

HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP
Students for Life

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

6:00 PM – August 10, 2026, Meeting
Harper Creek Administration Building
7454 B Drive North, Battle Creek, MI 49014

<https://www.youtube.com/live/VWOXZYz0kAI?feature=share>

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Bess led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.
- III. Roll Call: Present members – Mrs. Allwardt, Mr. Bess, Mr. Halverson, Mrs. Risner, Mr. Smith. Absent members – Mrs. Wallace and Mrs. Waterson.
- IV. Review and Approval of Agenda: No modifications were made to the agenda.
- V. Communications
 - A. President's Remarks: Mr. Bess welcomed all in attendance both in person and online. Mr. Bess also thanked the community for participating in the recent millage vote. In addition, Mr. Bess discussed the exciting preparations for the 2026-2027 school year.
 - B. Administration: Mr. Ridgeway discussed key dates for staff and students, including new teacher orientation, middle school dates for families to come into the building, the Blue and White Scrimmage, new staff signing day, staff professional development, and The Wall That Heals. Mr. Ridgeway stated that administration is looking forward to an exciting year for students and staff.
 - C. Board Secretary: Mrs. Allwardt read a thank-you note from Finance Director Ginger Obermyer.
- VI. District Updates
 - A. Curriculum: Mr. Abraham discussed the administration retreat centering on culture and collaboration. In addition, Mr. Abraham discussed the sex education curriculum with public viewings of the curriculum on August 7, 2026, and August 31, 2026. Mr. Abraham also discussed the Professional Development Plan for 2026-2027. Lastly, Mr. Abraham discussed the coursebooks and Tier II time (LEAD). LEAD stands for Learn Responsibly, Encourage Kindness, Act Respectfully, and Demonstrate Safety.
 - B. Facility: Mr. Robinson discussed that the compactor was installed, and the parking lot at Wattles Park is complete. Mr. Robinson also discussed the preparations and the schedule for The Wall That Heals. The Wall That Heals will be on display at Harper Creek Community Schools from August 19th through August 23rd. Mr. Robinson also discussed the

monument sign and said that Fritz Signs is correcting it to properly indicate Harper Creek Community Schools.

- C. Finance: Mrs. Obermyer discussed the finance reports. It was highlighted that earned interest for the month was \$21,240. In addition, Mrs. Obermyer discussed the summer food service program, which fed approximately 700 children each week. Lastly, Mrs. Obermyer discussed that the budget finished within the goal of two percent or better and that the audit will take place in September. Mr. Ridgeway added that for twelve years the district has finished with positive budgets and the fund balance is stable and at an appropriate amount. The current bond will be paid off in 2034 ahead of schedule, saving taxpayers \$15 million.
- D. Technology: Mr. Maynard discussed that the technology department is working to deploy the devices to 9th graders during the August 14th orientation.

VII. Comments Related to Agenda Items: There were no comments.

VIII. Consent Agenda - All items on this consent agenda were previously considered by the Harper Creek Board of Education and are recommended by Central Office, and will be acted upon in a single roll call vote of the Board. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a board member so requests, in which event the matter shall be removed from the consent agenda and considered as a separate item.

A. Approve the General Fund checks, School Services Fund checks (Food Service), and Student/School Activities Fund Checks, in accordance with the list discussed.

- 1. Approve July 13, 2026, Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes
- 2. Approve August 6, 2026, Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Risner,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the consent agenda as follows:

A. Approve the General Fund checks, School Services Fund checks (School Lunch), and Student/School Activities Fund checks, in accordance with the list discussed.

B. Approve the following minutes as reviewed:

- Approve July 13, 2026, Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes
- Approve August 6, 2026, Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

Roll Call Vote:

Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mr. Smith Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Risner Y,

Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mr. Halverson Y.

IX. Information and Discussion

A. School Safety: The committee discussed the open carry policy, a director for school safety, and safety at large events. In addition, Mr. Ridgeway discussed the need to address safety projects without bond funds.

- Emmett Township Safety will have officers at each building on the first day of school. Lastly, Mr. Ridgeway discussed that planning occurred for inclement weather during events like the Wall That Heals.
- B. Strategic Plan Update: Mr. Ridgeway debriefed the Board on the recent Bond vote and results. He stated that work will be done to understand why the bond did not pass. Mr. Ridgeway stated that it is important to get the message out about school funding and future planning. Mr. Ridgeway thanked the community for voting. Mr. Ridgeway discussed messaging to ensure that the community does not have miscommunications or a skewed perception of school finance. Community meetings and graphics to easily understand school finance will be key.
 - C. Parent Bus Application: Mrs. Obermyer discussed the STOP Finder Bus application. This application helps parents to communicate with the transportation department and to see their students' bus location in real time. STOP Finder is by invitation only, keeping students safe.
 - D. New Hires: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the following new hires recommended for hire:
 - Maelyn McKendrick – Middle School Special Education – BA3
 - Trista O'Dell – 4th Grade at Sonoma Elementary – BA1 (Grow Your Own)
 - Rebecca Gardner – High School Vice Principal - \$92,285
 - Shawn Sutherland – Transportation Supervisor - \$62,000
 - Lauran Nye – Wattles Park Elementary Student Support Specialist - \$86,160
 - Rebecca Schneider – Harper Creek Center for Academic Achievement Special Education Teacher – MA7
 - E. Cell Phone Policy: Mr. Ridgeway spoke to other districts in the community regarding their decision on cell phone policies. The majority are taking the stance that cell phones should be off and stowed in a locker or backpack during the school day. Mr. Ridgeway stated that there are mandated legal exceptions.
 - F. Course Books: Mr. Abraham presented the 2026-2027 course books that are annually formally approved by the Board.
 - G. Student Handbooks: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the 2026-2027 student handbook. The major changes were to the cell phone policy. Smaller changes were made to the Anti-Harassment policy and the Title IX policy. Mr. Ridgeway stated that the administrative staff also recommends that it be specifically stated that the handbook is effective from drop-off to pick-up, before and after school.
 - H. MASB Delegate Assembly: The Board must declare the MASB Delegate for the MASB Delegate Assembly at the fall conference. Mrs. Waterson is the delegate and has agreed to attend.

- I. Line of Credit: Finance Director Ginger Obermyer is requesting the Board approve a line of credit with Southern Michigan Bank & Trust. The line of credit is only used for cash flow purposes. The district has not used the line of credit for several years, but it may be necessary in emergency situations. The line of credit is for \$500,000 at an interest rate matching the current State of Michigan interest rate for school district borrowing.
- J. Appoint Reinstatement Committee: Mr. Ridgeway has received a letter requesting reinstatement. By policy, the Board must appoint a reinstatement committee that includes at least two board members, an administrator, a teacher, and a parent. I am recommending the following: Erin Allwardt, Sara Wallace, Brent Swan, Shayne Elwell, Nicole Bilger, and Mike Schmidt.
- K. Marshall Township Master Plan Review: Marshall Township sent a copy of their master plan draft to Harper Creek Community Schools to review and provide comments, recommendations, or concerns within 42 days (September 9, 2026). We will discuss how this relates to Harper Creek Community Schools. The plan is attached in BoardBook.
- X. Comments From the Audience: There were no comments.
- XI. ACTION
 - A. New Hires

Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mr. Halverson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the following New Hires:

Maelyn McKendrick, Middle School Special Education Teacher, bachelor's degree from Grand Canyon University, BA3
 Trista O'Dell, Sonoma 4th Grade Teacher, bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University (Grow Your Own), BA1
 Rebecca Gardner, High School Vice Principal, master's degree from Michigan State University in Curriculum and Teaching, master's degree in Progress at Western Michigan University in Educational Leadership, \$92,285
 Shawn Sutherland, Transportation Director, associate's degree from Davenport University, \$62,000
 Lauren Nye, Wattles Park Elementary Student Support Specialist, master's in educational leadership from Central Michigan University, \$86,160
 Rebecca Schneider, .50 FTE Special Education Teacher with HCCAA, master's degree in education technology, MA7

Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mr. Bess Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y.
 Motion carried: 5-0.
 - B. Cell Phone Policy

Motion by Mrs. Risner, supported by Mr. Smith,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the updated Thrun Law Firm cell phone policy with the option to have cell phones in lockers or in backpacks during the school day, as discussed and reviewed.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mr. Bess Y.

Motion carried: 5-0.

C. Course Books

Motion by Mrs. Risner, supported by Mr. Halverson,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the following Harper Creek course books: High School, Middle School, Elementary, and Edmentum for the 2026-2027 school year, as discussed and reviewed.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Halverson Y.

Motion Carried: 5-0.

D. Student Handbooks

Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mr. Halverson,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the 2026-2027 Harper Creek Community Schools Student Handbook as discussed and reviewed.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT.

Motion Carried: 5-0.

E. MASB Delegate Assembly

Motion by Mr. Halverson, supported by Mrs. Risner,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the attendance at the MASB Delegate Assembly of Mrs. Waterson as the delegate and Mr. Smith as the alternate, as discussed and reviewed.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mr. Bess Y.

Motion Carried: 5-0.

F. Line of Credit

Motion by Mr. Halverson, supported by Mrs. Risner,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education authorizes the renewal of a revolving line of credit of \$500,000 from Southern Michigan Bank & Trust, matching the State interest rate for the time period of September 1, 2026, through August 31, 2027, and authorizes the Superintendent and/or the Director of Finance to make withdrawals and repayments.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Halverson Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT.

Motion Carried: 5-0.

G. Appoint Reinstatement Committee

Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Risner,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education appoint the following individuals to the reinstatement committee: Erin Allwardt, Sara Wallace,

Brent Swan, Shayne Elwell, Nicole Bilger, and Mike Schmidt, as discussed and reviewed.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Wallace ABSENT, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mr. Bess Y.

Motion Carried: 5-0.

H. Marshall Township Master Plan Review

Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mr. Halverson,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves drafting a letter to Marshall Township indicating its support of the 2022 Master Plan Future Land Use map, as discussed and reviewed.

XII. Items for the Next Meeting: Joint Board Meeting at Lakeview. Dinner at 5:15 PM, and the meeting starts at 6:15 PM. Please RSVP to Karla.

XIII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 PM.

This meeting is a meeting of the Board of Education in public for the purpose of conducting the School District's business and is not to be considered a public community meeting. There is time for public participation during the meeting as indicated on the agenda.