

HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

January 26, 2026

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 January 26, 2026 at the Hopatcong Board of Education, Board meeting room in the Administration Building.

3. **ROLL CALL**

Absent	Natalia Cappello	Present	Kevin Daviau	Present	Veronica Schram
Present	James Chaffee, Jr.	-----		Present	Jennifer Polowchena
Absent	Jayson Cittrich	Present	Jayna Gulan	Present	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 Daviau. seconded by Schram

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

5. **RECONVENE**

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Motion to Reconvene

(ACTION) Motion by Chaffee seconded by Polowchena

Yes	Natalia Cappello	Yes	Kevin Daviau	Yes	Veronica Schram
Yes	James Chaffee, Jr.	-----		Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Absent	Jayson Cittrich	Yes	Jayna Gulan	Yes	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. December 15, 2025 - Regular Meeting
- b. December 15, 2025 - Executive Meeting

Motion to approve 6a-6b:

(ACTION) Motion by Polowchena. Seconded by Cappello

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

7. APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBER TO FILL VACANCY

- a. After considering three candidates to fill the open one year position the Board of Education wishes to appoint James Warin. Mr. Warin was appointed to the Student Achievement Committee by President of the Board, Nicole Falconi-Shubert.

Motion to approve 7a:

(ACTION) Motion by Daviau. Seconded by Polowchena

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

8. 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** discussed the following:

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1. Approval of the Budget Development Calendar – *and anticipation of the release of state aid.*
2. Chronic Absentee Attendance Action Plans 25-26.
3. Mid-year SSDS Data Submission – *SSDS is the Student Safety Damage System data which is a log of HIB data, property damage or vandalism which is submitted to the state. There was no property damage this year so we only reported HIB cases and resulting suspensions or other consequences.*

Superintendent Hallenbeck also reported on the Gym Restoration project occurring this summer to our 30-year-old gym which is still referred to as the “new” gym. The floor and dividing curtains need to be replaced so we are fundraising for project donations.

- c. A second reading and approval of the Superintendent’s HIB Report for December 2025 as presented to the Board at the December meeting on December 15, 2025. Approval of the Superintendent’s HIB report for January 2026 for first reading and review as presented to the Board at the January meeting on January 26, 2026.

Motion to approve 8a –8c:

(ACTION) Motion by Polowchena. Seconded by Daviau

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

9. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE**

- a. Congratulations to the following students who were chosen as **Hopatcong Middle School’s Students-of-the-Month** for their outstanding performance in December 2025
 Grade 4 - Aytana Lopez
 Grade 5 - Aiden Williamson
 Grade 6 - Sebastian Raga
 Grade 7 - Jaiden Paraggua
and
 January 2026
 Grade 4 - Devin Casey
 Grade 5 - Abigail Stewart
 Grade 6 - Victoria Garcia
 Grade 7 - Derek Silvestre

10. **PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES**

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HHSPTSO – Nicole Falconi-Shubert – *Tricky Tray is March 21, 2026 and information is on the school's website.*

Jennifer Polowchena – *The Wizards were a huge success! Project Graduation will get 25% of proceeds from the Tricky Tray and there are plans for a 7th grade dance.*

Veronica Schram – *Hopatcong Municipal Alliance and Girls on the Run for 3rd to 5th graders – information is in the digital backpack.*

11. PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL DISCUSSION - NONE

12. FINANCE

Approval of the following Finance items, 12a. – 12i, 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, December 15, 2025, through January 26, 2026 be revised and approved in the following amounts:

General Fund and Special Revenue (Grants) account -	\$2,838,801.32
Cafeteria account	- \$126,152.08
Fund 30	- \$18,885.00
Fund 40	- \$1,950,790.50
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Treasurer's Report for the month of December 2025.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Board Secretary's Report for the month of December 2025.
- d. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board approve the Transfer Report for the month of December 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 January 26, 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 January 26, 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 the board approves the transfer from the Capital Reserve account of \$150,000 to the General Fund account for the High School gymnasium restoration project.
- h. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board accept the donation from **Just Driven Athletics and Training LLC** in the amount of \$8,000.00 to the funding of the refinishing of the Hopatcong High School gym floor and in support of High School Athletics.
- i. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the board accept the donation from **Hopatcong Chiefs Booster Club** in the amount of \$5,000.00 to the funding of the

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refinishing of the Hopatcong High School gym floor and in support of High School Athletics.

Motion to approve 12a – 12i:

(ACTION) Motion by Polowchena. Seconded by Daviau

Yes	Natalia Cappello	Yes	Kevin Daviau	Yes	Veronica Schram
Yes	James Chaffee, Jr.	-----		Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Absent	Jayson Cittrich	Yes	Jayna Gulian	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 to accept the resignation of **Ann Merkle** from her position as paraprofessional effective December 15, 2025.
- b. Approval to accept the resignation of **Amanda Jennings** from her position as paraprofessional effective February 1, 2026.
- c. Approval to accept the resignation with regret, for the purpose of retirement, of **John Canzone** from his position as Middle School Physical Education Teacher effective June 30, 2026. John has worked for the Hopatcong School District for 31 years.
- d. Approval to accept the resignation with regret, for the purpose of retirement, of **Carmela Catizone** from her position as Middle School Elementary Teacher effective June 30, 2026. Carmela has worked for the Hopatcong School District for 26 years.
- e. Approval of employment of **Dylan Silva** as a Paraprofessional at the Middle School effective January 5, 2026 at a rate of \$16.73 an hour. Should toileting apply an additional \$1.00 an hour will be added to the hourly rate.
- f. Approval of employment of **Richard Thibault** as 0.625 Part-Time Custodian with a prorated salary of \$28,587.50, minus \$400 for not having a black seal, which reflects step 1 of the 2025-2026 HEA custodian guide effective February 2, 2026.
- g. Approval of **Employee #80887** to take a leave of absence using earned sick leave effective January 26, 2026 with an estimated return date of March 16, 2026.

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- h. Approval of **Michelle Zammito** to complete General Education Preschool registration for the 2026-2027 school year at a rate of \$28/hour as needed. (PEA Funds)
- i. Approval of **Stephanie Yang** as a High School Guidance Intern through Montclair College from January through May 2026.
- j. Approval of **Kelcey Weber** and **Sean Attas** to work as an Athletic Event Staff Member for 2025-2026 athletic events, to be paid at the Board Approved rate of pay per position.
- k. 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	Intermediate Accounting II	ACC-3302-HF1	4	\$0
Gabrielle Cardosa-Schnabel	ADD/ADHD Strategies and Interventions for the Classroom	EDUC_715G	3	\$420
Suzanne Annette	Learning Theories on the Nature and Needs of Individuals with Disabilities	GED 601	3	\$1,536.12

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

- l. Approval of the following substitutes:
 1. Margaret D’Amico, Substitute Nurse
 2. Ashleigh Sarafin, Substitute Nurse
 3. Aine Byrne, Substitute Teacher

Motion to approve 13a-13l:

(ACTION) Motion by Polowchena seconded by Cappello

Mr. Hallenbeck recognized both Carmela Catizone and John Canzone for their years of outstanding service.

Yes	Natalia Cappello	Yes	Kevin Daviau	Yes	Veronica Schram
Yes	James Chaffee, Jr.	-----		Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Absent	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

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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
Danielle Kovach	Council for Exceptional Children National Conference	\$0	March 11-13, 2026
Gregory Smyth	NJ School Buildings & Grounds Association	\$350 Registration \$153 Mileage \$256 Lodging	March 22 - March 25, 2026

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

15. POLICY & REGULATIONS

Approval of item 15a 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 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)

16. STUDENT AND SERVICES

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

- a. Approval for a maximum of 10 hours of home instruction services per week for student no. 13935. Instruction will be provided by P.G. Chambers School at the rate of \$88.00 per half hour beginning 1/5/26 for approximately 4 weeks.

17. RESOLUTIONS

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

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- a. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve an increase in the substitute teaching pay rate to \$120 per day, effective January 1, 2026, in order to reflect updated minimum wage and salary guidelines
- b. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the amendment of the 2026-2027 school year calendar.
- c. It is recommended by the Superintendent that the Board of Education approve the Updated Chronic Absentee Attendance action Plans for the Hopatcong High School, Middle School, Tulsa Trail and Durban Avenue Schools for the 2025-2026 School Year.

18. 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 December 16, 2025 through January 26, 2026 in the amount of \$51,889.24 for Regular bills and \$ \$4,741,690.28 for Contractor bills.
- b. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval to accept the resignation of Tina McGrath, School Bus Driver, effective January 9, 2026.
- c. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval of Employee #81238 to take an unpaid FMLA/NJFLA leave beginning January 23, 2026 and ending March 31, 2026.
- d. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the approval of the 2026-2027 Administrative Fee Schedule for Joint Transportation Agreements as follows:

Schedule of Fees	2025-2026	2026-2027
	Administrative Fees	Administrative Fees
Special Education Routes	3%	3.5%
	4%	4.5%
Public Routes	2%	2%
Non-Public Routes	2%	2%
Field Trips/Athletic Trips	4%	5%

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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:

**Knowlton
Rahway
Watchung Borough**
7. The Superintendent and the Director of Transportation recommend the **approval of One Hundred – Six (106) Member School Districts** for the 2026 - 2027 School Year as listed on Exhibit A.

Motion to approve items 14 – 18:

(ACTION) Motion by Polowchena. seconded by Cappello

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Yes	James Chaffee, Jr.	-----		Yes	Jennifer Polowchena
Absent	Jayson Cittrich	Yes	Jayna Gulan	Yes	Nicole Falconi-Shubert

19. **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER COMMENTS**

The Board, individually hoped that everyone stays safe and warm during this abnormally cold winter.

20. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn:

(ACTION) Motion by Polowchena. seconded by Daviau

All in favor: Yes Time: 7:18pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Hallenbeck, Board Secretary