

School District of Rhinelander
Board of Education

Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, June 16, 2025

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on Monday, June 16, 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: Judy Conlin, Mary Peterson, Duane Frey, Merlin Van Buren, Ronald Lueneburg, Patricia Townsend, Kurt Helke, and Ronald Counter

Board Members Absent: Mike Roberts

Others present at this meeting were: Superintendent, Eric Burke; Director of Human Resources, Michele Cornelius; Director of Learning Support, Richard Gretzinger; Rhinelander High School Principal, Shane Dornfeld; Food Service Directors, Pat Karaba and Drew Stamper, Rod Olson, Leigha Plehn, Secretary/Deputy Clerk, Shelley Anderson, Heather Schaefer of the Northwoods Star Journal and Michael Strasburg of the Northwoods River News. One other person was 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 expressed his appreciation to the staff and administration for their dedication and efforts in organizing an outstanding graduation ceremony. He also noted that the event served as a fitting and celebratory way to officially reopen the Hodag Dome to the community.

Vice-President's Report

- Vice-President Judy Conlin reflected on the senior speaker's message at graduation, noting how it powerfully echoed and reinforced the District's mission and core values. She highlighted how the Class of 2025 exemplified these principles through their actions, bringing the mission to life in meaningful ways.

Referendum Construction Project Update on Budget Status and Funding

Superintendent Eric Burke reviewed the summary of revenue and expenses through June 10, 2025. The construction management firm, C.D. Smith, has informed him that the project is currently ahead of schedule and under budget.

Revenue:

- **Interest:** \$680,344.07
- **Bond Proceeds:** \$26,000,000.00
- **Donations:** \$414,158.00
- **Total Revenue:** \$27,094,502.07

Expenses:

- **Construction Services:** \$2,687,460.09
- **Supplies:** \$17,148.94
- **Equipment:** \$189,617.43
- **Fees, Permits, etc.:** \$33,803.08
- **Total Expenses:** \$2,962,928.54

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

Update on Project Search for the 2024-2025 School Year – Rod Olson and Leigha Plehn

- **Mission:** To equip young adults with disabilities with job and life skills through workplace-based training in a supportive healthcare setting.
- Available to students in the 18-21 transition programs and adult learners in our Northwoods schools and surrounding areas.
- **Program Snapshot:**
 - 1-year immersion at Aspirus with three unpaid internship rotations
 - Daily schedule: 8:00 AM – 2:30 PM
 - Individualized training and career planning
 - Goal: Competitive, integrated employment (16+ hrs./week, above minimum wage)
- **Outcomes:**
 - Over 40,000 served since 2010
 - 70%+ employed after graduation
 - Avg. wage: \$11.67/hour | Avg. hours: 24.4/week
 - Gains in independence, confidence, health, and community involvement
- **Local Partners:** Rhinelander School District, Aspirus, Goodwill NCW, DVR, Long-Term Care providers, and 8 area school districts.
- **Internship Areas:** Administrative, Dietary, Emergency, Environmental Services, Radiology, Lab, PT, Pharmacy, IT, Med/Surg Clinic, and more.

Introduction of New Food Service Director Drew Stamper – Pat Karaba Taher Food Service

- Pat Karaba is retiring from her position as Director of Food Service, and her replacement is Drew Stamper

School Nutrition Standards Compliance Report – Pat Karaba

Pat Karaba provided a detailed report on the District's school nutrition program, highlighting its alignment with federal and state regulations and its emphasis on promoting healthy eating habits among students. Key areas of the presentation included:

- Meal Pattern and Nutritional Quality: An overview of compliance with USDA nutrition standards, including caloric content, saturated fat, sodium levels, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and milk requirements under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Supporting documentation, such as production records, menus, standardized recipes, and product labels, was referenced as part of the evaluation process.
- General Program Compliance: A review of equitable meal access for all students and nondiscrimination in program operations.
- Program Evaluation: A summary of the most recent evaluation conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).
- Vendor Overview: A demonstration of how the District's food service provider, Taher, supports compliance with nutrition standards was provided to the Board.

Acknowledgement of Final Payment from the Hodag Schools Foundation Toward the Hodag Dome Project – Eric Burke

Eric Burke reported that the final payment from the Hodag Schools Foundation (HSF) for the Hodag Dome project has been received. He noted that the Hodag Dome is one of several successful projects completed in partnership with HSF. Board President Ron Counter expressed appreciation to HSF on behalf of the Board for their continued support and contributions to the District over the years.

Committee Chair Reports

Instruction and Accountability Committee

- Committee Chair Judy Conlin reported that the Committee recommended agenda items IV. d and IV. e to the full Board for approval. She also provided a summary of the Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) Report as discussed during the committee meeting.

Operations and Strategic Planning Committee

- Merlin Van Buren reported that the Committee recommended agenda items IV.f, IV.g, IV.h, and IV. i, to the full Board for approval.

Employee Relations Committee

- The Committee did not meet in June.

Capital Projects Ad Hoc Committee

- The Committee did not meet in June.

CESA 9 Representative Report

- Merlin Van Buren, the Board's Representative to CESA 9, stated that he did not attend the meeting.

Discussion, Reports/Updates, and/or Action Topics

Consider Approval of the Minutes from the May 19, 2025, Regular Board Meeting

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

Approve the minutes of the May 19, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as printed.

J. Conlin abstained.

M. Peterson abstained.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Consider the Approval of the May 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$1,404,512.09 and the May 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the amount of \$814,331.01

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

Consider the Approval of the May 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$1,404,512.09 and the May 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the amount of \$814,331.01.

Aye: J. Conlin, M. Peterson, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K.

Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Consider Acceptance of Various Gifts/Donations Contributed to the District

MOTION: M. Peterson, seconded by J. Conlin.

Accept with sincere gratitude the following gifts/donations:

- \$100.00 from Tilly's - Camp Grounds Coffee, LLC.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Rhinelander High School Students Travel and Fundraising Request to Ecuador/Galapagos 2028 (Science & Spanish Classes) Spring Break 2028 – Mr. Dornfeld.

MOTION: J. Conlin, seconded by M. Peterson.

The Board of Education approve to allow Rhinelander High School students to travel to Ecuador/Galapagos during Spring Break 2028 and to allow students to solicit funds in an effort to help defray travel costs.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Rhinelander High School Students Travel and Fundraising Request to Germany Spring Break 2027 – Mr. Dornfeld.

MOTION: J. Conlin, seconded by M. Peterson.

The Board of Education approve international travel for Rhinelander High School students to Germany during Spring Break 2027 and grant permission for students to engage in fundraising activities to help offset the cost of the trip.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Increase in the Breakfast and Lunch Prices for the 2025-2026 School Year

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

The Board of Education approve the increase of breakfast and lunch meals by \$0.10 for the 2025-2026 school year.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Purchase of Wheelchair Accessible Van

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

The Board approve the purchase of a wheelchair accessible van from Rollx Vans of Minnesota for \$65,295.00 to be paid from the Fund 38 loan with possible reimbursement from special education grants.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on 2024-2025 Budget Revisions

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

The Board approve the budget revisions as presented for the 2024-25 school year as of May 28, 2025.

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Discussion and/or Action on the 2025-2026 Preliminary Budget

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

The Board approve the Preliminary Budget for the 2025-2026 school year as presented.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Moving the Full Board Meeting Date from March 16, 2026, to March 23, 2026

MOTION: R. Counter, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Move the regular monthly meeting of the full board from March 16, 2026, to March 23, 2026.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Superintendent's Report – Eric Burke

- Mr. Burke reported that 40 staff members attended the Professional Learning Communities at Work Conference in Minneapolis, MN, held June 16–18, 2025. This marks the third consecutive year the District has participated in this training.
- Summer school is currently in its second week of instruction.
- There are 405 elementary students enrolled in the program.
- An additional 160 students are attending middle school summer school.
- High school students are participating in credit recovery courses.
- Courses held at CAVOC (Cig A. Vig Outdoor Classroom) continue to be the most popular offerings among students.
- Mr. Burke expressed his appreciation to all staff involved in summer school for their hard work and commitment to students.
- He also thanked Board Members who were able to attend end-of-the-year events, including:
 - Employee Retirement Recognition

- 2025 Graduation Ceremony
- District End-of-Year Program

Enter Closed Session

MOTION: R. Counter, seconded by J. Conlin.

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: J. Conlin, M. Peterson, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, P. Townsend, K. Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Closed Session

The Board moved to closed session and discussed hires and resignations.

Return to Open Session

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

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Return to open session.

Open Session

MOTION: J. Conlin, seconded by R. Counter.

Approve the hire of Kari Roepke, Ryan Tienhaara, Lauren Beversdorf, Jesse Knetter, Michelle Knetter, and Makenna Anderson as proposed.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

MOTION: J. Conlin, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Approve the resignation of Carrie Calhoun, Jacob Lange, Sara Lange, Tylor Kloehn, Sarah Cirilli, and Zoe Quade as proposed.

Motion passed with a voice vote.

Adjournment

MOTION: D. Frey, seconded by J. Conlin.

Move to adjourn.

Motion passed with a voice vote at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Peterson, Board of Education Clerk