

School District of Rhinelander
Board of Education

Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, September 15, 2025

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order on Monday, September 15, 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, Patricia Townsend, Kurt Helke, and Ronald Counter

Board Members Absent: None

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; Community Education and School Forest Manager, Mike Cheslock; Secretary/Deputy Clerk, Shelley Anderson, and Heather Schaefer of the Northwoods Star Journal. Three 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 – Report on Pre-Meeting Tours of James Williams Middle School and Rhinelander High School and Staff Acknowledgment

- President Ron Counter reported that before the meeting, the Board toured the newly completed areas at James Williams Middle School and Rhinelander High School.
- While work continues in the technical education area, the science area at Rhinelander High School is now complete.
- The Family and Consumer Education room at James Williams Middle School is also complete with work continuing in the office, technical education, and art areas.
- Overall, the construction projects are progressing on or ahead of schedule.

- President Ron Counter expressed sincere appreciation for Shelley Anderson's dedicated work behind the scenes in support of both the School Board and the District. He noted that while her contributions may not always be visible to the public, they are essential and deeply valued.

Vice-President's Report – Acknowledge the Work of Fellow Board Members

- Vice-President Judy Conlin recognized the School Board Members for their commitment to prioritizing professional development. Professional development encompasses ongoing learning and activities that enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional effectiveness, ultimately improving student learning.

Beginning of the Year Reflection and Sharing Plans for the Year – Rhinelander Education Association Representative – Shari Wendland

- No report was given as Shari Wendland was unable to attend the meeting.

School Forest Foundational Plan – Mike Cheslock

An update was provided on CAVOC, the district's School Forest program. Highlights include:

- **Cedric A. Vig:** Mr. Vig served as Superintendent at the time the District acquired the property now known as the school forest. He played a key role in the development of what is today the Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom (CAVOC).
- **Advisory Committee Rebuilding:** A School Forest Manager position was created in 2024, with efforts focused on rebuilding the advisory committee, which now includes 24 diverse members.
- **Needs Assessment and Planning:** A teacher-focused needs assessment was conducted, followed by a foundational planning session with LEAF specialist Gretchen Marshall. This led to the development of a new foundational plan replacing the 2009 version.
- **Programs and Participation:**
 - All 4K–5th-grade students visit at least twice yearly, with additional winter outings. Middle and high school groups participate as scheduling allows.
 - An estimated 3,000 students visited CAVOC during the 2024–25 school year, not including events like FBLA/DECA 5Ks and ski meets.
- **Community Use:** CAVOC is in high demand for weekend rentals, including weddings, family events, and celebrations.
- **Program Developments:**
 - Ropes Course expanded with new elements built by RHS construction students.
 - Lesson plans and an activity menu are being developed for consistent, grade-level programming.
 - Successful acorn collection project in partnership with the DNR (66 lbs. collected).
 - Ice Fishing program recognized in *IMPACT Magazine* by the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association.
- **Looking Ahead:**
 - Timber harvests to support programming and Tech Ed.
 - Potential construction of a lake equipment storage shed by RHS students.
 - *Discover Wisconsin* will film a feature on CAVOC in October.

Referendum Construction Project Update on Budget Status and Funding

Director of Business Services, Bob Thom, reviewed the summary of revenues and expenses through September 4, 2025. He reported that the overall project is more than halfway complete, with approximately half of the allocated funds expended. He also noted that the District has received over \$1,000,000 in interest income to date, which exceeds initial projections.

Revenue:

- **Interest:** \$1,030,542.78
 - **Bond Proceeds:** \$26,000,000.00
 - **Donations:** \$414,158.00
- Total Revenue:** \$27,444,700.78

Expenses:

- **Construction Services:** \$9,427,491.56
 - **Supplies:** \$147,143.26
 - **Equipment:** \$238,183.47
 - **Insurance:** \$34,899.00
 - **Fees, Permits, etc.:** \$49,407.31
- Total Expenses:** \$9,897,124.60

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

Committee Chair Reports

Instruction and Accountability Committee

- The Committee did not meet in September.

Operations and Strategic Planning Committee

- Mike Roberts, the Committee Chair, reported that the Committee recommended agenda items e, f, and g to the Board for approval

Employee Relations Committee

- The Committee did not meet in September.

Capital Projects Ad Hoc Committee

- The Committee did not meet in September.

CESA 9 Representative Report

- No report was given.

Discussion, Reports/Updates, and/or Action Topics

Consider Approval of the Minutes from the August 18, 2025, Regular Board Meeting

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

Approve the minutes of the August 18, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as printed.

P. Townsend abstained.

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Consider the Approval of the August 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$985,959.51 and the August 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the Amount of \$688,138.37

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

Approve the August 2025 Payment of Claims in the Amount of \$985,959.51 and the August 2025 Payment of Contracted Services in the Amount of \$688,138.37.

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 9/0

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:

- \$500.00 from Jarred Stiemke, Eagle River Cabinets
- \$150.00 from Eric Theilman, Theilman Home Improvements LLC
- \$500.00 from CoVantage Credit Union
- \$250.00 from Jen Tucci, Northern Grounds Coffeehouse LLC
- \$250.00 from Patrick H. Finlan, Finlan Law Firm, S.C.
- \$50.00 from Gary Driscoll, Driscoll Property Management & Home Improvements LLC
- \$100.00 from O'Melia, Schiek, & McEldowney S.C.
- School supplies valued at \$100.00 from Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital/Excellence in Action

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Chromebooks for School Board Members' Use

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

The Board approve the purchase of Chromebooks for School Board Members at a cost not to exceed \$3,060.00.

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

Nay: None

Motion passed 9/0

Discussion and/or Action on First Readings of New Proposed Policies Relating to Program, Property, and Operations.

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

The Board approve the first reading of :

- Policy 2431 - Interscholastic Athletics
- Policy 7440.03 - Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems
- Policy 7455 - Accounting System for Capital Assets
- Policy 8550 - Competitive Food

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Revisions to Bylaws and Policies Relating to Program, Professional Staff, Support Staff, Students, Finances, Property, Operations, and Relations

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

The Board approve the revisions to the following policies:

- Bylaw 0100 - Definitions
- Bylaw 0144.5 - Board Member Behavior, Communications, and Code of Conduct
- Policy 1461 - Unrequested Leaves of Absence/Fitness for Duty
- Policy 2416 - Student Privacy and Parental Access to Information
- Policy 2440.01 - Summer or Interim School Attendance
- Policy 2522 - Library Media Centers
- Policy 3120.04 - Employment of Substitutes
- Policy 3431 - Employee Leaves
- Policy 4431 - Employee Leaves
- Policy 4124 - Notice of Reasonable Assurance of Employment
- Policy 4140 - Termination and Resignation
- Policy 4213 - Student Supervision and Welfare
- Policy 4281 - Personal Property of Staff Members
- Policy 5112 - Entrance Age
- Policy 5130 - Withdrawal from School
- Policy 5200.01 - Full-Time Student
- Policy 5410 - Promotion, Placement, and Retention
- Policy 5411 - Third Grade Promotion and Retention: At-Risk Students
- Policy 5464 - Early Graduation
- Policy 5505 - Academic Honesty
- Policy 5530 - Student Use or Possession of Intoxicants, Drugs, or Paraphernalia
- Policy 6144 - Investment Income for General Fund
- Policy 7450 - Property Inventory
- Policy 7530.02 - Staff and School Officials Use of Personal Communication Devices
- Policy 8120 - Volunteers
- Policy 8420 - School Safety
- Policy 8500 - Food Services
- Policy 8531 - Free and Reduced-Price Meals
- Policy 8540 - Vending Machines
- Policy 9151 - Use of Cameras and Other Recording Devices in Locker Rooms

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Discussion and/or Action on Rescinding Policies Relating to Professional and Support Staff

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

The Board approve to rescind the following policies:

- Policy 3419.02 - Privacy Protections of Fully Insured Group Health Plans
- Policy 4419.02 - Privacy Protections of Fully Insured Group Health Plans

The motion passed with a voice vote.

Superintendent's Report – Eric Burke – Beginning of the School Year Updates and Celebrations

Superintendent Burke reported the following:

- The District has successfully completed the first six days of the 2024–2025 school year.
- Members of the District Leadership Team have been conducting classroom and building observations across all schools.
- The school year began with a staggered start: elementary, 6th grade, and 9th grade students, along with student leaders and advisors, were in attendance on September 8. All students attended on September 9. The first day was a strong and positive start to the year.
- The team consisting of Lexi Allen, Shane Dornfeld, Ryan Ourada, and Eric Burke has been selected to present at the AASA 2026 National Conference on Education in Nashville, Tennessee. They will share a presentation titled “Future Ready: The Power of Local Partnerships.”

Enter Closed Session

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

Enter closed session pursuant to

- 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.
- 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, P. Townsend,

R. Lueneburg, K. Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 9/0

Closed Session

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

Return to Open Session

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

Aye: J. Conlin, M. Peterson, M. Roberts, D. Frey, M. Van Buren, P. Townsend,

R. Lueneburg, K. Helke, R. Counter

Nay: None

Motion passed 9/0

Return to open session.

Open Session

MOTION: J. Conlin, seconded by M. Roberts.
Approve the hire of Heather Collins and Julia Enz as proposed.
The motion passed with a voice vote.

Adjournment

MOTION: R. Lueneburg, seconded by J. Conlin.
Move to adjourn.
The motion passed with a voice vote at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Peterson, Board of Education Clerk