

Board of Education Meeting

Liberty School Board Room

June 10, 2025, at 6:30 PM



MINUTES

Mission

We, the Saline Area Schools, will equip all students with the knowledge, technological proficiency, and personal skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex society. We expect that our students, staff, and the Saline Community will share in these responsibilities.

OPENING

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Education Meeting was called to order at 6:41 pm by President Michael McVey

Board Members Present: Tim Austin, Darcy Berwick, Brad Gerbe, Lauren Gold, Michael McVey and Jason Tizedes.

Board Members Absent: Jennifer Steben

Central Administration Present: Superintendent Laatsch, Assistant Superintendents Baaki Diglio and Owsley, Executive Directors Clary, Davis, Martin and Voelker.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. STATEMENT READ BY BRAD GERBE

Treasurer Gerbe has accepted a teaching position with Saline High School. This is included on the HR Report being approved on this evening's consent agenda. Due to state law preventing an individual from being both an employee and a board member, he recused himself from the remainder of the meeting to avoid any conflict of interest. His resignation is effective June 21, 2025.

Motion made by Secretary Berwick, support Trustee Tizedes to accept the resignation of Brad Gerbe effective June 21, 2025.

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOGNITION**

Student Representative Recognition

Kate Sonnenday

The Board recognized Kate Sonnenday for her service as a student representative, presenting her with a plaque and a \$500 scholarship to be put towards her upcoming business studies at the University of Tennessee.

President McVey introduced Jillian Hayes as the 25/26 BOE Student Representative.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Cody Stedman, recent Alumni Class of 2025 - spoke regarding the SHS Journalism programs and the success of SHS Today and Hornet Nation including their recent induction of Nate Bush into the state high school journalism hall of fame.

Georgia Frost, Office of Debbie Dingell - presented Dr. Laatsch a framed copy of a Congressional Record Statement honoring his 27 years of service to Saline Area Schools. This statement, now part of the official congressional record, commends Dr. Laatsch's dedication to students and the improvements he has made to the district's schools.

Amy Tesolin, Parent - spoke regarding support of Saline Area School teachers and the community's strong appreciation for their work.

6. **RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC COMMENT**

AGENDA

7. **REVISIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION made by Trustee Austin, support Trustee Gold **to approve the agenda as printed.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

8. **ACTION ITEMS**

A. MOTION made by Secretary Berwick, support Trustee Austin **to approve the food service management contract with Chartwells for the 2025-26 School Year as submitted by Miranda Owsley, Assistant Superintendent of Finance**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- B. MOTION** made by Trustee Austin, support Trustee Tizedes **to adopt the amended General Appropriations Act for 2024-2025 Final Amended Budgets, 2025-2026 Original Budgets and the 2025 L-4029 tax rates as submitted by Miranda Owsley, Assistant Superintendent of Finance**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- C. MOTION** made by Trustee Austin, support Trustee Tizedes **to approve the Closed Session minutes of May 27, 2025, for the purpose of Collective Bargaining 8(c) of the Open Meetings Act.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- D. MOTION** made by Trustee Gold, support Trustee Tizedes **to approve the recommendation for The Reuse Network (IRN) to project manage and coordinate the logistics of the removal of up to 2,932 pieces of furniture at a cost not to exceed \$63,068 as submitted by Rex Clary, Executive Director of Operations.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- E. MOTION** made by Secretary Berwick, support Trustee Austin **to approve the Neola and District updates to the following policies as submitted by the Policy Committee:**

Policy 5330.01 - Epinephrine Auto-Injectors

Policy 7540.09 - Artificial Intelligence

Policy 7540.04 - Staff Technology Acceptable Use and Safety

Policy 5500 - Student Conduct

Policy 7440 - Facility Security

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

9. SCHEDULED REPORTS

- A. Presentation of Athletic 5|3 Consulting Athletic Department Review**

Presenters: Adhoc Committee Members (Austin, Gold, McVey)

President McVey gave an overview of the process regarding the Athletic Department Review. The ad hoc committee also included Lauren Gold and Tim Austin. The report was authored by Scott Robertson of 5|3 Consulting. For his report Mr. Robertson reviewed public documents and visited the district on 3 separate occasions. He engaged with community members and attended games and well as conducted two targeted surveys for coaches and student athletes. He thanked Athletic Director Ashley Mantha and Assistant Athletic Director Jeff Pike for their transparency and cooperation throughout the review process.

The report offered recommendations to enhance communication and overall functioning of the athletic department. Also recommendations to explore alternative tools for postseason feedback. Saline Area Schools is seen as a leader in Title IX compliance and is recognized by the Southeastern Conference administrators. The athletic department actively engages with the MHSAA and participates in multiple professional development sessions each year.

MOTION made by Trustee Austin, support Trustee Tizedes **to acknowledge the completion of the report and positive work of the athletic department.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

B. State of the District (Past, Present and Future)

Presenter: Superintendent Steve Laatsch

Dr. Laatsch presented his final report, recapping the district's past, present and future. He highlighted over 4700 students, 700+ staff members, 95% graduation rate and enrollment currently ahead of last year's numbers for young 5's and kindergarten.

The goals have remained consistent over the past four years aimed at continuous improvement. The importance of academic rigor within the curriculum was emphasized. This focus extends particularly within CTE programs. Students are excelling in state competitions which demonstrates the effectiveness of these programs.

Also creating a culture of equity is an ongoing process providing support and accelerating progress for all students especially in the English Learner program and social-emotional learning.

The district is dedicated to helping students engage in respectful conversations, supporting civility and unity even amidst differing viewpoints.

Improvements are being made to prepare Saline Area Schools for the future through the bond work and enhancements to the staffing model. The new SHS STEAM center is scheduled to open in August 2025 which will provide dedicated spaces for robotics and science olympiad teams. Also opening soon will be the new weight room designed to accommodate multiple PE classes simultaneously focusing on individual fitness. Current projects under way are the Liberty Athletic Complex and Senior Center.

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Finance Committee Update

Chair, Brad Gerbe (given by Tim Austin)

Acknowledgement to Brad Gerbe for his work as treasurer over the past several years. The finance committee met prior to this evening's Board meeting to look a little deeper into some of the line items being presented in the budget hearing like instructional staff services and maintenance and operations. The budget projection includes a \$200 per pupil increase. The next finance committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 12th at 4 pm.

11. ADMINISTRATION / BOARD UPDATES

Superintendent Laatsch - provided a farewell message to the community, updates on his future plans and confidence in Dr. Kowalski leading our district.

Trustee Austin - thank you to Steve for his 27 years of service to our district. Congratulations to the graduates, and thank you to all staff for their hard work this year.

Secretary Berwick - thank you to Steve for his 27 years of service to our district, excited to begin working with Rachel and to be part of the process in selecting and welcoming a new board member.

President McVey - attended the City of Saline Pride flag raising. The WISD election results: Dorcas Musili ran unopposed for the partial term and Diane Hockett and Mary Jane Tramontin elected for the two 3-year terms. Will work on a press release to be posted announcing the Board vacancy. This will include a 2 week window for applicants to apply. Applicants must reside in the SAS District and be eligible to vote.

Trustee Gold - thank you to Steve for his 27 years of service to our district and congratulations on his retirement. Also an acknowledgement to Brad for his mentoring. Acknowledgement that June is Gun Violence Awareness month. Gun locks are available at the police station. Honoring the LGBTQ community during Pride Month.

Trustee Tizedes - thank you to Steve for his 27 years of service to our district and congratulations on his retirement. Congratulations to Brad on his new teaching position. And congratulations to all the 2025 Saline graduates.

12. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION made by Trustee Austin, support Secretary Berwick **to authorize the Consent Agenda as printed:**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- A. **Approval** of the Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes of May 27, 2025
- B. **Approval of Payment** of the General Fund Accounts Payable of June 10, 2025, in the amount of \$3,498,355.22

- C. **Approval of Payment** of the Bond Fund Series III Accounts Payable of June 10, 2025 in the amount of \$164,500.00
- D. **Approval of Payment** of 2023 Bond Fund Series I Accounts Payable of June 10, 2025, in the amount of \$3,276,699.47
- E. **Approval of Payment** of 2025 Bond Fund Series II Accounts Payable of June 10, 2025, in the amount of \$570,991.88
- F. **Approval** of the 2025-2026 MASB Membership Renewal in the amount of \$8470.61
- G. **Receive and File** Finance and Human Resources Reports

CLOSING

13. ITEMS SCHEDULED ON THE NEXT AGENDA

- A. Dr. Kowalski's first meeting
- B. Approval of Banks / accounts / signatures
- C. Tech Department Annual update
- D. FSAS Annual update

14. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

15. NEXT MEETING

The next Board of Education Meeting will be held on July 8, 2025, at 6:30 PM.

16. CLOSED SESSION

MOTION made by Trustee Tizedes, support Trustee Austin **to enter Closed Session of the Board of Education at 8 PM, with the intent to re-enter Open Session at 8:30 PM, for the purpose of Collective Bargaining 8(c) of the Open Meetings Act. Under Section 8(c) a simple majority vote is sufficient to enter into a closed session.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

With no objection, the Board returned to open session at 9:52 pm

President McVey clarified that Brad's letter of resignation is dated June 21 which ensures the board remains within the 30-day timeframe to find a replacement. It was proper ethical etiquette for him to recuse himself from tonight's meeting.

17. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION made by Trustee Gold, support Trustee Austin **to adjourn the Regular Board of Education Meeting of June 10, 2025, at 9:53 PM.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darcy Berwick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Darcy Berwick
Board Secretary

Recorded by: Betty Jahnke