

**Board of Education
Worth School District 127
Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting
May 14, 2025
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

Pete Esposito
Michelle Okrzesik, WE
Tiffany-Alexander-Harris, WE
Melissa Poole, WW
Cathy Wilson, WW
Anital Falls, WJH
Barb Kasper, WW
Gabby Parra, WW
Esra Mahmoud, WW
Karam Mohammad, WE
Olga Castelan, WW
Francis Jayr Evangelista, WW
Ruby Rose Evangelista, WW
Kelly Machaj, WW
Chuck Machaj, WW
Agnieska Duda, WW
Ehalia Fakoollah, WW
Jeff Pagano, WW
Lisa Lyke, AC
Helen Castanon, WJH
Alyssa Zirngibl, WE
Mary Zirngibl, WE
Lisa Strzempa, WE

1. MEETING OPENING

A. CALL TO ORDER

President Drew Sernus called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

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

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President, Drew Sernus led the Pledge of Allegiance

2. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. HONOR 2025 RETIREES

Dr. Fleming honored the 2025 retirees and expressed excitement for this board meeting and acknowledges the retirees significant service of 139 years, collectively:

Kelly Machaj 13 years
Anita Falls 23 years
Barb Kasper 32 years
Helen Castanon 33 years
Linda Esposito 38 years

Linda Esposito shared her reflections on her career, highlighting the changes in education over the years and her fulfillment in making a difference in students' lives.

A brief recess was held to allow attendees to enjoy refreshments and socialize with the retirees.

B. WORTHWOODS/WORTH JUNIOR HIGH CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Dr. Fleming shared the the Worthwoods and Worth Junior High construction projects are coming along very well and projects are on track. Glass will be coming into the windows and both the west and the north end will start the interior and over at the junior high they are putting up drywall. Summer projects will include floorings in the common, and gym as well as the library to become the new art room.

C. DECLAMATION TEAM UPDATE

Dr. Fleming introduced Principal Tooth to give an update on the Declamation Team and stated they took first place in the conference. Principal Tooth shared a video of 8th graders, Julissa Roman and Vanessa Sereno, delivering an impressive performance of one of their skits.

Principal Tooth shared that the entire junior high is reading "And then, Boom" by Lisa Fipps and each Board Member received a copy of the book.

D. WORTH JUNIOR HIGH SECURLY IMPLEMENTATION

Principal Tooth shared that the district will be implementing Securly this fall, a digital digital hall pass system designed for K-12 schools. allowing administrators and teachers to manager student movements and improve safety. It provides a streamlined way to issue, track and manage hall passes. offering features like live dashboards, pass limits, and customizable reporting.

E. FOIA REQUESTS

Dr. Fleming stated the district received six FOIA's and they have been responded to in a timely manner.

3. ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR BUSINESS SERVICES

A. FY 2025 TENTATIVE AMENDED BUDGET

1. 2024-2025 Amended Budget

- a. Significant changes in the Budget require a formal Budget Amendment
- b. This is the presentation for the Tentative Amended Budget
- c. Since May 2nd, the Amended Budget has been on display. The requirement is for a minimum of 30 days. The final adoption of the Amended Budget will take place at the June 4th regular meeting
- d. The primary reasons for creating an FY25 Amended Budget:
 - i. Increase in revenues by \$500,000 from August original budget. relating to:
 1. The award of the Property Tax Relief Grant (we actually see the extra \$1 million in funding this year in Evidence Based Funding receipts from ISBE)
 2. Additional \$350,000 in Federal revenues for grants (Title I, Title II, Title IV)
 3. Additional \$150,000 in State Categorical aid
 4. Reduction of local revenue of \$1 million related to property taxes (PTRG)
 - ii. Increase in expenditures of nearly \$1.75 million:
 1. Increase \$250,000 in Ed Fund for consultants and capital outlay
 2. Increase in \$350,000 for Operations and Maintenance Fund expenses
 - a. \$150k less in purchased services
 - b. \$500k additional transfers – from resolution in November to move funds from O&M to Debt Service for Bond Payments to keep tax burden flat
 3. Reduction of \$250,000 for transfers from Working Cash (changed to a transfer from O&M, per above)
 4. Increase in \$50k in Transportation for outsourced bus services – higher than originally planned
 5. Decrease of \$300,000 in Health/Life Safety Fund expenses
 - a. All expenses charged to this fund must be in the Health/Life Safety Amendment by the architects, so construction costs originally planned for this fund cannot be paid out of the fund at this time.
 - b. The fund balance of just over \$1 million will be used in future years for roof, parking lots. etc.
- e. Overall deficit that was originally projected in August to be \$11 million, has dropped slightly to \$10.6 million
 - i. Large deficit due to construction costs – bond proceeds from August 2023 (realized last fiscal year)
 - ii. Last Fiscal Year the district had a surplus of \$8.5 million for this project

- iii. Cumulative two-year deficit spending of \$2 million
- f. Projected fund balance is now \$14.8 million, improving slightly from \$14.3 million from August 2024 budget
 - i. Again, large drop in fund balance is a result of the construction costs
 - ii. This will level to more normal figures next fiscal year when the construction is complete

4. DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES

No Report

5. DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

A. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMMITTEE UPDATE

- Our goal is to co-create a strategic plan that continues to strengthen social-emotional learning, cultivates wellness for students and staff, and builds proactive behavior supports across Worth School District.
- The committee members were selected and met for the first time on April 17.
- This committee includes all admins, nurses, and social workers, the SEL support facilitators, as well as teachers and paraprofessionals from all buildings.
- Our consultant, Kevin Smith, came to Worth for the first time at the beginning of May. During that week, we held separate meetings with each of the above-mentioned groups, then met together as a whole committee on the afternoon of May 2 (early dismissal day).

Outcomes after our first week of meeting - Strategic Vision

- The whole committee met in the MPR at WE and brought together all of our thoughts from our individual meetings. We created a purple wall with half sheets of all of our ideas. At the top of purple wall was a question. “What steps will Worth SD and its 3 schools take to shift from discipline as punishment to discipline as practice?”
- Next, we looked for common themes represented on our sheets, organized them into columns, and created names for each of the columns.
- With a yellow sticky note, we placed our names on a column that we found to be of particular interest. (We essentially divided ourselves into sub-committees.)
- Finally, we rearranged the question into a statement that will drive our work. “To shift from discipline as punishment to discipline as practice, Worth SD and its 3 schools will implement...”
 - Preventative Measures (de-escalation, classroom management, laws & policies)
 - Citizenship (community service, life skills, trades)
 - Trauma Lens (PD on trauma, brain research)
 - Student Support (abuse, homelessness, therapist, intervention)
 - Staff Support (training, resiliency, reduce burnout)
 - Team Approach with Check-ins (implementing BIPs, check-ins, follow-ups, meetings)
 - Individualization (case by case, data-driven, root cause, reflection)
 - Rapport Building (relationships, communication, connections, team-building)
 - Building Student Capacity (character education, class meetings, peer leadership, empathy)
 - Systems Approach (school-wide/district-wide, short- and long-term goals, consistency)
 - Mindset (staff buy-in, collective responsibility, labeling kids, how can we help?)
 - Positive-based supports (visual supports, positive framing, building incentives, golden rule)

Kevin will be returning to Worth for 2 days in May and 2 days in June for meetings with the whole committee. By the end of the day on June 26, we hope to have a kick-off plan to share with everyone when we return to school in August.

B. ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Michelle Okrzesik expressed her gratitude to the Board for the opportunity to launch and teach the new accelerated program, highlighting the fun and challenge it has brought. The program has seen significant success with students completing three STEM projects focused on the theme of power and concepts of force and motion. The program started with 27 students and has grown to 58 students.

The math goal composition involved students from various grade divisions with different coaches for each division. Michelle proudly announced that out of 21 school districts in Cook County, their program placed sixth in two divisions and received an individual award. Mohammad Alshwayit from Worthwoods received a fifth place medal.

Students demonstrated their tractors, showcasing their creativity and problem-solving skills.

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

There were no Citizen's 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."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action (Consent): B. BOARD BILLS PAYABLE

Resolution: Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Accounts Payable for \$492,476.98 (EDUCATIONAL); \$225,531.05 (OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE); \$41,450.51 (TRANSPORTATION); and \$1,218,351.51 (CAPITAL PROJECTS) for a total of \$1,977,810.05."

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

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

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 \$732,439.57 the Building Fund in the amount of \$56,687.10, and the FICA/IMRF/Medicare in the amount of \$48,029.01."

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

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action (Consent): D. RESIGNATION OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - DEBORAH HOGAN - LUNCH SUPERVISOR - EFFECTIVE MAY 5, 2025

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

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action (Consent): E. RESIGNATION OF CERTIFIED STAFF - ALYSSA KUEHL - 2ND GRADE TEACHER - WORTHWOODS ELEMENTARY - EFFECTIVE JUNE 3, 2025

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

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action (Consent): F. EMPLOYMENT OF CERTIFIED STAFF - CHRISTY POPPISH - SCHOOL NURSE - WORTHWOODS - EFFECTIVE FOR THE 2025/2026 SCHOOL YEAR

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

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action (Consent): G. FIRST READING OF BOARD POLICY #118

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

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

8. MOTIONS

Action: A. REGULAR BOARD MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the April 9, 2025 regular meeting."

Motion by Michelle Egan, second by Drew Sernus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action: B. CLOSED SESSION MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the April 9, 2025 session meeting."

Motion by Vince Flores, second by Michelle Egan.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action: C. SPECIAL REORGANIZATION BOARD MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Special Reorganization Meeting on April 22, 2025."

Motion by Michelle Egan, second by Drew Sernus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

Action: D. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Memorandum of Agreement."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Drew Sernus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

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

- Board Member commended Mrs. Dykas for the report on the 2025 Tentative Budget.
- Board Members discussed the tentative plans to implement a new schedule for the upcoming 2025/2026 school year.
- Dr. Fleming stated that each Board Member received the flyer for the 10th Annual Worth Fraternal Order of Police Golf Outing on June 14, 2025 at the Water's Edge Golf Course.

10. CITIZENS' REMARKS - AGENDA ITEMS

There were no Citizens' Remarks.

11. CLOSED SESSION

A. ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education adjourn to closed session at 7:31 p.m. to discuss The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees; Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; Student disciplinary cases; Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the minutes of the closed meeting; Security procedures, school building safety and security, and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property."

Motion by Michelle Egan, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

B. RECONVENE IN PUBLIC SESSION

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education upon completion of it's discussions in closed session reconvene in public session at 9:18."

Motion by Meghan Sisk, second by Vince Flores.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Vince Flores

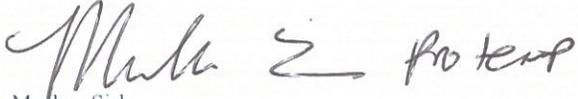
12. ADJOURNMENT

Recommended Motion (voice vote): "that the Board of Education motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 p.m."

Voice Vote: All Yes

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Respectfully Submitted,

Handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meghan Sisk" followed by a flourish and the word "pro temp" written in a cursive style.

Meghan Sisk
Secretary, Board of Education

Handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Drew Sernus" in a cursive style.

Drew Sernus
President, Board of Education