

NORTHWEST INDIANA SPECIAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE
2150 W. 97th PLACE
CROWN POINT, IN. 46307
January 14, 2026

Executive Session: The Board of Managers met in executive session at 5:30 p.m. and discussed items related to IC 5-14-1.5-6.1.

REORGANIZATION

1. Mrs. Horn called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Dr. Kleefisch took Roll Call in the absence of Board Secretary, Frank Porras. The following members were recorded as present:
Mr. Kevin Music for Lake Station, Mrs. Louise Neese for Lake Ridge, Dr. Nathan Kleefisch for Tri-Creek and Mrs. Erica Smith-Gomez for Highland. There was no representative for Hanover, River Forest or Hobart.
3. Annually, the Board of Managers must take the Indiana Oath of Members. Ms. Peyton Gilmore, NISEC Notary, completed the Oath of Officers with the Board Members who were present at the meeting. Members not present will take the Oath at the Board of Managers meeting on February 18, 2026.
4. The Board of Managers considered the election of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Mrs. Horn asked for nominations for President of NISEC Board of Managers. Dr. Kleefisch motioned to nominate Mrs. Erica Smith-Gomez for President. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese and passed unanimously. Mrs. Horn then turned the meeting over to Mrs. Smith-Gomez. Mrs. Smith-Gomez presented a slate of officers to the Board which included Mrs. Tara Beilke for Vice President, Mr. Frank Porras for Secretary, Ms. Peyton Gilmore, NISEC's CFO, for Treasurer and Mrs. Kathy Cain, NISEC's Assistant Director, for Deputy Treasurer. There were no other nominations. Dr. Kleefisch made a motion to approve the slate of officers presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez and passed unanimously.

BOARD OF FINANCE

1. Mrs. Horn opened the Board of Finance Meeting for the purpose of electing the current designated officers of the Board of Managers to act in the same capacity as the Board of Finance for the current year. Mrs. Horn recommended the Board approve the entire Board of Managers as officers and Ms. Gilmore, NISEC's CFO, as Treasurer and Mrs. Cain, NISEC's Assistant Director, as Deputy Treasurer for the Board of Finance. Dr. Kleefisch moved for approval of the Board of Finance and Officers with NISEC's CFO, Ms. Gilmore, as Treasurer and NISEC's Assistant Director, Mrs. Cain, as Deputy Treasurer, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.
2. Ms. Gilmore presented the Annual Interest Report for 2025. There were no questions or discussion.
3. The Board of Finance meeting was adjourned.

GENERAL MEETING OF THE BOARD

1. Mrs. Smith-Gomez called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.
2. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for comments or questions on agenda items from the audience. There were none.
3. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for any additions or deletions to the December 10, 2025 minutes. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.

4. Ms. Gilmore recommended Board approval of the monthly financial reports dated December 31, 2025. Mr. Music moved for Board approval of the monthly financial report, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese and passed unanimously.
5. Ms. Gilmore requested Board approval of Resolution #26-01: To Transfer Amounts from the Education Fund to the Operations Fund for December 2025. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of Resolution #26-01, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.
6. Mrs. Horn shared the tentative December 1, 2025 count compared to December 1, 2024 count and discussed the funding decrease for each disability category. Mrs. Horn said “Even though there was a decrease in funding amounts for each disability category, we had a large increase in student count for the severe disability category which resulted in an overall increase in funding”. There were no questions or further discussion.
7. Ms. Gilmore reported on the ESCRFT Renewal for the 2026 fiscal year. She discussed that NISEC’s renewal cost decreased by 1% from the previous year. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the ESCRFT Renewal for the 2026 fiscal year, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese and passed unanimously.
8. Mrs. Horn requested Board approval of the Therapeds service contract agreement, as presented. Mr. Music moved for Board approval of the service contract agreement between the NISEC and Therapeds. This motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese passed unanimously.
9. Mrs. Horn presented the agreement between Hoosier School Services, LLC and the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative. Mrs. Horn shared the request for proposal was approved at the December 2025 board meeting. Mrs. Horn said the agreement presented outlines the services provided by Hoosier School Services, LLC.
10. Ms. Gilmore shared the fiscal year 2026 IDEA Part B (Section 611) mandatory CCEIS grant for the Lake Station Community School Corporation. Ms. Gilmore said Dr. Rebecca Harkema, District Director for Lake Station Community School Corporation, is working with select staff to monitor the status of special education disability counts per pupil enrollment outlined in the grant.

11. **Director’s Report:**

Eagle Park activities during the month of December

Mrs. Horn shared the activities that occurred during the month of December at Eagle Park Community School. These activities included themed dress up days and visits from both the Grinch and Santa/Mrs. Claus.

Upcoming Professional Development

Mrs. Horn shared information regarding upcoming professional development.

Eagle Park Construction Update

Mrs. Horn updated the Board of Managers on the construction project that occurred during Winter Break at Eagle Park Community School.

Reminder for the February board of managers meeting date change

Mrs. Horn reminded the Board of Managers about the meeting date change for the February board meeting. The meeting will now be held on Wednesday, February 18, 2026.

12. **Personnel:**

Mrs. Horn recommended approval to the following personnel actions:

A. Retirements

Certified

Julie Alessia, Life Skills Teacher at Oak Hill Elementary, effective June 1, 2026.

Classified

Mira Grubnic, Paraprofessional at Longfellow Elementary, effective June 2, 2026.

B. Resignations

Classified

Irene Crouch, Paraprofessional at Highland Middle School, effective January 9, 2026.

Shanice Daviston, Paraprofessional at Highland Middle School, effective January 2, 2026.

Theresa Miller, Paraprofessional at Evans Elementary School, effective December 17, 2025.

Magdalena Sanchez, Substitute Teacher at Evans Elementary School, effective December 15, 2025.

Alison Wajvoda, Paraprofessional at Lowell Middle School, effective December 16, 2025.

C. Terminations

Maximina Huizar, Paraprofessional candidate for Highland High School. Candidate did not meet all hiring requirements, effective December 3, 2025.

D. Appointments

Classified

Hailey Brady, Paraprofessional at Lowell Middle School, effective January 14, 2026.

Jessica Cruse, Substitute Paraprofessional at Joan Martin Elementary School, effective January 5, 2026.

Madeline Cruz, Paraprofessional at The Early Learning Center at George Earle, effective January 12, 2026.

Maria Mendoza, Paraprofessional at Johnston Elementary, effective September 23, 2025.

Alivia Pinon, Paraprofessional at Eagle Park Community School, effective January 5, 2026.

Airyal Rangel, Paraprofessional at River Forest Middle School, effective January 12, 2026.

Tsi-Tsi-Ki Rangel, Paraprofessional at Joan Martin Elementary, effective December 10, 2025.

Meryl Smelko, Paraprofessional at Highland High School, effective September 22, 2025.

Cali Smith, Substitute Teacher at Jane Ball Elementary, effective January 13, 2026.

Registered

Kelsey Shaw, Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant in Hanover, effective January 6, 2026.

E. Leave of Absence

None at this time.

F. Conference Leave

None at this time.

G. Independent Contracts

None at this time.

H. Other

Danielle Keilman, Change in position from Paraprofessional to Long Term Teacher Substitute/Behavior Support Specialist, effective August 11, 2025.

Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the Personnel Report, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.

13. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for comments or questions from the Board.

The Board members thanked Mrs. Horn, Mrs. Cain and Ms. Gilmore for the special treats for appreciation month. Mrs. Horn said she always appreciates the support NISEC receives from the Board.

14. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for comments or questions from the Audience.

There were none.

15. Dr. Kleefisch moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.