

West Plains R-VII Board Meeting
August 25, 2026

Opening Items - 5:00 PM

- Call to Order by President Tyree (B Mitchell and R Grigsby absent)
- Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum
- Approval of Agenda - Approved 5-0
- Motion to enter into Closed Session - Approved 5-0

Open Session - 5:30 PM

- Call to Order by President Tyree
- Pledge of Allegiance led by President Tyree

Tax Rate Hearing

- Motion to enter Tax Rate Hearing - Approved 5-0
- Tax Rate Calculation Explanation - Provided by Dr. Davis
 - <https://zizzers-org.community.highbond.com/home/document/ca9fef07-0bbe-4728-a577-22a65fe01b87>
 - <https://zizzers-org.community.highbond.com/home/document/507cd4cd-0803-4708-924f-b9e478ac85d7>
 - <https://zizzers-org.community.highbond.com/home/document/4a94d171-5493-4ec0-b437-846099fb163e>
 - <https://zizzers-org.community.highbond.com/home/document/b19be554-a1c4-464c-a4ea-28f94cdd7f8e>
 - Five year tax rate comparison provided by Dr. Davis

Year	Rate	Change
2022-2023	\$3.7404	
2023-2024	\$3.7476	\$0.0072
2024-2025	\$3.7723	\$0.0247
2025-2026	\$3.6883	-\$0.0840
2026-2027	\$3.7301	\$0.0418
5 Year Avg	\$3.7357	

- Public Comment on Tax Rate - None
- Motion to set the tax rate at \$3.7301 with designation of \$3.7301 into Fund I - Approved 5-0
- Motion to return Open Session - Approved 5-0

Zizzer Spotlight

- New Staff Introductions
 - Building administrators had the opportunity to introduce new staff members to the West Plains R-VII Board of Education during the August meeting. Amy Marshall, Ashley Cooley, Josh Cotter, Ryan Smith, Seth Bryant, Seth Huddleston, and Sarah Land each introduced the newest members of their teams and shared a little about the roles they will fill throughout the district.



- **Consent Agenda** - Approved 5-0
 - Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting(s)
 - Approval of Monthly Finance Reports
 - Approval Request for employments, resignations, retirements, terminations, transfers, and volunteers of individuals as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools

■ **New Hires – Board Action Required**

Certified Positions

- Andrea Stevens - SFES 6th Grade Teacher
- Cheyenne Ade - SFES 5th Grade Teacher
- Ritchie Sharp - SMTI Welding Instructor
- Andrea Beene - WPHS/ZPA JAG

Non-Certified Positions

- Stanley Reid - Facility and Grounds Maintenance
- Tyler Collins - Custodian
- Sharon Stevenson - Paraprofessional
- Kerry D. Bradshaw - Custodian

- Bill Combs - Custodian
- Chloe Hays - Paraprofessional
- Kristy Miran - Paraprofessional
- Jordan Uphaus - Facility and Grounds Maintenance
- Dennis Weatherford - Substitute Bus Driver
- Heather Hufstedler - WPMS BETA Sponsor

● **Transfers – Board Action Required**

- Richard Forshee - WPHS Social Studies to WPHS Science
- Darrell Milburn - Full-Time Route Driver - Custodian

■ **Volunteers - Board Action Required**

- Riley Simpson
- Kristopher Kirby
- Jerry “Max” Meany
- Kara Brown
- Justin Brown
- Samuel Cobb
- James Laughary
- Lee Laughary
- Rebecca Pruett
- Faith Long

■ **Resignations – Board Action Required**

- Kara Brown - Elementary Teacher
- Drew Cargill - Maintenance (July 13, 2026)
- Kevin Collins - Full Time Route Driver
- Angelina Contreras - Paraprofessional
- Dayla Decker - Elementary Teacher
- Lacey Graham - Paraprofessional
- North West - SMTI Welding Instructor
- Samantha Wadkins - Paraprofessional
- Joan Dietrich - JAG teacher
- Hailey Beazley - WPHS Assistant Track and Field Coach

● **Retirements - Board Action Required**

- Stacy Davis - (EOY)

● **Terminations - Board Action Required**

- Kerry A. Bradshaw - Custodian

- Approval of Program Evaluation(s)
- Approval of CSIP Update(s)
- Reapprove Board Policy BBFA

- Approval of HCSD SRO MOU
- Approval of WPPD SRO MOU
- Approval of District Wellness Plan
- Approval of Sign Language Interpreter MOU
- Approval of Special Education Local Compliance Plan

- **Previous Business**

- None at this time

- **Regular Agenda**

- Payment of Bills - Approved 5-0

New Business

- None at this time

Updates & Reports to the Board

- Student School Board Member Report - Abigail Freidt
 - Student School Board Member Abigail Freidt reflected on a positive start to the school year and several meaningful leadership experiences. She shared that Clint Pulver's message at the district back-to-school meeting resonated with her personally and could be applied not only by staff members, but also in her own life. Abigail also highlighted a recent choir leadership meeting with Sam Cobb, noting how beneficial it was in strengthening relationships with peers and underclassmen. One takeaway that especially stood out was the importance of addressing people by name and the impact such a simple gesture can have. She thanked Mr. Smith for Freshman Zizzer Day and for giving her the opportunity to speak to incoming freshmen. Abigail also noted the excitement she saw from students on the first day of school and the continued success of the district's phone policy as it enters its second year. She closed by sharing how grateful and blessed she feels to serve in her role as Student School Board Member.
- Administrative Reports
 - Amy Marshall - WPMS
 - Amy Marshall shared several exciting updates from West Plains Middle School and expressed how proud she is of the work completed throughout the building over the summer. Improvements included new paint and carpet in the library, along with reorganizing books completed by Mrs. Hufstedler. Both gym spaces also received attention, including fresh paint, cleaning, and a deep clean of the sound board.
 - Marshall highlighted two new Zizzer-themed additions to the building, including a feature wall upstairs and a metal "West Plains Zizzers" sign created by Mr. Hale

near the bottom of the stairs, surrounded by candid photos of middle school students. She also reported that Open House was a huge success and celebrated the growth of the summer school program. With support from Dr. Davis, students were able to participate in frequent educational trips, including experiences in Branson. Summer school enrollment increased by more than 100 students compared to previous years, and the building looks forward to continuing that growth in the future.

- Amy Ross - Special Ed/Federal Programs

- Dr. Amy Ross shared several updates from Special Education and Federal Programs, beginning with improvements to the ECSE building, including new carpet. She highlighted recent paraprofessional training and shared how exciting it has been to see several former paraprofessionals transition into teaching positions, demonstrating continued growth within the education profession and the district. Staff also completed CPI training related to seclusion and restraint procedures. Dr. Ross reported that the district has received its federal program funding, including Title I funds that support reading specialists, Title II funds that support kindergarten and preschool programs, and Title III funding for tutoring services. The district received approximately \$85,000 to provide tutoring services districtwide.

- Briana Link - Communications

- Briana Link shared that while the summer months were quieter, much of the time was spent preparing district communications for the new school year, including updating the district website. Radio visits have started back up, with plans to feature new staff and students throughout the year. She shared her excitement about incorporating more video content into the district's social media presence, giving the community more opportunities to see Zizzers in action rather than only through photos. Briana also highlighted the collaboration with buildings to create back-to-school hype videos and was especially proud of the back-to-school message she created with Dr. Davis that was shared the night before the first day of school. She looks forward to continuing to tell the Zizzer story and having a great year.

- Josh Cotter - SMTI

- Dr. Josh Cotter shared several updates from Southern Missouri Technical Institute, including the opportunity for a student to compete at the national level in Atlanta, where he placed seventh out of approximately 50 competitors. Dr. Cotter emphasized the impressive size and level of the national competition and how valuable it was to experience the event firsthand.
- Practical Nursing students completed clinicals over the summer as well as students in the welding and surg tech programs. Recruitment is underway for the nursing and lineman programs, and SMTI is seeing strong interest in welding,

including a record number of students signed up and 10 students enrolled in the September adult welding class.

- On the high school side, all students will be in the building by the fourth day, with orientation meetings being held with each participating school to review expectations. Dr. Cotter also shared that SMTI is preparing for an upcoming accreditation visit, with an opening-night social event scheduled for October 12 at 6:00 p.m.
- Matthew Orchard - Facilities/Safety
 - Deputy Superintendent Matthew Orchard reported a great start to the school year, noting that the first two days went smoothly and recognizing the efforts of staff and administrators at the building level. He reflected on recruitment and retention efforts that began several years ago and shared how rewarding it is to now see the results, particularly through West Plains graduates returning to the community to teach in the district. He also highlighted the district's third annual customer service training for office staff, which received positive feedback, and thanked staff members for their participation.
 - Orchard provided a brief recap of recent legislative updates impacting public schools. He discussed House Bill 2292 and new requirements related to reporting animal abuse, as well as the state's upcoming A–F school grading system and legislation involving an oversight DESE committee for MSHSAA. Districts are expected to receive their first A–F grade in spring 2027 based on data from the 2025–2026 school year. Beginning September 2027, schools should receive their grade for the prior year by mid-month.
 - Safety continues to be a district priority. Orchard shared that each building's main entrance now utilizes a secure visitor management process that includes account login, background screening, and printed identification badges. The district is also fully staffed with seven School Resource Officers, including three officers from the police department and four from the sheriff's department. Safety drills will begin next week and continue throughout the school year. Orchard also shared plans to tour district facilities and expressed appreciation to the Board for its continued support in maintaining quality spaces for students and staff. He recognized the maintenance and custodial teams for their hard work in preparing and caring for district facilities.
- Ryan Smith - WPHS
 - Ryan Smith reported that West Plains High School is off to a great start, recognizing both teachers and students for helping make the first days of school run smoothly. He highlighted the positive culture throughout the building, with teachers walking students to class and students stepping up to help their peers find where they need to be. With many moving pieces at the beginning of a school year,

Smith shared that it has been encouraging to see everyone supporting one another and creating an environment where people are excited to be at WPHS.

- Smith also celebrated another successful summer school program under the leadership of Colton Hensley, who continues to do an excellent job communicating expectations with students and families. Summer school enrollment increased from 401 students last year to 450 this year, representing approximately 41% of the WPHS student body. He also thanked Dr. Tiffany Young for organizing summer curriculum work days, which teachers found valuable and worthwhile.
- Several activities helped build school spirit and strengthen relationships leading into the new year. Senior parking spot painting brought students and families together for a full day of creativity and hard work while adding plenty of color and personality to campus. Staff and their families also gathered for a pool day before school began, complete with hamburgers and hot dogs, providing another opportunity to build a positive culture outside of the school day. Smith closed by recognizing the custodial and maintenance teams for the tremendous amount of work they put into preparing the building for students and staff.

○ Seth Bryant - ZPA

- Seth Bryant shared that he is proud to be back as a Zizzer and reported a great start to the school year at Zizzer Pride Academy. ZPA currently has 53 students enrolled, with enrollment expected to continue growing throughout the year. Bryant also shared that the first Care Team meeting of the year will take place at the high school the first week of school. One of ZPA's primary focuses this year will be providing students with monthly community service opportunities. While ZPA continues to help students successfully earn their diplomas, Bryant emphasized a goal of developing high-quality graduates by focusing on service, responsibility, and education.
- Bryant also shared plans to strengthen connections between ZPA and Southern Missouri Technical Institute. Dr. Josh Cotter will visit with ZPA juniors and seniors to discuss the programs available at SMTI and explore enrollment opportunities, with the goal of connecting more ZPA students with career and technical education programs.

○ Seth Huddleston -SFES

- Seth Huddleston shared his excitement for the new school year at South Fork Elementary and welcomed several new faculty members to the building, describing them as a great group of educators. He also provided a brief facilities update and shared that an outdoor classroom is among the upcoming projects planned for South Fork.
- Huddleston reported that Open House was very well attended and thanked everyone who helped welcome families, serve hot dogs, and provide water during the event. He noted that South Fork has welcomed many new faces this year, including students joining the district from several different states. First-day

enrollment was 186 students, which is slightly lower than last year, with preschool enrollment also currently down. He is hopeful additional students will enroll as the year continues. Huddleston also shared his excitement about the building's MAP results and looks forward to discussing those results.

- Tiffany Young - Teaching/Learning

- Dr. Tiffany Young shared several highlights from a productive summer for the Teaching and Learning Department. Approximately 30 district educators attended the GOCSD Innovation Summit, where three West Plains educators, Patricia Rodriguez, Nathan Fleming, and Jennifer Shipley, were selected to present. She also highlighted a successful three-day New Teacher Orientation that welcomed 30 new teachers to the district. Dr. Young noted how encouraging it is to see so many former *Zizzers* returning to West Plains to begin their careers as educators.
- Dr. Young also provided an update on MAP and EOC assessment results. The district was assessed in 19 areas and showed growth in 10 of the 19 areas. West Plains students also scored above the state average in 10 areas, highlighting positive academic progress across the district.

- Sarah Land - WPES

- Sarah Land shared several updates from West Plains Elementary, beginning with facility improvements completed over the summer. Repairs resulting from previous storm damage on the back side of the building have been completed, and the gym floor was refinished, giving it a fresh look that students have been excited to see.
- Land also highlighted the school's new book vending machine, which will be used as part of a student recognition program. Students who demonstrate identified positive behaviors can earn a token to select an on-grade-level book from the machine. Each month will focus on different expectations, with September recognizing positive recess behavior. Students are already excited about the new opportunity to be recognized and earn a book.
- Open House was also a success, with Land expressing appreciation to administrators and Board members who helped cook more than 1,000 hot dogs for families. She noted that splitting Open House into separate evenings for lower and upper elementary students helped families feel less rushed and overwhelmed. The positive start continued into the first day of school, with plenty of staff available to assist students as they arrived. Land shared that students came in excited, prepared, and ready to begin the new year.

- Virginia Uphaus - Human Resources

- Virginia Uphaus shared several updates from across district operations and student support services. She highlighted the success of the Bridges Back-to-School Fair, which served 410 students during the event and an additional 25 students afterward. A community clothing giveaway at the Civic Center also served more than 1,000 individuals, with approximately 1,500 area families served through back-to-school assistance efforts overall.

- Uphaus also reported a strong start for transportation, including smooth operations during the first two days of school despite train tracks being blocked during high school and middle school dismissal. Two new buses are expected to arrive Monday, adding to the district's transportation fleet.
- Student support services have also expanded this year. Three therapists will serve students through the clinic, and seven case managers have been added across the district, each serving approximately 25–30 students. Two case managers are assigned to West Plains Elementary, two to West Plains Middle School, two to West Plains High School, and one to Zizzer Pride Academy. Uphaus also shared that the mobile mammogram bus will return September 8, an opportunity that typically serves around 20 staff members each visit. She closed by sharing her excitement about the start of the school year and how much she is enjoying her new role and the opportunity to work across different district locations.
- Superintendent's Report
 - Dr. Davis reported on the following financial topics
 - The district received \$29,932.38 for lunch reimbursement. This was payment from the previous school year. (May 2026 lunch reimbursement)
 - The district submitted a request for DESE for the Teacher Based Salary Grant. This should come in December and May. He noted that last year the December payment was not received until January.
 - (a) \$563,377 in salary
 - (b) \$90,475 in benefits
 - (c) 101 teachers were submitted for approval to DESE
 - The district just completed the annual audit and he had finished the exit interview with the auditor. Below are some things that Dr. Davis mentioned from the audit
 - (a) No findings to report
 - (b) Fund IV Balance - large enough to pay off the Lease Purchase if the district desires
 - (c) Finished our second year of "Cash Accounting Method"
 - (d) Auditor will be back in November or December to review with the school board
 - (e) District is financially healthy (and had added to reserves)
 - (f) Discussed the MEUHP insurance concerns
 - Enrollment
 - Dr. Davis discussed enrollment figures
 - (a) As of 8/25 (Including Preschool in both WPES and SFES)
 1. SFES down 7 Students (-3.61%)
 2. WPES down 49 students (-7.06%)
 3. WPMS up 7 students (+1.23%)
 4. WPHS down 20 students (-1.80%)

■ Recent and Upcoming Events

- A law seminar was held at WPHS library on August 13th. Over 90 administrators and board members were present from 15 school districts.
- Dr. Davis, Mr. Orchard, and the R-VII school board will be attending the Area MSBA fall meeting at Willow Springs on September 3rd.
- Dr. Davis encouraged the school board to join the admin team on September 10th to assist the Sunrise Rotary in filling the backpacks. They will fill over 1100 food backpacks for students at SFES, WPES, WPMS, Glenwood, Fairview, Howell Valley, and Junction Hill. Sunrise Rotary does this 3-4 times per school year.

● Tour of Facilities

- Dr. Davis, Mr. Orchard, and Mrs. Uphaus provided the school board and admin team a tour of the facilities at the end of the meeting. Below are some of the stops they took. Highlights included new carpet in various areas of the district, the book vending machine at WPES, the Ballpark Building constructed by the SMTI students, and the metal Zizzer sign displayed in the lower FEMA lobby at WPMS recently crafted by Jay Hale.



● Adjournment

- Adjournment from Open Session - Approved 5-0 8:09 pm
 - Next Meeting - September 15, 2026