

**Minutes of Gurnee School District 56  
Board of Education Meeting  
March 19, 2025**

The following Board members were in attendance: Odie Pahl, Mark Pos, Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, and 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 and Grounds  
Miriam Torres, Multilingual & Assessment Coordinator  
Principals: Jen Glickley, Ryan Lazar, Sara Rosheger, and Allison Waller  
Lori Rupsch, Board Clerk

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

Dr. Glickley recognized River Trail School eighth grader, Kaison Atkinson, who qualified to go to State for wrestling. He was the only wrestler to go to State this year.

Board Member Pos made a motion with a second from Board Member Pahl to accept the minutes from the regular meeting on February 26, 2025, as presented. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

The regular February 28, 2025, Treasurer's Report identified cash and investments of \$25,561,206.71. The Revenue Report identified receipts of \$502,115.53 and the Expenditure Report identified expenses totaling \$3,265,063.19. The cash balance in the Activity Fund for February was \$101,775.91. The Financial Reports plus the Revised February (\$2,249,424.46) and Regular March (\$1,259,772.64) Bills for Payment Reports were approved on a motion by Board Member Pahl and seconded by Board Member Kotsinis. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

During the *Public Participation* portion of the meeting, Mrs. Elizabeth Rivas addressed the Board by reading a letter that she wrote. In this letter she commented on the lack of communication. She also voiced her approval on the District's initiative to not utilize technology all of the time for educational purposes.

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:

Spaulding: Respect Week; 2<sup>nd</sup> grade project of writing their own individual books; and donuts with a detective

River Trail: 1<sup>st</sup> grade parent workshop to reinforce reading; sweetheart rewards winners; award presentations from the American Legion and Exchange Club; pi day competition, and a shoe tying contest

Viking: spring band and choir concert; group collaborations; and the Stinky Cheese Man drama production

Prairie Trail: Exchange Club honorees; Bluestem challenge; teacher rounds; and the Black History Month Celebration

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

Mr. Da Costa: new payroll person to start April 1<sup>st</sup>; 1<sup>st</sup> hire for next year at River Trail School was processed

Mr. Helfers: next curricular review was science; Title grants for next year; maker faire tomorrow

Ms. Torres: IAR and ISA; EL audit; Pre-K audit; job fairs

Mr. Smith: annual state mandated inspections

Mr. Esteban: E-rate year 5; all doors and readers are now installed

Mr. Esteban reported to the Board of Education that the technology committee met to figure out what role electronic devices currently played in education. They discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Ms. Torres and Ms. Amy Castrejon (coordinator at the Viking Middle School site) provided an update on the Boys and Girls Club program. Currently, 95 students participate in the program and most students were excited to attend.

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 March 19, 2025, Board of Education meeting.

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Mr. Martin Da Costa via email on February 25, 2025, from Mr. Michael Rost (Allium Data) requesting copies of the District's current property and casualty insurance policies including premium, or a summary document that includes coverage, carrier, limits, deductibles, and premium. Mrs. Rupsch emailed Mr. Rost on February 25, 2025, with the requested information.

A second Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was received by Dr. Luis Correa via email on March 4, 2025, from Mr. Mickey Olhava (IFT/LCFT) requesting copies of all correspondence, including emails, memos, timesheets, and letters, sent by the Gurnee District 56 Superintendent (L. Correa), Director of Business (M. Da Costa), and Director of Pupil Services (R. Solomon) to any staff members regarding *Infinitec* Training Modules from August 1, 2024, to March 4, 2025. Ms. Solomon and Dr. Correa provided the requested information to Mr. Olhava.

On a motion from Board Member Pos with a second from Board Member Garcia, the Board voted to approve Board policies under review (Policies 2:80, 2:100, 2:105, 4:45, 4:50, 4:60, and

4:70) and to adopt those policies as presented by the administration. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

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 6:70, 6:80, 6:100, 6:120, 7:70, 7:80, and 7:90. The Board would officially approve the recommended changes at the next Board of Education meeting.

Mr. Smith was in attendance seeking Board approval to award a contract to Balanced Environments Inc. for lawn care and maintenance. This would be Year 2 of their 2024-2028 landscaping bid, not to exceed \$58,009.00. On a motion from Board Member Florip with a second from Board Member Pahl, the Board voted to approve Balanced Environments to continue Year 2 of their landscaping bid, not to exceed \$58,009.00. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

Mr. Smith requested Board approval for gutter repairs at River Trail School from Tremco not to exceed \$24,213.00. On a Motion from Board Member Pos with a second from Board Member Kotsinis, the Board voted to approve Tremco to repair the gutters at River Trail School not to exceed \$24,213.00. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

Board Member Kotsinis made a motion to approve the following items as presented on the consent agenda. Board Member Pahl seconded the motion.

- Prairie Trail School SSC Fundraising Request
- River Trail School NJHS Fundraising Request

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

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

On a motion by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board Member Pahl, the Board voted to adjourn open session at 5:55 p.m. The Board went into closed session at 5:56 p.m. to discuss the following items on a roll call vote:

- The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by P.A. 93-0057.
- 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 District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds

that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

- Discussion of lawfully closed meeting minutes, 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: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

The Board of Education came out of closed session at 7:31 p.m. on a motion from Board Member Pos and seconded by Board Member Kotsinis. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

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

On a motion from Board Member Florip with a second from Board Member Pos, the Board voted to approve the new Superintendent's Employment Contract for Luis Correa for the period beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2029, with the following amendment. The Board requested the following changes to the contract: under Item 11. Termination of Employment, Part D. Termination Without Cause, change the effective date from July 1, 2028, to July 1, 2027, and the school year from 2027-2028 to 2026-2027. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

On a motion from Board Member Pahl with a second from Board Member Pos, the Board voted to approve closed session minutes for the meeting on February 26, 2025, as presented. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

A motion was made by Board Member Kotsinis and seconded by Board Member Pos to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. Motion carried on a roll call vote. Roll Call: Ayes: Cesar Garcia, Jim Blockinger, Becky Kotsinis, Mandi Florip, Germain Castellanos, Odie Pahl, and Mark Pos.

Respectfully submitted:

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James Blockinger, President

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