

HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
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Students for Life

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
6:00 PM – September 14, 2026, Meeting
Harper Creek Administration Building
7454 B Drive North, Battle Creek, MI 49014

<https://youtube.com/live/apSoU3VaDB8?feature=share>

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:05 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, Mrs. Wallace, Mrs. Waterson. Absent members – Mr. Smith.
- IV. Review and Approval of Agenda
 - A. Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Waterson
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves amending the agenda to include Transportation Improvements under Action Item E.
Roll Call Vote: Mr. Smith ABSENT, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Halverson Y.
Motion Carried: 6-0
- V. Communications
 - A. President's Remarks: Mr. Bess welcomed the audience and fellow Board members to the meeting. In addition, Mr. Bess congratulated the Girls' Swim and Dive Team and the Girls' Golf Team on earning All-City honors this season. Mr. Bess also mentioned that families should be aware of the multitude of activities around campus and to please check the website for a full list.
 - B. Administration: Mr. Ridgeway discussed that the HCEF Golf Outing is complete and that the event raised \$19,500.00 for scholarships to Harper Creek students. This year's event grew, which was a success. Also, Mr. Ridgeway informed the Board of upcoming dates of importance, including when 6th grade camp will be going, the September 30, 2026, weight room dedication, and Homecoming on October 2, 2026. Mr. Ridgeway discussed Count Day on October 7, 2026; both students in classrooms and students

riding the buses will be counted. Lastly, Mr. Ridgeway informed the Board that he will be out of town for bereavement.

- C. Board Secretary: Mrs. Allwardt recognized communications recognizing middle school teacher Kaylah Eddy. The Board then all saw the letter in reference.

VI. District Updates

- A. Curriculum: Mr. Abraham shared strong academic results, noting that district students outperformed both county and state averages in 13 out of 14 measured grade-level areas. Additionally, elementary and middle school students finished their Fall NWEA benchmark tests. Teachers will use these results to target specific student needs in LEAD and Learning Lab classes. Mr. Abraham stated that work continues on building and maintaining consistent routines and early warning systems across the district. To keep families informed, each school building is implementing a standardized communication plan to ensure clear, routine updates. Lastly, Mr. Abraham discussed the proposed Reproductive Health Curriculum designed to strengthen personal boundaries, peer dynamics, emotional health, and risk factor awareness. Mr. Abraham outlined the curriculum scope and sequence, teaching protocols, and legal opt-out rights for parents. Health-endorsed teachers will deliver the lessons alongside community partners—Bronson Sexual Assault Services and SAFE Place—under administrative supervision. This curriculum will be presented for formal Board approval later in the meeting.
- B. Facility: Mr. Robinson submitted a Board report. Mr. Robinson informed the Board that the replacement drive, including the drain and landscaping, is complete at Wattles Park Elementary. In addition, Mr. Robinson stated that the rental house demolition is complete. The building committee will meet to discuss next steps. The Facilities department is busy with fall sports and activities. Lastly, Mr. Robinson discussed the Filter First project. A letter went out to staff detailing the legislation and the implementation of the project. The biggest change is that the elementary classrooms will no longer have an in-classroom drinking fountain. Families are asked to provide reusable drinking bottles for students to refill at designated filter stations throughout the building.
- C. Finance: Mrs. Obermyer reviewed the reports submitted to the Board highlighting that \$27,000.00 was earned in interest. Mrs. Obermyer stated that the Audit is complete and that her team did an excellent job providing all documentation required by the audit

team. The Auditor will present their report to the Board in November. The budget finished positive. Mrs. Obermyer added that her team is working with Food Service to ensure families have completed the Education Benefits Forms. These forms directly affect grants. Lastly, Mrs. Obermyer discussed that the transportation department is working diligently to learn the new software and implement the Stopfinder App system. Currently, one hundred and eighty-five families have signed up for the app.

- D. Technology: The technology team worked with Mrs. Obermyer and Mrs. Sutherland to install the Stopfinder software on the bus fleet. Transportation then tested the app and deployed the system. In addition, Mr. Maynard discussed the PowerSchool cleanup project. Although this will be a lengthy project, once complete, it will enable the full use of PowerSchool's built-in messaging system. Lastly, Mr. Maynard discussed that he was able to source replacement parts with a warranty to repair the middle school projector, saving a significant amount of money.

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

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 August 10, 2026, Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes
2. Approve September 10, 2026, Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
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 August 10, 2026, Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes
 - Approve September 10, 2026, Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
- Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Smith ABSENT, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mr. Halverson Y.
- Motion Carried: 6-o.
- IX. Information and Discussion
- A. School Safety: Mr. Ridgeway stated that the Safety Committee met and discussed campus security. Topics discussed include a district safety director, improvements to pick up/drop at Wattles Park Elementary, training new staff on Threat Assessment, safety at Homecoming, and having dedicated outside AED units. Mr. Ridgeway added that discussion on the district safety director would be further discussed at a budget meeting and then a personnel committee.
 - B. Strategic Plan Update: Mr. Ridgeway stated that the district continues to make decisions using the strategic plan as the guide. Some key progress includes quality speakers from Solution Tree, a volunteer system being built to be responsive to volunteers, consistent newsletters from buildings, and a clean financial audit.
 - C. Middle School Grace Health Behavioral Specialist: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the need for a middle school behavioral specialist. The middle school can technically use the high school, but issues with logistics and space arise. Having an on-site middle school behavior specialist would cost \$85,000.00 per year. Harper Creek would use 31aa mental health money to cover at least half of the cost. The Board of Education would commit to up to \$45,000.00 for this position using the general fund.
 - D. Bond Refinancing: Mrs. Obermyer and Mr. Ridgeway were contacted by PFM, our financial bond vendor, about the opportunity to refinance our voted facility bonds to save interest. The savings are estimated at \$450,000, but would depend on bond interest rates.

The district would have the option not to refinance if bond interest rates worsen.

- E. New Hires: Mr. Ridgeway recommends hiring the following individuals: Mithell Beck, HS English teacher, BA3, and Lesa Guth, special education teacher consultant, elementary, MA13.
- F. Volleyball Overnight Trip: Mr. Ridgeway discussed that he will bring all overnight trips to the Board for their approval. The volleyball team is requesting an overnight trip for an upcoming tournament at Schoolcraft College on October 17, 2026. The team would travel to the away football game at Jackson Northwest High School on October 16, 2026; after the game, they would travel to a hotel in Canton, Michigan. The team would then go to the early morning tournament. Students would not pay for the hotel; the volleyball student account would cover the cost of the hotel. Two chaperones and two varsity coaches will be attending.
- G. Transportation Improvements: Mr. Ridgeway discussed that a grant for school buses is being awarded. It will allow the district to purchase a lift bus and a regular bus at a much discounted rate. This aligns with the district's desire to keep the fleet current. In addition, Mr. Ridgeway discussed transportation improvements to the dropoff/pickup area at Wattles Park Elementary. This improvement would follow the improvements already done to Beadle Lake Elementary and Sonoma Elementary's pickup/dropoff areas.
- X. Comments From the Audience: There were no comments from the audience.
- XI. ACTION
 - A. Bond Refinancing

Motion by Mr. Halverson, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the Resolution Authorizing the Issuance and Delegating the Sale of Harper Creek Community Schools 2026 Refunding Bonds, as prepared by bond counsel and presented by the Administration.
Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Smith ABSENT, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Allwardt Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mr. Halverson Y.
Motion Carried: 6-0.
 - B. New Hires

Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the following New Hires:

1. Mitchell Beck, High School English Teacher, bachelor's degree from the University of Olivet, BA₃
2. Lesa Guth, Special Education Teacher Consultant for the Elementary Buildings, master's degree in leadership and teaching from Notre Dame of Maryland, MA₁₃

As discussed and reviewed.

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

Motion Carried: 6-o.

C. Volleyball Overnight Trip

Motion by Mrs. Waterson, supported by Mrs. Risner,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the Harper Creek Volleyball overnight trip to the Schoolcraft College Volleyball tournament.

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

Motion Carried: 6-0.

D. Reproductive Health Approval

Motion by Mrs. Risner, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the Reproductive Health Revised Curriculum as discussed and reviewed.

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

Motion Carried: 6-0

E. Motion by Mrs. Risner, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the authorization not to exceed \$170,000 for Transportation Improvement affiliated with Wattles Park Elementary.

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

Motion Carried: 6-0.

- XII. Items for the Next Meeting: Areas of interest for upcoming meetings include onboarding new teachers, High School and Counselors update, and MS Athletics.

- XIII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:45 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.

