

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
HINCKLEY-BIG ROCK COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #429**



**Regular Meeting  
September 17, 2025**

The meeting begins at 6:30 PM in the Hinckley-Big Rock High School Library.  
This meeting is also live streamed for public  
viewing: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcNJ6ijnqwe0nF8UpSCsB8A>.

1) **Call to Order - Regular Meeting of the Hinckley-Big Rock Board of Education**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by President Greg Pritchard

2) **Roll Call**

Policy 2:220 Board of Education Meeting Procedure

Present: Abigail Barrett, Greg Pritchard, Darrin Gengler, Tim Badal, Myia Sittig and Jack Haines

Also Present: Dr. Jessica Sonntag and Student Representatives: Alex Casanas and Matthew Badal

Absent: Debi White and Student Representative Savannah McMurtrie

3) **Approval of the Agenda**

Policy 2:220 Board of Education Meeting Procedure

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Jack Haines and seconded by Abigail Barrett, passed 6-0,

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and

Myia Sittig: Yea

4) **Consent Agenda**

A. **Minutes** - Regular Meeting and Executive Session Minutes

B. **Treasurer's Report**

C. **Bills and Payroll**

D. **Personnel Report**

Dr. Sonntag made a note about the personnel report being revised before the board meeting to add a resignation of a paraprofessional.

Motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Jack Haines and seconded by Tim Badal, passed 6-0,

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and Myia Sittig: Yea

5) **Royal Shout Out**

This month our HBR High School front office staff was recognized. Our student representatives shared how supportive and helpful Kristin Langston and Jenn Porter are throughout the school year.

6) **Citizens Request to Address the Board-None**

7) **Presentation**

A. Kristin Delisio: STEAM Education Update

Mrs. D started off her presentation with a lesson to challenge the board members, showing them what skills were being practiced in the short activity. Mrs D. explained to the Board that STEAM at HBR is changing. What once was a stand alone special class is now an integrated/embedded lesson for not only the students but for our teachers. Teachers are able to book times with Mrs. D. on a shared calendar where she will bring a STEAM activity to go along with the lesson that is being taught in the classroom.

B. Audit Presentation: Andrea Meyer Newkirk & Associates

Andrea Meyer with Newkirk & Associates presented the FY25 audit to the Board. After reviewing finances, processes, and controls, it was concluded with a "clean" audit. No disagreements or difficulties were presented. There were no areas for concern, no material weaknesses or deficiencies. One thing that may have room for improvement is a credit card policy. It was suggested that anyone that holds a credit card in the district should read and sign

a credit card policy to keep on file. Dr. Sonntag indicated that this has been instituted since the audit review.

Mrs. Meyer was complimentary of the HBR business office team, both in their collaboration and segregation of duties to support internal controls. Hinckley-Big Rock received a financial profile rating of “recognition” from ISBE, which is the highest rating you can receive. Our financial score for FY25 is 3.65 out of 4.0.

8) **Committee Updates**

A. Buildings, Grounds & Transportation

This committee met on September 3rd. There was a presentation from Shawn Ajazi from Progressive Business Solutions. Shawn updated the committee on key solar provisions from the July 4, 2025 bill, noting commercial projects must begin by July 4, 2026 to secure federal incentives, with reduced benefits for later starts. He also recommended solar placements for the schools and shared a 25-year cost and savings analysis.

Andy Lien reported that the O&M Building has made routine maintenance easier, and the air compressor piping was updated. At the beginning of the school year bus battery issues arose but have since been resolved, but a new problem with ABS tone rings disconnecting from wheel hubs is still being addressed.

The high school lighting project is nearly complete, with only a few items and the online access portal remaining, expected to finish this month. Soccer field lights are installed. The installer is adding four additional lights at no cost increase to alleviate the lighting concern. There were some challenges with the network upgrade due to the outdated former setup of the network that had additional components added to it over time. Sorting this out and transitioning to a more cloud-based and orderly approach took some additional time. Some of the new switches were also not set up correctly by the supplier and needed to be replaced under warranty. The final step is migrating printers to the new server, which may cause minor user disruption. The driveway at 540 W Lincoln Highway was reviewed, with concerns about deep potholes preventing safe use; Zane Holland will explore repair options. Site cleanup is ongoing, and Zane and Brandon Kriesch will contact the contractor to complete the work. The team also discussed revisiting phases 2 and 3 of the Facilities Improvement Project and potential future expansion as the community grows.

B. IVVC

The IVVC Board did not meet this month. The next meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2025

C. IBCC

Abigail Barrett updated the board on the IBCC meeting that was held on September 10th, 2025. The committee revisited the mental health days discussion from last year, reviewing the guidelines set by the IBCC and HBREA Executive Board. Members expressed support for the guidelines, which aim to clarify the use of mental health days, similar to personal and sick leave. We encourage all staff to prioritize their well-being.

The IBCC will again serve as the calendar committee for HBR, gathering input for a survey from students, parents, and staff at the October 8 meeting. Survey results will be reviewed in November, with final calendars for the 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 school years to be completed by January.

One topic that was brought up by Dr. Sonntag in the meeting was the printer usage within the district. Our printing lease expires in February, and Brandon Kriesch is exploring the best options for pricing and functionality. We often find unclaimed print jobs, resulting in wasted paper, ink, and color copies. Additionally, students sometimes print to color printers without approval. Solutions to reduce waste were discussed.

9) **Student Representative Update**

Matthew Badal gave a sports update. Golf has 2 more weeks until regionals. We have 4 new coaches this fall season. 2 new volleyball coaches and 2 new golf coaches. Soccer field benches have been updated with blogger dugouts as well as the field lights. Matthew thanks the maintenance team on behalf of the soccer team for this upgrade.

A new and popular addition this year is dual sports participation, allowing students to play on two teams simultaneously. Students are expected to check in daily with their coaches to communicate where they will be. One challenge noted is when competitions for both sports occur on the same day.

Matthew gave Mr. Wilkie a shoutout for attending different sporting events and talking to students in school showing his support for everyone.

The FFA participated in the Sandwich Fair by hosting a petting zoo. Additionally, the middle school officially signed its charter, marking an important milestone.

Alex Casanas shared that the high school transitioned from two lunch periods to one this year. The students like having the one lunch period so that they can eat lunch with their friends. Everyone is getting through the lunch line with plenty of time to eat. Students enjoy spending free time in the gym and outside after they eat. As an alternative, the library is available for quiet study or schoolwork.

Also new this year is Student Support, a program similar to a study hall. It takes place in the library and is supervised by staff who check in with students to ensure they are staying on task and completing assignments.

The Advisory Committee is to meet October 2nd is the first meeting this school year.

#### 10) **Administrative Update**

##### A. Food Service

Dr. Sonntag reminded the board that last April, we renewed our contract with Whitsons, our food service management company, for one year with the intention of exploring new options that better serve our students and district. Whitsons has been our provider for the past 25–30 years, largely because they have been the only company to bid on our contract.

Currently, we are charged \$5.78 per meal. While we have raised the adult meal price to \$5.75 to help offset this cost, student meals remain at \$3.50. For students who qualify for free or reduced lunch, the district is reimbursed \$4.60, and we cover the remaining difference. Participation remains low, with only about one-third of students purchasing school lunch.

As part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), we must meet certain requirements, including specific food choices and ingredients. After conducting a thorough cost analysis, Dr. Sonntag reported that the district is projected to lose approximately \$194,000 in food service this year.

To address this, several options are being considered, including opting out of the NSLP. Doing so would reduce restrictions and allow for more flexible and appealing meal options. This could include partnering with local businesses or preparing meals in-house. Dr. Sonntag has also met with Whitsons, who will conduct a review to explore possible improvements on their end.

##### B. Enrollment Update

So far this year, we have had 23 students move in, 13 students move out, and 1 transfer to a private school who still lives within the district. Current enrollment is 730. At the high school we currently have 211 students, 214 at the middle school, and 295 at the elementary school. Capacity at each school is about 300 at the high school, about 250 at the middle school and about 350 at the elementary school. The board also discussed the total square footage of each building compared to the instructional space available, with a focus on maximizing use of existing facilities.

Dr. Sonntag will attend the upcoming Hinckley Village meeting this month to provide an update on district enrollment and to learn about any new developments from the village.

#### 11) **Discussion**

##### A. District and Building finalized SIP goals

There are no changes to the district or building SIP (School Improvement Plan) goals. According to Dr. Sonntag, these goals are intentionally set at a high level to ensure that 80% or more of our students meet the established standards.

The new superintendent's goal is to support the building administrative teams in reaching these targets by providing strong leadership and a clear framework.

Each building may approach these goals differently based on their specific needs.

Currently, we are working with outside vendors to provide virtual professional development for staff during the upcoming Institute Day on October 10th. Our staff consistently demonstrates initiative by actively seeking out conferences and training relevant to their content areas.

##### B. Press Issues 119

Dr. Sonntag explained that this issue is about the five year monitoring and no substantial language changes. These are policies we have in place currently and Dr. Sonntag suggested waiving the 2nd reading of this policy.

C. Policy Review

The Board began the multi-year policy review. Breaking up the policy in smaller sections for the board to review. This month, the focus was on Section 2: Board of Education, parts 2:10-2:80. Jack Haines went over some notes he created and the board discussed how to interpret this section of the policy and how to show the revisions.

12) **Action**

A. Motion to approve the FY25 audit as presented

Motion to approve the FY25 audit as presented was made by Darrin Gengler and seconded by Jack Haines, passed 6-0

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and Myia Sittig: Yea

B. Motion to approve the Resolution for Permanent Fund Transfer from Working Cash to Capital Projects Fund as submitted

Motion to approve the Resolution for Permanent Fund Transfer from Working Cash to Capital Projects Fund as submitted was made by Jack Haines and seconded by Tim Badal, passed 6-0

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and Myia Sittig: Yea

C. Motion to waive the 2nd reading and approve Press Issue 119 policy updates as presented by IASB

Motion to waive the 2nd reading and approve Press Issue 119 policy updates as presented by IASB was made by Darrin Gengler and seconded by Abigail Barrett, passed 6-0

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and Myia Sittig: Yea

D. Motion to approve the FY26 Final Budget as submitted

Motion to approve the FY26 Final Budget as submitted was made by Tim Badal and seconded by Jack Haines, passed 6-0

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and Myia Sittig: Yea

E. Motion to approve the HBRHS overnight Leadership Retreat on November 1, 2025

Motion to approve the HBRHS overnight Leadership Retreat on November 1, 2025 was made by Abigail Barrett and seconded by Jack Haines, passed 6-0

Abigail Barrett: Yea, Darrin Gengler: Yea, Tim Badal: Yea, Greg Pritchard: Yea, Jack Haines: Yea, and Myia Sittig: Yea

13) **FOIA**

Owen Wang, Lake County Gazette: Middle School Graduate Names & High Schools Attending

Owen Wang, Lake County Gazette: Principal Contracts and CBA

Owen Wang, Lake County Gazette: AP Scholar names

Peter Medlin, WNIJ Public Radio: AI for Education subscription agreements

Woo Park, The Data Branch: all purchase orders issued by any and all departments

Justin Wenig, StarbridgeTech; all purchases dating back to January 1, 2022

Marina Garcia: Contract Rates for related services

14) **Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

Break at 8:42pm before entering Executive Session

A motion to enter Executive Session was made by Darrin Gengler and seconded by Jack Haines, passed 6-0 with a unanimous voice note, Aye at 8:55pm

Abigail Barrett: Aye, Darrin Gengler: Aye, Jack Haines: Aye, Myia Sittig: Aye, Greg Pritchard: Aye, Tim Badal: Aye

15) **Executive Session**

- A. 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).

A motion to exit Executive Session was made by Abigail Barrett and seconded by Jack Haines, passed 6-0 with a unanimous voice vote, Aye at 9:19pm

Abigail Barrett: Aye, Darrin Gengler: Aye, Jack Haines: Aye, Myia Sittig: Aye, Greg Pritchard: Aye, Tim Badal: Aye

16) **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was made by Jack Haines and seconded by Tim Badal, passed 6-0 with a unanimous voice vote, Aye at 9:20pm

Abigail Barrett: Aye, Darrin Gengler: Aye, Tim Badal: Aye, Myia Sittig: Aye, Jack Haines: Aye, and Greg Pritchard: Aye

The next regular meeting of the Hinckley-Big Rock CUSD #429 Board of Education will be October 15th, 2025 at 6:30 PM in the Hinckley-Big Rock High School Library.