

# **GRIFFITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS** **REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**September 10, 2026**

The Board of School Trustees of the Griffith Public Schools met in regular session at Griffith Public Schools LGI room 600 N. Wiggs, Griffith, IN 46319 on the tenth of September at the hour of 6:00 p.m. pursuant to the rules of the Board.

Ms. Connor, of the Board of School Trustees, called the meeting to order.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, on call of the roll, members were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present:                    Emil Conner, President  
                                 Tina Adams, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (called In)  
                                 Kathy Ruesken, Secretary  
                                 Jesse Adduci, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
                                 Jason Jaques, Assistant Secretary

Absent:

Others Present:           Leah Dumezich, Superintendent  
                                 Terri Chance, Chief Financial Officer  
                                 Joseph Svetanoff, Attorney

## **1.1 Pledge of Allegiance:**

## **1.2 Moment of Silence:**

**2.1 Delegations and/or Communications:** One audience participant wanted to know about the athletic adult and student panther pass. She stated we are 104% higher from other districts charging students and adults for athletic passes. She feels what we are doing is not fair to our families. She thinks that you can offer incentives for students to earn an athletic pass this will allow for more students to attend games. She also stated that the elevator in the High School is still not working. The audience member wanted to know if the athletic 50/50 raffle to the PTO that was under other administration will happen again, and will it come back to help other departments? Another audience participant stated the approval of the bus fees from last meeting was not fair. The audience participant does not feel that it is fair to charge the fine arts department the same bus fees as a regular field trip bus fee. The audience participant wanted to know what the school is going to do to honor Emerald Miller. Mrs. Ruesken stated that an Emerald green bench will be placed in the courtyard, but this would be in honor of all students in the same regard. Pastor Bill Jones shared a prayer.

**2.2 Panther Spotlight:** Mr. Chance recognized Coach Taylor and Clair. Clair was recognized for stopping and helping a student from another district during a cross country meet who had a seizure. Clair also received a sportsmanship pin from the IHSA.

**2.3 Superintendent Update:** Mrs. Dumezich shared the following - As we begin the 2026–2027 school year, I want to take a moment to reflect on what was certainly an unexpected start for Griffith Public Schools.

Severe storms and widespread damage throughout our community forced us to delay the opening of school. While no superintendent ever wants to postpone the first day, the safety of our students, staff, and families had to remain our highest priority. Our buildings and grounds required significant cleanup, power and technology had to be restored, and numerous people worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure we could safely welcome our Panthers back.

What stood out most during those challenging days was the incredible amount of support Griffith Public Schools received from our community and our partners. People stepped forward without hesitation, offering their time, resources, equipment, guidance, and encouragement.

## **A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Griffith Public Works • Chief Tharp • Erica Rios • United Way • Becca Hatfield and Becky Alvarez • Ann Marie • John Dudlicek and Grimmer Construction • State Representative Mike Andrade • PSI

I also want to give an especially huge thank you to our Griffith Public Schools team. Our Food Service Department, Transportation Department, Maintenance Department, custodial staff, administrative team, educators, and support staff showed exactly what it means to be a Panther.

So many of our employees stepped outside of their normal roles and simply did whatever needed to be done. They helped prepare buildings, clean, and organize spaces, communicate with families, support students and one another, adjust schedules, solve problems, and help our district move forward under incredibly unusual circumstances.

Our employees could have focused only on the disruption and inconvenience the storm created. Instead, they focused on our students and our community. Their flexibility, commitment, teamwork, and willingness to help wherever needed made an enormous difference in getting Griffith Public Schools reopened and our students safely back into their classrooms.

To every GPS employee who came in early, stayed late, changed plans, answered questions, moved supplies, prepared meals, cleaned buildings, checked buses, supported families, taught students, or simply asked, “What can I do to help?” — thank you.

I am also incredibly grateful to our families, volunteers, first responders, community members, and everyone who helped us clean up, problem-solve, communicate, and prepare our schools for students. There were countless acts of kindness during a difficult situation, and many occurred quietly without recognition.

Although our school year began a little later than we planned, it also began with an important reminder of what makes Griffith special. When our schools and community face a challenge, people come together.

Our students are now back where they belong — in our classrooms, learning, growing, participating, and building memories together. We are excited about the year ahead and remain focused on providing our students with exceptional opportunities while continuing to strengthen the connection between our schools and our community.

**2.4 Finance:** Ms. Chance shared the following. The Form 9 annual financial report is finished and submitted to the state. The first budget hearing will be in September and the approval of the budget will be in October. We have about \$170,000.00 in Insurance claims from the August 11<sup>th</sup> storm. We will be paying for repairs out of the operations fund and will put back once we start receiving the insurance money. We sold three buses. The buses were sold through an auction. In our budget we are down 1.6 million circuit breaker. This will affect transportation and maintenance.

**2.5 Board Reports:** None

**Consent Agenda:** Ms. Conner requested a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mrs. Ruesken made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. The consent agenda contains the following items: Minutes, agreements/contracts, and claims for payroll 7/17/2026 – 8/13/2026 & 7/17/2026-7/31/2026. Accounts payable 8/14/2026-8/28/2026 & 8/14/2026-9/10/2026. Professional leaves, fundraisers, Overnight request, Grants, donations, and the following personnel report. Motion passed.

| PERSONNEL REPORT    |                                            |                 |                   |             |                                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------|
| September 10, 2026  |                                            |                 |                   |             |                                          |
| Name                | Administrator                              | Replacing       | Effective Date(s) | Pay Rate    | Hourly, Daily, Seasonal, Yearly Contract |
|                     |                                            |                 |                   |             |                                          |
|                     | Certified                                  |                 |                   |             |                                          |
| Allison Chavez      | ELA Teacher Middle School                  | Kristina Taylor | 8/6/2026          | \$56,700.00 | Contract                                 |
| Lauren Bibeau       | ELA Teacher Middle School                  | Matt Bliss      | 8/9/2026          | \$51,000.00 | Contract                                 |
| Mary Jo Brown       | School Psychologist Beiriger/Middle School | Amanda Hudson   | 8/6/2026          | \$82,500.00 | Contract                                 |
| Christopher Young   | LRE Teacher Wadsworth                      | Gianna Witte    | 8/6/2026          | \$52,000.00 | Contract                                 |
| Christopher McGowen | Math Teacher Middle School                 | Adam Noel       | 9/16/2026         | \$63,975.00 | Contract                                 |
|                     |                                            |                 |                   |             |                                          |
|                     | Non- Certified                             |                 |                   |             |                                          |
| Bertha Tuskan       | Recess Aide Beiriger                       | Nicole Moore    | 8/12/2026         | \$15.50     | Hourly                                   |

|                        |                                                       |                                                                                    |           |            |          |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Crystal Williams       | Bus Aide                                              | Sam Ramirez                                                                        | 8/10/2026 | \$16.00    | Hourly   |
| Catherine Garretson    | Bus Aide                                              | Jennie Gary                                                                        | 8/2/2026  | \$16.00    | Hourly   |
| Angelee Ford           | Bus Aide                                              | Pam Wielogorski                                                                    | 8/12/2026 | \$16.00    | Hourly   |
| Mildred Hampton-Watson | Bus Aide                                              | Samantha Ramirez                                                                   | 8/10/2026 | \$16.00    | Hourly   |
| Amaya Hatch            | Food Service Prep Middle/High School                  | Amy Jaime                                                                          | 8/20/2026 | \$16.00    | Hourly   |
| Kenneth Techentin      | Food Service Prep Middle/High School                  | Jacqueline Lopez                                                                   | 8/20/2026 | \$16.00    | Hourly   |
| Angela Cullum          | Bus Driver                                            | Andi Wright                                                                        | 9/14/2026 | \$23.00    | Hourly   |
|                        |                                                       |                                                                                    |           |            |          |
|                        | <b><i>Extra-Curricular/Athletics</i></b>              |                                                                                    |           |            |          |
| Ethan Starks           | JV Boys Soccer Coach                                  | Anthony Doctor                                                                     | 8/12/2026 | \$3,820.00 | Contract |
| Melissa Pride          | Co-Sponsor Student Council Club Sponsor Beiriger      | Camille Schafer. Will Co-Sponsor with Riley Hendron                                | 8/11/2026 | \$667.50   | Contract |
| Ben Geffert            | JV Boys Football Coach                                | Vincenzo DeRosa                                                                    | 8/13/2026 | \$6,110.00 | Contract |
| Dave Sisak             | 9th Grade Boys Football Coach                         | Bryce Hayman                                                                       | 8/13/2026 | \$5,725.00 | Contract |
| Richie Popovich        | Middle School Football Coach                          | Replacing Andrew Braddy, Richie will Be Splitting This Position With Devin Johnson | 8/13/2026 | \$2,672.50 | Contract |
| Haley Gearhart         | Assistant High School Cheer Coach                     | N/A                                                                                | 8/17/2026 | \$2,290.00 | Contract |
| Kristin Arras          | Middle School 7th Grade B Team Girls Volleyball Coach | Amy Skura                                                                          | 8/31/2026 | \$3,435.00 | Contract |
| Daniel Mitchell        | Middle School 8th Grade A Team Girls Volleyball Coach | Ellen Purkey                                                                       | 8/31/2026 | \$3,435.00 | Contract |
| Michelle Brown         | Co-Girls on The Run Sponsor Beiriger                  | Will Co-Sponsor with Payton Carlson                                                | 8/24/2026 | \$477.50   | Contract |
| Payton Carlson         | Co-Girls on The Run Sponsor Beiriger                  | Will Co-Sponsor with Michelle Brown                                                | 8/24/2026 | \$477.50   | Contract |

|                    |                                            |                                                          |           |                                                   |          |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Chris Tomcsi       | Fall Athletic Supervisor                   | N/A                                                      | 8/21/2026 | \$4,000.00                                        | Contract |
| Julie Mills        | Boys Fitness Sponsor Beiriger              | Michelle Castillo (Wallis)                               | 8/12/2026 | \$955.00                                          | Contract |
| Julie Mills        | Patrol Co-Sponsor Beiriger                 | Katherine Crozier. Will Co-Sponsor with Melonee Widelski | 8/12/2026 | \$25.00 X 9                                       | Contract |
| Melonee Widelski   | Patrol Co-Sponsor Beiriger                 | Katherine Crozier. Will Co-Sponsor with Julie Mills      | 8/12/2026 | \$25.00 X 9                                       | Contract |
|                    |                                            |                                                          |           |                                                   |          |
|                    | <i>Clubs</i>                               |                                                          |           |                                                   |          |
|                    |                                            |                                                          |           |                                                   |          |
|                    | <i>Separations</i>                         |                                                          |           |                                                   |          |
| Thomas Ehrlich     | High School Math Teacher                   | Resignation                                              | 7/28/2026 | \$58,140.00                                       | Contract |
| Nicole Moore       | Recess Aide Wadsworth                      | Rescinded Board Approved 6/11/2026                       | 7/9/2026  | \$15.00                                           | Hourly   |
| Gianna Witte       | LRE Teacher Wadsworth                      | Rescinded Board Approved 6/11/2026                       | 7/27/2026 | \$51,000.00                                       | Contract |
| Jeffrey Matt Bliss | LRE 7th Grades Middle School               | Resignation                                              | 7/15/2026 | \$62,934.00                                       | Contract |
| Enzo De Rosa       | JV Football Coach                          | Resignation                                              | 8/6/2026  | \$6,110.00                                        | Contract |
| Katherine Crozier  | Bookworm Sponsor Beiriger                  | Resignation                                              | 8/6/2026  | \$1,525.00                                        | Contract |
| Katherine Crozier  | Patrol Club Beiriger                       | Resignation                                              | 8/6/2026  | \$25.00 Per Hour with A Max OF 18 Hours Per Year. | Hourly   |
| Amy Jaime          | Cafeteria Worker High School/Middle School | Resignation                                              | 6/4/2026  | \$16.00                                           | Hourly   |
| Bryce Hayman       | 9th Grade Football Coach                   | Resignation                                              | 6/4/2026  | \$5,725.00                                        | Contract |
| Andrew Braddy      | Middle School Football Coach               | Resignation                                              | 8/10/2026 | \$2,672.50                                        | Contract |
| Amanda Salinas     | 10-Month Custodian Wadsworth               | Resignation                                              | 8/4/2026  | \$17.50                                           | Hourly   |
| Michelle Brown     | Girls On the Run Beiriger                  | Resignation Michelle Will Co-Sponsor the Club with       | 8/24/2026 | \$955.00                                          | Contract |

|                                         |                                   |                                                                                      |           |             |          |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
|                                         |                                   | Payton<br>Carlson                                                                    |           |             |          |
| Adam Noel                               | 7th Grade Math<br>MS/HS           | Resignation                                                                          | 9/16/2026 | \$70,636.81 | Contract |
|                                         | <i>Other</i>                      |                                                                                      |           |             |          |
| Jessica<br>Isabell                      | Food Service<br>Manager Wadsworth | Leave Of<br>Absence 15<br>Days                                                       | 8/24/2026 | \$21.53     | Hourly   |
| Michelle<br>Wallis<br>(Castillo)        | P.E. Teacher Beiriger             | Permitted To<br>Utilize 15<br>Banked Days<br>Without Any<br>Impact on<br>Evaluation. | 9/11/2026 | \$81,130.79 | Contract |
|                                         |                                   |                                                                                      |           |             |          |
| *<br>Backgrounds<br>Pending<br>Approval |                                   |                                                                                      |           |             |          |

**4.1 Approval and Adoption of Second Reading of Policies:** Ms. Conner requested a motion for the approval and adoption of the second reading of policies. Mr. Jaques made a motion for the approval and adoption of the second reading of policies. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.2 Approval of First Reading of Policies:** Ms. Conner requested a motion for the approval of the first reading of policies. Mr. Jaques made a motion for the approval of the first reading of policies. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.3 Approval of The New High School Peer Tutoring Course For 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, And 12<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Mr. Chance presented and asked the Board for the approval of the New High School Peer Tutoring Course For 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade. Mrs. Ruesken made a motion to approve the New High School Peer Tutoring Course For 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, And 12<sup>th</sup> Grade. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.4 Approval of The Updated Employee Handbook:** Ms. Chance presented and asked the Board for the approval of the Updated Employee Handbook. Mr. Jaques made a motion to approve the updated Employee Handbook Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.5 Approval of The Updated Custodial/Maintenance Handbook:** Ms. Chance presented and asked the Board for the approval of the Updated Custodial/Maintenance Handbook. Mr. Jaques made a motion to approve the Custodial/Maintenance Handbook. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.6 Approval of The Test Security Policy:** Mrs. Dumezich presented and asked the Board for the approval of the Test Security Policy. Mr. Jaques made a motion to approve the Test Security Policy. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.7 Approval and Adoption of Resolution # 2026-24 To Increase the McKinney-Vento Liaison Stipend:** Mrs. Dumezich presented and asked the Board for the approval and adoption of resolution #2026-24 to Increase the Mckinney-Vento Liaison Stipend. Mr. Ruesken made a motion for the approval and adoption of resolution #2026-24 to Increase the Mckinney-Vento Liaison Stipend. Mr. Jaques seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.8 Approval and Adoption of Resolution # 2026-26 Authorizing Payment of Classified Staff During Unanticipated Emergency Closures:** Ms. Conner requested a motion for the approval and adoption of resolution # 2026-26 authorizing payment of classified staff during unanticipated emergency closures. Mr. Jaques made a motion for the approval and adoption of resolution #2026-26 authorizing payment of classified staff. Mrs. Adams seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.9 Approval and Adoption of Resolution # 2026-27 Declaring an Emergency Requiring Mitigation and Restoration:** Mrs. Conner requested a motion for the approval and adoption of resolution # 2026-27 declaring an emergency requiring mitigation and restoration. Mrs. Ruesken made a motion for the approval and adoption of resolution #2026-27 declaring an emergency requiring mitigation and restoration. Mr. Jaques seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.10 Approval and Adoption of Resolution # 2026-28 Consumable Materials Fees and Advanced Placement (AP) Testing Costs for the 2026-2027 School Year:** Ms. Conner requested a motion for the approval and adoption of resolution # 2026-8 consumable materials fees and advanced placement (AP) testing costs for the 2026-2027 school year. Mr. Jaques motions to defer the approval and adoption of resolution #2026-28 consumable materials fees and advanced placement (AP) testing costs for the 2026-2027 school year until next month. Mrs. Adams seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.11 Approval of Partnership Between the Morris Chiefs Baseball Program and The Griffith Public Schools.:** Ms. Conner requested a motion for the approval of partnership between the Morris Chiefs baseball program and the Griffith Public Schools. Mr. Jaques made a motion for the approval of the partnership between the Morris Chiefs baseball program and the Griffith Public Schools. Mr. Adduci seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.12 Approval of Changes to the 2026-2027 School Calendar:** Mrs. Dumezich presented and asked the Board for the approval of the changes to the 2026-2027 school calendar. Mrs. Ruesken made a motion for the approval of the changes to the 2026-2027 school calendar. Mrs. Adams seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

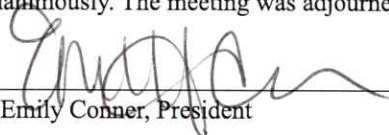
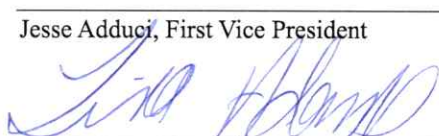
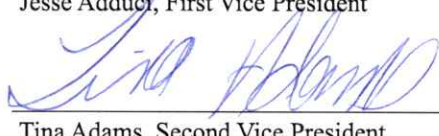
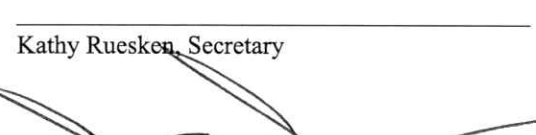
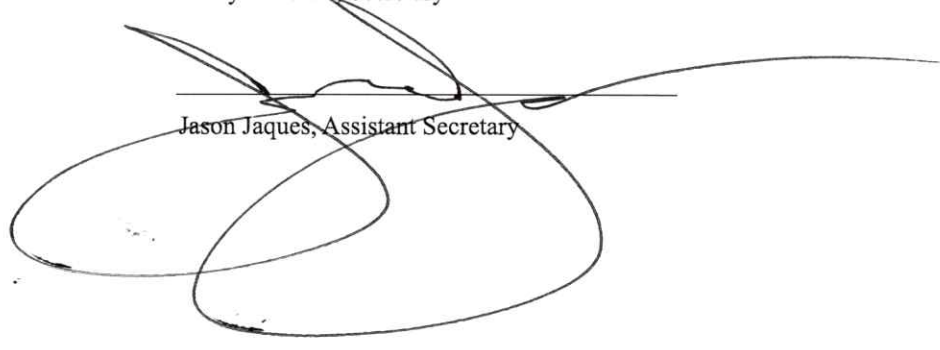
**4.13 Approval of Changes to the 2026-2027 RVA School Calendar:** Ms. Conner requested a motion for the approval of the changes to the 2026-2027 RVA school calendar. Mr. Jaques made a motion for the approval of the changes to the 2026-2027 RVA school calendar. Mr. Jaques seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**4.14 Approval of The Amended 2026-2027 Strategic Plan:** Mrs. Dumezich presented and asked the Board for the approval of the amended 2026-2027 Strategic Plan. Mrs. Ruesken made a motion for the approval of the amended 2026-2027 strategic plan. Mr. Jaques seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Audience Participation:** One audience member wanted to know why resolution 2026-28 consumable material fees and advanced placement (AP) testing costs for the 2026-2027 school year was removed. Ms. Conner explained that it was tabled for next month because we do not have the exact cost for AP exams. Mrs. Dumezich shared that there is no issue with the fee schedule. Mrs. Dumezich explained the only thing we are waiting for is the confirmation from the state to see if two AP exams will be covered.

**Good of the Corporation:** Mrs. Dumezich shared Senior night is taking place, Track or Treat will is on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Dumezich wanted to congratulate coach Mason and the team for win over Lowell. That was the first time Griffith has beat Lowell in football in a decade. Mrs. Jaques wanted to thank all the coaches, athletes and students who helped the community with clean up after the August 11<sup>th</sup> storm. Mrs. Dumezich stated that she did drive one of the buses around with students during the cleanup from the storm. Mr. Jaques shred tomorrow is homecoming, and the band has a new half time performance.

**Upcoming Board Meeting:** The next Regular School Board meeting will be on October 8, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the LGI. There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Jaques motioned to adjourn the meeting and Mrs. Ruesken seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Emily Conner, President  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jesse Adduci, First Vice President  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tina Adams, Second Vice President  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Ruesken, Secretary  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Jaques, Assistant Secretary