

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2026

Meeting held as virtual ZOOM meeting due to district snow day.

### CALL TO ORDER

Time: 6:59 pm

1. **FLAG SALUTE**

2. **OPENING STATEMENT**

In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, this public body, the Hopatcong Board of Education hereby announces that The New Jersey Herald and the Daily Record have been notified by email that this Board of Education Regular Meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m following the Executive Session (in room 21) which starts at 6:00 p.m. on February 23, 2026 at the Hopatcong Board of Education, Board meeting room in the Administration Building.

3. **ROLL CALL**

|         |                    |         |              |         |                        |
|---------|--------------------|---------|--------------|---------|------------------------|
| Present | Natalia Cappello   | Present | Kevin Daviau | Present | Veronica Schram        |
| Present | James Chaffee, Jr. | Present | James Warin  | Absent  | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Present | Jayson Cittrich    | Present | Jayna Gulan  | Absent  | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

4. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A motion will be made that the Hopatcong Board of Education will enter Executive Session in room 21 to discuss personnel and attorney/client privilege, which are exempt from public participation pursuant to New Jersey Public Law 1975, Chapter 231, Open Public Meetings Act. Any discussions held by the Board which need not remain confidential will be made public when appropriate. Minutes of the Executive Session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists. The Board will reconvene in public session at 7:00 p.m. following the executive session.

**Motion to enter executive session:**

(ACTION) Motion by Schram. seconded by Daviau

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Yes    | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

5. **RECONVENE**

**Motion to Reconvene**

(ACTION) Motion by Cappello seconded by Gulan

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|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the minutes of the following meetings, as reported by the Board Secretary reviewed by the Board President and members of the Board:

- a. January 5, 2026 - Special Meeting/Reorganization
- b. January 26, 2026 - Regular Meeting
- c. January 26, 2026 - Executive Meeting

**Motion to approve 6a-6c:**

(ACTION) Motion by Cappello. Seconded by Schram

|     |                    |         |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|---------|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes     | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Abstain | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes     | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND HIB REPORT**

- a. Student Representatives, Natalia Gerena-Roman, Reagan Gravatt, Lilyanne Zinsli
- b. Superintendent's Report – **Mr. Jeffrey Hallenbeck, Superintendent of Schools**
- c. A second reading and approval of the Superintendent's HIB Report for January 2026 as presented to the Board at the January 2026 virtual meeting on January 26, 2026.
- d. Mr. Hallenbeck completed the swearing in of our newly appointed board member, Mr. James Warin.

**Motion to approve 7a –7d:**

(ACTION) Motion by Daviau. Seconded by Schram

|         |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|---------|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Present | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes     | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes     | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

8. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE**

- a. Congratulations to the following students who were chosen as **Hopatcong High School's Students of the Marking Period** for their outstanding performance:  
**Grade 8** – Logan Brown  
 Honorable Mention: Brynn Tracey  
**Grade 9** – Yadhira Martinez

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Honorable Mention: Sebastian Balloveras

**Grade 10** – Alesi May

Honorable Mention: Asher Aarons

**Grade 11** –Madelyn Bryant

Honorable Mention: Ariana Espino, Yousef Hayek

**Grade 12** - Sabrina Naranjo Hurtado

Honorable Mention: Ryan Kovach, Jeremiah Beeh

- b. Congratulations to the following students who were chosen as **Hopatcong High School's Scholar Athletes of the Season** for their outstanding performance throughout the Winter Sports Season:

**Boys Basketball** - Colin O'Malley (Sophomore)

**Girls Basketball** - Reagan Gravatt (Sophomore)

**Bowling** - Jeremiah Beeh (Senior)

**Competition Cheer** - Madee Ausmus (Senior)

**Ice Hockey** - Ryan Pucco (Senior)

- c. Congratulations to **Hopatcong High School Students** who made **High Honor Roll and Honor Roll** for the second marking period of the 2025 – 2026 school year.
- d. Congratulations to **Hopatcong Middle School School Students** who made **High Honor Roll and Honor Roll** for the second marking period of the 2025 – 2026 school year.
- e. Congratulations to **Amanda Maliszewski** on being selected as our school's honoree for the **Lake Hopatcong Elks "2026 Leap In The Lake For Our Special Kids"** event.
- f. Congratulations to the following staff who have been nominated for **Governor's Educator of the Year** and **Educational Services Professional of the Year**. This honor reflects their commitment, hard work, and the meaningful difference they make each day:

**Durban Ave Educator of the Year** - Kelly Rodick

**Durban Ave Educational Services Professional of the Year** -Melanie Piereth

**Tulsa Trail Educator of the Year** – Amanda Maliszewski

**Tulsa Trail Educational Services Professional of the Year**- Dawn Hersh

**Middle School Educator of the Year** - Hilary Wolf

**Middle School Educational Services Professional of the Year** - Jaclyn DiBrienza-Cikovic

**High School Educator of the Year** – James McKowen

**High School Educational Services Professional of the Year**- Melissa Stein

**HOPA ESP of the Year**- Endora (Liz) Molisso

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## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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9. **PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES**

*Dr. Capello reports that the presale tickets for the Tricky Tray, March 21, 2026 are on sale now.*

10. **PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL DISCUSSION**

NONE

11. **FINANCE**

Approval of the following Finance items, 11a. – 11j, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools:

- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that bills for the General Fund and Special Revenues (Grants) account, January 26, 2026, through February 23, 2026 be revised and approved in the following amounts:  
General Fund and Special Revenue (Grants) account - \$1,675,734.23  
Cafeteria account - \$73,726.72  
Fund 30 - \$12,800.00
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Treasurer's Report for the month of January 2026.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Board Secretary's Report for the month of January 2026.
- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Transfer Report for the month of January 2026.
- e. Motion to approve the certification by the Board Secretary that the Account Balance Report, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:17-9, as of February 23, 2026, no line item account has encumbrances and expenditures, which in total exceed the line item appropriation in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(a).
- f. Motion to certify, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(c), as of February 23, 2026, after review of the Board Secretary's and Treasurer's Monthly Financial Reports and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of our knowledge no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(b), and sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- g. It is recommended by the Superintendent that Jeff Hallenbeck, Business Administrator/Board Secretary be designated as the Public Agency Compliance Officer (P.A.C.O.)
- h. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the acceptance of the following donations to the Hopatcong High School Gym floor renovation:

| DONOR                         | CHECK NUMBER | AMOUNT     |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Rotary Club of Lake Hopatcong | #2977        | \$2,000.00 |
| Jennifer and Kyle Johnson     | #836         | \$2,000.00 |

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2026

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|                           |       |            |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Kevin Devine              | #1956 | \$200.00   |
| Hopatcong Youth Wrestling | #1088 | \$1,000.00 |

- i. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Joint Transportation Agreement with the Sussex County Regional Transportation Cooperative for the 2026- 2027 School Year which offers the benefit of the elimination of all Administrative fees due to our continued partnership.
- j. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board accept the highest bid provided by Hunterdon County ESC January 27, 2026, Bid #TRANS 26-06 from Jets Transport in the amount of \$13,200.00 for the sale of Hopatcong vehicle # H-06, 2014 Chevy/Thomas, 19 passenger wheelchair lift bus.

**Motion to approve 11a – 11j:**

(ACTION) Motion by Chaffee. Seconded by Daviau

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

12. **PERSONNEL**

Approval of the following personnel items, **12a – 12g**, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval of **Employee #81066** to take intermittent FMLA/NJFLA leave, if needed, during the twelve months retroactively effective to November 1, 2025.
- b. Approval of **Employee #81546** to take a leave of absence using earned sick leave beginning on or around May 1, 2026 through the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year, followed by an unpaid leave of absence under FMLA/NJFLA beginning August 26, 2026 with an estimated return date of November 23, 2026.
- c. Approval of **Employee #81132** to take a leave of absence using earned sick leave beginning on or around May 12, 2026 through the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year, followed by an unpaid leave of absence under FMLA/NJFLA beginning August 26, 2026 with an estimated return date of November 23, 2026.
- d. Approval of **Nicole Roman Gerena** to work as Drama Play Ticket Collector when needed for the school plays at \$50/day.
- e. Approval of **Angelo Lipuma** as a Track and Field Volunteer Coach.

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2026

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- f. Approval of the following staff to take and receive **tuition reimbursements\***, as per contract, upon successful completion of the course and submission of paperwork

### ***Course Approval /Reimbursement Approval***

| Name            | Course Title               | Course Number | Credits | Cost      |
|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------|-----------|
| Tracey Talmadge | Human Resources Management | US-3120-OL2   | 4       | \$0       |
|                 | Auditing                   | ACC-4301-OL2  | 4       | \$710     |
|                 | Advanced Accounting        | ACC-4201-OL   | 4       | \$2185.00 |

***\*The maximum rate of reimbursement per credit for the 2-26 school year is \$512.04.***

- g. Approval of the following substitutes:
1. Tabitha Kestenholz, Substitute Paraprofessional
  2. Allison Limatola, Substitute Paraprofessional
  3. Teofilea Valencia, Substitute Teacher
  4. Andrew Choffo, Substitute Teacher

**Motion to approve 12a-12g:**

(ACTION) Motion by Schram seconded by Gulan

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

13. **TRAVEL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Resolved, that the Hopatcong Board of Education approve travel costs as related in this resolution which are educationally necessary and fiscally prudent and are related to and within the scope of the employee's current responsibilities and promotes the delivery of instruction or furthers the efficient operation of the school district. The reimbursement listed in this resolution are in compliance with the state travel reimbursement guidelines as established by the Department of Treasury and Board of Education policy in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23B-1.1. seq

***Approval of the following staff to attend Professional Development/Conference\****

| Name                         | Title   | Cost                            | Date                |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Melissa Kennedy              | Sussex County School Counselors Association Meeting | \$0                             | 11/19/26            |
| Emily Ionni                  | Orton-Gillingham certification renewal courses (6)  | 6 courses x \$35<br>total \$210 | 2/7/26              |
| Hank Fattorusso<br>Ken Olsen | North Jersey Transition Partnership                 | \$0                             | 3/26/26 &<br>6/3/26 |

***\*Cost will be reimbursed upon completion of attendance and all documentation has been provided.***

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2026

**Meeting held as virtual ZOOM meeting due to district snow day.**

**Motion to approve 13:**

(ACTION) Motion by Cappello seconded by Daviau

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

**14. POLICY & REGULATIONS**

Approval of item 14a-14b as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the Student Achievement and Operations Committees of the Board:

- a. Approval of modifications and additions to the policies and regulations of the Hopatcong Board of Education in accordance with statutory and regulatory changes for approval, as revised, for **FIRST READING:**

| Policy/Regulation # | Title                    |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| P & R 7510          | Use of School Facilities |

- b. Approval of modifications and additions to the policies and regulations of the Hopatcong Board of Education in accordance with statutory and regulatory changes for approval, as revised, for **SECOND READING:**

| Policy/Regulation # | Title   |
|---------------------|---|
| P 0142.1            | Nepotism (M) (Revised)  |
| P 1220              | Employment of Chief School Administrator (M) (Revised)                      |
| P & R 1552          | Sexual Harassment – Staff (M) (New)   |
| P 3362              | Sexual Harassment (M) (Abolished)   |
| R 3362              | Sexual Harassment of Teaching Staff Members Complaint Procedure (Abolished) |
| P 4352              | Sexual Harassment (M) (Abolished)   |
| R 4352              | Sexual Harassment of Support Staff Members Complaint Procedure (Abolished)  |

**Motion to approve 14a-14b:**

(ACTION) Motion by Daviau seconded by Chaffee

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

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### 15. STUDENT AND SERVICES

Approval of the following items, 15a-15b as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval for a maximum of 10 hours per week of educational instruction services for student no. 15871 beginning 1/29/26, for the anticipated duration of approximately 30-60 days. Instruction will be provided by Learnwell at a rate of \$56.70 per hour.
- b. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 14229. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour beginning 2/13/26 until approximately 5/5/26.

**Motion to approve 15a-15b:**

(ACTION) Motion by Schram seconded by Cappello

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

### 16. RESOLUTIONS

Approval of the following resolutions as per the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools.

- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education authorize the Business Administrator to develop and advertise a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the replacement of fiber optic cabling between the District Administration Office, Hopatcong High School, and the Hopatcong Middle School. This project aims to ensure sustainable high-speed connectivity and network reliability between district facilities. All proposals will be reviewed in accordance with Public School Contracts Law.

**Motion to approve 16a:**

(ACTION) Motion by Gulan seconded by Cappello

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

### 17. SUSSEX COUNTY REGIONAL COOPERATIVE

- a. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of bills** for the Sussex County Regional Cooperative Operating account for January 27, 2026

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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through February 23, 2026 in the amount \$29,647.62 for Regular bills and \$4,935,515.33 for Contractor bills.

- b. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval to accept the Top Offer provided by Hunterdon County ESC January 27, 2026 Bid #TRANS 26-06 from Jets Transport in the amount of \$14,300.00 for Vehicle #120, 2016 Chevy/Thomas, 24 passenger Bus.
- c. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval of the **2026-2027 School Year Resolution for Participation in Coordinated Transportation with Warren County Special Services School District** in consideration of pro-rated contracts plus a 2.0% administrative fee.
- d. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of the Transportation Consultation and Advisory Services** agreement with the Rahway Public Schools for the 2025-2026 school year.
- e.
  1. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **acceptance** of student transportation **quotations for Special Education School Year Routes** for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
  2. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **award** of student transportation **quotations for Special Education School Year Routes** to the lowest, responsible and responsive bus contractor companies for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
  3. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of route contract addendums** for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
  4. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **acceptance** of student transportation **quotations for Athletic/Class/Field Trips** for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
  5. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **award** of student transportation **contracts for quoted Athletic/Class/Field Trips** to the lowest, responsible and responsive bus contractor companies for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
  6. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval of New **Member Districts for the 2025-2026 School Year** as follows:

### Unity Charter School

7. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval of New **Member Districts for the 2026-2027 School Year** as follows:

### Morris School District

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2026

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### Motion to approve item 17:

(ACTION) Motion by Daviau. seconded by Cappello

|     |                    |     |              |        |                        |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| Yes | Natalia Cappello   | Yes | Kevin Daviau | Yes    | Veronica Schram        |
| Yes | James Chaffee, Jr. | Yes | James Warin  | Absent | Jennifer Polowchena    |
| Yes | Jayson Cittrich    | Yes | Jayna Gulan  | Absent | Nicole Falconi-Shubert |

### 18. **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER COMMENTS**

Dr. Cappello – Extra congratulations to the Educators of the Year and Educational Service Professionals of the year. Thank you to all the donors to our gym floor restoration: Rotary Club, Kevin Devine, Kyle and Jen Johnson and the Hopatcong Youth Wrestling. It is greatly appreciated.!

Mr. Warin – Thank you to the board for the warm welcome. Congrats to the students and teachers recognized and thank you to the donors. And thank you to HEPTO for putting on a great winter dance.

Mr. Chaffee – Welcome to James. And thank you to all the donors to the gym restoration.

Mrs. Schram – Just going to echo what everyone has said. Thank you!

Mrs. Gulan – Thank you to all the donors. And congrats to all the students for their accomplishments

### 19. **ADJOURNMENT**

#### Motion to adjourn:

(ACTION) Motion by Chaffee. seconded by Cappello

All in favor: Yes Time: 7:21pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Hallenbeck, Board Secretary