

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 24, 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: 7:06 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 24, 2025 at the Hopatcong Board of Education, Board meeting room in the Administration Building.

3. **ROLL CALL**

Present	Natalia Cappello	Present	Philip DiStefano	-----	
Present	James Chaffee, Jr.	Absent	Jayna Gulan ^	Present	Jennifer Polowchena
Absent	Jayson Cittrich *	-----		Present	Nicole Falconi-Shubert

\* Arrived 6:27pm

^ Arrived 6:27pm

4. **ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE TO NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS**

The Board Secretary will administer the Oath of Office to the newly elected/appointed Board members.

5. **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 DiStefano. seconded by Polowchena

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

6. **RECONVENE**

**Motion to Reconvene**

(ACTION) Motion by Cappello seconded by Polowchena

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

7. **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 2, 2025 - Special Meeting
- b. January 27, 2025- Executive Session
- c. January 27, 2025 - Regular Meeting

**Motion to approve 7a-7c:**

((ACTION) Motion by Cappello. Seconded by Gulan

Yes	Natalia Cappello	Abstain	Kevin Daviau	Abstain	Veronica Schram
Yes	James Chaffee, Jr.	Abstain	Philip DiStefano <b><u>Abstain b &amp; c</u></b> <b><u>7a Y</u></b>	Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Yes	Jayson Cittrich	Yes	Jayna Gulan	Yes	Nicole Falconi-Shubert

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

- a. Superintendent's Report – **Mr. Jeffery Hallenbeck, Superintendent of Schools** – reported over \$300,000 in damages from pipes bursting and other issues; filed claims with insurance company.
- b. A second reading and approval of the Superintendent's HIB Report for January 2025 as presented to the Board at the January meeting on January 27, 2025. Approval of the Superintendent's HIB report for February 2025 for first reading and review as presented to the Board at the February meeting on February 24, 2025.

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- c. Student Representatives: **Natalia Gerena-Roman** – reports on our Cheerleaders winning 1<sup>st</sup> place at Nationals! Spring Sports start 3/10/2025. Our Marching Band will be performing at the NJ Devils game on 3/13/2025.

**Motion to approve 8a –8c:**

((ACTION)Motion by Polowchena. Seconded by Cappello

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

### 9. 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** – Angelina Oforiwaah-Edusei  
Honorable Mention: Liana Sweedy, Grace Jurgaitis, Hayden Arnold, Alyson Brown  
**Grade 9** – John Rosado  
Honorable Mention: Aaron (AJ) Francis  
**Grade 10** – Giancarlo Kestenholz  
Honorable Mention: Nathan Velez, Louise Andriano, Annalise Dillenkofer, Radwa Bashandy, Liam Murphy  
**Grade 11** – Ian Siegel  
Honorable Mention: Georgi Andonov  
**Grade 12** - Gabriel Houle  
Honorable Mention: Brenden Belar, Ashley Mower
- 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** - Kevin Kruczek (Senior)  
**Girls Basketball** - Kelsey Weber (Senior)  
**Bowling** - Ian Siegel (Junior)  
**Competition Cheer** - Gianna Sperduto (Senior)
- c. Congratulations to **Hopatcong High School Students** who made **High Honor Roll and Honor Roll** for the second marking period of the 2024 – 2025 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 2024 – 2025 school year.

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- e. Congratulations to the following students who were chosen as **Hopatcong Middle School's Students-of-the-Month** for their outstanding performance in January 2025:  
**Grade 4** - Abigail Stewart  
**Grade 5** - Mikayla Miranda  
**Grade 6** - Olivia Tirondola, Jackson Cramp & Nicole Roff  
**Grade 7** - Jasmine Ebanks
- f. Congratulations to the **Hopatcong Cheerleading Team** on winning 1st Place at Nationals!

**Superintendent Hallenbeck added a congratulations to the Boys Basketball team for winning the NJAC Colonial Conference which will allow them to move on to the playoffs.**

### 10. PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES -

Nicole Gerena-Roman – spoke on behalf of the Music Boosters. Mr. Al Cerulo, Band Director and Music and Performing Arts teacher, was recently invited to speak about his career as a musician, artist and educator at the Manhattan School of Music, after which he gave a Master Class. The Manhattan School of Music is a prestigious Music conservatory located in New York City. Mr. Cerulo also received an award for a short film he created, which was showcased in Texas at the Boomtown Film & Music Festival. Also, our New Music Ensemble received an invitation to perform at William Paterson University as part of their new music series, and there is a also an opportunity for them to participate in a large scale recording project. Hopatcong High School is the only High School in New Jersey involved in a project of this kind.

### 11. PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL DISCUSSION

NONE

### 12. FINANCE

- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that bills for the General Fund and Special Revenues (Grants) account, January 27, 2025, through February 24, 2025 be approved in the following amounts:  
General Fund and Special Revenue (Grants) account - \$1,139,928.17  
Cafeteria account - \$83,791.01  
Fund 30 - \$93,209.45
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Treasurer's Report for the month of January 2025.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Board Secretary's Report for the month of January 2025.
- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Transfer Report for the month of January 2025.
- 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 24, 2025, no line

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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 24, 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.
- 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.)

**Motion to approve 12a – 12g:**

(ACTION) Motion by DiStefano. Seconded by Cappello

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

### 13. PERSONNEL

Approval of the following personnel items, **13a – 13i**, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

- a. Approval of employment of **Nikki Calfee** as a Paraprofessional at Durban Ave at a rate of \$16.55 an hour effective February 10, 2025. Should toileting apply an additional \$1.00 an hour will be added to the hourly rate.
- b. Approval of employment of **Franchis Vidal** as a Paraprofessional at Durban Ave at a rate of \$16.55 an hour effective March 3, 2025. Should toileting apply an additional \$1.00 an hour will be added to the hourly rate.
- c. Approval of **Loren Turner** as High School English 8 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 as needed.
- d. Approval of **Stacey Montefusco** and **Jaclyn DiBrienza-Cikovic** to complete psychological evaluations at a rate of \$300 for assessment and written reports as needed for as a leave replacement during the period of March 17, 2025 through October 10, 2025.

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- e. Approval of **Employee #80488** to take an unpaid leave of absence using FMLA beginning March 18, 2025 through Friday, April 18, 2025 with an anticipated return date of April 21, 2025.
- f. Approval of **Employee #81510** to take 4 days of an unpaid leave of absence using FMLA/NJFLA leave beginning 2/12/25 pending the submission of required healthcare certification.
- g. Approval to accept the resignation of **Amanda Michko** from her position as High School Social Worker effective April 19, 2025.
- h. Approval of the following volunteers:  
 Wendy Vergara and Allyson McDermott, cheer tryout judges  
 Michael Stec, baseball
- i. Approval of the following substitutes:  
 Jamie Stec, Substitute Teacher  
 Patric McGuire, Substitute Teacher  
 Deana Riggs, Substitute Teacher  
 Michael Williams, Substitute Paraprofessional  
 Elham Abogendia, Substitute Paraprofessional

**Motion to approve 13a-13i:**

(ACTION) Motion by Chaffee seconded by Cappello

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

14. **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
Christi Murphy	Social Executive Functioning Strategies	\$100 + mileage	5/20/25
Greg Smyth	NJSBGA	\$350+mileage	3/23-3/26/25

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	IPM Training	\$0	3/7/25
Wendi Braun	NJSCA Spring Conference	\$35 + mileage	4/11/25
Christine Kalemba	NJ AP Day at the State House	\$0 + mileage	3/27/25
Danielle Kovach	Council for Exceptional Children	\$0	3/12-3/14/25
Lisa Osbun	SCSCA Meeting	\$0 + mileage	3/7/25

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

### 15. POLICY & REGULATIONS

Approval of item 15a-15b 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:**

- P 8540 School Nutrition Programs (abolished)
- P 8550 Outstanding Food Service Charges (abolished)

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 5512	Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying (M) (Revised)
P 5533	Student Smoking (M) (Revised)
R 5533	Student Smoking (Revised)
P & R 7441	Electronic Surveillance In School Buildings and On School Grounds (M) (Revised)
P & R 9320	Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies (M) (Revised)
P 2365	Acceptable Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) (New)
P 5460	High School Graduation (M) (Revised)
P 5516	Use of Electronic Communication Devices (Revised)
R 5516	Use of Electronic Communication Devices (New)
P 5701	Academic Integrity (Revised)
P 5710	Student Grievance (Revised)
P 8500	Food Services (M) (Revised)
P 9163	Spectator Code of Conduct for Interscholastic Events (M) (New)

### 16. STUDENTS AND SERVICES

Approval of the following items, 16a-16g as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and Student Achievement Committee of the Board:

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- a. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 13165. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour beginning 1/27/25 until approximately 2/10/25.
- b. 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 2/3/25 until approximately 6/18/25.
- c. Approval for 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 413028. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour beginning 2/10/25 until approximately 2/18/25.
- d. Approval of the agreement between the Andover Regional Board of Education and Hopatcong Borough Schools to pay tuition to Andover Regional Board of Education for placement of a homeless student.
- e. Approval for up to 10 hours per week of educational instruction services for student no. 15413 beginning 2/18/25 for the anticipated duration of approximately 30-60 days. Instruction will be provided by Silvergate Prep at a rate of \$45.00 per hour.
- f. Approval for an additional 5 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 13883 1/30/25-2/3/25. Instruction will be provided by Hopatcong certificated staff at the Board approved rate of \$40.00 per hour.
- g. Approval of the following field trip requests:

SCHOOL	TRIP
High School	NJ State House Trenton
High School	Six Flags
High School	IBS Javits Convention Center NYC
High School	SCCC

### 17. 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 approve of the contract between the Hopatcong Board of Education and Prestige Education Consultants to provide Bilingual Special Education Evaluation services for the district.
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve of the submission of the Corrective Action Plan for the District LIEP Three Year Plan.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve of the submission of the 2024 ESSER Performance Report as required by the NJDOE.
- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve of the submission of the CRDC as required by the United States Department of Education.



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### 18. 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 January 28, 2025 through February 24, 2025 in the amount of \$199,925.93 for Regular bills and \$5,461,789.57 for Contractor bills.

- a. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of Employee #81673** for a 12 week FMLA unpaid leave beginning February 10, 2025.
- b. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of enrollment** for Danielle Iadarola in the Rutgers Transportation Supervisors Course for the Spring Semester as follows:  
*ST-7003-SP25-2, Codes, Statutes and Regulations, \$483.00*
- c. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend **the approval of the following new member district** for the 2024-2025 school year:  
**Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District.**
- d.
  1. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **acceptance** of student transportation **quotations for Special Education School Year Routes** for the 2024-2025 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 2024-2025 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.
  3. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of route contract addendums** for the 2024-2025 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 2024-2025 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,

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responsible and responsive bus contractor companies for the 2024-2025 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.

6. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of Eighty-Seven (87) Member School Districts** for the 2025-2026 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.

**Motion to approve items 14 – 18:**

(ACTION) Motion by DiStefano. seconded by Cappello

Yes	Natalia Cappello	Yes	Kevin Daviau	Yes	Veronica Schram
Yes	James Chaffee, Jr.	Yes	Philip DiStefano <b>Present on 18</b>	Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Yes	Jayson Cittrich	Yes	Jayna Gulan	Yes	Nicole Falconi-Shubert

19. **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mr. DiStefano – is concerned about academic performance in the schools.

Mrs. Falconi-Shubert - welcomed Kevin and Veronica to the team. Great year to be a Chief!!

20. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion to adjourn:**

(ACTION) Motion by DiStefano. seconded by Polowchena

All in favor: Yes Choose an item. Time: 7:32 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Hallenbeck, Board Secretary