

**Minutes of Gurnee School District 56  
Board of Education Meeting  
May 28, 2025**

The following Board members were in attendance: Odie Pahl, Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, and Mandi Florip. Absent: Germain Castellanos.

Also in attendance:

Luis Correa, Superintendent  
Martin Da Costa, Director of Business | CSBO  
Eric Esteban, Director of Technology  
Pete Helfers, Director of Curriculum & Instruction  
Sean Smith, Director of Facilities & Grounds  
Rachel Solomon, Director of Pupil Services  
Miriam Torres, Multilingual & Assessment Coordinator  
Principals: Jen Glickley, Ryan Lazar, and Allison Waller  
Lori Rupsch, Board Clerk

Board President Pos called the regular meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and asked that everyone join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Member Castellanos arrived at 5:02 p.m.

At this time, recognition was given to the District's track students for qualifying for State. These students were Khyrii Coleman, Haddin English, Adriel Gonzalez, Kayden Hudgins, and Yayra Kuma. Board President Pos presented each student with a certificate of achievement and pictures were taken.

Board Member Blockinger made a motion with a second from Board Member Pahl to accept the minutes from the regular meeting on April 23, 2025, as presented. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

The regular April 30, 2025, Treasurer's Report identified cash and investments of \$22,096,061.60. The Revenue Report identified receipts of \$855,060.23 and the Expenditure Report identified expenses totaling \$2,614,013.09. The cash balance in the Activity Fund for April was \$109,591.40. The Financial Reports plus the Revised April (\$1,620,697.64) and Regular May (\$2,025,750.02) Bills for Payment Reports were approved on a motion by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board Member Garcia. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

During the *Public Participation* portion of the meeting, no one wished to address the Board of Education.

The Board took a moment to recognize Mrs. Rupsch for her twenty-three years as Board secretary and wished her well in her retirement.

Dr. Correa requested that each building principal provide the Board of Education highlights that had occurred at their building since the previous Board of Education meeting. This included pictures from:

Prairie Trail: Baby Chick Project; Great American Ceremony

River Trail: Memorial Garden and Garden Club; Parent Advisory Committee; during Asian Islander Month Ms. Gozun taught a class how to make Pancit from scratch; End of Year Recognitions

Viking: Financial Literacy Activities; Dinner Theater; Track Recognitions; 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Promotion

Spaulding: Growth Parade; Racine Zoo Trip; Team Building Activities

BPAC: Mother's Day Event

At this time, Dr. Correa requested that each administrator report on department projects/tasks that they were currently focused on:

Mr. Esteban: Summer Projects

Mr. Smith: Purging Process; Upgrade HVAC Computer; Summer Construction

Ms. Torres: Multilingual Director's Meeting; Hosted Registration Event (BPAC)

Ms. Solomon: SRP Meetings; State Reporting; Preschool for All Audit

Mr. Helfers: Science Curriculum; ELA Literacy Review; Planning New Staff Training

Mr. Da Costa: Filling Employment Vacancies; Insurance Meetings; CLIC Renewal

Mrs. Solomon provided the Board of Education a presentation on SEDOL's program costs and financial changes that would occur throughout the FY25, FY26, and FY27 school years. She provided a comparison of total charges starting with FY23 through to FY26. Mr. Da Costa provided information on funding to support the SEDOL increase.

The Board held discussion as to whether they wanted to attend the Triple I Conference this year that was being held on November 21-23, 2025. Board Members Pahl, Kotsinis, Garcia, and Pos indicated they wished to attend, and Board Member Castellanos would let Mrs. Rupsch know prior to June 2, 2025.

Dr. Correa asked Board members to discuss topics suggested by the PTO for consideration. Items discussed were: organizing a Meet & Greet event for September, mutual participation in the Gurnee Days Parade, and live streaming of Board of Education meetings. The Board was amenable to all of these items. Mr. Esteban would investigate what would be needed to start streaming Board meetings and acquiring the necessary equipment.

Dr. Correa requested that the Board of Education make the Professional Leave and Conferences report a matter of record of the minutes of the regular May 28, 2025, Board of Education meeting.

An additional six Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests were received by Dr. Correa from [ad.cuius.bonum@proton.me](mailto:ad.cuius.bonum@proton.me) via email asking for the annual expenses paid to identified vendors, firms, and individuals for a total of 27 years with the four requests noted at last month's meeting. Mrs. Rupsch responded via email to [ad.cuius.bonum@proton.me](mailto:ad.cuius.bonum@proton.me) with the requested information.

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Correa via email on April 18, 2025, from Mr. Bo Kim (UnionBids.com) asking for bid results/tabulations and which bidder was awarded the project for pavement improvements at Spaulding and Viking Schools. Mrs. Rupsch responded via email on April 28, 2025, to Mr. Kim with the requested information.

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Mrs. Rupsch via email on April 25, 2025, from Ms. Karen Garcia (SmartProcure) asking for information regarding staff. The information included first name, last name, position title, department, direct phone number, business cell phone number, email address, and office address. Mrs. Rupsch responded via email on April 28, 2025, to Ms. Garcia with the requested information.

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Correa via email on May 7, 2025, from Mr. Abbas Khan (Civic IQ Inc.) asking for information regarding all purchasing records from 1/1/2022 to date for all schools in the District. This information needed to include vendor name, purchase order number, purchase date, and line-item details, quantities, and prices. Mrs. Rupsch responded via email on May 8, 2025, to Mr. Khan with the requested information.

On a motion from Board Member Florip with a second from Board Member Pahl, the Board voted to approve Board policies under review (Policies 2:110, 2:120, 2:125, 2:130, 4:80, 4:90, 4:100) and to adopt those policies as presented by the administration. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

Dr. Correa provided the Board of Education a group of policies to review to ensure that those policies reflected the intent of the Board. This was a goal the Board made and, ultimately, all Board policies would be reviewed during a three-year cycle. Current policies for review were 6:130, 6:135, 6:140, 6:145, 7:100, 7:130, 7:140, and 7:160. The Board would officially approve the recommended changes at the next Board of Education meeting.

Dr. Correa presented to the Board of Education for first reading recommended new policies, Issue 118 April 2025, from the Illinois Association of School Boards. No Board action on these policies was necessary at this time.

Mr. Smith was in attendance seeking Board approval to award a contract to Schroeder Asphalt Services Inc., not to exceed \$1,101,915.25 for the replacement of the parking lot at Viking Middle School and the expansion and replacement of the parking lot at Spaulding School. On a motion from Board Member Blockinger with a second from Board President Pos, the Board voted to award a contract to Schroeder Asphalt Services Inc., not to exceed \$1,101,915.25 for the replacement of the parking lot at Viking Middle School and the expansion and replacement

of the parking lot at Spaulding School. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

Mr. Da Costa shared with the Board of Education the 2024 levy and tax extension information provided by the Lake County Clerk's Office. The maximum capped levy available to the District was \$26,984,227.98. The tax rate for all levies was set at 4.256210 per \$100 of EAV (Equalized Assessed Valuation).

On a motion from Board Member Kotsinis with a second from Board Member Pahl, the Board voted to make the Post-Issuance Tax Compliance Report a part of the minutes of the May 28, 2025, meeting of the Board of Education. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

Due to the huge success of the Boys & Girls Club of Lake County Great Futures Academy at Viking Middle School this current school year, Dr. Correa proposed to the Board of Education that the District expand the program and have an additional program at Spaulding School for students for the 2025-2026 school year. On a motion from Board President Pos with a second from Board Member Garcia, the Board voted to accept the proposal to operate a Great Futures Academy at both Viking Middle School and Spaulding School for District 56 students as presented by the administration. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, and Odie Pahl. Abstain: Germain Castellanos.

Dr. Correa discussed with the Board of Education a proposal submitted by CESO Communications to provide the District with a tailored communications plan that will align with the District's strategic plan and will achieve its goals and objectives. CESO Communications will also assist the District with ongoing communications support after the plan had been implemented. The maximum cost of this proposal was \$48,000.00. On a motion from Board Member Kotsinis with a second from Board Member Garcia, the Board voted to accept the proposal from CESO Communications at a cost not to exceed \$48,000.00 to create a communications plan for the District and then assist the District in implementing the plan and provide ongoing support. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

Mrs. Solomon reported to the Board details from the meeting that she attended with Ms. Rebecca Chorazy, special education teacher at St. Patrick School, and the Occupational Therapist at St. Patrick School, on May 19, 2025, to discuss the utilization of proportionate share funds. The preliminary allocation amount was unknown at the time of the meeting. Ms. Vitulli, Principal at St. Patrick School, proposed that the money be used to support speech-language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy services for eligible students attending the school. Ms. Vitulli also requested that a portion of the funds to be allocated toward funding the services provided by the school counselor, Ms. Bridget McKinnon. On a motion from Board Member Blockinger with a second from Board Member Pahl, the Board of Education voted to approve the use of the proportionate share monies to provide speech and language services,

occupational therapy services, and physical therapy services for eligible students at St. Patrick School along with the salary for their school counselor. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

During the *Public Comment* portion of the meeting, Mrs. Emily Heslinga thanked the Board of Education for their support. Mrs. Helena Kreul thanked Board Member Kotsinis and Dr. Correa for attending the last PTO meeting of the year. She also thanked the Board for supporting her recommendation to livestream Board meetings.

On a motion by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board President Pos, the Board voted to adjourn open session at 6:41 p.m. The Board went into closed session at 6:44 p.m. to discuss the following items on a roll call vote:

- The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or a volunteer of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity. However, a meeting to consider an increase in compensation to a specific employee of a public body that is subject to the Local Government Wage Increase Transparency Act may not be closed and shall be open to the public and posted and held in accordance with this Act. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).
- Student disciplinary cases. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(9).
- The placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10).
- Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the minutes of the closed meeting. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).
- Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under the Open Meetings Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21).

Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

The Board of Education came out of closed session at 6:54 p.m. on a motion from Board President Pos and seconded by Board Member Kotsinis. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

On a motion from Board Member Florip with a second from Board President Pos, the Board voted to approve the personnel recommendations minus Item F.1.e. as presented by the Superintendent. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

On a motion from Board Member Castellanos with a second from Board Member Pahl, the Board voted to approve closed session minutes for the meeting on April 23, 2025, as presented. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

A motion was made by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board Member Garcia to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Becky Kotsinis, Cesar Garcia, Mark Pos, Jim Blockinger, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, and Odie Pahl.

Respectfully submitted:

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Mark Pos, President

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Odie Pahl, Secretary  
Board of Education, District #56  
Lake County, IL