

HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 22, 2025

6:00 pm. Open the Meeting and enter Executive Session in the Administration Building: Room 21

Public Portion will begin at 7:00 p.m in the Board Meeting Room

2 Windsor Avenue, Hopatcong, NJ 07843

CALL TO ORDER

Time: 7:00 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 September 22, 2025 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
Absent	James Chaffee, Jr.	Present	Philip DiStefano	Present	Jennifer Polowchena
Present	Jayson Cittrich	Absent	Jayna Gulan Arrived 6:27pm	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 DiStefano

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

5. **RECONVENE**

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Motion to Reconvene

(ACTION) Motion by DiStefano seconded by Schram

Yes	Natalia Cappello	Yes	Kevin Daviau	Yes	Veronica Schram
Absent	James Chaffee, Jr.	Yes	Philip DiStefano	Yes	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:

- August 25, 2025 - Regular Meeting
- August 25, 2025 - Executive Meeting

Motion to approve 6a-6b:

(ACTION) Motion by Schram. Seconded by DiStefano

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

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND HIB REPORT

- Superintendent's Report – **Mr. Jeffrey Hallenbeck, Superintendent of Schools**
Superintendent Hallenbeck reported that there were no HIBs reported in August or September for 1st reading. With our schools opening we had some transportation changes and are working hard to get route times down.
- Natalia Gerena and Reagan Gravatt reported on sports, specifically Soccer which has 4 wins, 2 losses and Football presently at 2 and 2. Band is going strong. Mr. Hallenbeck said there was a great turnout for last weeks Homecoming Dance and everyone was well mannered and behaved. Boonton commended our students who attended away game there last week as well.*
- Parette Somjen Architects Presentation – Josh Thomson indicated that the summer of 2026 our roofs will be repaired/replaced. Currently bidders are in the middle of the question/answer period. October 10, 2025 is the bid opening and 25 contractors have shown interest in the projects.*
- Whereas there have been no HIBs reported for the months of August 2025 and September 2025, acceptance of the HIB report at the September 22, 2025 board meeting to indicate no findings.

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Motion to approve 7a –7c:

(ACTION) Motion by Daviau. Seconded by Cappello

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

8. **PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES**

Nikki Roman-Gerena reported that thirteen students auditioned for the Sussex County All Honors Band.

Jennifer Polowchena reported that Project Graduation 2026 was hosting the Wizards January 20, 2026 and we will need teachers to play. Mums Fundraiser fliers went out and orders being taken 10/3-10/5 with pick up at Nester's Greenhouse. Parking spot paving fundraiser for Project Grad 2026 will be on 10/5/2025.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Jen Johnson asked about any excess money (if there is any) from the Referendum projects and Superintendent Hallenbeck replied that the money would be used to pay back the bonds.

10. **FINANCE**

Approval of the following Finance items, 10a. – 10g, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools:

- a. **Revision of bills:** It is recommended by the Superintendent that bills for the General Fund and Special Revenues (Grants) account, July 28, 2025, through August 25, 2025 be revised and approved in the following amounts:

General Fund and Special Revenue (Grants) account -	\$1,280,780.09
Cafeteria account -	\$ 2,059.25
Fund 30 -	\$ 36,000.00
Fund 40 -	\$ 123,900.29
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that bills for the General Fund and Special Revenues (Grants) account, August 25, 2025, through September 22, 2025 be revised and approved in the following amounts:

General Fund and Special Revenue (Grants) account -	\$1,695,043.28
Cafeteria account -	\$957.95
Fund 30 -	\$21,000.00
Fund 40 -	\$0
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Treasurer's Report for the month of August 2025.

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- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Board Secretary's Report for the month of August 2025.
- e. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Transfer Report for the month of August 2025.
- f. 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 September 22, 2025, 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).
- g. Motion to certify, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(c), as of September 22, 2025, 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.

Motion to approve 10a – 10g:

(ACTION) Motion by DiStefano. Seconded by Cappello

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

11. **PERSONNEL**

Approval of the following personnel items, **11a – 11p**, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval to accept the resignation of **Donna Roio** from her position as a Paraprofessional effective September 24, 2025.
- b. Approval to accept the resignation of **Jamie Sprague** from her position as a Paraprofessional effective September 15, 2025.
- c. Approval of **Jessie Locascio** as a Paraprofessional at the High School at a rate of \$16.73 an hour. Should toileting apply an additional \$1.00 an hour will be added to the hourly rate. Start date pending background clearance.
- d. Approval of **Piper Giacomaro** as a Paraprofessional at the High School at a rate of \$16.73 an hour. Should toileting apply an additional \$1.00 an hour will be added to the hourly rate. Start date pending background clearance.
- e. Approval to rescind all offers of employment of **Employee #81867**.

HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

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2 Windsor Avenue, Hopatcong, NJ 07843

- f. Approval of a leave of absence for **Employee #81490**, effective September 18, 2025, to utilize 8 weeks of earned sick leave, with an anticipated return date of November 13, 2025, or upon medical clearance.
- g. Approval of the employment of **Jean Marsicovete** as High School & Middle School Music Teacher at a pro-rated salary of \$83,410, which represents MA, Step 7 of the 2025-2026 HEA contract. Start date pending release from current school district.
- h. Approval of **Jennifer Neu** as Tulsa Trail Special Education Temporary Assistance Position, for the purpose of lesson planning and grading at a rate of \$35 per hour for 1-2 hours per week/per class period.
- i. Approval of **Sonia Scovil** as Middle School Special Education Temporary Assistance Position, for the purpose of lesson planning and grading at a rate of \$35 per hour for 1-2 hours per week/per class period.
- j. Approval of **Peter Oesen** to coordinate Athletic Scheduling and Transportation for the 2025–2026 school year, with a stipend of \$15,000.
- k. Approval of **Janelle VanTassel** a CCM student to observe 25 hours of classroom observation at Tulsa Trail.
- l. Approval of an additional 18 hours for **District School Nurses** to work on sports physicals and immunization records.
- m. Approval of **Michelle Zammito** to work up to 18 hours for preschool expansion registration work, paid out of pre-school expansion grant.
- n. Approval of the following **Coach/Advisor** Positions for the 2025-2026 school year:

Name	Nature of Action	Position	Class	Level	Salary
Heather Loven	Appoint	Marching Band Director	A	1	\$4,868

- o. Approval of the following **salary guide movements***

Name	Current Degree Status	Degree Change	Effective Date
Nancy Stephens	MA+15	MA+30	9/1/2025
George Segale	BA+30	MA+15	9/1/2025
Alexa McLean	MA+30	MA+45	9/1/2025

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Christopher Bove	MA	MA+15	9/1/2025
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***Approval of the listed staff members to move up on the HEA guide due to increased education credentials.**

- p. Approval of the following **Extra Duty/Extra Pay** Position for the 2025-2026 school year:

Name	Nature of Action	Position	Salary
Kristine Kester Ruth Desalvia Allyson McConnell Leeanne Juliano	Appoint	MS Detention Monitors	\$28/hour
Kristine Kester Ruth DeSalvia Leeanne Juliano	Appoint	MS Homework Club	\$28/hour
Jason Mulvihill	Appoint	HS Cafeteria Duty	\$2,400
David Campagna	Appoint	HS Cafeteria Duty	\$2,400
Craig Vallaro	Appoint	HS Cafeteria Duty	\$2,400
Mary Burns	Appoint	HS Cafeteria Duty	\$2,400

- q. 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
Vincent Marinoni	Math Activities for the Intermediate Grades	MAT-901	3	\$460
Alexa McLean	Curriculum Design:Theory and Practice	EDLP 6040	3	\$1,536.12
Brian Collins	Philosophy & Organization of the American School	EDUC 507	4	\$1,340
Audra Bauer	The Science of Reading	138T02	3	\$284.25

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

- r. Approval of the following substitutes:
1. Connor Dowling, Substitute Custodian
 2. Morgan Denmead, Substitute Teacher
 3. Samantha Genader, Substitute Teacher

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REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 22, 2025

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2 Windsor Avenue, Hopatcong, NJ 07843

Motion to approve 11a-11r:

(ACTION) Motion by Cappello seconded by Gulan

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

12. **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
Nancy Stephens Susan Pallotta Stephanie Vitale Melissa Kennedy James Valentine Melissa Stein Lisa Osbun	County In-Service for School Counselors & CST Members	\$0 + mileage	10/13/2025
Kristine Kester Christi Murphy Dougherty Siobhan Winkler Emily Taylor	Current EBP Approaches to Intervention for Preschoolers with Speech and Language Disorders	\$100 + mileage	10/13/2025
Tanya Pagano	Workshop for PreK Teachers- Small Steps to Learning II Food, Fitness, and Fun	\$0	10/28/2025
Lisa Osbun	Sussex County School Counselor Association Meeting	\$0 + mileage	9/26/2025
Michele Culcasi Christine Braun Tanya Pagano Kathleen Brennan Patricia Coleman	Language and Literacy Creative Curriculum	\$140+mileage	10/13/2025

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

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13. POLICY & REGULATIONS

Approval of item 13a, 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 **SECOND READING:**

Policy/Regulation #	Title
P 0173	Duties of Public-School Accountant (Revised)
P 0174	Legal Services (M) (Revised)
P 0177	Professional Services (M) (Revised)
P & R 1570	Internal Controls (M) (Revised)
P 1620	Administrative Employment Contracts (M) (Revised)
P & R 6111	Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program (M) (Revised)
P 6220	Budget Preparation (M) (Revised)
R 6220	Budget Preparation (Revised)
P 0143	Board Member Election and Appointment (Revised)
P 1636.01	Notification of Promotion, New Job, and Transfer Opportunities (New)
P 1648.15	Recordkeeping for Healthcare Settings In School Buildings –Covid-19 (M) (Abolished)
P 2422	Statutory Curricular Requirements (M) (Revised)
P & R 5117	Interdistrict Public School Choice (Revised)
P 5339.01	Student Sun Protection (M) (New)

14. STUDENT AND SERVICES

Approval of the following items, 14a-14f as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval for up to 10 hours per week of educational instruction services for student no. 16514 beginning 9/9/25, 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 up to 10 hours per week of educational instruction services for student no. 12710 beginning 9/8/25, for the anticipated duration of approximately 30-60 days. Instruction will be provided by Learnwell at a rate of \$56.70 per hour.
- c. Approval for 10 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 15413. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour beginning 9/2/25 until approximately 6/12/26.
- d. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 13760. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour beginning 9/2/25 until approximately 6/12/26.
- e. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 12724. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour beginning 9/2/25 for approximately 6-8 months.

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- f. Approval of the following field trips:

Trip	School
Raritan Valley CC Planetarium	Tulsa
Van Campus Glen	High School
Turtle Back Zoo	Tulsa

15. **RESOLUTIONS**

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

- It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the following HEA sidebar agreements for the 2025-2026 school year: 25-26 Sidebar-04, 25-26 Sidebar-05.
- It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the Math, Physical Education, Science Curricula that were revised during the summer of 2025 as submitted.
- It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the MOA between the Hopatcong School District and Mental Health Association.

16. **SUSSEX COUNTY REGIONAL COOPERATIVE**

- The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the ***approval of bills*** for the Sussex County Regional Cooperative Operating account for August 26, 2025 through September 22, 2025 in the amount of \$162,895.71 for Regular bills and \$3,638,177.65 for Contractor bills.
- The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval to accept the resignation of ***Julissa Ruiz Quinones***, Bus Driver, effective August 23, 2025.
- The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the ***approval of Janine Byrnes and Christopher Verdi to attend the NJ School Boards Annual Workshop***, October 20-23, 2025 in Atlantic City, NJ at a total cost of \$800.00 for mileage, tolls, parking and meals.
- 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.
 - 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.

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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 ***award of bids submitted from the August 6, 2025 Bid #2025-26-06*** to the lowest, responsible and responsive bus contractor company for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
7. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the ***rejection of bids submitted from the August 6, 2025 Bid #2025-26-06*** due to cost exceeding allowable amount, non-compliance or termination of the routes as listed on Exhibit A.
8. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the ***renewal of 2024-2025 School Year Routes for the 2025-2026 School Year*** at State issued CPI increase of 3.57% or less as listed on Exhibit A.
9. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the ***renewal of 2024-2025 Student Transportation Routes for School Related Activities for the 2025-2026 School Year*** at or below the State issued CPI increase of 3.57% or less as listed on Exhibit A.
10. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend ***the approval of Parent Transportation Contracts*** for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.

Motion to approve items 12-16:

(ACTION) Motion by Daviau. seconded by Schram

HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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Absent	James Chaffee, Jr.	Yes 12-15	Philip DiStefano Present - 16	Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Yes	Jayson Cittrich	Yes	Jayna Gulan	Absent	Nicole Falconi-Shubert

17. **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER COMMENTS**

Veronica Schram – reports that there will be a movie night at the High School Auditorium on 10/17/2025 at 7:00pm.

Natalia Cappello – shared that our teachers have so much energy and we are very lucky to have them working here.

Jayna Gulan – welcomed the student liaisons to the board.

Phil DiStefano – wished everyone a Happy Autumn.

Jennifer Polowchena – thanked everyone for coming.

18. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn:

(ACTION) Motion by DiStefano. seconded by Daviau

All in favor: Yes Time: 7:38pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Hallenbeck, Board Secretary