Science Teacher, MN, 02/17/2026; Maureen Hilliard, Instructional Assistant, ES, 12/17/2025; Bogumila Lebieczinski, Instructional Assistant, MS, 11/10/2025; Ryan Preuss, Instructional Assistant, MN, 12/01/2025.

3 Resignations: Kerry Appelbaum, Instructional Assistant, MN, 11/24/2025; Carl Gruebele, Technology Support Specialist, District, 12/19/2025; Swathi Vasantham, Instructional Assistant, HSYL, 12/12/2025.

MOTION: Michael Engle moved that the Board of Education approve the **Consent Agenda** items as presented; seconded by Stephanie Peters.

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

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Dr. Hannigan discussed the proposed 2026–2027 student calendar for Board review. He reviewed that the Calendar Committee met and developed a calendar that includes 174 student attendance days, two parent-teacher conference days, and four teacher institute days. Key dates include a staff start date of August 17, 2026, with students beginning on August 20, 2026. The tentative last day of school is May 28, 2027, or June 7, 2027, if emergency days are utilized. Dr. Hannigan noted that additional details regarding Lincoln's student-specific attendance calendar will be forthcoming due to screening dates.

Mrs. Jennifer Akin presented two action items related to the Business Department for Board approval. First, she requested Board approval of the 2026-2027 Student Fees. She explained that the district utilizes four categories of student fees including registration, optional fees, meal, and technology to help streamline costs for families and offset program expenses not covered by the general operating budget. Ms. Akin noted that the proposed adjustments are intended to maintain an equitable, transparent, and sustainable fee structure while supporting responsible resource management and the continuation of high quality programs.

Second, she requested Board approval of the 2026 Summer School Fees. The Summer Leadership Team finalized a condensed three week summer program schedule and confirmed that Band Camp and Volleyball Camp will remain separate two week programs. Based on this structure, the Business Office recommended a participation fee of \$259 for each program, consistent with comparable two week offerings in 2025.

ACTION ITEMS

2026-2027 Student Calendar

MOTION: George Fievet moved that the Board of Education approve the 2026-2027 Student Fees; Michael Engle seconded the motion.

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

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

2026-2027 Student Fees

MOTION: Stephanie Peters moved that the Board of Education approve the 2026-2027 Student Fees; George Fievet seconded the motion.

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

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

2026 Summer School Fees

MOTION: Karl Borchers moved that the Board of Education approve the 2026 Summer School Fees; George Fievet seconded the motion.

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

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

INFORMATION

1. Enrollment - Uploaded
 2. FOIA Log, Dr. Hannigan reported that the District has received four 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

Board Member Julie Clifford requested a future discussion regarding how the district plans to educate students and staff on the use of artificial intelligence, including the development of guidelines and guardrails. The Board reached consensus for the administration to prepare this topic for a future meeting in the spring.

Board Member Karl Borchers requested a future discussion providing an overview of elementary school activities offered across the district, including how activities are determined, staffed, and implemented, with an emphasis on equity and access across buildings. The Board reached consensus for the administration to prepare this overview for a future meeting later in the spring.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Michael Engle made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Karl Borchers. The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m. **All in favor? Yes.**

Motion carried: 7 ayes; 0 nays

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Flores

Robin Cleek, President

Julie Clifford, Secretary

Date Minutes Approved: _____