



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

**April 13, 2026**

**Call to Order**

Board President Rogers called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 13, 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 Don Sutenbach and seconded by Dennis Peterson, 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 March 9, 2026.**

Motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the Regular Board of Education Meeting of March 9, 2026. This motion, made by Andrew Drinnin and seconded by Don Sutenbach, passed.

**Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed**

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

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

**Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed**

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

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

**Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed**



## **Presentation**

### **Board Appreciation from Theater Club**

Ms. Tepe and Mrs. DeChristopher expressed their appreciation to the Board for its continued support of the theater program. They shared that the Board's visible encouragement, attending previews, greeting students after performances, and offering personal congratulations, was a "game changer" for the students involved.

They also extended their gratitude for the Board's approval of the new sound system. Ms. DeChristopher noted that the upgraded equipment has significantly improved the quality of performances and has already become a shared resource, now used by the PE department and the PTA for events such as Trivia Night.

### **Strategic Plan Team Recognition**

Dr. McGill recognized and expressed deep appreciation for the Strategic Planning Team for its role in guiding the development of the district's new five-year strategic plan. He acknowledged the team's thoughtful work and the strong community partnership that shaped the process.

The Strategic Planning Team consisted of approximately 50 members representing students, parents, community members, district staff, administrators, and members of the Board of Education. Dr. McGill noted the significant time commitment required of the group, which included two evening Zoom sessions and three full-day retreats. Board President Rogers expressed appreciation for the leadership behind the initiative.

As a token of appreciation, each committee member received an apple-shaped award. Members were also recognized collectively with a group photo.

### **DuPage Regional Superintendent Update - Amber Quirk**

Amber Quirk, Regional Superintendent for DuPage County, presented her annual report, recognizing Benjamin District 25's strong performance, collaborative culture, and community engagement. She shared that she is visiting school boards to highlight positive work taking place in education and help counter negative narratives.

Superintendent Quirk provided an overview of the DuPage ROE's role in supporting districts, including educator licensure and certification, compliance, professional development, truancy support, health/life safety visits, school safety training, and networking and grant support. She also commended the district's student attendance, low mobility rate, strong teacher retention, and strategic planning efforts.

Ms. Quirk commended the Board's leadership and highlighted opportunities for continued collaboration between the DuPage ROE and the District.

## **Hearing**

### **FY26 Budget Amendment**

The Board entered a public hearing regarding the FY26 budget amendment at 7:39 p.m. The administration reviewed the reasons for the amendment, including capital expenditures related



to the Evergreen addition and a bond-related escrow payment. There were no public comments. The hearing was closed at 7:41 p.m., and the Board returned to regular session.

## **Reports**

### **Teaching and Learning**

Dr. Fitzgerald highlighted several updates for the Teaching and Learning department. The district has successfully completed Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) testing for students in grades 3–8 and has transitioned to Illinois Science Assessment (ISA) testing for fifth and eighth-grade students.

Professional development continues to support new curriculum implementation. Orientation is being planned for K–4 teachers on the TCI social studies program to support effective use of the resource. In science, teachers are entering the next phase of training, which includes in-classroom support and follow-up collaboration to further strengthen instruction.

The district continues to integrate technology into learning, including the use of Magic AI to support responsible use of artificial intelligence, WeVideo for student-created content, and ClassLink to streamline access to instructional tools.

District leadership continues to collaborate with West Chicago High School to improve the transition to ninth grade. Updates to the course selection process include providing course recommendations at the eighth-grade open house and having high school counselors meet directly with students at the middle school to complete course selection.

The administration completed its second round of learning walks across kindergarten, first grade, and sixth grade classrooms, highlighting the strong work taking place in classrooms.

Additionally, the newly approved Strategic Plan includes a Profile of a Graduate, which outlines the skills and competencies the district aims to develop in all students.

### **Operations Report**

Dr. Filas provided updates on district finances, facilities, and technology. He shared that local property tax revenue is expected to increase, largely due to new property within the district. Tax rates for residential properties have decreased for the third consecutive year, though individual tax bills may vary.

The district is currently managing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for food service and seal coating. The food service process is underway, including site visits and vendor review. Seal coating is planned for August to avoid disruption to summer programming and building access.

The technology department shared continued progress in infrastructure and instructional tools. The district received an “A” rating for cybersecurity, with two-factor authentication improving system security and helping reduce insurance costs. Additional tools include interactive displays, document cameras, microphones, and ClassLink to streamline student access. The



district is also piloting Chromebook options in preparation for a future technology refresh and plans to implement Securly Home to provide families with additional device management tools.

District leadership continues to monitor legislative updates through the Legislative Education Network of DuPage (LEND), including proposed legislation related to student cell phone use and unemployment eligibility for non-certified staff.

### **Superintendent Report**

Dr. McGill provided an update highlighting the district's strategic plan, recent activities, and upcoming parent resources.

He shared that the newly developed Strategic Plan received strong support across all areas, with particularly strong feedback on the Profile of a Graduate. Dr. McGill also thanked Danielle, Christopher, and Angela Anthony for their work in creating the video that showcased the strategic planning process and noted that all related documents are available on the district website.

Dr. McGill recognized several student and staff accomplishments. He attended the Benjamin Middle School sports awards, the second-grade musical and art show, and commended the recent theater production, thanking staff for their leadership and continued commitment to student extracurricular activities.

In addition, Dr. McGill noted the upcoming GPS Parent Series offerings and encouraged families to participate in the available sessions.

### **GPS Parent Series:**

- April 15 - Never Give Up On Kids: How to Go from End-of-Your-Rope to Hope
- April 20 - Brace Yourself For an AI Future
- April 22 - Raising Calm Kids in a World of Worry: Tools to Ease Anxiety and Overwhelm
- April 28 - Teen Relationship Skills in the Social Media Era
- May 5 - The Amazing Generation: Breaking Up with Screens, and Unlocking Kids' Potential in a Tech-Filled Environment
- May 6 - Awe-Seeking and Mess-Making: The Science of Wonder to Help Kids Thrive

### **Board Committee Reports**

#### **PTA**

Member Sutenbach shared several recent events and ongoing initiatives. Recent events, including Candy Bingo and Disney Trivia, were well attended and reflected strong community engagement. The PTA also utilized the district's new sound system for Trivia Night. The PTA continues to support students and staff through ongoing activities, including hosting ice cream days at both schools and preparing for Teacher Appreciation Week in May. Member Sutenbach also shared an Update regarding upcoming PTA executive board elections. Community



members are encouraged to get involved and support future events and activities. The Board recognized the continued efforts of the PTA and its positive impact on the school community.

### **LEND**

Member Peterson reported attending the LEND meeting with Dr. McGill, updates included discussion on proposed legislation related to a statewide cell phone ban, which is not expected to impact current district practices, and potential changes to unemployment eligibility for non-certified staff. The Board will continue to monitor legislative developments that may affect district operations.

### **Finance Committee**

Member Peterson reported on the Finance Committee meeting held on April 5. The committee reviewed several items, including the tax extension and related updates. The committee also reviewed the FY26 budget amendment. The amendment reflects capital expenditures related to the Evergreen addition that were anticipated in a prior fiscal year but incurred in the current year, as well as an escrow payment associated with a prior bond. It was also noted that investment earnings have decreased due to lower interest rates. The committee discussed ongoing efforts to maintain financial efficiency, including current Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and continued attention to cost-saving measures.

### **Technology Committee**

Member Vlantis shared updates from the Technology Committee, including recent technology implementations supporting student learning. Updates included the addition of document cameras, microphones, and interactive displays, as well as tools such as ClassLink for streamlined access, WeVideo for student-created content, and Magic AI to support responsible use of artificial intelligence. The district continues to utilize existing platforms, including Canva, Google Suite, Seesaw, and Canvas, across content areas. It was also noted that the district has implemented a system for broadcasting board meetings.

### **Public Comment on Agenda Items**

None.

### **Consent Agenda: Items Removed**

President Rogers moved to remove consent agenda item 10.d., approval of the Yearbook Agreement for Evergreen Elementary School, due to a mislabeling error. The attachment was correct, but the item should have been listed as the Color Portrait Contract for school pictures.

### **Consent Agenda (Roll Call)**

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. This motion, made by Vince Engstrom and seconded by Dennis Peterson, 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)**

#### **Approval of the Strategic Plan**

Motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented. This motion, made by Andrew Drinnin 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

#### **Approval of the Audit Engagement Letter.**

Motion to approve the Audit Engagement Letter 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 BMS Outdoor Education Field Trip**

Motion to approve the BMS Outdoor Education Field Trip 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.

#### **Teacher Resignation Letter**

Dr. McGill shared a staff update regarding the resignation of Ms. Caroline Orr, he expressed appreciation for her contributions to the district and recognized her connection as both a former student and staff member, noting she will be greatly missed.

#### **Motion to Enter Executive Session**

Motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:04 p.m. This motion, made by Don Sutenbach and seconded by Gina Vlanits.

**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 9:05 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 9:06 p.m. This motion, made by Andrew Drinnin and seconded by Bridgette Pedersen, passed.

**Voice Vote: Unanimously Passed**

Respectfully submitted by:  
Solly Garcia, Board Recorder

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President, Board of Education

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Secretary, Board of Education

Recorded: April 13, 2026  
Approved: May 11, 2026