SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Sweet Home Board of Education was held on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, in the Norman C. Vergils Community Center. President of the Board, Mr. Laible, called the meeting to order at 5:43 pm.

Mr. Laible led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PRESENT: Scott Johnson, Dirk Rabenold, Marianne Jasen (arrived at 5:50 pm), Amy Battaglia, Brian Laible, Jessica Stephens (arrived at 6:03 pm)

ABSENT: Danyelle Anthon

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Battaglia, the Board of Education accepted the roll as called.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	4	No	0	Absent	3
Carried	X				

MOTION TO MOVE TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Battaglia, the meeting was adjourned to executive session at 5:44 pm for matters related to the employment history of particular individuals as well as collective negotiations.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Rabenold, the following resolution was offered to come out of executive session at 6:46 pm. Action was not taken during the executive session.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Jasen, the following resolution was offered:

> RESOLVED: That, the agenda set forth for the regular Board of Education meeting held Tuesday, August 18, 2026 is hereby adopted in its entirety.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Jasen, the following resolution was offered:

RESOLVED: That, the reading of the minutes from the reorganization meeting and the regular meeting of the Board of Education held on July 7, 2026 be waived and are hereby adopted in their entirety.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

Mr. Rabenold requested that the minutes of July 7, 2026 reflect that he did not receive the complete contract for Item "L" prior to the vote and had not yet completed the Superintendent's evaluation, and that he would have preferred to abstain rather than vote no. The vote as recorded remains unchanged.

Mr. Rabenold requested that his written statement recommending Danyelle Anthon for President of the Board of Education be entered into and made part of the record of the July 7, 2026 Reorganization meeting. The Board consented to the request, and the minutes of July 7, 2026 were approved with the statement attached as an exhibit.

COMMUNICATIONS

Jessica Stephens – Reported that a couple of teachers had reached out to her with concerns about class sizes, noting the Board would be addressing it.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Tax Rates

Donald Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Plant Services, gave an update to the Board of Education at the regular meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2026.

B. Superintendent's Report

Michael Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, gave an update to the Board of Education at the regular meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2026.

OPEN SESSION – AGENDA TOPICS – POLICY 1510

1. Katie Smyser, staff member and parent – Asked about the new drop-off traffic pattern at the middle school, requesting consideration of a crosswalk near the parent drop-off area by Door 5, citing vehicles moving quickly through that area. She also asked whether the plan addressed the exceptional-needs drop-off door, noting that parents without exceptional-needs students sometimes park there.

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NEW BUSINESS

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Ms. Stephens, the following resolution was offered for agenda items A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and J.

A. Special Education

1. Class placements for 2026-2027 – Policy 7613

WHEREAS, Public Law 94-142, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, and Chapter 853, Laws of 1976 (New York State Education Act), requires Board of Education approval for all placements of students with disabilities, and

WHEREAS, the District Committee on Special Education has reviewed all placements, and

WHEREAS, all parents have approved said special education class placements, now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That, the 2026-2027 placements for students with disabilities be approved as recommended in a memorandum to Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, dated August 3, 2026.

2. Preschool class placements for 2026-2027 – Policy 7614

WHEREAS, Public Law 94-142, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, as amended by P.L. 99-457, New York State Compliance, Chapter 243 of the Laws of 1989, requires Board of Education approval for all placements of preschool student with disabilities, and

WHEREAS, the District Committee on Preschool Special Education has reviewed all placements, and

WHEREAS, all parents have approved said preschool special education placements, now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That, the 2026-2027 placements for preschool students with disabilities be approved as recommended in a memorandum to Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools, dated August 3, 2026.

and be it further...

B. Monthly Financial Reports – Policy 2140

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accept the Investment Schedules, the Treasurer's Reports, the Budget Appropriation Status Reports, the Budget Transfer Reports, the Revenue Budget Status Reports, and the Extra-Curricular Accounts Reports as provided.

and be it further...

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NEW BUSINESS-continued…

C. Tax Rates

ADOPTION AND CERTIFICATION OF SCHOOL BUDGET, HOMESTEAD AND NON-HOMESTEAD PROPORTIONS, AGGREGATE HOMESTEAD AND NON-HOMESTEAD TAX SHARES AND TAX RATE

RESOLVED: That, pursuant to Paragraph 4(b) of the §1903-a of the Real Property Tax Law, the homestead and non-homestead proportions for the fiscal year 2026-2027 are as follows:

Homestead Proportion .5752 Non-Homestead Proportion .4248 TOTAL 1.0000

and be it further

RESOLVED: That, pursuant to Paragraph 4(c) of §1903-a of the Real Property Tax Law, the aggregate homestead and non-homestead tax shares for the fiscal year 2026-2027 are hereby fixed and certified to be as follows:

Aggregate Homestead Tax Share .4691 Aggregate Non-Homestead Tax Share .5309 TOTAL 1.0000

Total Budget $108,608,147

To be raised by tax $56,283,605

Total homestead share $26,400,120 — Amherst homestead share $20,646,639 — Tonawanda homestead share $5,753,481

Total non-homestead share $29,883,485 — Amherst non-homestead share $27,819,699 — Tonawanda non-homestead share $2,063,786

Tax rate to raise such amount (rounded to the nearest cent):

Amherst – homestead $10.148090 Amherst – non-homestead $15.578273

Tonawanda – homestead $45.720001 Tonawanda – non-homestead $68.984348

and be it further

RESOLVED: That, the Board of Education approve the "Certification of Aggregate Homestead and Non-Homestead Tax Shares" and "Certification of Tax Budget and Rate" for the 2026-2027 school year

and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Board of Education authorize the President of the Board to sign the documents entitled "Certification of Adoption of School Budget" and "Certification of Tax Budget and Rate" dated August 19, 2026.

and be it further…

D. Dispose of Obsolete Property – Policy 5250

RESOLVED: That, the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, authorize the district to participate in competitive bidding procedures for the disposal of obsolete property.

and be it further…

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NEW BUSINESS-continued…

E. Committee Appointments

The Superintendent of Schools recommends the appointment of the following individuals for the school year 2026-2027.

1. Safety Committee

RESOLVED: That, the following individuals be and are hereby appointed to serve on the district's Safety Committee for the 2026-2027 school year:

Ryan Conrad	Ray Bailey	Lindsay Marcinelli	Sheila Connors
Stephen Shepherd	Karen DeLaPlante	Donald Feldmann	Michael Ginestre
Amanda Glenn	Rebecca Harmon	Wendy Januchowski	Marianne Jasen
Scott Johnson	David Kasprowicz	Lynn Kawa	Scott Kennedy
Matt LaRoach	Falon Derion	Ben Morton	Antonio Perry
Kristen Piurek	Jason Phillips	Mallory Piwtorak	John Radens
Emily Mrozek	Christine Lyle	Katie Barillari	Ariel Carlino
Rob Woodford			

2. Wellness Committee

RESOLVED: That, the following individuals be and are hereby appointed to serve on the district's Wellness Committee for the 2026-2027 school year:

Erica Duerr	Karen Barrett	Peter Bellanti	Morgan LePage
Christine Couvutsakis	Karen DeLaPlante	Donald Feldmann	Marcy Gerlach
Shannon Hutchinson	Sara Juico	Keli-Koran Luchey	Anne Nowak
Kristin Puff	Mary Rao	Danyelle Anthon	

and be it further…

F. Code of Conduct – Policy 3410

RESOLVED: That, the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, approves the 2026-2027 Code of Conduct and Plain Language Code of Conduct as written.

and be it further…

G. District Safety Plan

WHEREAS, Project SAVE, the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act, Education Law 2801, requires that every school district review the District Safety Plan yearly and update as necessary and

WHEREAS, the District Safety Committee has recommended revisions to the District Safety Plan and Code of Conduct and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That, the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, accept the revised District Safety Plan.

and be it further…

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NEW BUSINESS-continued…

H. Purchasing Cooperative

WHEREAS, the Sweet Home Central School District (School District) pursuant to the authority granted in General Municipal Law, Article 5A (Public Contracts), Section 103 desires to participate in the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance, Sourcewell, National IPA, National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA), OMNIA Partners, PEPPM Cooperative Purchasing, the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) ValuePoint Cooperative Purchasing Organization and TIPS-USA Cooperative; and

WHEREAS, Section 103 of the General Municipal Law permits the School District to make purchases of apparatus, materials, equipment or supplies, or to contract for services related to the installation, maintenance or repair of apparatus, materials, equipment, and supplies, as may be required by the School District through the use of a contract let by the United States of America or any agency thereof, any state or any other county or political subdivision or district therein if such contract was let to the lowest responsible bidder or on the basis of best value in a manner consistent with this section and made available for use by other governmental entities; and

WHEREAS, the School District desires to participate for the purpose of fulfilling and executing its public governmental purposes, goals, objectives, programs and functions; and

WHEREAS, the School District has reviewed the benefits of participating in these programs and based on this review has concluded these programs will provide the best value to taxpayers of this School District through the anticipated savings to be realized.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Sweet Home Central School District authorizes the School District's participation in the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance, Sourcewell, National IPA, National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA), OMNIA Partners, PEPPM Cooperative Purchasing, the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) ValuePoint Cooperative Purchasing Organization and TIPS-USA Cooperative and authorizes the Purchasing Agent to register for participation in such purchasing cooperative programs on behalf of the School District.

and be it further…

J. 403b Employee Option

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the addition of Legend Group – Roth to our list of approved 403b options for our employees.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

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NEW BUSINESS-continued…

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Jasen, the following resolution was offered for agenda item I.

I. Revised Policy – Policy 1410 – First Reading

Board of Education By-Law #1410 states that "Board of Education policy and rules and by-laws shall be adopted, amended and/or suspended...only when the addition, amendments or suspension is first introduced in writing and is subsequently moved and seconded at a public meeting at least 27 calendar days prior to the time when such adoption, amendment and/or suspension may be voted upon."

At the regular Board of Education meeting held on August 18, 2026, the Superintendent of Schools recommended the Board of Education accept the first reading of the following revised policies.

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Jasen, the following resolution was offered:

RESOLVED: That, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the first reading of the following revised policies as provided in the August 18, 2026 presentation.

a. 1510 – Regular Board Meetings and Rules (Quorum and Parliamentary Procedure)
b. 1511 – Agenda Format
c. 5140 – Administration of the Budget

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

M. Jasen – Expressed pride that the district's proposed resolution recommending that children receive food during the summer received little pushback at the NYSSBA resolutions committee meeting, and thanked Mr. Johnson for his help advancing it.

S. Johnson – Reported attending the first meeting of the NYSSBA Resolutions Committee, which reviews resolutions for the state association's annual business meeting, noting there were fewer resolutions than in past years and that the district's resolution passed through without discussion or objection.

D. Rabenold – Commented on the August summer graduation ceremony, noting a mother's remarks during the ceremony were moving, and stated the Board should be proud of the impact the district has on changing students' lives.

OPEN SESSION – Policy 1510

1. Ron Walker – President of the Sweet Home Service Employees Association – Read a prepared statement asking for a fair contract that reflects the value of service employees' work, describing the range of roles service employees fill throughout the district (transportation, food service, classroom aides, secretaries, nurses, and grounds/maintenance), and stating that they are seeking recognition through action, not just words.

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OPEN SESSION – Policy 1510-continued…

2. Donna Dayfert – Teacher Aide in the Life Skills classroom at the High School and Treasurer of the Service Employees Association – Stated that the District's 408-plus service employees are often overlooked despite serving as the foundation of the school system, and cited a personal example of an administrator completing her annual evaluation without ever having observed her working with students. She asked the Board to use respect as a "bonding agent" to address concerns among service employees.

3. Joseph Rice – Food Service Helper and Bus Aide – Raised concerns that understaffing in food service is creating safety issues that staff has so far managed to catch but which he said are deteriorating, and asked for a fair contract to help attract and retain staff.

4. Jonathan Makeley – Community Member – Asked about the timeline for the town's ongoing pipe and sidewalk construction along Sweet Home Road in front of the high school, and whether it would be complete before the start of the school year. Mr. Feldmann responded that the contractor expected sidewalk and curb work to begin the following Monday and be substantially complete within about a week, with work continuing further down the road into the school year, but that driveways and sidewalks near the high school would be ready for the first day of school.

5. Diane Schueler – A 32-year Sweet Home employee who began as a Special Education Aide – Described how the district's culture has shifted in recent years from a close-knit family feel to a more business-like one, which she said service employees feel most acutely. She noted the current starting wage for service positions is $16.48/hour, just above minimum wage, and cited her own decades of added duties and responsibilities. She asked for fair wages and respect for the work service employees do.

6. Katie Smyser – Parent and District Employee – Encouraged the Board, administration, and staff to apply the "Seven Habits" framework taught to students, particularly seeking first to understand, thinking win-win, and synergizing, as negotiations continue. She expressed confidence that all parties' hearts are in the right place and encouraged everyone to remember they often hold multiple roles within the district community.

7. Kristin Puff – School nurse at Willow Ridge Elementary and Sweet Home Alumna – Described how the responsibilities of school nursing have grown significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, with increased student visits and medical complexity but no substitute nurses or relief support at the elementary level. She asked that compensation reflect the level of responsibility, expertise, and dedication school nurses bring to the district.

8. David Schmidt Jr. – A 30-year Bus Driver for the District – Noted this is the first time in his tenure the district and service employees have not reached a contract agreement, and encouraged both sides to continue communicating in good faith to reach a resolution.

9. Daniel Mazzola – Bus Driver entering his fourth year with the District and a former cook – Said he felt compelled to speak on behalf of his coworkers after witnessing dissatisfaction among service employees, described the connection he has felt to the Sweet Home community since becoming a bus driver, and asked the Board to help find a resolution that works for service employees.

10. Cheryl Sciria – A 15-year district employee, 1983 Sweet Home graduate, and mother/spouse of other district employees – Cited rising costs of living (food, insurance, gas, rent) and noted that pay steps had been taken away, making it difficult for employees, particularly newer staff such as her daughter, to keep up. She asked for a fair contract reflecting cost-of-living increases.

11. Tina Reich – Custodial staff member – Described having worked in every building in the district, at times cleaning entire buildings alone due to understaffing and working late into the night, and asked that custodial and cleaning staff be treated fairly and with respect in the contract.

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OPEN SESSION – Policy 1510-continued…

Mr. Johnson requested a moment of silence in memory of Barbara Rucker.

Mr. Laible gave a statement. Stated that he was sorry if anyone felt disrespected, noting that his own father worked for the district for 17 years and passed away a year ago, and that he has a deep personal appreciation for the work service employees do. He asked the administration and district office to continue working with the Service Employees Association's leadership toward an agreement, and thanked speakers for their respectful comments.

Mr. Ginestre gave a statement. Echoed Mr. Laible's comments and stated the administration respects service employees, noting the district and union leadership had reached a tentative agreement that was not ratified by the membership. He said the district's proposed raises would again lead the region as they have for the past four years, invited members to meet individually to review how the proposal would affect them, and noted a further negotiating session is scheduled for September 1.

PERSONNEL

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Jasen, the following resolution was offered for consent agenda on personnel items I and II:

I. TEACHING & ADMINISTRATIVE

RESOLVED: That the following *discontinuances* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 752 dated August 18, 2026,** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

A.1.b. Resignation
Kelsey Chubb
Brad Horrigan

RESOLVED: That the following *appointments* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 752 dated August 18, 2026,** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

A.2.a. Tenure
Marissa Dauria
John Pilato
Natasa Popovic

A.2.b. Regular Appointment
Nina Colucci
Anne Downing
Andrea Vu
Liam Kelly
Paul Schmidt
Elham Dehghanipour

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PERSONNEL -continued…

I. TEACHING & ADMINISTRATIVE

A.2.f. Transfer
Grace Carey
Lauren Kilian
Hayley Stein
Jaqueline Wzientek

A.2.g. Leave of Absence
Diana Calandra

A.2.h. Reinstatement from Leave
Sarah English
Kathleen May
Sharrie Scully
Antonio Perry
Kimberley Kwoka

A.2.l. Summer School
Paige Bressett
Andrea Vu

B.2.a. Substitute Long-Term Appointments
Lisa Schmitt

C.1. Interscholastic Appointments
Lisa Feyes (Chg.)
Christy May (Remove)

B.2.c. Student teachers for 2026-2027 school year

RESOLVED: That the *student teachers* in the **TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 752 dated August 18, 2026,** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

II. SERVICE

RESOLVED: That the following *discontinuances* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 752 dated August 18, 2026,** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

A.1.b. Resignation
Samara Williams
Ali Aljebori
Ronald Farleo
Catherine Amber
Liam Kelly
Amanda Wight
John Burckhalter
Elizabeth Barbato

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PERSONNEL -continued…

II. SERVICE

RESOLVED: That the following *appointments* in the **SERVICE SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 752 dated August 18, 2026,** be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

A.2.c. Permanent Civil Service
Kaylee Holderrieth

A.2.f. Leave of Absence
Lisa Schmitt
JoDeane Didio
Mae Fisher

A.2.g. Reinstatement from Leave
Lisa Goodwin
Taniya Khatun
Andrew Herb
Kristin Puff

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Jasen, the meeting was adjourned to executive session at 8:44 pm for matters related to the employment history of particular individuals as well as collective negotiations.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Rabenold, the following resolution was offered to come out of executive session at 9:30 pm. Action was not taken during the executive session.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

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ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Rabenold, the meeting was adjourned at 9:31 pm.

The vote on the foregoing resolution was as follows:

Yes	6	No	0	Absent	1
Carried	X				

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Falon Derion
Secretary, Board of Education
District Clerk
Sweet Home Central School District

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