

INDIAN RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2025
MILLSBORO MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

MINUTES

Call to Order

Mr. Steele called the Regular Meeting of the Indian River School District Board of Education to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Board Members present: Mr. Derek Cathell, Mrs. Lisa Briggs, Mrs. Kelly Kline, Dr. Michelle Parsons Mr. Gerald Peden, Mr. Mark Steele, Mrs. Kim Taylor, Mrs. Anita West Werner.

Board Member Absent: Mr. Ivan Neal

Board Member Late: Mrs. Leolga Wright (6:03 pm)

Executive Session

Mr. Cathell, seconded by Mr. Peden, motioned to go into Executive Session at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of discussing personnel, negotiations, litigation. The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Reconvene Regular Session at 7:20 p.m.

Roll Call

Board Members present: Mr. Derek Cathell, Mrs. Lisa Briggs, Mrs. Kelly Kline, Dr. Michelle Parsons Mr. Gerald Peden, Mr. Mark Steele, Mrs. Kim Taylor, Mrs. Anita West Werner, Mrs. Leolga Wright.

Board Member Absent: Mr. Ivan Neal

Approval of Agenda – September 22, 2025

Mrs. Taylor, seconded by Mrs. Briggs, moved to approve the agenda for September 22, 2025. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Pledge of Allegiance

Student Government

Payton Richie, Sussex Central High School student representative shared with the Board events, activities occurring at Sussex Central High School.

Approval of Minutes

Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes – August 25, 2025

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mrs. Briggs, motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Board of Education Executive Session Meeting Minutes – August 25, 2025

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mrs. Briggs, motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Visitors and Staff in Attendance

Jay Owens, Renee Jerns, Celeste Bunting, Kelly Dorman, Melissa Whisted, Cathy Wolfe, Chris Parker, Matt Schifano, Jennifer Troublefield, Dan Mann, Joe Dooley, Blair Catlin Brown, Jenna Argo, Lauren Kirk, Karen Maull, Blair Caitlin Brown, Jason Pilgrim, Sylvester Quillen III, Cassie Queen, Rick Radatovich, Bob Blyman, Jim DeBastiani, Barbara DeBastiani, Mary Caliguire, Christina Caligiure, Megan McClure, Payton Richie, Nicholas Robino, Lauren Robino, Nolan Vickers, Julie Lums, Keli Vale, Nick Bucci, Christina Bireley, Joanna Bireley, Laura Walter.

Recognition

- Francesca Caliguire and Nicholas Robino (SDSA) – First place Delaware Music Educator Association's Young Composer Competition

Public Comments

- Rick Radatovich spoke to the board about the district using a referendum as a last resort and should be charting a different course for financial stability. The district needs to rebuild the trust of the public with finances.
- Christina Bireley spoke to the board regarding her son and a volunteer coaching position with the Unified basketball team. He was denied this position due to his age being under 21. She feels not being able to volunteer his time as a coach is a disservice and is asking for board reconsideration.

New Business

School Choice Applications 2025-2026 (September 2025)

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mr. Cathell, motioned to accept 2025-2026 school choice applicants (September 2025) as presented by Dr. Owens. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

2025-2026 Administrative Organizational Plan

Dr. Parsons, seconded by Mrs. West-Werner, motioned to approve the 2025-2026 Administrative Organizational Plan as presented by Dr. Owens. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Indian River School District Survey

Ms. Taylor and Dr. Owens shared with the Board the upcoming district wide surveys they are working on to distribute to staff, parents, and community.

FY '26 Salary Scales for Constables, Investigators, Student Advisors

Dr. Parsons, seconded by Mr. Cathell, motioned to table the FY '26 Salary Scales for constables, investigators, student advisors. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

GW Carver Front Sign Replacement

Mrs. Taylor, seconded by Mrs. Briggs, motioned to table the GW Carver Front Sign Replacement for \$30,400 as presented by Mr. Dooley. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Sussex Central High School Stairwell 5 Wall Logo

Mrs. West-Werner, seconded by Mrs. Taylor, motioned to approve option #3 design for the Sussex Central High School Wall Logo and to consider Sussex Central High School students ability to do the rendering themselves within an acceptable time frame. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Sussex Central High School Change Order Notifications

Dr. Parsons, seconded by Mrs. Kline, motioned that change order(s) thresholds for the remainder of the project over \$25,000 come to the superintendent and board president for review. The motion failed (5-3-1).

For the motion: Mrs. Briggs, Mr. Cathell, Mrs. Kline, Dr. Parsons, Mr. Steele

Against the motion: Mr. Peden, Ms. Taylor, Mrs. Wright

Abstained: Mrs. West Werner

Mrs. Wright, seconded by Mrs. Taylor, motioned that change orders under \$100,000 (for contractors) stay in the threshold of superintendent approval. If the change order(s) is under the amount of \$100,000 and is an additional request from the school/owner (not a contractor request) needs to come to the board for review. The motion passed (8-1-0).

For the motion: Mrs. Briggs, Mr. Cathell, Mrs. Kline, Dr. Parsons, Mr. Steele, Ms. Taylor, Mrs. West Werner.

Mrs. Wright

Against the motion: Mr. Peden

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mrs. Taylor, motioned to approve the district 15 Sussex Central High School Change Orders as presented by Mr. Dooley and Mr. Blyman totaling \$287,344.83. The motion passed (9-0).

Old Business

Major Capital Planning

Dr. Owens shared with the Board the final construction updates at the new Sussex Central High School.

Committee Reports

Buildings and Grounds

Mrs. Wright reviewed the minutes from the September 8, 2025 meeting.

Comprehensive School Safety

Mr. Cathell thanked the staff and students at both high schools who made the first few weeks of schools using the weapons detection system a success.

Finance

Mr. Peden reviewed minutes from the September 8, 2025 meeting.

Curriculum

Both Dr. Jerns and Mrs. Dorman shared with the Board the 2024-2025 Academic Progress and Next Steps presentation.

DSBA Board of Directors

Mrs. Kline shared with the Board the meeting minutes from the DSBA Board of Directors meeting on September 3, 2025. The next meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2025.

DSBA Legislative

No report.

Special Education Committee

No report.

Policy

Mrs. Taylor reviewed the minutes from the September 8, 2025 meeting.

Mrs. Taylor shared the following policies for first readings: GCBD.1 Paid Leave for Birth or Adoption of a Child, JE Student Attendance, JF Students Rights and JE Attendance Policy.

IREA Representative

Ms. Blair Caitlin Brown spoke to the Board and shared that she sat on the CBOC applicant review committee. She stressed the importance of IREA being informed of the future financial planning for the district.

Superintendents Report

Dr. Owens shared with the Board the Superintendent monthly activities.

Financial Summaries for month ending August 31, 2025

Mr. Parker reviewed the financial summaries, major and minor capital improvement financials for the month ending August 31, 2025.

Mrs. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Peden, motioned to accept the financial summaries for the month ending August 31, 2025. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Detail Information for month ending August 31, 2025

Mr. Cathell, seconded by Mr. Peden, motioned to approve the Detail Information for the month ending August 31, 2025 as presented by Mr. Parker. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Major Capital Improvements for month ending August 31, 2025

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mrs. Taylor, motioned to approve the Major Capital Improvements for the month ending August 31, 2025 as presented by Mr. Parker. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Minor Capital Improvements for month ending August 31, 2025

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mrs. West Werner, motioned to approve the Minor Capital Improvements for the month ending August 31, 2025 as presented by Mr. Parker. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

FY 2026 Preliminary Budgets – Indian River School District and Howard T. Ennis

Mrs. Wright, seconded by Mrs. Taylor, motioned to table the FY 2026 Preliminary Budgets for Indian River School District and Howard T. Ennis. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Field Trip Requests

Mr. Peden, seconded by Mrs. West-Werner, motioned to approve the following field trips as presented by Dr. Owens. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

- Overnight trip by Sussex Central High School FFA on September 24-25, 2025 to Camp Barnes, DE.
- Overnight trip by Indian River High School Baseball on March 13-16, 2026 to Myrtle Beach, SC.
- Sunday trip by Indian River High School Band on September 28, 2025 to Allentown, PA.

Use of Facility

Dr. Parsons, seconded by Mrs. Kline, motioned to approve the use of Sussex Central High School Parking lot on Sunday, October 26, 2025 by United Church. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Personnel Agenda for September 22, 2025

Mr. Neal, seconded by Mrs. Wright, motioned to approve the Personnel Agenda for September 22, 2025 excluding items #1 -4. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Personnel Addendum for September 22, 2025

Mr. Cathell, seconded by Mrs. Briggs, motioned to approve the Personnel Addendum for September 22, 2025 as presented. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Contractual Agenda for September 22, 2025

Mrs. Kline, seconded by Mrs. Taylor, motioned to approve the Personnel Contractual Agenda for September 22, 2025 as presented. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Notification of Retirements

Notification of retirements was presented to the Board.

Public Comments

No comments.

Adjournment

Mrs. West Werner, seconded by Mrs. Kline, motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 pm. The motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark L. Steele
President
Board of Education
Indian River School District

Jay F. Owens, Jr.
Superintendent
Board of Education
Indian River School District

MLS/JFO:jmt