

School District of Rhinelander
Board of Education

Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, August 18, 2025

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on Monday, August 18, 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, Mike Roberts, Duane Frey, Merlin Van Buren, Ronald Lueneburg, Kurt Helke, and Ronald Counter

Board Members Absent: Patricia Townsend

Others present at this meeting were: Superintendent, Eric Burke; Director of Human Resources, Michele Cornelius; Director of Learning Support, Richard Gretzinger; Director of Business Services, Bob Thom; Director of Instruction, Ryan Ourada; Crescent Elementary School Principal, Alex Bontz; James Williams Middle School Principal, Kyle Raleigh; James Williams Middle School Dean of Students, Jake Adams; Rhinelander High School Associate Principal, Matt Knott Secretary/Deputy Clerk, Shelley Anderson, Brian Jopek of the Northwoods River News, and Heather Schaefer of the Northwoods Star Journal. Six other people were also present.

Declaration of Public Notice

President Counter indicated that the 'Declaration of Public Notice' was printed 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/Updates

President's Report

- No report was given.

Vice-President's Report

- Vice-President Judy Conlin commended the 2025 Graduation class speaker for sharing meaningful lessons relevant to the school year. She also expressed appreciation to all staff and community members for their continued dedication and support of the Rhinelander School District.

Recognition of Hodag Schools Foundation (HSF) Retiring Board Members – Julie Bronson, Dave Heck, Jonna Jewell, Sue Makris, and Carol Zierden

- Superintendent Eric Burke acknowledged the Hodag Schools Foundation (HSF) Board members who were present at the meeting.
- Superintendent Eric Burke noted that the Hodag Schools Foundation (HSF) was established in response to the need for improvements within the District's schools.
- He emphasized that the foundation has played an important role in supporting both the School Board and the Rhinelander community.
- Julie Bronson was recognized for her instrumental contributions to the foundation's work over the past 25 years.
- The all-class reunion was highlighted as one of the many initiatives that resulted from the foundation's efforts.
- Julie Bronson expressed her gratitude to the District for its support throughout the years.

Referendum Construction Project Update on Budget Status and Funding

Director of Business Services, reviewed the summary of revenues and expenses through August 11, 2025. He noted that fiscal activity for the month has been minimal, but additional expenditures are expected as project work progresses. He also informed the Board that tours of James Williams Middle School and Rhinelander High School are scheduled prior to the September 15 Board meeting.

Revenue:

- **Interest:** \$897,235.28
 - **Bond Proceeds:** \$26,000,000.00
 - **Donations:** \$414,158.00
- Total Revenue:** \$27,311,393.28

Expenses:

- **Construction Services:** \$4,423,202.97
 - **Supplies:** \$28,866.94
 - **Equipment:** \$361,578.09
 - **Insurance:** \$34,899.00
 - **Fees, Permits, etc.:** \$41,766.36
- Total Expenses:** \$4,890,313.36

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

Summer School Update – Elementary, Middle, and High School – Alex Bontz, Jake Adams, Kyle Raleigh, and Matt Knott

- **4K–5th Grade Program:**
 - 29 teachers, 12 interventionists, 19 teaching assistants, and two office staff supported the program over 18 school days.
 - Venues included Rhinelander High School, Hodag Dome, RHS pool, CAVOC, and various classrooms.
 - Breakfasts served: 2,629 | Lunches served: 5,163
 - A wide variety of enrichment classes were offered, such as rocketry, culinary arts, swimming, Legos, outdoor games, and therapeutic art.

- Math and reading intervention returned, with 24 daily sessions to support academic growth.
- **JWMS Program:**
 - 28 classes offered; 112 students enrolled.
 - New courses included Life Skills, Golf, fishing, kayaking, and Rocketry.
 - Field trips included the Tomahawk Berry Farm, Camp 5, and Stable Hands LLC.
- **RHS Program:**
 - 19 credit recovery classes (50 students), one credit accrual course in Health (36 students), and a non-credit English prep class.
 - Jump Start Program was for incoming freshman and introduced them to CTE courses and study skill to set them up for success.
- **Weight Training:**
 - 129 athletes participated, nearly evenly split between male and female.
 - Sessions logged: nearly 1,500. Speed and agility training occurred at the Hodag Dome.
- **Driver's Education:**
 - 2 summer classes served 79 students; 214 total students took the course this past year—the highest ever.
 - Guest speakers and simulator usage supported student learning.

Shout-outs were given to numerous support staff and community partners who contributed to the program's success.

Annual Seclusion and Restraint Report – Richard Gretzinger

- Director of Learning Support, Richard Gretzinger, presented the 2024-2025 seclusion and physical restraint data to the Board, which is part of the annual reporting process.
- The District uses Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVCi) Protocols with a focus on research-based based de-escalation techniques
- The District has established its own in-house NVCi trainers who train special education staff as well as those who are on their building-level NVCi teams.

Committee Chair Reports

Instruction and Accountability Committee

- The Committee did not meet in August.

Operations and Strategic Planning Committee

- The Committee did not meet in August.

Employee Relations Committee

- The Committee did not meet in August.

Capital Projects Ad Hoc Committee

- The Committee did not meet in August.

CESA 9 Representative Report

- Merlin Van Buren, the Board's Representative to CESA 9, provided the following update:
 - The 42nd Annual CESA 9 Convention was held on August 4, 2025.
 - There are 12 CESA agencies across the state; CESA 9 serves 22 school districts.
 - CESA 9 is governed by an 11-member Board of Control, with each member serving a three-year term.
 - The Annual Report was presented at the convention. It was noted that CESA 9's operating income primarily comes from services provided, with additional support from grant funding.

Discussion, Reports/Updates, and/or Action Topics

Consider Approval of the Minutes from the July 21, 2025, Regular Board Meeting

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by M. Roberts.

Approve the minutes of the July 21, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as printed.

M. Peterson abstained.

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Consider the Approval of the July 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$3,315,261.07 and the July 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the Amount of \$668,555.42

MOTION: M. Roberts, seconded by M. Van Buren.

Consider the Approval of the July 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$3,315,261.07 and the July 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the Amount of \$668,555.42.

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Review of the July Budget Status Report

Director of Business Services, Bob Thom, provided the following update:

- The preliminary audit was completed the previous week.
- The District is currently \$96,000 ahead of budget projections.
- Work is ongoing on the 2025–2026 budget.
- The full budget will be presented at the Annual Meeting on October 27, 2025.

Consider Acceptance of Various Gifts/Donations Contributed to the District

MOTION: M. Peterson, seconded by M. Roberts.

Accept with sincere gratitude the following gifts/donations:

- \$50.00 from Joe and Judy Conlin
- Ice fishing equipment valued at \$500.00 from Drew Mosley
- ROKU ONN 65" Smart TV valued at \$315.88 from Ollie Torgenson
- \$3,000.00 from Rhinelander Little League
- Milwaukee sander, bits, and posters for the technical education classroom valued at \$150.00 from Adam Clark

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Review of Strategic Plan with Discussion and/or Action on Recommendations for 2025-2026

MOTION: M. Roberts, seconded by R. Lueneburg.

Board approve the recommendations as outlined for the 2025-2026 School District of Rhinelander Strategic Plan.

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action Purchasing a Dual Temperature Pass Through Cabinet for Food Service

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

Approve the purchasing a dual temperature pass through cabinet for \$30,145.08 from Boelter Foodservice Design with funds coming from Fund 50.

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

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

Remove from the table Board Members Receiving Laptops or Chromebooks for Meetings (District Issued Devices) and Board Packet Distribution

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Board Members Receiving Laptops or Chromebooks for Meetings (District Issued Devices) and Board Packet Distribution

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

The Board approve receiving District-issued Chromebooks for meetings. A firm quote to be provided at the next meeting for Board approval. Packets to be received in two PDFs – Financial information in one PDF, with the remaining materials in a second PDF.

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Superintendent's Report – Eric Burke

Superintendent Burke reported the following:

- New staff training will take place next week over three days.
- The District Welcome Back Day for all staff is scheduled for August 28, 2025; all Board members are encouraged to attend.
- The 2025–2026 school year will begin with a staggered start: elementary, 6th grade, and 9th grade students will attend on September 8, with all students in attendance on September 9.

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, M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, R. Lueneburg, K. Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Closed Session

The Board moved to closed session and discussed hires and a resignation.

Return to Open Session

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

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 8/0

Return to open session.

Open Session

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

Approve the hire of Raven Killian and Tracy Cirves as proposed.

The motion passed with a voice vote.

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

Approve the resignation of Diana Budde as proposed.

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Adjournment

MOTION: M. Van Buren, seconded by M. Roberts.

Move to adjourn.

The motion passed with a voice vote at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Peterson, Board of Education Clerk