

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

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

6:00 PM – Monday, July 14, 2024, Meeting
Harper Creek Administration Building
7454 B Drive North, Battle Creek, MI 49014

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

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Mr. Bess.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was said, followed by a moment of silence.
- III. Roll Call: Present members: Mrs. Allwardt, Mr. Bess, Mrs. Risner, Mr. Smith, and Mrs. Wallace. Absent members: Mr. Halverson and Mrs. Waterson.
- IV. Review and Approval of Agenda: An amendment was made to the agenda by Mr. Ridgeway to add to the closed session segment 8(h) attorney-client privilege to review legal advice.
Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mr. Smith,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education amends the agenda to include an item under closed session section 8(h), Attorney/Client Privilege information to review legal advice.
Roll Call Vote: Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson Absent, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Halverson Absent.
Motion Carried: 5-0
- V. Communications
 - A. President's Remarks: Mr. Bess welcomed all in attendance and those viewing from home. Mr. Bess discussed planning for the next school year. Mr. Bess reminded everyone to mark their calendars for the upcoming important dates. On August 1, 2025, the kindergarten school of choice window closes, August 18 and 19 are Meet the Teacher events at high school, middle school, and elementary buildings, and school starts on August 20, 2025.
 - B. Administration: Mr. Ridgeway discussed that Summer School is back in session for the next three weeks with a Summer School Showcase on July 30, to celebrate the students' hard work, creativity, and career exploration. Elementary will be from 9:00-9:45, and Middle School will be from 10:00-10:45, both events will be at the high school. In addition, Mr. Ridgeway discussed the ongoing summer food program serving

breakfast and lunch at many locations, and remote locations offering lunch only. Another item, Mr. Ridgeway called for both a Policy Committee meeting and a Building Committee meeting. Next, Mr. Ridgeway discussed that fall sports begin on August 11, and a Fall Sports Kickoff event will be on August 15, at 7:00 pm at the Harper Creek Stadium. Lastly, Mr. Ridgeway stated that a day of learning on identifying and addressing antisemitism in our schools will be held on Thursday, August 14, 2025, at Lansing Community College. This is a free event that begins at 8:30 am.

- C. Board Secretary: Mrs. Allwardt thanked the Merry Ellen Eason Educators Fund for the grant totaling \$2,177.00 to Harper Creek Community Schools. In addition, Mrs. Allwardt received a thank-you to the following teachers from the American Heart Association: Morgan Smith, Beadle Lake Elementary, Christine Guthrie, Sonoma Elementary, and Paul Cotts, Wattles Park Elementary. Harper Creek Community Schools is grateful for their work in leading this event and the impact on students and families.

VI. District Updates

- A. Curriculum: Mrs. Williams submitted a report to the Board. Mrs. Williams discussed the continuation of summer programming. Mrs. Williams lifted up Erin Wagaman, Ashley Berner, and Libby Gilbert, as well as the teachers, for their incredible job running the program. Feedback has been positive. In addition, Mrs. Williams discussed the preparations for new teachers with a special event, Teacher Signing Day and Breakfast, on August 15, 2025, at 7:30 AM. Another item Mrs. Williams discussed was the Reading Apprenticeship Training, a group of high school teachers who attended in Livonia, MI. This training equips teachers with research-based strategies to support students in becoming more engaged, confident, and capable readers.
- B. Facility: Mr. Robinson submitted a report to the Board. Mr. Robinson stated that Deryck and the custodial team are doing great work in all the buildings. Sonoma Elementary had a backup due to heavy rain, and Deryck had a crew cleaning and sanitizing immediately. In addition, Mr. Robinson discussed some of the summer projects, including the repair of potholes, the crack filling and sealing at the high school, and painting crews around the District. Lastly, Mr. Robinson discussed the Filter First project. Mr. Robinson stated that his crew will be installing filters and hydration stations around the District.
- C. Finance: Mrs. Obermyer discussed the Pre-audit letter to the Board from Willis and Jurasek. The audit is expected to begin on approximately September 2, 2025. They will issue a report no later than

October 31, 2025. Another item Mrs. Obermyer discussed was State School Aid, which is still held up in the House and Senate. The Senate and House have two different options, but at this time, it is unclear which will ultimately be passed.

- D. Technology: Mr. Maynard was not present at the meeting. He had submitted a report. Mr. Ridgeway discussed the major change to all District computers to Windows 11. This change requires that each computer be physically updated. Mr. Ridgeway discussed that the continuation of the clock/notification project will allow the hardware and licenses for Wattles Park, Sonoma, and the athletic areas. Lastly, Mr. Ridgeway discussed the software server upgrade that will align with best practices. It is estimated that this will begin later this month and require 30-40 hours of work to complete.

VII. Comments Related to Agenda Items: None

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.
- B. Approve the Fiscal Year Authorizations:
 - 1. Authorize the signature of the Superintendent or his designee for all forms, reports, and applications for Local, State, and Federal Grants and related programs, including Public Employment Program, Vo-Tech, and others that are appropriate for the general operation of the district during the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- C. Authorize the district to retain the services of SET/SEG for Workers' Compensation Insurance and FAR Management for the handling of claims for unemployment compensation for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.
- D. Approve the following meeting minutes as reviewed:
 - 1. Approves June 23, 2025, Public Budget Hearing Meeting Minutes
 - 2. Approves June 23, 2025, Public Hearing Naming of Facilities Meeting Minutes
 - 3. Approves June 23, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve the consent agenda as

follows:

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

- E. Approve the General Fund checks, School Services Fund checks (Food Service), and Student/School Activities Fund Checks, in accordance with the list discussed.
- F. Approve the Fiscal Year Authorizations:
 - 1. Authorize the signature of the Superintendent or his designee for all forms, reports, and applications for Local, State, and Federal Grants and related programs, including Public Employment Program, Vo-Tech, and others that are appropriate for the general operation of the district during the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- G. Authorize the district to retain the services of SET/SEG for Workers' Compensation Insurance and FAR Management for the handling of claims for unemployment compensation for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026.

Approve the following minutes as reviewed:

- Approves June 23, 2025, Public Budget Hearing Meeting Minutes
- Approves June 23, 2025, Naming of Facilities Public Hearing Meeting Minutes
- Approves June 23, 2025, Special Budget Meeting Minutes

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Bess __Y __, Mrs. Risner __Y __, Mrs. Wallace __Y __, Mrs. Allwardt

__ Y __, Mrs. Waterson __AB __, Mr. Halverson __ AB __, Mr. Smith __Y __.

Motion carried: 5-o.

IX. Information and Discussion

- A. School Safety: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which is complete and will be rolled out to each building as they return from summer break. The new binders include universal vocabulary that matches emergency response agencies to make clear the procedures for staff in high-stress situations. The EOP has a section of important phone numbers, and it is recommended that this section be reviewed and updated every three months. The EOP binders will be housed in the main office of the buildings, and each classroom will have an emergency response guide flipbook for quick reference by teachers. Staff will receive training during PD on August 19, 2025, and a

training in January as well. The recommendation is to have refreshers at building staff meetings, too. Another item discussed is the Rave Alert System integration, which allows the call received to be associated with a nearby camera that can be seen at the 911 center. This technology gives responders clear directions and information in seconds to aid in emergencies. Chris Young also stated that stadium cameras can be used for big events. Next, Mr. Ridgeway stated that the 911 tower has been replaced at Sonoma.

- B. Strategic Plan Update: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the updated Strategic Plan poster that will be in every classroom in the District. Mr. Ridgeway will place these in the classrooms before the staff returns. The plan will also be publicly facing on the website. The progress on the strategic plan will be discussed at Board meetings to ensure that it is a living document showing the progress. Progress is being made to provide a written curriculum that is community-facing, allowing parents to easily see the scope and sequence
- C. MHSAA Hockey Co-op: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the Cooperative team of Loy Norrix, Kalamazoo Central, Three Rivers, Schoolcraft, Galesburg-Augusta, and Harper Creek Community Schools, and the MHSAA to establish a 2-year ice hockey agreement. Students from the above-mentioned schools are able to form a team under the MHSAA regulations.
- D. School Bond Loan Revolving Fund Application: Mr. Ridgeway stated that this is a yearly requirement and ensures accurate borrowing.
- E. Student Handbook: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the Student Handbook. The Policy Committee will be meeting to update some policies that are in the handbook. The handbook will be for Board review before the August meeting.
- F. Facility Naming Request: Mr. Ridgeway stated that a request has been received. As policy requires, he is notifying the Board and will contact the naming committee to meet to hear the request.
- G. New Hires: The following individuals have been selected for positions at Harper Creek Community Schools: Kayla Bartrem, Special Education co-teacher, middle school, MA9, Master's Degree, Concordia University, Brady Gawne, Social Studies teacher, high school, BA1, Bachelor's Degree, Albion College, Mark Lowrie, Science Teacher, high school, \$250.00/day for the first semester, MA13 thereafter 2nd semester with tenure, Mannes "Luke" Overweg, math teacher, high school, BA4, Bachelor's Degree, Michigan State University, Seth Shubert, social studies teacher, high school, BA7, Bachelor's Degree, Trinity Christian College, Teaching Certificate via Alternative Pathway. Mr. Ridgeway recommends that the Board approve the new hires.

- X. Closed Session – (entered at 6:48 pm) Negotiations Section 8(c) Collective Bargaining and 8(h)
Motion by Mr. Smith, and supported by Mrs. Wallace,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education meet in closed session under section 8 (c) of the Open Meetings Act, for strategy connected with collective bargaining, and section 8(h) of the Open Meetings Act for attorney-client communication for legal advice.
Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mr. Halverson ABSENT, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT.
Motion Carried: 5-0
A. HCEA Teacher Contract Tentative Agreement
B. Secretary Contract Tentative Agreement
C. Attorney-Client legal advice
Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education resumes in open sessions.
Roll Call Vote: Mr. Halverson ABSENT, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT.
Resumed in open session at 7:32 PM.
- XI. Comments from the Audience: None
- XII. ACTION
- A. MHSAA Hockey Co-op
Motion by Mrs. Risner, supported by Mr. Smith,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education accept the administration's recommendation to enter into an MHSAA cooperative agreement with Loy Norrix Community Schools, Kalamazoo Central, Three Rivers, Schoolcraft, Galesburg, and Harper Creek Community Schools for boys' ice hockey, which will allow Harper Creek High School Students to participate as members of the Ice Hockey Cooperative.
Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Halverson ABSENT
Motion Carried: 5-0.
- B. School Bond Loan Revolving Fund Application
Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education certifies the 2025 Annual Michigan School Loan Revolving Fund Application, as reviewed and discussed.
Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mr. Halverson ABSENT, Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Waterson ABSENT, Mrs. Allwardt Y.
Motion Carried: 5-0.
- C. New Hires
Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the following new

hires:

Kayla Bartrem, Special Education Co-teacher, Middle School, MA9,
Master's Degree, Concordia University

Brady Gawne, Social Studies teacher, High School, BA1, Bachelor's
Degree, Albion College

Mark Lowrie, Science Teacher, High School, \$250/day first semester,
MA13 thereafter 2nd semester, granted tenure immediately

Mannes "Luke" Overweg, Math teacher, High School, BA4, Bachelor's
Degree, Michigan State University

Seth Shubert, Social Studies teacher, High School, BA7, Bachelor's
Degree, Trinity Christian College, Teaching Certificate via Alternative
Pathway

As discussed and reviewed.

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

Motion Carried: 5-0

D. HCEA Teacher Contract Ratification

Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Risner,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve the Master
Agreement between Harper Creek Board of Education and the Harper
Creek Education Association MEA-NEA for the 2026-2028 school
years, as discussed and reviewed.

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

Motion Carried: 3-0-2

E. Secretary Contract Ratification

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

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve the Harper Creek
Community Schools Executive Secretarial Group Contract Ratification
as discussed and reviewed.

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

Motion Carried: 5-0

XIII. Items for the Next Meeting

XIV. Adjournment: 7:38 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 a time for public participation during the meeting as indicated on the agenda.