



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
SCHOOL DISTRICT 25, WEST CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

March 9, 2026

Call to Order

Board President Rogers called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m. on March 9, 2026, at the Benjamin School District Administrative Center, located at 28W250 St. Charles Road, West Chicago, IL 60185.

Roll Call

Board Recorder Solly Garcia took a roll call vote of the members present: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Dennis Peterson, Don Sutenbach, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis.

Other attendees included Dr. Patrick McGill, Superintendent; Dr. Joel Filas, CSBO; Dr. Michael Fitzgerald, Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Teaching/Principal; Dr. Julie Salamone, Director of Student Services; Mrs. Sarah Smith, Evergreen Principal.

Pledge of Allegiance

President Rogers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approve Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda as presented. This motion, made by Dennis Peterson and seconded by Gina Vlantis, passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers, and Gina Vlantis
Nays: None

Approval of Draft Minutes (Roll Call Vote)

Approval of Draft Minutes from the Regular Board of Education Meeting of February 9, 2026.

Motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the Regular Board of Education Meeting of February 9, 2026. This motion, made by Vince Engstrom and seconded by Bridgette Pedersen, passed.

Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed

Approval of Draft Minutes from the Executive Session Meeting of February 9, 2026.

Motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the Executive Session Meeting of February 9, 2026. This motion, made by Gina Vlantis and seconded by Vince Engstrom, passed.

Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed

Approval of the Draft Minutes from the Finance Committee Meeting of February 5, 2026.

Motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the Finance Committee Meeting of February 5, 2026. This motion, made by Dennis Peterson and seconded by Andrew Drinnin, Passed

Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed



Approval of the Draft Minutes from the Facilities Committee Meeting of February 26, 2026.

Motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the Facilities Committee Meeting of February 26, 2026. This motion, made by Andrew Drinnin and seconded by Bridgette Pedersen, Passed.

Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed

Reports

Learning and Teaching

Dr. Fitzgerald provided updates on several instructional initiatives and upcoming assessments. Staff at Benjamin and Evergreen recently completed training for the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR), with testing scheduled to begin next week. Families have received communication encouraging students to come prepared by getting a good night's sleep, bringing charged devices, and doing their best.

He also shared an update on the TCI Social Studies pilot, which has been extended through March to allow for additional teacher feedback. Work continues on the Elementary Comprehensive Numeracy Plan, focused on strengthening student numeracy skills, supporting effective instructional strategies, and providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for staff.

An update on the Illinois 5Essentials Survey indicates strong participation from students and staff at both schools. Parent participation remains low at Benjamin Middle School; reminders will continue to be sent to families to reach the 20% participation threshold.

Dr. Fitzgerald also highlighted recent classroom learning walks, including visits to fifth-grade classrooms and Evergreen specials. While much of the work remained focused on instruction and continuous improvement, there was also an opportunity to build connections when Dr. McGill and Dr. Fitzgerald joined students during gym class for a friendly game of bags.

Operations Report

Dr. Filas provided an update on the Business and Operations Department. He shared that the FY 2027 budget outlook includes a mix of positive and challenging news. The district expects to continue receiving fully funded General State Aid, along with \$50,000 in School Maintenance Project Grant funding to help offset capital project costs. However, the State will not be fully funding the Transportation and Special Education reimbursement programs, and the District will expect to receive prorated shares of funding for these programs.

He also reviewed federal funding updates. While national funding for programs such as Title I and IDEA has increased, Benjamin 25 may see slightly lower federal revenue due to the State's distribution methods. The District will also fall below the Title III Grant minimum pupil threshold this year. The District will not have access to the \$10,000 flat grant. However, this reflects the continued success in integrating English Learner students into general education programs.



Dr. Filas noted that staff are reviewing procedures as part of ongoing severe weather preparedness. In addition, two new doorbell cameras have been ordered for Evergreen to enhance building security. He

concluded with a financial update, noting that the district is currently at its lowest fund balance for the year, which is typical before county tax revenues are received. The district also anticipates bringing a budget amendment to the board later this spring to account for bond-related expenditures.

Superintendent Report

Dr. McGill provided an update on the district's strategic planning process. Three full-day planning retreats were held with a diverse group of students, parents, staff, administrators, and community members. The sessions focused on identifying district strengths and opportunities, refining the mission and vision, and developing long-term goals.

The emerging strategic plan is centered on five key areas: student achievement, learning environment, working environment, family and community partnerships, and responsible stewardship of district resources. This plan will guide district priorities over the next five years. Additional feedback will be gathered from staff, families, and community members prior to presenting the final plan to the Board in April.

Dr. McGill also highlighted several recent and upcoming school events. Evergreen students recently participated in a surprise animal assembly featuring a variety of animals, including a sloth and a large winged bat, creating excitement throughout the building. Family Reading Night at Evergreen was well attended and provided an opportunity for families to engage in literacy-focused activities. The Benjamin Theater production of *Matilda* is scheduled for this weekend.

He also shared updates from the SASSED Board of Directors, as well as information on upcoming GPS parent education events, which will be offered both in person and virtually. Finally, Dr. McGill reported that two recent FOIA requests were received and processed within the required timelines.

GPS Parent Series:

- March 24, 2026: College Admission Essentials from "The College Essay Guy"
- April 8, 2026: *Parent Yourself First: Become the Parent You Want to Be*
- April 9, 2026: Coping Skills to Address Anger and Challenging Feelings

Board Committee Reports

PTA

Member Sutenbach shared updates from the PTA, highlighting February's school dance, which was well attended. He also noted several upcoming events, including a pop-up candy fundraiser



in March and the next PTA general meeting scheduled for Monday, March 16, at 7:00 PM in the Ad. Center Boardroom. Nominations for PTA executive board positions are currently being accepted, as several roles will be opening due to term limits. Additional upcoming events include Evergreen Bingo Night, PTA Trivia Night, and Ice Cream Social.

Member Pedersen also thanked the PTA for their continued support and hard work. She shared her appreciation for the books the PTA provided to each Evergreen student, noting that her family enjoyed reading them together at home.

LEND

Member Peterson reported attending the LEND meeting on February 27 with Dr. McGill, during which several pending pieces of legislation were discussed. Topics of particular interest included proposed legislation related to the cell phone ban in schools and a bill addressing unemployment eligibility for non-certified school staff during scheduled school breaks.

Finance Committee

Member Engstrom reported on the Finance Committee meeting held on March 5. The committee reviewed several items, including the rationale for FY 2027 school fees and the Benjamin Middle School partition replacement project. The committee also discussed ongoing work to review substitute teacher pay rates to ensure the district remains competitive with surrounding districts while maintaining long-term financial stability. In addition, member Engstrom discussed proposed state legislation related to unemployment benefits for non-certified school staff during scheduled breaks. If passed, the bill could have a financial impact on school districts, though it is currently considered unlikely to move forward.

Facilities Committee

Member Pedersen reported on the Facilities Committee meeting held on February 26, which she attended along with Member Drinnin. The committee reviewed the district's current three-year capital plan and began discussions on the upcoming 10-year Health Life Safety survey. The survey will evaluate all district facilities to ensure compliance with current state safety codes, with particular attention to fire safety systems, including updating strobe lighting in classrooms and hallways. The Arcon facility assessment will help provide important data as the district begins identifying priorities for its next multi-year capital plan. The committee is also working to establish a timeline for the next capital planning cycle and explore strategies for funding future facility improvements.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

Consent Agenda: Items Removed

None

Consent Agenda (Roll Call)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. This motion, made by Dennis Peterson and seconded by Don Sutenbach, passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach



Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers, and Gina Vlantis

Nays: None

Action Items (Roll Call Vote)

Student Fee Discussion

Dr. Filas discussed the process behind the recommended school fee adjustments, explaining that the district is working to align fees more consistently by making small, CPI-based increases each year. This approach is intended to create greater transparency and stability for families, rather than holding fees flat for several years and then requiring larger increases. Dr. McGill also acknowledged Dr. Filas' work in developing a more structured and predictable approach that aligns school fees with the district's overall financial planning.

Approval of the 2026-2027 School Fees

Motion to approve the 2026-2027 School Fees as presented. This motion, made by Don Sutenbach and seconded by Gina Vlantis, Passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis

Nays: None

Approval of the Resolution to Transfer Funds from the Operations and Maintenance Fund to the Capital Projects Fund.

Motion to approve the Resolution to transfer funds from the Operations & Maintenance Fund to the Capital Projects Fund, as presented. This motion, made by Gina Vlantis and seconded by Don Sutenbach, passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis

Nays: None

Approval of the BMS Toilet Partition Project

Motion to approve the BMS Toilet Partition Project. This motion, made by Dennis Peterson and seconded by Don Sutenbach, Passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis

Nays: None

Approval of the Benjamin Middle School Overnight Field Trip

Motion to approve the Washington DC overnight field trip. This motion, made by Dennis Peterson and seconded by Don Sutenbach, Passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis

Nays: None



Approval of ESP Salary Recommendations

Motion to approve the ESP salary recommendation as presented. This motion, made by Dennis Peterson and seconded by Gina Vlantis, Passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis
Nays: None

Approval of the Administrator Contracts

Motion to approve the Administrator contracts as presented. This motion, made by Don Sutenbach and seconded by Bridgette Pedersen, Passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers and Gina Vlantis
Nays: None

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

None

Discussion Items

Communication To and From the Board: As a reminder, per Board of Education Policy 2:140, during the Board's regular meetings, the Superintendent will report for the Board's consideration all questions or communications submitted through the active electronic link, along with the status of the District's response.

Parent Email

Dr. McGill referenced an email from Ms. Hall and noted that the district responded in accordance with District Policies 5:90 and 4:190, and that staff acted in alignment with school procedures.

Motion to Enter Executive Session

Motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:01 p.m. This motion, made by Don Sutenbach and seconded by Dennis Peterson.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers, and Gina Vlantis
Nays: None

No action resulted from the Executive Session

Motion to Return to Open Session

Motion to return to open session at 8:51 p.m. This motion was made by Vince Engstrom and seconded by Don Sutenbach. Passed.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas: Andrew Drinnin, Vince Engstrom, Bridgette Pedersen, Don Sutenbach
Dennis Peterson, Eric Rogers, and Gina Vlantis
Nays: None



Adjournment (Voice Vote)

Motion to adjourn the Regular Board of Education Meeting at 8:52 p.m. This motion, made by Don Sutenbach and seconded by Gina Vlantis, passed.

Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed

Respectfully submitted by:
Solly Garcia, Board Recorder

President, Board of Education

Secretary, Board of Education

Recorded: March 9, 2026
Approved: April 13, 2026