

**Board of Education
Worth School District 127
Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting
December 11, 2024
Dr. Rosemary Lucas Administration Building
11218 S. Ridgeland Ave, Worth, Illinois**

Administrators:

Dr. Mark Fleming, Superintendent
Cindy Dykas, Assistant Superintendent, Business Manager/CSBO
Dr. Sinead Chambers, Director of Student Services
Dr. Maureen Eichstaedt, Assistant Director of Student Services
Linda Esposito, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Robert Jeffers, Director of Technology
David Dvorchak, Director of Facilities and Grounds
Jason Tooth, Principal, Worth Junior High
Melissa Wills, Assistant Principal, Worth Junior High
Ashley Toms Bonnsetter, Principal, Worthwoods Elementary
Elizabeth D'Andrea, Principal, Worth Elementary
Alyse Koehler, Assistant Principal, Worth Elementary & Worthwoods Elementary

Board Recording Secretary

Jill Moore

Others Present

Angelika Bochenek
Ramiro Orona
Bora Gashi
Ricken Jensen
Kelly Gansauer, WEA
Michelle Okrzesik
Jeff Pagano
Alyssa Zirngibl
Mary Zirngibl
Krystal Constantino

1. MEETING OPENING

A. CALL TO ORDER

President Drew Sernus called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Drew Sernus, Danette Keeler, Meghan Sisk, Missy Sinclair
Absent: Michelle Egan, Vince Flores, David Blanks

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President, Drew Sernus led the Pledge of Allegiance

2. SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT

A. WORTHWOODS/WORTH JUNIOR HIGH CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Dr. Fleming stated that the constructions projects at both schools is coming along very well in spite of the very cold weather. At Worth Junior High, you'll notice there has been some steel that's been installed. They are hoping to do some roof work during the winter break to eliminate tar smell while students are out of school.

B. JANUARY BOARD MEETING

Dr. Fleming stated that the January 8th Board Meeting will now be moved to January 15th so as to allow enough time for everyone to prepare after the break.

C. FOIA REQUESTS

Dr. Fleming stated that since the last Board Meeting, the district has received one (1) FOIA Request and it's been responded to in a timely manner.

Worthwoods/Worth Elementary Choir Performance

Mrs. Liz D'Andrea shared details about Spirit Week at Worth Elementary and Worthwoods where teachers selected themes and students had to guess the daily themes.

Dr. Fleming introduced Krystal Constantino as she recognized choir students from Worth Elementary and Worthwoods. Students' performed several songs including "Boots of Shiny Leather".

3. ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR BUSINESS SERVICES

A. FY2025 SCHOOL MAINTENANCE PROJECT GRANT

- \$48.8 million appropriated for this year's grants
- Dollar for Dollar state matching grant program that provides awards up to \$50,000 exclusively for the maintenance or upkeep of buildings for educational purposes.
- Timeline is two years to complete from grant award date, so sometime in FY2027
- Worth 127 proposal is for a section of roof replacement at Worth Elementary in Summer 2026 for a total estimated cost of \$180,000, of which \$50,000 will be grant funded
- If you want to move forward with this, the next step is to approve the motion item C.
- Questions?

B. RECAP 2024 TAX LEVY PRESENTATION

Asking for the 2024 Tax Levy to be approved at this meeting. All the figures are the same that was presented in November. Just a few things to highlight:

Slide 2 - Review basic terms of the tax levy process

- With the CPI at 3.4%, the lowest since the 2021 levy, this year's levy ask is 4.35% greater than last year's extension. In following the Truth in Taxation act, it is under 5% so there is no need to hold a public hearing today.
- Speaking of the Truth in Taxation Act, there is a new legal requirement. For at least 30 consecutive days, the Truth in Taxation Notice must be posted on or near the top of the homepage or link on the homepage of the district website.

Slide 3 - P.A. 102-0895

- New section of the School Code, effective May 23, 2022
- Each School District now must publicly disclose the cash reserve balance of all funds held by the school district related to its operational levy
- Disclosures must occur at the public hearing at which the district certifies its budget and levy for the taxable year
- Worth School District 127 has complied with this by posting this information in Board Docs each month
- As of June 30, 2024, the Operational Cash Reserve Balances (all funds except Debt Service) was near \$25,500,000

Slide 9 - CPI (Inflation)

- 2023 CPI which affects the 2024 Levy was down to 3.4% (year prior was 6.5%)
- CPI in December 2024 is expected to start to level off (announcement in January 2025). This will affect next year's levy.
- November 2024 CPI was 2.7%, so this is an indicator that things are starting to normalize and get closer to the Federal Reserve goal of 2.0% for next year.

Slide 10 - Tax Levy vs. Tax Extension

- Doesn't matter what is levied, the district only receives CPI increase plus extra for new property growth.
- The middle row shows large levy increases over prior year extension
- Row above is a year over year extension increase, which is roughly CPI and very minimal increases
- 2019 was a sharp decline because it was the first opportunity for the Property Tax Relief Grant
- 2020 and 2021 were low increases due to low CPI and continuing to receive PTRG
- 2022 was up as a result of CPI being at 7.0% (again, capped at 5.0%)
- 2023 was low, far below the CPI 5% cap. We are anticipating 2023 actual extension to be closer to 3% or less.

Next Steps

- The board will not have to conduct a public hearing during this meeting because the levy is less than a 5% increase over last year's extension, per the Truth in Taxation requirement.
- The board will vote on the 2024 Tax Levy resolutions (Motions, Item D) which will be filed with the Cook County Clerk's office, prior to the last Tuesday in December.

4. DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES

A. STUDENT SERVICES UPDATE

Dr. Fleming introduced Dr. Sinead Chambers to give a Student Services. Dr. Chambers stated that Student Services provides support for All Worth student families. The department oversees students with CWD (IEP/504) and related services, Multilingual students, at-risk students, but also any that require health services. There are currently 214 active IEPs in Worth, including OOD placements. Since August 2024, 29 new IEPs have entered Worth School District. There is a Special Education MTSS Process and all Worth School District students take universal screeners 3X per academic year with groups being identified based on Tier 1, 2, and 3.

There are 44 students placed in different settings based on their unique individual needs: DLP, Elim, CARE, and AAA. 504 Plans include students with disabilities who do not qualify for an individualized education program, as required by the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and provisions of the School Code, my qualify for services under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if the child (i) has physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or major life activities, (ii) has a record of a physical or mental impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment.

Early Childhood (EC)

- Currently serving 16 students, capped at 20.

PreK/PreK for All

- Currently serving 32 students, capped at 40.

Dr. Chambers introduced Dr. Eichsteadt to give the Board an update regarding ML (Multilingual):

Current Population:

- 254 out of 1039 students currently enrolled in Worth School District
- 35 out of the 254 ML students enrolled qualify for special education services.
- Three major language clusters: Arabic, Spanish and Polish
- 7 teachers/254 students
- 3 Bilingual Arabic
- 1 Bilingual Spanish
- 2 ML teachers (Polish/Arabic)

At registration all Worth School District parents complete a home language survey to determine if the student speaks a language other than English. If yes, the student will be screened further and if they qualify, are enrolled into the ML Program. Dr. Eichsteadt stated that ISBE does program monitoring and ML students are monitored with yearly goals to achieve language proficiency. Dr. Eichstaedt stated the district has accomplished much since the start of the 2024 school year.

5. DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

No Report

6. CITIZENS' REMARKS - AGENDA AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

There were no citizens' remarks

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Action (Consent): A. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Resolution: Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the following Consent Agenda Items as presented."

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the following Consent Agenda Items as presented."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): B. BOARD BILLS PAYABLE

Resolution: Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Accounts Payable for \$356,759.58 (EDUCATIONAL); \$40,359.00 (OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE); \$7,860.28 (TRANSPORTATION); \$557,508.92 (CAPITAL PROJECTS); and \$102,811.00 (TORT IMMUNITY) for a total of \$1,065,239.59."

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the following Consent Agenda Items as presented."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): C. PAYROLL SUMMARY

Resolution: Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Payroll Summary for the Education Fund in the amount of \$1,135,625.03, the Building Fund in the amount of \$83,652.68, and the FICA/IMRF/Medicare in the amount of \$74,029.69."

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the following Consent Agenda Items as presented."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): D. EMPLOYMENT OF CERTIFIED STAFF - SHANNON SILVA - SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER - EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 26, 2024

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the following Consent Agenda Items as presented."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): E. APPROVAL OF TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR ATTENDANCE AT THE TRI-CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO, IL ON NOVEMBER 21-24, 2024 AS OUTLINED IN BOARD BILLS PAYABLE

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the following Consent Agenda Items as presented."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

8. MOTIONS

Action: A. REGULAR BOARD MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 13, 2024 regular meeting."

Motion by Danette Keeler, second by Meghan Sisk.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action: B. CLOSED SESSION MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 13, 2024 closed session meeting."

Motion by Missy Sinclair, second by Meghan Sisk.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action: C. APPROVAL OF FY2025 SCHOOL MAINTENANCE PROJECT GRANT

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the application to proceed with applying for a \$50,000 School Maintenance Project Grant for Fiscal Year 2025."

Motion by Danette Keeler, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

Action: D. 2024 TAX LEVY

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education adopt the Resolution providing for the Tax Levy for the Year 2024, adopt the Resolution providing for 2024 Tax Levy for Working Cash; adopt the Resolution providing for 2024 Tax Levy for Special Education Purposes; authorize the President to sign the Certificate of Compliance with the Truth in Taxation Law; adopt the Resolution Authorizing Reduction of Certain Fund Levies for the 2024 Levy Year, as recommended by the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services/CSBO and the Superintendent."

Motion by Danette Keeler, second by Danette Keeler.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler, Missy Sinclair

9. BOARD DISCUSSION/ACTION AND/OR REPORTS/REQUESTS

Board Members discussed their attendance at the JAC - Joint Annual Conference that was held in Chicago on November 21-24, 2024 and the impact of Illinois Education funding after the election. The conference featured representatives from both parties, aiming to keep the discussion balanced. There is uncertainty about future funding for schools due to the lack of a new president and potential changes in funding policies. Board Member stated there is also instability of EBF (Evidence Based Funding) which has changed multiple times in the past.

Board Members discussed concerns about teacher funding, particularly for tier one and tier two teachers stating their is uncertainty about how to address the teacher shortage and fixing the funding issues. Further stating there are challenges of maintaining and attracting teachers in the current educational landscape.

Board Member provided an overview of the delegate assembly and stated that everything went smoothly. Board Members shared their experiences attending the workshops and how impactful they were.

Board Member commented on how wonderful the Aladdin Performance was and how well the students' performed. Board Members appreciated the hard work and dedication of the staff behind the scenes in supporting students.

10. CITIZENS' REMARKS - AGENDA ITEMS

There were no citizens' remarks.

11. CLOSED SESSION

There was no Closed Session.


12. ADJOURNMENT


Recommended Motion (voice vote): "that the Board of Education motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 p.m."

Voice Vote: All Yes

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Respectfully Submitted,


Meghan Sisk
Secretary, Board of Education


Drew Sernus
President, Board of Education