**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**
Minutes of the Northern Local Schools Board of Education
Regular Meeting – April 15, 2026

The Northern Local Schools Board of Education met in regular session in the Somerset Elementary Library.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

**Call to Order -** President Dale DeRolph called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Roll Call** – Treasurer Jennie Clifton called the roll:

| Members Present: | Members Absent: |
|---|---|
| Dale DeRolph | |
| Levi Dupler | |
| Patrick Hogan | |
| Steve Lemon | |
| David Weals | |

**Student Presentation –** Three 5th grade students from Somerset Elementary were introduced by Ms. Gibson. Ms. Gibson explained that the 5th grade students have been learning about volume, and that each would be presenting a slideshow titled "My Town" as well as showing a diorama that they constructed that went with their presentation. Each student presented the name of their town, the structures and buildings that their town contained, such as restaurants, stores, and public service buildings, along with the volume of each building. Upon the conclusion of their presentation, Mr. DeRolph thanked the students for sharing their project with the Board and acknowledged their efforts.

**Recognition of Visitors and Public Participation** – The Board of Education recognized and welcomed several visitors in attendance, specifically Ms. Jessica Phillips, Mr. Jason Barrera, and Mr. John Ulmer, all whom signed in and requested to speak during the public participation.

Ms. Jessica Phillips addressed the Board to voice her concerns regarding Wellness Policy 8510, the USDA's National School Lunch Program, and the Ohio Public Records Act. Ms. Phillips stated that she has attempted to engage with the administration regarding the Federally mandated Wellness Policy and its annual requirements since August of 2025. She stated that her inquiries were met with significant delays and inaccurate information and that she wished to submit a formal complaint and supporting evidence. Ms. Phillips stated there were four critical failures, including; Federal Non-Compliance, Lack of Transparency, Communication Breakdown, and Administrative Inaccuracy. Ms. Phillips stated that the administration's primary response to her inquiries have been to suggest informal, in-person meetings, which she has declined in favor of written accountability and that a meeting is not a substitute for missing information. Ms. Phillips also stated that in October 2025, the District announced that former Northern Local Schools Treasurer Elizabeth Clark-McCarthy had been indicted for theft in office and telecommunications fraud and that the District claimed to have new financial procedures and a commitment to stewardship, but asked that if that is true, why is the administration ignoring basic transparency laws, and that the Board is the supervisor of both the superintendent and treasurer. Ms. Phillips continued by stating that the administration is risking federal funding by ignoring mandated wellness compliance and that the district is in this financial mess because of a lack of Board oversight and administrative failure. Ms. Phillips concluded by presenting the treasurer with a full copy of her statement and email chain.

Mr. Jason Barrera addressed the Board stating that he is not speaking to be confrontational and that he takes great pride in our District. Mr. Barrera stated that as a coach, it is very difficult for him to speak out against another coach, and asked that when a decision is made to act on Coach Mallarnee's new contract, that there is an opportunity for athletes to speak, and that action is taken separately so that there is a record of how each Board member votes.

Mr. John Ulmer addressed the Board to speak about the handling of extended day contracts for coaches for next school year. Mr. Ulmer felt that each of the coaches and band advisor were blindsided with an approximate

$8,000 loss of income by having their extended days contracts taken away. Mr. Ulmer stated that he knew that some of the coaches impacted were immediately looking for new jobs and considering relocating their families for what equals about $40,000 per year in estimated savings to the district, which is not a lot in the overall budget. Mr. Ulmer stated that the district is using the wrong approach in justifying this decision by using the logic that this is bringing contracts in-line with other area districts and we should be looking more at the standard of coaching and accomplishments for each coach and advisor and accounting for what they have done for the students and community. Mr. Ulmer stated that the fan support, community support, and ticket sales may suffer for this decision.

Mr. Ulmer then questioned the District's decision to not grant Mr. Bendle's request at the end of last school year for retire-rehire stating that he felt the decision was punishment due to Mr. Bendle's mistake of falling asleep at his desk, which everyone has done at some point, and that Mr. Bendle's intentions were to come to work sick and not create an additional expense for the district by calling a substitute. Mr. Ulmer stated that the estimated $20,000 per year savings that could have been realized by allowing this retire-rehire could have been applied to help cover the coaches extended day contract cost.

**Recommendation for Approval** – Mr. Dupler moved to approve the following meeting minutes:

1. March 18, 2026

Mr. Lemon seconded the motion.
Roll call: Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. DeRolph, aye.
Motion carried 5-0.

**Mid-East Vocational School Report** – Mr. Hogan provided a brief overview of his Mid-East Board report that was sent earlier to the Board members. He highlighted purchases of a new bus and new tractor with a loader for the CDL credentialing program, which continues to grow. He also stated that the new first responders' program along with the health sciences, skilled trades, cosmetology, and skilled services programs are continuing to see increased enrollments and they are looking into implementing a new spa services program as well. Mr. Hogan stated that Mid-East was happy that the Vo-Ag partnership with Northern Local was complete and that they are looking at other ways to better serve our students.

**Superintendent's Report** – Mrs. Gussler informed the Board of a few dates that she will be out of the office in May, and reminded them that graduation is Sunday, May 17th at 6 p.m. She also reviewed the dates of upcoming events such as the High School Drama Club Spring Play, Wellness Committee Meeting, and Staff Appreciation Week. Mrs. Gussler informed the Board that Coach Coleman is beginning to prepare a proposal and get costs for a potential Spring Break trip out of state for the baseball team next year, and once that is ready it will be presented to the Board for consideration. Mrs. Gussler also stated that the high school and middle school principals, along with the Curriculum Director, have been working to compile a reading list for grades 6-12 which will be published on the district website for parents to be able to review. She also reminded the Board that the Financial Correction Plan will be presented for approval tonight and that she and Mrs. Clifton have been holding insurance meetings with all buildings and staff to provide education on the differences between the traditional PPO plan and the High-Deductible Health plan that was implemented as an option last year.

## Business and Finance

**Treasurer's Report** – Mrs. Clifton presented the Board with the monthly financial reports. She stated that 75% of the fiscal year is completed and our current general fund expenditures are at 72.6% of the total. Interest earnings for all funds for the fiscal year have reached $273,202.99.

The unencumbered permanent improvement fund balance is $789,427.08 of which $148,464.50 are earmarked donations for the football turf replacement and $40,000 is earmarked for other athletic facility improvements.

Mrs. Clifton reported that the first half tax settlement from Licking County was received and is reflected in the March numbers presented, but that the Perry and Fairfield County settlements were not received until April 1st. She also expects the Homestead and Rollback settlements to come in within the next few weeks.

Mrs. Clifton shared that she and Mrs. Gussler met with Kevin Howell with Wichert Insurance on April 9th to review the district's upcoming property and liability insurance renewal however, the renewal proposal was not yet ready from our current carrier, EMC. She also stated that she will be researching other options for property and liability insurance such as the Ohio School Plan and Schools-Oh Risk Sharing Authority (SORSA), which are both school insurance consortium programs, for potential cost-savings.

Mrs. Clifton provided an update on the turf replacement project, which has received $278,464.50 in donations as of April 15th. The Board will be asked to approve the recommendation to accept the proposal from FieldTurf this evening, with an estimated total project budget of $450,000. This includes an 8-year agreement for field maintenance and G-Max testing and an allowance of $11,415.12 for contingencies in the case nailer boards require replacement or drainage issues are uncovered. Work will begin this summer and the project should be completed in 3-4 weeks. This project will mostly be funded by the donations received and the permanent improvement fund, with only the annual maintenance agreement costs being paid from the general fund.

Mrs. Clifton also provided an update on the soccer/track lighting project, which has received a pledge of $150,000 in donations to be received over three years. The Board will be asked to approve the recommendation to accept the proposal from Jess Howard Electric this evening, with an estimated total project budget of $232,000. Work will begin this summer and the project should be completed in 1-2 weeks. This project will fully be funded by the donations received and the permanent improvement fund.

Mrs. Clifton also reported that there has been another design meeting for the Glenford Playground. Though no final decisions have been made, the preliminary estimates for the demolition of the current playground and construction of the new playground will be approximately $450,000. Mid-States has stated that the district takes care of the demolition, that could provide a savings of about $25,000. This project will also fully be funded by the donations received and the permanent improvement fund.

**Recommendation for Approval** – Mr. Hogan moved to approve the following:

A. Recommendation for Approval

1. March Financial Reports — Attachment

   Recommend the Board approve the March 2026 financial reports, as presented.

2. Financial Correction Plan — Attachment

   Recommend the Board approve the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Financial Correction Plan, as presented.

3. Budget Adjustments

   Recommend the Board approve the following budget adjustments:

   *Revenue:*

   a.) FY26 K-12 Network Subsidy (451-9226) $5,291.40

   *Appropriations:*

   a.) FY26 K-12 Network Subsidy (451-9226) $5,291.40
   b.) Senior Class (200-968B) $625.30
   c.) Pepsi Scholarship (008-925H) $500.00
   d.) Drama Club (200-913H) $1,251.25
   e.) Girls Basketball (300-950M) $14,724.36

4. Then & Now Certificates

   Recommend the Board approve the following Then & Now Certificates:
   a.) PO#133951; Stephanie Winters, Therapy Dog Training Reimbursement
   b.) PO#133982; Rival Motorsports, 4Wheeler for Softball/Baseball

c.) PO#133981; APG Media, Legal Notices & Advertising
d.) PO#134004; Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, Unemployment Charges
e.) PO#133995; Pendent Fire Protection, AMP Batteries
f.) PO#133970; Gofer Parts, LLC, Scrubber Parts
g.) PO#133292; Ag-Pro Ohio, LLC, Primer Valve
h.) PO#134047; Crisis Prevention Institute, Annual Membership
i.) PO#133952; NASSP, NHS Charter Renewal

5. Paul Culver, Jr. Stadium Turf Replacement Project Proposal — Attachment

   Recommend the Board accept the proposal from FieldTurf for the turf replacement project at the Paul Culver, Jr. Stadium.

6. Soccer and Track Stadium Lighting Project Proposal — Attachment

   Recommend the Board accept the proposal from Jess Howard Electric Company for the lighting project at the soccer and track stadium.

7. META VOIP Agreement — Attachment

   Recommend the Board approve a 3-year agreement with META Solutions for VOIP services, effective May 1, 2026, as presented.

8. Creative Coach Company Contract — Attachment

   Recommend the Board approve a contract with the Creative Coach Company to provide STARS students and families field trip transportation on April 18th and April 25th, as presented.

9. Reach Educational Services, LLC Contract — Attachment

   Recommend the Board approve a contract with Reach Educational Services, LLC for the 2025-26 school year, as presented.

10. Student Accident Insurance Program — Attachment

    Recommend the Board approve participation in the Ohio Student Accident Insurance Program for the 2026-27 school year, as presented.

11. Memorandum of Agreement – Vo-Ag Positions — Attachment

    Recommend the Board approve a Memorandum of Agreement with NLEA regarding Vo-Ag positions, as presented.

12. Anthem Medical and Prescription Drug Plan Renewal — Attachment

    Recommend the Board accept the renewal rates for the Anthem Medical and Prescription Drug plan for the 2026-27 plan year, as presented.

13. Delta Dental Plan Renewal — Attachment

    Recommend the Board accept the renewal rates for the META/Delta Dental plan for the 2026-27 plan year, as presented.

14. Asset Disposal

    Recommend the Board approve the following asset disposal:
    a.) Toro Wheelhorse Mower (Softball & Baseball) - inoperable

15. Donations

Recommend the Board approve the following donations:

a.) Edward Bope; $100 to National Honor Society
b.) Somerset American Legion; 4'x 6' American flag to Sheridan Baseball
c.) Somerset American Legion; 4'x 6' American flag to Sheridan Softball
d.) Anonymous; $100,000 for the Paul Culver, Jr. Stadium Turf Replacement
e.) Sheridan Football Mother Generals; $30,000 for the Paul Culver, Jr. Stadium Turf Replacement
f.) Somerset American Legion; $500 to FFA for Meeting Sponsorship
g.) Frank Bever; $150 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
h.) Kilbarger Farms; $100 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
i.) Custom Ag Solutions; $100 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
j.) Dittoe Custom Ag Service; $100 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
k.) The Lozier Family; $100 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
l.) Just Junk It; $250 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
m.) Lones Landscaping & X Materials; $250 to FFA for Greenhand Shirt Sponsorship
n.) Just Junk It; $250 to FFA for Kindergarten Farm Day Shirt Sponsorship
o.) Lones Landscaping & I Materials; $250 to FFA for Kindergarten Farm Day Shirt Sponsorship

Mrs. Gussler provided an outline of the presented reductions in the Financial Correction Plan including the reduction of 3 FTE's of Vo-Ag teachers as a result of the partnership with Mid-East, the reduction of 1 FTE teacher due to class size evaluation, the reduction of 1 FTE administrative position, the reduction of 1 FTE secretary position, the reduction of extended day contracts, and freezing the supply and capital outlay budgets to FY26 levels. Mrs. Gussler also reinforced that no one was losing a job from these reductions, that they have been accomplished through retirements and shifting staff. She also stated that while this plan is being submitted to ODEW as required, that the Board still maintains local control and can make future adjustments.

Mr. Lemon introduced himself to the guests in attendance stating that he used to be in the audience and thought that the Board was just going through the motions at meetings, but wanted to assure everyone that the information being considered has been provided, reviewed, and any questions have been answered prior to the meetings and vote.

Mr. Ulmer requested permission to ask a question, which Mr. DeRolph permitted. Mr. Ulmer asked Mrs. Clifton how insurance increases are shared. Mrs. Clifton stated that per the NLEA and OAPSE agreements, insurance is split between the employee and the Board. For NLEA and administrators, the share is 20% employee and 80% Board, and for OAPSE it is 15% employee and 85% Board.

Mr. Hogan stated that the Somerset American Legion received a thank-you card from the high school for the donation that was made to reimburse Ms. Winters for the therapy dog training and that it was very nice and appreciated.

Mr. Dupler seconded the motion.

Roll call: Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. DeRolph, aye.
Motion carried 5-0.

**Employment**

**Recommendation for Approval** – Mr. Weals moved to approve the following:

1. Certified Retirement

Recommend the Board accept the following retirement:

a) Dan Riggs, Science Teacher, effective May 29, 2026

2. Classified Retirement

Recommend the Board accept the following retirement:

a.) Becky Howell, Secretary, effective May 29, 2026

3. Certified Substitutes Attachment

Recommend the Board approve the following certified substitutes for the 2025-26 school year:

a.) MVESC Substitutes, as presented

4. Certified Contract Renewals

Recommend the Board approve the following certified contract renewals effective for the 2026-27 school year:

*One Year Contract (Retire/Rehire):*
a.) Mark Paxton
b.) Tyrone Davis

*One Year Contract (Second):*
a.) Brady Blattner
b.) Grace Conrad
c.) Emily Heath
d.) Genna Heileman
e.) Elizabeth Hoover
f.) Claire Kilger
g.) Jessica Lane
h.) Hunter McCartney
i.) Ashley Norman
j.) Landen Russell
k.) Whitney Snider
l.) Emma Taylor
m.) Melissa Thompson
n.) Adrienne Winders
o.) Adrian Wymer

*Two Year Contract:*
a.) Sarah Smathers
b.) Kathryn Stepanovich
c.) Kari Stute

*Five Year Contract:*
a.) Michele Cardiel
b.) Alicia Clouse
c.) Amber Daly
d.) Michelle Eversole
e.) Ali Forsythe
f.) Jason Garver
g.) Ashley Heavener
h.) Amy Hupp
i.) Casey Jones
j.) Carey Maierle
k.) Hannah Pressdee
l.) Ashley Reed

m.) Jill Richards
n.) Julie Rupe
o.) Melissa Shank
p.) Miranda Shriner
q.) Krista Trent
r.) Tracy VanBalen
s.) Mandie White
t.) Kirk Washburn
u.) Angela (Shay) Wofter

5. Classified Contract Renewals

Recommend the Board approve the following classified contract renewals, effective for the 2026-27 school year:

*One Year Contract:*
a.) Michele Pittman
b.) Brandi Ridenour
c.) Kalie Ridenour
d.) Rodney Trapp
e.) Stacy West

*Two Year Contract (First):*
a.) Gary Blevins
b.) Darrin Blosser
c.) Brittany Butcher
d.) Angie Custer
e.) Jill Donnelly
f.) Abigayle Duke
g.) Dominic Grasso
h.) Gina Kaetzel
i.) Daniel Leasure
j.) Brittany Phillis
k.) Dawn Reichley
l.) Brittany Sigler
m.) Brandy Chubb-Swickard

*Two Year Contract (Second):*
a.) Heidi Anthony
b.) Jessie Bilka
c.) John Borland
d.) Lea Anne Broseus
e.) Heather Brumage
f.) Jessica Foust
g.) Tim Huber
h.) Taylor Icenhower
i.) Robert Lynn
j.) Daon Neal
k.) Mary Pritt

*Two Year Contract (Third):*
a.) Mason Conrad
b.) Lori Richardson
c.) Jennifer Soto

*Continuing:*

a.) Jamella Blevins
b.) Erin Cook
c.) Heather Hynus
d.) Kara Sprankle

6. Administrator / District Office Contracts — Attachment

Recommend the Board approve the following administrator / district office contracts, effective August 1, 2026, as presented:

a.) Jody Bratton, Technology Assistant, 2-year contract
b.) Chris Hill, Technology Coordinator, 3-year contract
c.) Jack Holland, IT Technician, 2-year contract
d.) Lisa Householder, Principal, 3-year contract
e.) Lori Tussing, Principal, 3-year contract

7. Administrator / District Office Contract Addendums — Attachment

Recommend the Board approve the following administrator / district office contract addendums, effective August 1, 2026, as presented:

a.) Catina Brown, Transportation Manager
b.) Tyler Brown, Associate Principal
c.) Robyn Cannon, Accounts Payable
d.) Gretchen Combs, Special Education Coordinator
e.) Rachel Dolsky, School Psychologist
f.) Lance Dupler, Athletic Director
g.) Lori Dupler, Principal
h.) Dale Factor, Maintenance Supervisor
i.) LeAnn Forgrave, Superintendent's Secretary
j.) Jill Landrum-McGee, District Data and Assessment Coordinator
k.) Lori Larimer, Food Service Coordinator
l.) Daniel Pfeffer, Athletic Trainer
m.) Olivia Severance, Payroll
n.) Kate Simmons, Principal
o.) Amy VanBalen, Curriculum Director
p.) Ed Wolfel, Principal
q.) Kelly Wright, EMIS Coordinator

8. Classified Substitutes

Recommend the Board approve the following classified substitutes for the 2025-26 school year:

a.) John Shafer, Bus Driver, effective 3/30/2026
b.) Teresa Gregg, Educational Assistant
c.) Teresa Gregg, One-on-One Attendant
d.) Teresa Gregg, Cook
e.) Teresa Gregg, Custodian
f.) Teresa Gregg, Secretary
g.) Kathleen Spencer, Cook

9. Volunteers

Recommend the Board approve the following volunteers for the 2026-27 school year:

a.) Kelly Murphy and Jax, Therapy Dog

Mr. Lemon seconded the motion.
Roll call: Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. DeRolph, aye.
Motion carried 5-0.

**Curriculum & Instruction**

**Recommendation for Approval** – Mr. Hogan moved to approve the following:

1. Field Trips

Recommend the Board approve the following field trips:
a.) April 18, 2026; Somerset STARS to Olentangy Caverns
b.) April 22, 2026; Thornville 2nd Grade to The Pines at Buckeye Ridge
c.) April 25, 2026; Somerset STARS to United States Air Force Museum
d.) May 4, 2026; Thornville 5th Grade to United Skates of America
e.) May 11, 2026; Somerset 4th Grade to Stone Academy, Putnam Presbyterian Church and Kidzville Park.
f.) May 13, 2026; Thornville 4th Grade to The Works

2. Calamity Day Forgiveness

Recommend the Board forgive one calamity make-up day for staff for the 2025-26 school year.

3. Class of 2026 Graduates Attachment

Recommend the Board approve the Class of 2026 graduates, as presented.

4. 2026-27 Sheridan High School Student Code of Conduct Attachment

Recommend the Board approve the 2026-27 Sheridan High School Student Code of Conduct, as presented.

Mr. Lemon asked about the status of the donation certificates were coming along. Mrs. Lisa Householder stated that the design is complete and that she has ordered nice paper to print them so they will be ready soon.

Mr. Dupler seconded the motion.
Roll call: Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. DeRolph aye.
Motion carried 5-0.

**Board Policy & Procedure**

**Recommendation for Approval** – Mr. Lemon moved to approve the following:

1. Board Policies – Final Reading

Recommend the Board approve the following Board policies upon final reading:

a.) PO# 3440; Job Related Expenses
b.) PO# 4440; Job Related Expenses
c.) PO# 5112; Entrance Requirements
d.) PO# 5330; Use of Medications

e.) PO# 5330.05; Procurement and Use of Naloxone (Narcan) in Emergency Situations
f.) PO# 5421; Grading
g.) PO# 5430; Class Rank
h.) PO# 6220; Budget Preparation
i.) PO# 6320; Purchasing and Bidding
j.) PO# 6325; Procurement-Federal Grants/Funds
k.) PO# 6423; Use of Credit Cards
l.) PO# 4162.01; Drug and Alcohol Testing of Employees without CDL licenses Who Transport Students in Alternative Vehicles (Non-DOT Testing)
m.) PO# 4162; Drug and Alcohol Testing of CDL License Holders Who Perform Safety-Sensitive Functions and are Subject to DOT Testing
n.) PO# 8600.04; Bus and Alternative Vehicle Driver Certification
o.) PO# 8600; Transportation
p.) PO# 8640; Transportation for Non-Routine Trips
q.) PO# 8650; Transportation by Alternative Vehicles

Mr. Weals seconded the motion.
Roll call: Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. DeRolph, aye.
Motion carried 5-0.

**Executive Session**

Mr. Dupler moved to enter Executive Session at 7:15 p.m. for the appointment, dismissal, promotion, demotion or compensation of an employee or the investigation of charges or complaints against an employee or student unless the employee or official or student requests a public hearing.

Mr. Lemon seconded the motion.
Roll call: Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. DeRolph, aye.
Motion carried 5-0.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:07 p.m.

**Adjournment** – Mr. Hogan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Dupler seconded the motion.
Roll call: Mr. Hogan, aye; Mr. Dupler, aye; Mr. Lemon, aye; Mr. Weals, aye; Mr. DeRolph, aye.

President DeRolph declared the meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

_____
President

_____
Treasurer