

Freeburg Elementary School
Monday, February 23, 2026
7:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Board of Education for Freeburg Community Consolidated School District No. 70 was held on Monday, February 23, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria at Freeburg Elementary School.

Call to Order

Mrs. Trout called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call of the members.

Roll Call

In addition to Mrs. Trout, board members Ed Scheibel, Bill May, Ben Mueth, Erin Shook, Ben Howes, and Nicole Schilling (7:02) were in attendance. Also in attendance were Dr. Mark Bearley, Superintendent and Mark Janssen, Financial Officer and Recording Secretary. Principal Stacey Sommerfield and Director of Student Services Amanda Hargan were also present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Board and public stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Visitors

Visitors to the meeting included district staff Sarah Gagen, Stephanie Ketchum, Jim Janssen, Jennifer Hopfinger, Amanda Braun, Cory Lawrence, and Chelsi Lloyd. Also in attendance were David Goff, Marie Goff, Autumn Goff, Jenny Patterson, Nathan Patterson, Ara Patterson, and Serafina Patterson. Hans Carpenter of the Freeburg Tribune was also present.

Recognition

Band teacher Stephanie Ketchum informed the Board that she recently attended the ILMEA Music Conference, where she participated in professional development opportunities. She also shared that two students, Autumn Goff and Ara Patterson, were selected to participate in the Junior High All-State Band Festival. The students performed under the direction of a guest conductor and represented the District exceptionally well.

Kindergarten teacher Sarah Gagen was nominated for and received the "Those Who Excel" teaching award. Mrs. Gagen is a highly deserving recipient, recognized for her consistent dedication and commitment to students. This marks the District's first recipient of this honor in nearly 20 years.

Consent Agenda

Moved: Ed Scheibel

Seconded: Ben Mueth

A MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, AS PRESENTED (SEE ADDENDA).

- MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 26, 2026 REGULAR BOARD MEETING, JANUARY 26, 2026 BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE MEETING, AND THE FEBRUARY 9, 2026 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
- INVESTMENT SUMMARY THROUGH FEBRUARY 20, 2026
- BUDGET SUMMARY THROUGH JANUARY 31, 2026

Upon a voice vote, Motion Carried, 7-aye, 0-nay.

Approval of the Bills

Moved: Erin Shook

Seconded: Nicki Schilling

A MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROVE THE BILLS, AS PRESENTED (SEE ADDENDA).

AYES: Scheibel, May, Mueth, Shook, Howes, Schilling, Trout

Motion Carried

Committee Updates

Petitions/Communications

There were three Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests received during this reporting period. The first request sought personnel-related information. The second request, submitted by SmartProcure, requested purchasing information. The third request, submitted by Sunlight Access, sought purchasing information related to educational subscriptions. All requests were fulfilled within the required five-day response timeframe.

Public Participation

The Board welcomed the public to the meeting.

Teachers' Report

The fifth-grade teachers provided the Board with an update on current classroom activities and highlighted several upcoming events and instructional initiatives.

Superintendent's Report

Enrollment and Suspension Report

Dr. Bearley reported that current district enrollment stands at 716 students, compared to 715 students last month. He also reviewed the updated suspension data with the Board.

Discussion of Tuition Policy for Children of Staff Members

Dr. Bearley shared with the Board that several teachers approached him regarding a possible Board policy change that would allow children of staff members to attend the District tuition-free. Dr. Bearley noted there are potential benefits, including assisting with recruitment of prospective staff. He stated this could serve as an incentive for individuals considering employment with the District. However, he also explained that the current tuition rate to educate one student in the District is \$11,789. This figure is determined through the annual audit and reflects the calculated

cost of educating one student. He further noted that the cost could be higher if a student required special education services. Dr. Bearley sought to gauge the Board's interest in pursuing the matter. Following discussion, the Board requested additional information, including an estimate of the potential number of students staff members might seek to enroll under such a policy.

Establish Date for Graduation

Dr. Bearley stated he would like to set Graduation for May 19, 2026 at 7 pm. Board members agreed.

Financial Projections

Mr. Janssen reviewed a five-year financial projection report prepared using over twenty years of historical data. The projections focus on the district's three primary operating funds: Education, Operations & Maintenance, and Transportation. Overall, revenues and expenditures have remained closely aligned, and the Education Fund is projected to maintain a healthy balance with small operating surpluses in the coming years. The Operations & Maintenance and Transportation Funds are expected to experience periodic deficits, largely due to maintenance timing and scheduled bus replacements, but will continue to be closely monitored. At the conclusion of the projection period, the district is expected to maintain approximately \$2.59 million in combined reserves, reflecting a stable financial position. The full report is available in the addenda.

Elementary School Principal's Report

Grade-level teams have been actively preparing for the upcoming Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). Each grade level has developed student incentive plans designed to encourage effort, focus, and academic achievement during the testing window.

The Student Council is sponsoring a "Back the Bus – Go for Gold" food drive. District staff launched the campaign with an impressive contribution of more than 2,000 pounds of donated items.

Upcoming Events

- End of Quarter 3: Friday, March 6
- IAR Testing: March 17, 18, 19, and March 23, 24, 25

Primary Center Principal's Report

The District is currently scheduling appointments for Pre-K Screening, which will be held on April 20.

Kindergarten registration will take place earlier this year to allow the District additional time to effectively plan and prepare for incoming students.

The "Bike for Books" program, sponsored by the Illinois Masonic Assistance Program, will be implemented this spring. For each book a student reads, his or her name will be entered into a drawing for the opportunity to win a free bicycle. The winning student will be selected in April.

Upcoming Events

- March 2–6: Read Across America Week. March 2 marks Dr. Seuss’s birthday, and the Kindergarten classes will participate in themed activities throughout the week.
- March 10: Family Reading Night, 6:00–7:30 p.m. The theme for this year’s event is “Magic.”
- Book Fair at the Primary Center – March 5th – 10th.

Director of Student Services Update

Special Education / 504

Spring is a busy season for Special Education, as staff meet with families to review student progress and plan for the upcoming school year. Collaboration with the high school is underway to ensure a smooth transition for eighth-grade students entering their freshman year. Students will also participate in two upcoming events: the Inclusion Carnival at Red Bud High School on April 9 and the ACE Olympics at Columbia High School on April 17.

MTSS / Response to Intervention

The District’s Anxiety Night and Mental Health Fair were well attended and generated strong parent feedback. Survey results indicate interest in additional information on ADHD and homework support, and a follow-up parent event is being planned. Staff continue to work with families on topics such as student behavior and screen time, and positive progress has been noted.

District Update

Dr. Bearley reported that the Primary Center playground, approved by the Board last month, is scheduled to arrive on March 23. Installation is expected to take place shortly thereafter.

He shared that Miles of Smiles provided free dental services to students at the Elementary School today and will be at the Primary Center tomorrow.

Dr. Bearley informed the Board that the Regional Office of Education and the State Fire Marshal conducted building inspections last week. Both agencies were complimentary of the condition of the facilities. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Havel and Mr. Kennedy for their efforts in maintaining compliance and ensuring the buildings are well maintained.

Dr. Bearley also thanked the principals for organizing the Staff Olympics as a morale-boosting event during the month of February.

Finally, he noted that tomorrow will be “Pink for Jozie” in recognition of her birthday.

Old Business

New Business

Moved: Ben Mueth

Seconded: Erin Shook

A MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROVE THE 2026-2027 DISTRICT CALENDAR, AS PRESENTED (SEE ADDENDA).

Moved: Erin Shook

Seconded: Ben Mueth

There being no further business to come before this body, **A MOTION WAS MADE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:56 P.M.**

Upon a voice vote, Motion Carried, 7-aye, 0-nay.

Amber Trout, President
Board of Education, Dist. #70

Erin Shook, Secretary
Board of Education, Dist. # 70