

School District of Rhinelander
Board of Education

Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, May 19, 2025

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on Monday, May 19, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Superior Diesel Advanced Learning Center at Rhinelander High School, 665 Coolidge Avenue, Rhinelander, WI.

Ronald Counter, Board President, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Mike Roberts (virtual), Duane Frey, Merlin Van Buren, Ronald Lueneburg, Patricia Townsend, Kurt Helke, and Ronald Counter

Board Members Absent: Judy Conlin and Mary Peterson

Others present at this meeting were: Superintendent, Eric Burke; Director of Business Services, Robert Thom; Director of Human Resources, Michele Cornelius; Director of Learning Support, Richard Gretzinger; 6-12 Activities Director, Brian Paulson; Community Education and School Forest Manager, Mike Cheslock, Megan Cihla, Andrew Seaman, Secretary/Deputy Clerk, Shelley Anderson, Heather Schaefer of the Northwoods Star Journal and Michael Strasburg of the Northwoods River News. Two other people were also present.

Declaration of Public Notice

President Counter indicated that the "Declaration of Public Notice" was printed along with the meeting agenda. This notice identifies the public places where the meeting agenda was posted and/or shared.

Citizens/Delegations

- No citizens/delegations wished to address the Board.

Report Topics

President's Report

- President Ron Counter had no report.

Vice-President's Report

- Vice-President Judy Conlin was absent. Therefore, no report was given.

Referendum Construction Project Update on Budget Status and Funding

Robert Thom reviewed the summary of revenue and expenses through May 6, 2025. As the construction project progresses, we can expect an increase in the number of bills processed in the coming months.

Revenue:

- **Interest:** \$641,976.21
- **Bond Proceeds:** \$26,000,000.00
- **Donations:** \$414,158.00
- **Total Revenue:** \$27,056,134.21

Expenses:

- **Construction Services:** \$1,182,806.91
- **Supplies:** \$17,148.94
- **Equipment:** \$150,353.88
- **Fees, Permits, etc.:** \$29,974.72
- **Total Expenses:** \$1,415,183.45

The \$26 M of bond proceeds are invested in CD's and Treasury Bills with Ehlers Investment Services. The return has been 4.12%.

Rhineland Community Foundation Grant Winners – Mike Cheslock, Megan Cihla, and Andrew Seaman

- Megan Cihla, Science Teacher at Rhineland High School, presented to the Board how her classes will benefit from the two MiniOne units and lab materials she acquired through the grant funding.
- Mike Cheslock, Community Education and School Forest Manager, shared how the grant he was awarded supports the Culture Tap Program.
- Andrew Seaman, Elementary Physical Education Teacher, reported that the grant he received will cover most of the costs for all fifth-grade students to participate in a ski trip to Ski Brule on February 27.

Results from the Student, Family and Community Surveys – Mike Cheslock, Richard Gretzinger, and Brian Paulson

- Richard Gretzinger, Director of Learning Support, opened the presentation by noting this is the District's second year using School Perceptions for the survey. He reported improvements across all student survey questions. Students in grades 4–12 participated, and the results will help align efforts with the District's Strategic Plan and Local Report Card.
- Participation: 1293 students responded to the survey, achieving a 91% participation rate.
- Score averages are based on: Definitely = 5, Sort of = 4, Not really = 2 and No = 1. "Don't know/doesn't apply" is not included in the calculation.

Top Five Average Scores – Student Survey Results

The following five items received the highest average ratings from students, compared to the previous year. Students reported strong social support and motivation, with slight improvements across all five categories. The highest increase (+3.80%) was in the perception of parental/guardian academic support. The data reflects a positive trend in student relationships and school engagement.

1. "I have friends to sit with at lunch or hang out with at school."
 - Current Average: 4.61
 - Previous Average: 4.52

- Change: +1.99%
 - Agreement Rate: 93%
2. "I have friends who help me when I need help."
 - Current Average: 4.43
 - Previous Average: 4.33
 - Change: +2.31%
 - Agreement Rate: 91%
 3. "My parents/guardians help me with school as much as they can if I ask."
 - Current Average: 4.37
 - Previous Average: 4.21
 - Change: +3.80%
 - Agreement Rate: 89%
 4. "I like helping other people when I can."
 - Current Average: 4.35
 - Previous Average: 4.21
 - Change: +3.33%
 - Agreement Rate: 91%
 5. "I try my best at school."
 - Current Average: 4.35
 - Previous Average: 4.29
 - Change: +1.40%
 - Agreement Rate: 91%

The following five items received the lowest average ratings from students, with comparisons to the previous year. While all five items showed improvements in average scores, they remain the lowest-rated areas. These responses highlight areas for continued focus and improvement.

1. "Students treat me with respect."
 - Current Average: 3.59
 - Previous Average: 3.47
 - Change: +3.46%
 - Agreement Rate: 72%
2. "I feel safe answering questions in class even when I'm not sure I have the right answer."
 - Current Average: 3.55
 - Previous Average: 3.44
 - Change: +3.20%
 - Agreement Rate: 67%
3. "I can relate to what I'm learning at school."
 - Current Average: 3.48
 - Previous Average: 3.33
 - Change: +4.50%
 - Agreement Rate: 68%

4. "I talk to people outside of school about what I'm learning."
 - Current Average: 3.18
 - Previous Average: 3.02
 - Change: +5.30%
 - Agreement Rate: 56%
5. "Most kids at school follow the rules."
 - Current Average: 2.79
 - Previous Average: 2.75
 - Change: +1.45%
 - Agreement Rate: 45%

Community and Family Connectedness Survey – Mike Cheslock

This survey was administered from April 7–25, 2025, and distributed via Infinite Campus email to families, MindBody software email (for Community Education/Hodag Dome users), SDR website, social media, and local media release.

- Positive Trends (Overall)
 - % rating SDR a "10" (highest score):
 - 2022: 18.3% → 2025: 31.8%
 - % rating SDR a "7 or higher":
 - 2022: 60.9% → 2025: 74.5%
- Top 4 Things SDR is Doing Well (2025):
 - Facilities (Hodag Dome, etc.): 78.4%
 - Extracurricular Offerings (sports, clubs, plays): 63.6%
 - Community Program Offerings: 59.4%
 - Academic Offerings: 56.9%
- Top 4 Areas for Improvement (2025):
 - Mental Health Supports: 51.4%
 - Staff Quality, Commitment, and Professionalism: 32.7%
 - Academic Offerings: 30.7%
 - Technology: 22%

Student Activities Participation – Brian Paulson

Grades 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12 participated in the survey. The report includes data showing active participation in sports and extracurricular activities at and out of school.

- 84% of grades 4-5 students play a sport and/or do activities.
- 81% of grades 6-8 students play a sport and/or do activities.
- 74% of grades 9-12 students play a sport and/or do activities. This is a 4% increase over last year.

Committee Chair Reports

Instruction and Accountability Committee

- The Committee did not meet.

Operations and Strategic Planning Committee

- Merlin Van Buren reported that the Committee recommended agenda items e, h, i and j to the Board for approval.

Employee Relations Committee

- The Committee did not meet.

Capital Projects Ad Hoc Committee

- The Committee did not meet.

CESA 9 Representative Report

- Merlin Van Buren, the Board's Representative to CESA 9, stated that Teri Phalin provided an update. The remainder of the meeting was business as usual.

Discussion, Reports/Updates, and/or Action Topics

Consider Approval of the Minutes from the April 14, 2025, Regular Board Meeting

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by D. Frey.

Approve the minutes of the April 14, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as printed.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Consider Approval of the Minutes from the May 12, 2025, Special Meeting/School Board Organizational Meeting

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by P. Townsend.

Approve the minutes of the May 12, 2025, Special Meeting/School Board Organizational Meeting as printed.

M. Roberts abstained.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Consider the Approval of the April 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$1,154,279.58 and the April 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the amount of \$542,314.36

MOTION: D. Frey, seconded by M. Van Buren.

Consider the Approval of the April 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$1,154,279.58 and the April 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the amount of \$542,314.36.

Aye: M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke,
R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 7/0

Consider Acceptance of Various Gifts/Donations Contributed to the District

MOTION: M. Van Buren, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Accept with sincere gratitude the following gifts/donations:

- \$5,000.00 from Contract Carpets of Wausau, Inc. (Carpet City - Rhinelander, WI)
- \$100.00 from Tilly's—Camp Grounds Coffee, LLC.
- \$200.00 from David and Julie Holperin
- \$100.00 from Kliner Insurance
- \$250.00 from Mary King
- \$35.00 from Steinmetz Landscape Design
- \$250.00 from Nicolet Bank

- \$3,000.00 from the Rhinelander Community Foundation, Gina Heck
- \$850.00 from the Rhinelander Community Foundation
- Snacks valued at \$100.00 from Peoples State Bank
- \$50.00 from Lucy Krainz
- \$150.00 from Fiebke Dental
- \$150.00 from Town Pump Bar and Grill
- \$150.00 from RIPCO Credit Union
- \$75.00 from Ava Stauter
- \$200.00 from Boyd Financial
- \$100.00 from Northern Grounds
- Books valued at \$500.00 from the Harshaw Helping Hands
- Grab and go snacks valued at \$100.00 from Walmart

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on 2025-2026 Open Enrollment Applications for Student Enrollment Into and Out of the District

MOTION: M. Van Buren, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Board approve the 'Full-Time Public-School Open Enrollment' applications for students requesting enrollment into and out of the School District of Rhinelander for the 2025-26 school year and authorize Superintendent Burke to deny any applications as he finds appropriate after review of non-resident student records.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Appointment of the 2025 CESA #9 Annual Convention Representative

MOTION: P. Townsend, seconded by D. Frey.

Appoint Merlin Van Buren as the District's representative to the 2025 CESA 9 Annual Convention being held on Monday, August 4, 2025, at the CESA 9 office in Tomahawk, WI.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Appointment of Administrator for Board Treasurer

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by D. Frey.

The Board of Education officially recognizes the Director of Business Services, Robert Thom, as the designated administrator as outlined in Bylaw 0152.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on 2025-2026 Chromebook Replacement Purchase, Including Licenses

MOTION: M. Van Buren, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Board approve the purchase of 375 Chromebooks and 200 Touch Chromebooks with licenses from BDJ Tech at a cost of \$170,125.

Aye: M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke,
R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 7/0

Discussion and/or Action on 2025-2026 District Staff Laptop and Docking Station Replacement Purchases

MOTION: K. Helke, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Board approve the proposal from Heartland Business Services for the purchase of 85 HP ProBook 460 laptops and 30 docking stations for a total cost of \$79,684.50 with funding to come from the technology budget.

Aye: M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke,
R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 7/0

Discussion and/or Action on Vehicle replacement via Loan from the Bureau of Commissioners of Public Lands

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by M. Van Buren.

Board approve the resolution #2025-01 as provided by the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands.

Aye: M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke,
R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 7/0

Discussion and/or Action on the 2025-2026 Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) Membership Renewal for Rhinelander High School

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by M. Van Buren.

Approve the Rhinelander High School Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association membership for the 2025-2026 school year.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Second Reading of New Policies 5411 – Third Grade Promotion and Retention: At Risk Students and Policy 6630 - Cash Handling and Deposits

MOTION: M. Van Buren, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Board approve the second reading of Policy 6630 - Cash Handling and Deposits and Policy 5411 - Third Grade Promotion and Retention: At Risk Students.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Superintendent's Report – Eric Burke

- Mr. Burke reported that over \$317,000 in scholarships was awarded to 80 students during the Scholarship Ceremony on Sunday, May 18, 2025.
- Board members were reminded that the annual Retirement Dinner is scheduled for May 27, 2025.
- Graduation is scheduled to take place on June 1, 2025.
- The District's 2024–2025 End-of-Year Celebration will be held on June 6, 2025, at Rhinelander High School. All Board members are encouraged to attend.
- Mr. Burke provided an update on ongoing repairs to the Dome, noting that progress has been positive. The fire alarm systems have passed inspection; the next step will be the city inspection. It is anticipated that graduation will be held in the Dome, and it is expected to reopen to the public on June 2, 2025.

Enter Closed Session

MOTION: R. Counter, seconded by D. Frey.

Enter closed session pursuant to

- a. Wis.. Stats. 19.85 (1) (c), to consider employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.
- b. Wis. Stats. 19.85 (1) (f) to consider financial, medical, social or personal histories or disciplinary data of specific persons, preliminary consideration of specific personnel problems or the investigation of charges against specific persons which, if discussed in public, would be likely to have a substantial adverse effect upon the reputation of any person referred to in such histories or data, or involved in such problems or investigations.

More specifically, to address matters related to staff contracts, including the hiring of staff, staff layoffs, and/or resignations, and retirements, as well as to review an agreement concerning a specific individual and/or contracted service and/or to consider the histories and/or disciplinary data of specific individuals.

Aye: M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 7/0

Closed Session

The Board moved to closed session and discussed hires, resignations, and a retirement.

Return to Open Session

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by D. Frey.

Aye: D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 6/0

Return to open session.

Open Session

MOTION: D. Frey, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Approve the hire of Lisa White, Autumn Berry, Mitch Elbe, Katherine Laska, Amanda Knapp, Madison Schulz, Andrea Baughman, Danielle Adams, Ryan Mullen, Tyler Johnson, and Alexe Coney as proposed.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

MOTION: D. Frey, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Approve the resignation of Robert Hock, Ariel Roseland, and Susan Schmidt as proposed.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

MOTION: D. Frey, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Approve the retirement of Cathleen Rogich as proposed.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Adjournment

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by M. Van Buren.

Move to adjourn.

Motion passed with a voice vote at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Anderson, Secretary/Deputy Clerk