

**Board of Education**  
**Worth School District 127**  
**Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting**  
**August 13, 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  
Lisa Lyke, Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Robert Jeffers, Director of Technology  
David Dvorchak, Director of Facilities and Grounds  
Jason Tooth, Principal, Worth Junior High  
Brittan Swanagan-Russell, Assistant Principal, Worth Junior High  
Ashley Toms Bonnstetter, Principal, Worthwoods Elementary  
Elizabeth D'Andrea, Principal, Worth Elementary  
Alyse Koehler, Assistant Principal, Worth Elementary & Worthwoods Elementary

**Board Recording Secretary**

Jill Moore

**Others Present**

Michelle Okrzesik, WE  
Mary Zirngibl, WE  
Alyssa Zirngibl, WE  
Jeff Pagano, WW  
Lisa Strzempa, WE

**1. MEETING OPENING**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

President Drew Sernus called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

**B. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Drew Sernus, Danette Keeler, Meghan Sisk, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

Absent: David Blanks, Vince Flores

**C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President, Drew Sernus led the Pledge of Allegiance

**2. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

**A. WORTHWOODS/WORTH JUNIOR HIGH CONSTRUCTION UPDATE**

Dr. Fleming provided an update on the construction projects, noting that nearly all of the flooring at the junior high is complete, with only a few rooms needing final touches. Everything is expected to be ready for teachers on August 21. The playground at Worthwoods will not be finished until September or October; however, the school will be fully prepared for students on the first day of school.

**B. FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL - AUGUST 27, 2025**

Dr. Fleming stated that the first day of school will be August 27, 2025, with EC and Pre-K starting on August 28. Staffing at all buildings is well managed for the beginning of the school year and almost all positions have been filled. Dr. Fleming recognized Peter Leggett, who served as a permanent substitute last school year and is now working toward his Physical Education endorsement.

**C. SEPTEMBER BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING LOCATION**

Dr. Fleming shared that the September Board Meeting will begin at Worth Junior High with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. From there we will proceed to Worthwoods Elementary with another ribbon-cutting, followed by the business meeting. The buildings will be open to the public at 5:00 p.m. to walk the buildings and view the final construction projects.

**D. SOUTH COOK DIVISION MEETING 10/07/2025**

Dr. Fleming stated that the fall South Cook Division Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 7 in Lansing from 5:30 - 8:00 p.m. Board Members should let Jill Moore know if they are interested in attending.

**E. FOIA REQUESTS**

Dr. Fleming stated that the district received three (3) FOIA requests since the last board meeting and they have been responded to in a timely manner.

### **3. ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR BUSINESS SERVICES**

#### **A. FY 2026 TENTATIVE BUDGET PRESENTATION**

##### Revenues-Worth 127

- Evidence Based Funding
  - Largest revenue source for the first time - 43% of total revenue budget
  - Over past several years: 2021 \$6.5 million, 2022 \$6.8 million, 2023 \$8 million, 2024 \$8.9 million, 2025 \$10.5 million
  - Current budget 2026 \$10.5 million - Document recently released from ISBE on funding for FY26
    - No increase from FY25 (now Tier 2)
    - Increases over the past few years is a result of the Property Tax Relief Grant where we gave \$800k-\$2 million per year back to taxpayers!
    - Various reasons why: We were a Tier 1 district – Tier 1 receives 50% of new money first; low EAV, high tax rate, student poverty count increase
    - Because of this continued funding, we were able to complete the large, much needed capital projects. In FY26 we are finishing three additions at two buildings which will be fully complete for the start of the school year, fulfilling our goal to offer full day kindergarten this school year!
  - In the past, a portion of EBF was allocated to O&M Fund to address our facility needs; that will continue this year with \$4.5 million to O&M for the completion of construction.
    - EBF can be directed to any fund most in need
- Property tax
  - Second Largest revenue source – 42.0% of total revenue budget
  - Less than prior year's because of additional EBF funds which squeezed the pie showing less Property Tax percentage, but the amount budgeted to be received is similar as past years
  - Normally very constant; only varies slightly from year to year, mostly by the CPI increase (5% this year; 3.4% for next year).
  - For the sixth year in a row, we will collect about \$1,000,000 less this year due to Property Tax Relief Grant, but this is recognized in EBF
  - Budgeted what was expected from the levy done in December 2024
- Federal Programs
  - Although not a huge revenue source at 9% of the total revenue budget, it is still significant, totaling just over \$2 million.
    - Of this, 25% covers our meal program so all students can eat for free through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs
    - Nearly 50% is Title I and IV funds, which we use for most of our curriculum materials and professional development needs to implement these new innovative programs
    - The remaining 25% is IDEA, Medicaid and ML funding for our students with additional needs

##### Revenues - State Averages

- Difference between state average and Dist. 127 (last updated on State website is FY23):
  - We receive over 15% less in property taxes than the state average
  - Dist. 127 receives nearly 5% less funding from other local and state funds
  - Since Evidence Based Funding was implemented (formerly General State Aid) and we were designated as Tier 1 for many years, and recently Tier 2, we have received more than the state average, now 23% more. PTRG for 4 consecutive cycles has helped

##### Expenditures by Fund

- Instruction takes top priority – 64.5% of all expenses in the Ed Fund. This is getting more normalized after the Building additions at Worthwoods and Worth JH (this slice of the pie was getting squeezed by Fund 60-Capital Projects).
- Capital Projects Fund – next largest area of expenditures with 19.1% (last year 37.5%), again, due to all the construction!
- O&M Fund – this is normally always the second largest area of expense, but this year is only 9.1%, since all the expenses are being paid out of Capital Projects fund since we issued bonds

##### Expenditure by Object

- Salary and Benefits account for only 49% of expenses
  - This is normally closer to 70% but because of the building projects, it has squeezed this piece of the pie.
- Capital Outlay is almost 23% which is starting to normalize (last year was 40%) now that construction is nearly complete
- Out of District tuition increasing: In 2016 \$544k; 2025 \$2.3 million; 2026 Budget \$2.5 million – 8.5% of expense budget

- Also, within this expenditure line item is \$953k, which is 75% payment in FY26 for the Eisenhower Cooperative addition. This is the final payment, and by making the lump sum payments, we saved significant financing costs.
- Bond Payments (required – no room for movement) 4.0%. This is locked in until 2041.
- Supplies, Purchased Services and Non-Capital Equipment round out the remaining expenses

#### Staffing (Full Time Equivalents)

- Total FTE's by classification of employee, for the current budget year: Certified Staff 56.1%, Support Staff 37.1%, Admin 6.8%

#### Summary of Budget and Projected Fund Balance for the 2025-26 Fiscal Year

- Starting with the beginning fund balances, by fund
- Adding in the projected revenues and expenditures, per the first several slides
- Overall net deficit budgeted for the fiscal year, just over \$5.5 million (all funds)
- We planned for this! This is the last year (Mark promises you all that)

#### Fund Balance – Ten Year Comparison

- FY26 Budgeted ending fund balance is just over \$12 million
- Last year (FY25) fund balance was just under \$18 million, using up the nearly \$10 million surplus from FY24 due to the bond sale
- We had many years with ending fund balance far below the \$12 million we are planning this year and we will build it back up in FY27
- Even though a \$12 million Fund Balance is lower than what we have been used to, it represents over 40% of annual expenditures (which is 4.8 months of cash on hand, when looking at Operating expenses). ISBE and Policy recommends a 25% benchmark to indicate healthy finances. The District's excellent fund balance health has allowed the District the ability to continue to proactively renovate and maintain the District's 4 facilities each year. At the start of this school year, all of our buildings will have been recently fully renovated and full day kindergarten will be offered to our community!
  - This is significant and NOT common! The number one financial concern for communities should be how to maintain their investments in school buildings and how to pay for such a task.

#### Summary Page

- All Funds – End the 2026 year with \$5.5 million loss
  - Side note: The expected fund balance exceeds that of 10 years ago in FY2016, and since that time, we have built FOUR additions and fully renovating EVERY BUILDING!

Budget will be on display during normal business office for the required minimum of 30 days. We will publish a notice in the newspaper, as required. The budget hearing to adopt the budget will be at the next board meeting on September 17th.

- Per Board Policy 4:40 Incurring Debt, in connection with the Board's issuance of bonds, the Superintendent, or designee, is responsible for compliance with federal securities law and continuing disclosure obligations
- We have agreements in place with Raymond James to assist us in all required filings with the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC)
- Furthermore, having this item listed on the Board Agenda is simply an acknowledgement to you that we are following all required compliance and that I am the Compliance Officer of the district
- This is a summary of the district's compliance:
  - I continue to keep all debt records in my possession, as required in the Board Policy
  - I have reviewed the agreements of the district with respect to each issue of the Tax Advantaged Obligations.
  - I have reviewed copies of all contract and agreements of the District. Each issue of Tax Advantaged Obligations (bonds issued) complies with federal tax requirements.
  - The IRS has not commenced an examination of any issue of the Tax Advantaged Obligations, nor have they requested a compliance check, questionnaire or other inquiry.
- In essence, the District is currently in compliance with the tax law and no further action is necessary at this time.

#### B. POST-ISSUANCE TAX COMPLIANCE REPORT

- Per Board Policy 4:40 Incurring Debt, in connection with the Board's issuance of bonds, the Superintendent, or designee, is responsible for compliance with federal securities law and continuing disclosure obligations
- We have agreements in place with Raymond James to assist us in all required filings with the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC)
- Furthermore, having this item listed on the Board Agenda is simply an acknowledgement to you that we are following all required compliance and that I am the Compliance Officer of the district
- This is a summary of the district's compliance:
  - I continue to keep all debt records in my possession, as required in the Board Policy
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- o I have reviewed copies of all contract and agreements of the District. Each issue of Tax Advantaged Obligations (bonds issued) complies with federal tax requirements.
- o The IRS has not commenced an examination of any issue of the Tax Advantaged Obligations, nor have they requested a compliance check, questionnaire or other inquiry.
- In essence, the District is currently in compliance with the tax law and no further action is necessary at this time.

## C. FINANCE REPORTS

### 4. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

No Report

### 5. DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

#### A. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION UPDATE

Our district is fortunate to offer professional development opportunities throughout the summer. Ongoing PD is essential for educators to stay current in their knowledge and practices, ensuring they can effectively meet the diverse needs of students. This summer, staff have been learning about MTSS, a framework that helps provide students with the right academic and behavioral support when they need it. Clear protocols are being developed so staff can consistently raise concerns and work together to respond quickly and effectively.

Teacher teams also created new ELA and Math pacing guides. These guides help ensure students receive consistent, comprehensive instruction aligned to standards, while still allowing teachers flexibility to adjust based on student needs. They serve as a roadmap, outlining what to teach and when, keeping instruction focused and timely.

The SEL Committee —made up of teachers, coaches, paraprofessionals, SEL facilitators, and administrators—began its work in April to strengthen social-emotional learning across Worth School District. The committee created a strategic plan with action steps to support student wellness and proactive behavior practices, as well as goals to ensure SEL is consistent across all schools. Members also received an overview of trauma-informed care, which will be shared with all staff during the year.

We are working closely with our SEL consultant, Kevin Smith, to build a strong districtwide SEL plan within the MTSS framework, supporting both academics and social-emotional growth. The plan focuses on six key areas:

- Collaborative & Systemic Implementation
- Proactive & Preventative Practices
- Whole Child Supports
- Purposeful Engagement
- Staff Support Structures
- Foundational Mindsets

Each focus area includes a clear vision, strategies, and outcomes designed to strengthen support for students, staff, and the district as a whole.

In addition, a team of kindergarten teachers, coaches, and administrators began reading and discussing *Purposeful Play* to help integrate more play-based learning into our new full-day kindergarten program. This work is especially timely, as House Bill 2396 requires all Illinois districts to offer full-day kindergarten with developmentally appropriate, play-based practices by the 2027–2028 school year.

This year will be one of learning, experimenting, and growing as we deepen our understanding of effective play-based learning—supporting both academics and social-emotional development for our youngest students.

### 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, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

#### Action (Consent): B. BOARD BILLS PAYABLE

Resolution: Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Accounts Payable for \$1,333,800.02 (EDUCATIONAL); \$497,767.69 (OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE); \$450.00 (DEBT SERVICE); \$39,485.08

(TRANSPORTATION); \$2,958,203.96 (CAPITAL PROJECTS); and \$50,146.60 (TORT IMMUNITY) for a total of \$4,879,853.35."

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, Michelle Egan, 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 \$149,032.77, the Building Fund in the amount of \$60,906.01, and the FICA/IMRF/Medicare in the amount of \$27,407.50."

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, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): D. CALL LIST OF SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF

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, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): E. RESIGNATION OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - SHARON KEILA - LUNCHROOM SUPERVISOR - EFFECTIVE AUGUST 11, 2025

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, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): F. RESIGNATION OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - MARLA ANGLIN - PART-TIME SCHOOL SECRETARY - WORTH 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): G. RESIGNATION OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - CHARLENE KATS - PART-TIME SECRETARY - WORTH JUNIOR HIGH - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): H. EMPLOYMENT OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - LEANNE VAN DAHM - PART-TIME SECRETARY - WORTH ELEMENTARY - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): I. EMPLOYMENT OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - HEATHER KUNZ - PARAPROFESSIONAL - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): J. RECLASSIFICATION OF CLASSIFIED STAFF - JAMIE ROSSOW - FROM PART-TIME CUSTODIAN TO FULL-TIME CUSTODIAN - EFFECTIVE AUGUST 18, 2025

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, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

Action (Consent): K. EMPLOYMENT OF CERTIFIED STAFF - ALEXANDER ARVIA - WORTH JUNIOR HIGH MATH TEACHER - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): L. EMPLOYMENT OF CERTIFIED STAFF - JULIA JAROC - PERMANENT SUBSTITUTE - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): M. EMPLOYMENT OF CERTIFIED STAFF - JILLIAN HASSAN - SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST - WORTHWOODS ELEMENTARY - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

Action (Consent): N. EMPLOYMENT OF CERTIFIED STAFF - MICHAEL JOKUBAUSKAS - SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER - WORTHWOODS ELEMENTARY - 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 Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

## **8. MOTIONS**

Action: A. REGULAR BOARD MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the June 4, 2025 regular meeting."

Motion by Michelle Egan, second by Missy Sinclair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Drew Sernus, Michelle Egan, Missy Sinclair

Abstain: Meghan Sisk, Danette Keeler

Action: B. SPECIAL BOARD MINUTES

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the June 25, 2025 special meeting."

Motion by Missy Sinclair, second by Meghan Sisk.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

**Action: C. SPECIAL CLOSED SESSION MINUTES**

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the June 25, 2025 special closed session meeting."

Motion by Drew Sernus, second by Meghan Sisk.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

**Action: D. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS PERSONAL PROPERTY**

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Resolution Authorizing Disposal of Surplus Personal Property as presented in the attachment".

Motion by Michelle Egan, second by Danette Keeler.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

**Action: E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FOR DESKTOP PRINTERS & MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT**

Recommended Motion (roll call): "that the Board of Education approve the Cooperative Agreement for Desktop Printers and associated 60-month Maintenance Agreement with Canon USA, at a price not to exceed \$1,790.53 per month."

Motion by Danette Keeler, second by Meghan Sisk.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

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

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

Board Members took a moment to welcome the new Assistant Principal at Worth Junior High, Brittan Russell.

**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 6:57 p.m."

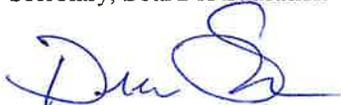
Voice Vote: All Yes

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Respectfully Submitted,



Meghan Sisk  
Secretary, Board of Education



Drew Sernus  
President, Board of Education