

MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie Ave., Flossmoor

April 7, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 a.m.

In attendance for all or part of the meeting were:

Members

Dr. Jennifer Norrell, Superintendent
Dr. Ariana Leonard, Board Member
Mr. Gerald Pauling, Board President
Mr. Chris Riedel, Board Finance Chair

Participants

Dr. Jennifer Norrell, Superintendent
Dr. Lawrence Cook, CSBO
Mr. Jim Patterson, Director of Operations & Maintenance

A representative from the HF Chronicle and community members Ms. Karstrom and Ms. Larocca were also in attendance.

Approval of Minutes. The February 3, 2026 Finance Committee meeting minutes stand approved as presented.

Monthly Financials

Dr. Cook presented a Financial Snapshot through March 25, 2026 and reported the following:

All Funds:

- As of March 25, 2026
- Fund balance - \$56.9M
- Total revenues received: \$54.2M
- Total expenditures over 9 months: \$56.1M
- Average monthly expenditures: \$6.2M
- 9.1 Months Reserves

Operating Funds:

- As of March 25, 2026
- Fund balance - \$54.3M
- Total revenues received: \$51.8M
- Total expenditures over 9 months: \$47.8M
- Average monthly expenditures: \$5.3M
- 10.2 Months Reserves

Percentage of Budgeted Revenues Received

- Property tax collection is at 57%, down 37% from last fiscal
- year. Revenues are down due to property tax bills going out late this year. Dr. Cook noted fund balances and reserves will increase once all monies are received.
- Approximately \$16.6 million in revenue
- Other State Revenue down 16%, due to \$2million NetZero grant received at the beginning of FY2025. The NetZero grant was related to the Science building project.
- Federal Revenue, up 5%; only budget \$1.14million; this is a small amount to overall revenue; any overage is magnified; we received more in Special Ed – Orphanage. Dr. Cook noted a three-year trend can be seen as more funds have been received than originally anticipated.

Percentage of Budgeted Expenditures Spent

- May see savings in salaries and benefits. Currently tracking lower in this area showing a 6% decrease of what was budgeted last year.
- Favorable spending trends in supplies, capitalized purchases/services, tuition, other objects, and equipment can be seen.
 - Other objects the item that exists in debt services (long term debt). Equipment because we closed coffers should not increase much beyond the 57%.
 - Chris asked for clarification on the budget expectations for equipment. Dr. Cook responded that projections were developed in collaboration with Dr. Norrell, with an emphasis on reducing line items based on identified needs during departmental meetings.
 - Dr. Norrell added that tuition expenditures are being reviewed in collaboration with the Student Services Department and noted that there are opportunities for improvement in that area.
 - Possible overage for purchased services due to professional training of staff this year. As of March 25, 2026 Professional is at 95% reported expenditure. In addition the district's contract with Kaplan has been paid out of this year's budget \$265,000 to secure a spot for next year and to ensure that Kaplan staffed property for next year. Dr. Norrell added that this amount will reduce next year as substantial training of staff has been completed.

Donations

None

Comments

Ms. Larocca raised questions regarding reserve levels, noting increases from 6.3 to 10.2 months for expenses and from 7.3 to 9.1 months in the operating fund, and requested clarification on these changes. She expressed concern about the lack of agenda attachments, stating it limits the ability to review information and ask informed questions, and referenced that not providing board packet documents to the public in advance does not align with the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Larocca also inquired about residency enforcement, asking whether the district continues to use a residency firm and whether additional resources will be allocated, stating there may not be enough residency officers to investigate potential non-residents. She expressed concern about the impact of non-resident students on district resources and outcomes. Mr. Pauling asked for clarification regarding her statement about a potential Open Meetings Act violation. Ms. Larocca responded that not providing the same materials to the public as those given to the board could constitute a violation. Mr. Pauling stated that this does not violate the Open Meetings Act, clarifying that OMA requires a posted agenda that lists all items to be discussed, which had been provided. Ms. Larocca asked about the change in practice regarding document availability. Dr. Norrell explained that the district is transitioning to a new board management system that will allow attachments to be accessible via live links once presented to the committee or board, improving access to information. Mr. Pauling added that information can be provided upon request and reiterated that the district is not in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Karstrom noted that Flossmoor District 161 is losing a superintendent and encouraged the district to explore opportunities for stronger collaboration with feeder districts 161 and 153, to improve curriculum alignment and better prepare students for success at HF. She emphasized the need for greater consistency in student preparedness and suggested exploring shared resources and strategies to support smoother student transitions. Ms. Karstrom also raised

concerns regarding residency, requesting data on residency figures at semester break and the number of student enrollments. She stated that community members want transparency in these numbers, emphasizing that taxpayers expect responsible stewardship of resources and expressed concern about non-resident students attending the school. Mr. Pauling responded that the board shares these concerns, noting that board members are also taxpayers. He added that the board is in agreement regarding the importance of articulation and stated that Dr. Norrell is spending significant time dedicated to these efforts. Mr. Riedel stated that comments were appreciated and that efforts will be made to provide information when they can.

Old Business

Contract Renewal – Transportation

The District will soon complete the required second year of the transportation contract, with the third year being optional. Kickert, now First Student, has agreed to contract language reflecting a 2.7% rate increase. Historical context was provided by Dr. Cook noting that in 2022–2023, Kickert initially requested an 11% increase for the 2023–2024 school year, which was subsequently reduced to 8.5%. The Board later directed that the contract be put out to bid, resulting in an 8% decrease in the first year and a 3% increase in the second year, with subsequent years structured for increases equal to the lesser of 5% or CPI. Dr. Cook further noted that any extension of the contract must be mutually agreed upon by both parties; otherwise, the agreement will expire and a new bid process will be required. Committee discussion included questions about future market conditions, potential increases in transportation costs across other districts, and whether the contract allows for negotiation within the optional renewal terms. It was clarified that both parties must agree to renewal terms, and if no agreement is reached, the contract would return to the bidding process. Additional discussion addressed service quality improvements over the past two years and prior concerns related to shared transportation routes with other districts. The committee requested that Dr. Cook gather information on transportation bids from other school districts and prepare for potential future cost increases. The importance of understanding what other districts are paying was emphasized. Dr. Cook noted that transportation service quality has improved overall. This item will be on the April 21, 2026 board agenda for approval.

Safety & Security Update

Dr. Norrell stated that additional details regarding safety and security will be discussed in closed session with the full Board. She reported that the audit report has been returned and that she will meet with the safety and security lead and Mr. Patterson to review the draft before finalizing and sharing it with the Board. Dr. Norrell also announced the launch of an interim improvement plan starting today, noting that new safety and security officers have begun in their permanent positions and are now visible on a daily basis in new uniforms identifying them as security. She added that additional Dean's Assistants have also started today based on staff input that addressed additional areas in need of security. Two full days of training was conducted and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), approximately 11 pages in length, have been developed and implemented. Mr. Pauling expressed appreciation to Dr. Norrell and Dr. Alexander for their team training efforts, noting he had the opportunity to meet both new and existing security staff during the training and described it as a positive experience. Mr. Riedel added that Dr. Norrell should be commended for her efforts in bringing these initiatives together so quickly.

New Business:

FY27 Budget Plan Process

Dr. Norrell stated that, in light of the safety and security audit, the district anticipates additional expenses, including potential facility-related needs. She explained that, as a result, they are focused on identifying strategies to grow the fund balance. Dr. Norrell noted that a meeting with Dr. Cook, Dr. Grossi, Mr. Horton, and herself is scheduled, during which they plan to move forward with a zero-based budgeting model as a means to strengthen the fund balance. She stated that the goal is to present a tentative zero-based budget to the Board by late June or early July, with the final budget to be presented in August. Dr. Norrell added that the process will include collaboration with Dr. Cook, Mr. Horton and Dr. Grossi. Mr. Riedel inquired about the budget timeline and whether there would be any issues meeting it, to which Dr. Norrell responded that there would not be. Mr. Riedel expressed support for the zero-based budgeting approach, noting its effectiveness, and asked whether it aligns with prior comments regarding eliminating certain line items. Dr. Norrell confirmed that it does. Dr. Leonard asked whether purchased services would remain consistent moving forward. Dr. Norrell responded affirmatively, noting that they want to ensure the district continues moving in the right direction in alignment with the district's strategic plan and Board goals.

HB4416 Update

Dr. Cook provided an update on House Bill 4416, noting that the House Bill is currently on the table and the Bill could be called for a floor vote at any time between then and the House's third reading deadline of Friday, April 17th. He explained that the legislation would allow non-12-month employees to receive compensation opportunities over the summer for approximately 8 to 10 weeks. If approved, the bill would take effect in June 1, 2026 and would allow eligible non-full-time employees to apply for unemployment benefits during the two-week winter break and summer break periods. Dr. Cook reported that, based on approximately 66 current employees, the projected cost to the district could range from \$225,000 to \$370,000 over the summer, compared to no current cost under existing practice. Mr. Riedel noted that state agency estimates suggest the legislation could cost school districts statewide between \$200 million and \$400 million and emphasized the importance of monitoring the potential impact of this Bill. He thanked Dr. Cook for the information. Dr. Cook added that if the bill passes, the district will need to account for additional FTE-related costs in the budget and identify corresponding savings. He further stressed that, if enacted, this requirement would be mandatory rather than optional for the district.

Auditorium Microphone

Mr. Patterson provided rationale for the purchase of a wireless microphone system for use in the Auditorium. He noted this has been budgeted and falls under the technology procurement with the lowest bid at \$157,033.76 from JRLX out of Tinley Park. Mr. Patterson added that the system requirements were developed in coordination with Ms. Smith and Mr. Gould from the theater department. The team reviewed needs, consulted with the manufacturer and evaluated bids from multiple vendors. Mr. Patterson noted that the existing system was installed in 2016 and has experienced significant wear and tear due to frequent student use, including repeated handling and repairs. The expected lifespan of the system is approximately 10 years, and the current equipment is considered beyond its optimal service life. It was further noted that the proposed purchase represents a long-term investment in updated equipment to support student performances. This item will be on the April 21, 2026 board agenda for approval.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 a.m.