

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

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

6:10 PM – September 8, 2025, Meeting
Harper Creek Administration Building
7454 B Drive North, Battle Creek, MI 49014

<https://youtube.com/live/pK4aQuzwVHw?feature=share>

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:13 PM.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Bess led the Pledge, followed by a moment of silence.
- III. Roll Call: Present Members: Mr. Bess, Mr. Halverson, Mrs. Risner, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Wallace, Mrs. Waterson. Absent Members: Mrs. Allwardt.
- IV. Review and Approval of Agenda: Mr. Ridgeway called for a modification to the agenda by adding Item G. to the information and discussion – School Aide Budget Resolution.
Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approves the addition of Item G. to Information and Discussion, School Aide Resolution, as discussed and reviewed.
Roll Call Vote: Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Allwardt A.
Motion Carried: 6-0.
- V. Communications
 - A. President's Remarks: Mr. Bess welcomed all in attendance and those viewing from home. In addition, Mr. Bess discussed the wonderful evening celebrating Mr. Greenman and Matt Bryne on August 28, 2025. Mr. Greenman was honored with the athletic stadium being named in his recognition, “The Ed Greenman Athletic Complex”. Also, the service drive was dedicated as “Matt Bryne Way” in recognition of Matt, his spirit, loyalty, and kindness to Harper Creek Athletes. The event was a wonderful night for our whole community, beginning with a reception followed by a ceremony and the opening football game. Thank you to Melissa Feasel, John Ruemenapp, and Jim Robinson for all the hard work organizing this event.

- B. Administration:** Mr. Ridgeway communicated the upcoming events around the District. Mr. Ridgeway discussed that the Steering Committee will meet on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, to see the District Facility Assessment results. In addition, Mr. Ridgeway highlighted the high school parent meeting on September 11, 2025, for seniors, September 16, 2025, for sophomores and juniors, and on September 18, 2025, for freshmen. Another item Mr. Ridgeway discussed is Band Night for parents at the Friday, September 26, football game, and the Homecoming date for 2025, which is October 3, 2025. Additionally, he highlighted Count Day on October 1 and the WPE Read-A-Thon. Also, Mr. Ridgeway discussed that WPE will be getting a therapy dog named Charlie, the Middle school will have a chess club, and the fall play will be ***Murder on the Orient Express***. Mr. Ridgeway discussed the HCEF/Beaver Booster Golf Outing, which raised \$12,000.00 for scholarships and athletics. In addition, Mr. Ridgeway discussed an upcoming policy committee meeting to dive deeper into AI, making sure Harper Creek keeps up with the latest safety and protocol of AI. Lastly, Mr. Ridgeway discussed the Handle with Care initiative with county law enforcement to provide students who have been in situations with the police with extra support from staff, teachers, and counseling if and when needed.
- C. Board Secretary:** Mr. Halverson shared a thank you from the Harper Creek Clay Target Team and Coach Hamilton.

VI. District Updates

- A. Curriculum:** Mrs. Williams stated that the Board Report looks a little different because it now aligns with the Strategic Priorities. Mrs. Williams discussed a literacy grant that Harper Creek applied for and received to upgrade ELA Amplify (KD-5th), EL Education (6th-8th) curriculum, so that the 3rd edition can be used for fall 2026. Lastly, Mrs. Williams highlighted student success. The Board reviewed the state testing of time data, which shows many grade level increases in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Many are now at or above the state average. Success is because of the viable curriculum, professional learning communities, and the investment in our people, and hiring the best teachers.
- B. Facility:** Mr. Robinson discussed the facilities report. Some areas that were highlighted include the middle school chiller repair by Johnson Controls, the high school fire alarm panel, which has been

replaced and is currently working according to specifications. Lastly, Mr. Robinson updated the Board on moving forward with a controlled burn at the rental property. Mr. Robinson is working with Emmett Township.

- C. Finance: Mrs. Obermyer discussed the Cash Balance Report, allowing Board members to ask questions. The report indicates a 2024/2025 final budget projection with a deficit, but because of conservative budgeting and responsible spending, there is positive revenue. Because of this, the Fund Balance for Harper Creek Community Schools is 16.6%. In addition, Mrs. Obermyer stated that the State Budget has still not been passed, causing some concerns. Another item Mrs. Obermyer discussed is the audit that was completed earlier in the month. The audit went well, and the Board will receive a presentation from the auditors in an upcoming Board of Education meeting. Lastly, Mrs. Obermyer stated that all financial reports are available to the Board to review in Boardbook.
- D. Technology: Mr. Maynard discussed the need for more student devices due to increased enrollment, and some devices are too old to allow for updates needed for testing. The technology department will order some additional computers to cover the needs. Lastly, Mr. Maynard discussed the new and improved HCTV, a student-led news update show. He commented on how engaged students are and how excited staff are about the new formatting.

VII. Comments Related to Agenda Items:

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 11, 2025, Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes
 - 2. Approves August 27, Building Committee Meeting Minutes
 - 3. Approve September 4, 2025, Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mrs. Wallace, 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.

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

Approve the following minutes as reviewed:

- Approves August 11, 2025, Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes
- Approves August 27, 2025, Building Committee Meeting Minutes
- Approves September 4, 2025, Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

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

Motion Carried: 6-0.

IX. Information and Discussion

- A. School Safety: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the school safety. The Safety Committee met at the middle school to go over building-specific concerns, thoughts, and ideas. Mr. Ridgeway discussed the clock/notification system at the middle school, allowing for a whole school PA that would better reach large spaces like the gym. In addition, some concerns at the middle school are the windows, which are “people-sized,” and safety procedures for after-school activities. The middle school has a volunteer group called the “Safety Squad” that patrols hallways and makes student connections to help with safety issues. Vaping is down at the middle school. The team also discussed a doorbell system for HCCAA.
- B. Strategic Plan Update: Mr. Ridgeway stated the strategic priority of achievement was visible in the testing data presented by Mrs. Williams. Students are growing because of a viable curriculum and teachers working hard to align teaching with priority standards. In addition, Mr. Ridgeway stated that a leadership program that fast-tracks staff to a Master’s program, allowing staff to obtain an Education leadership degree, is being considered by many staff

members. The program is employee-paid but allows staff to obtain a degree in 18 months.

- C. School Year Update: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the increase in students at Harper Creek this year. With additional students come additional needs. The District added a .5-time person at the high school, a full-time art teacher at the middle school, and a 1st grade teacher will be added. Currently, class numbers are still high in ELA in the high school, 3rd grade at Sonoma, and kindergarten at Wattles Park. Principals and administration are working together to solve any issues. The high school has adjusted the bell schedule and added a third lunch period to accommodate increased numbers.
- D. New Hires: Mr. Ridgeway discussed the latest new hires for the 2025-2026 school year. Lynne Wood, .5 HCCAA Special Education Teacher, MA20, and Kasey Cole, Sonoma 4th grade teacher, BA1
- E. Funding Requests
 - 1. 6th Grade Camp: The cost of 6th-grade camp continues to increase, with parents paying \$371 per student last year. The middle school, specifically the 6th-grade staff, fundraised to ensure that all students could attend. After considering the total cost – approximately \$71,000 – Mr. Ridgeway recommends that the Board of Education pay \$40,000 out of the general fund to offset the cost to our families.
 - 2. 4th Grade Big Zoo Lesson: Similar to 6th 6th-grade camp, all of our students have the opportunity to learn at Binder Park Zoo for a week-long daytime experience. The buildings have been fundraised to cover the cost, but as this is a curricular activity, the district should cover it. Mr. Ridgeway recommends approving an expenditure of \$7,500 for all 4th graders to continue the Big Zoo Lesson.
- F. Naming of Facilities Request: The recommendation of the naming committee consensus was to name the high school gym floor in memory of Gary Lincoln. Committee members expressed an opinion that other facilities might be more suitable based on Mr. Lincoln's legacy. Still, Mr. Lincoln does meet the criteria for facilities to be named after him. As we previously discussed, the facility naming request comes with a significant donation.
- G. School Aid Budget Resolution: Mr. Ridgeway read the resolution that Mrs. Allwardt wrote regarding the lack of a passed State Aid Budget.

- X. Comments From the Audience: There were no comments from the audience.
- XI. ACTION
- A. New Hires :
- Motion by Mrs. Wallace, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve the following new hires:
- Lynne Wood – HCCAA part-time Special Education Teacher, Master's Degree from Concordia University, MA20 (prorated for .50 FTE)
 - Kasey Cole – Sonoma Elementary 4th Grade Teacher, Bachelor's Degree from Seton Hill University, BA1
- As discussed and reviewed.
- Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Allwardt Absent.
- Motion Carried: 6-0
- B. Funding Requests
1. 6th Grade Camp
- Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve allocating \$40,000 from the general fund to offset the cost of 6th Grade Camp as discussed and reviewed.
- Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Risner Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Allwardt Absent.
- Motion Carried: 6-0
2. 4th Grade Big Zoo Lesson
- Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Waterson,
That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve allocating \$7,500.00 from the general fund to cover the cost of the 4th Grade Big Zoo Lesson as discussed and reviewed.
- Roll Call Vote: Mr. Halverson Y, Mrs. Wallace Y, Mr. Bess Y, Mrs. Waterson Y, Mrs. Risner Y, Mr. Smith Y, Mrs. Allwardt Absent.
- Motion Carried: 6-o.
- C. School Aide Budget Resolution
- Motion by Mr. Smith, supported by Mrs. Risner,
- HARPER CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD OF
EDUCATION RESOLUTION REGARDING THE LACK OF A
STATE BUDGET AND MISALIGNED BUDGET DEADLINES**

WHEREAS, the Harper Creek Community School District, Board of Education, along with school districts across the State of Michigan, is required by law to adopt an annual budget no later than June 30; and

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan’s fiscal year begins on October 1, with a statutory deadline of September 30 to adopt its own budget; and

WHEREAS, the absence of a finalized state budget prior to the June 30 deadline for local school districts forces districts to adopt budgets based on assumptions and incomplete information; and

WHEREAS, this year, Harper Creek Community Schools—along with districts across Michigan—are being forced to start the 2025–26 school year without a state budget in place, creating unacceptable uncertainty in funding; and

WHEREAS, this uncertainty jeopardizes the ability of Harper Creek Community Schools to plan responsibly for staffing, programs, student services, and operational needs; and

WHEREAS, the continued misalignment between the State of Michigan’s budget process and the mandated school budget deadline creates unnecessary instability for the school community; and

WHEREAS, the Governor has placed a public priority on infrastructure projects such as repairing roads, while the operation of Michigan’s public schools—institutions that serve the most vulnerable citizens of the state and prepare the next generation—should be the highest priority.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Harper Creek Community School Board of Education expresses its deep concern and frustration with the State of Michigan’s failure to provide school aid funding information in advance of the mandated deadline; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Harper Creek Community School Board of Education calls on the remaining 704 Michigan Public School Districts to pass similar resolutions demanding a more

appropriate alignment of fiscal years, in addition to the immediate action in passing a state budget prior to the September 30 deadline; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Harper Creek Community School Board of Education urges the Michigan Legislature and Governor to take immediate action to adopt a statutory requirement for the School Aid Budget to be finalized and enacted no later than June 1 of each year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be transmitted to the Governor of Michigan, the Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Michigan Senate, Local representatives, the Michigan Department of Education, and the Michigan Association of School Boards, Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators, Calhoun County Board of Commissioners and the Calhoun County Intermediate School District.

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

Motion Carried: 6-0.

D. Naming of Facility Request

Motion by Mrs. Risner, supported by Mrs. Waterson,

That the Harper Creek Board of Education approve the recommendation by the Naming Committee to name the high school basketball court in memory of Gary Lincoln, as discussed and reviewed.

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

Motion Carried: 6-o

XII. Items for the Next Meeting

XIII. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:21 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.