



BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

August 11, 2025 | Administration Building

MEETING NOTES

Meeting Notes are not official until voted on by the Board of Education at its following Regular Meeting.

- A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- A2 Members present: Ms. Arnold, Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Murdoch, Mr. Perry, and Mr. Vorst.
- A3 Pledge of Allegiance

NOTE: *Portions of the meeting's audio recording were difficult to decipher; therefore, this document may contain several incomplete sentences or inaccuracies. Additionally, some of the participants' names may be misspelled.*

B. PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS

- B1 May Forecast vs Actual – Melissa Swearingen

Mrs. Swearingen: As I promised, I want to spend a few minutes reviewing where we ended the fiscal school year of 2025 on June 30th compared to the May forecast. In the May forecast, we projected an operating surplus of about a million dollars, with revenues of \$249.7 million and expenditures of \$248.7 million. When added to our beginning cash balance, we projected an ending cash balance of just over \$92 million. This was an improvement over the May forecast. But we did have some positive fluctuations in our revenue estimates that changed it from being an operating deficit to an operating surplus. When we look at where we ended on June 30th, our actual revenues were \$252.4 million, or \$2.6 million more than our forecast. That's a positive 1.1% variance. Our actual expenditures were \$246.1 million, or \$2.7 million less than our forecast. Also, a positive variance of 1.1%. Both of these result in an actual cash balance at the end of June of \$97.4 million. That's a positive variance of 5.8%.

Within that cash balance, we have to account for our outstanding encumbrances at the end of the year, which were just under \$900,000. Those were the purchase orders that were in place where we hadn't been able to pay the invoices at the end of the year. The increase in our ending cash balance gives us the capacity to absorb any unforeseen expenditure increases or revenue losses in the current fiscal year or beyond. For instance, up until two weeks ago, we were looking at the impact of federal funding losses for fiscal year 2026 of about \$800,000. Fortunately, it doesn't look like we will see those at this point for fiscal year 2026. But we're not sure what the future holds in terms of federal funding.

This is a graphic representation of the forecasted to actual balance—both of those variances were positive variances. I wanted to go into some detail about what those high variances represented. On the revenue side, our unrestricted grants and aid were about \$630,000 more than our projected amount. We received \$50.6 million as opposed to \$50 million. Our interest income was \$560,000 more than our projected amount. We received \$5.4 million versus the \$4.9 million projected. And then for our TIF payments, we received \$1.4 million more. We had timing differences where we received two payments in June as opposed to this coming in July. So we received \$7.5 million versus \$6.1 million. That variance will come off the November forecast. It'll be in the October forecast this year. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a second. So that is revenue we will not receive again in fiscal year 2026.

On the expenditure side, our personnel services were about \$800,000, or 0.5% more than our forecast. And that was due to fluctuations in stipend and supplemental payments, as well as contract payouts for staff who retired in May and June. We came in at \$146.8 million versus the \$146 million projected. But on the purchased service side, our expenses were \$1 million less than our projected expenses. So \$24.2 million compared to the \$25.2 million we had projected. And then supplies were \$2.1 million less than our projected amount. So that was \$6.8 million versus \$8.9 million. And in both of those categories, we encumber funds throughout the district for some of our anticipated or expected purchases, but those funds were not spent. Our May forecast represented all of those purchase orders that had been in place at the time, so those were closed out as the year came to an end.

Looking ahead, the positive variance for fiscal year 2025 is important as we look towards fiscal year 2026. We have a new state budget where our unrestricted state funding will decrease by \$1.1 million for fiscal year 2026, and then return to the fiscal year 2025 level in 2027. This is slightly better than what we were predicting in our May forecast.

We have new negotiated agreements with both of our bargaining units. While the percentage of increase in wages is larger than our forecast, we also made changes to our medical insurance plan. Those will lower our expenditures on the benefit side, including both plan design changes and additional employee contributions towards the premiums for insurance. We are hopeful that the plan design changes will result in a premium increase for 2026 that is less than the projected 10% in the May forecast. We have an insurance committee meeting coming up on September 10th, and we'll finalize the rates in time to put them into the next forecast.

Within the last couple of weeks, we were informed that our funding for Title II-A, Title III, and Title IV grants will be continuing for fiscal year 2026, which is great. That did represent more than \$800,000 that we were unsure would be funded. Even with the positive fluctuations that we just noted, we're still projecting that we will begin deficit spending in fiscal year 2027 and will continue to deficit spend throughout the remainder of the forecast. So any fluctuations we have over the next couple of years that are positive help us in those later years.

The most recent state budget revised the forecast submission schedule. Our initial filing will typically be due August 31st, beginning in fiscal year 2027. But for this year, it's due by October 15th instead of November 30th. And then the update is due at the end of February as opposed to the end of May. So, some earlier timeframes. We're a little concerned that it doesn't give us the time we need to formulate the projections, but we'll go with the best information that we have at the time. It is just a snapshot of the information we have at the time we're preparing it. So, we will have that prepared in mind with those deadlines. The fall forecast will need to be approved by the October 6th board meeting, so that it can be submitted on time.

Any questions.

Ms. Arnold: Quick question on the TIFs. You said they were up \$1.4 million. Did that include where Columbus was reimbursing districts for some of the income revenue off the TIFs, or was that separate?

Mrs. Swearingen: That is separate. These are two payments that typically come to us in July, and we received them in June. One of them was from Hickory Chase, and I can't remember what the other one was. It was a small amount. The majority of that was from Hickory Chase.

Mr. Vorst: Great job as always. You mentioned you have an insurance meeting coming up. How do you feel about the stability of the insurance price increases in the last couple of years, and are we on a good trajectory? Can you look into your crystal ball and tell us what you think the future holds?

Mrs. Swearingen: We had some positive news when we met about a month ago to look at claims. We have to make sure we have as much claims data available to us as possible before we make those decisions. Typically, the way our plan works with the deductibles, folks are still under that threshold at the beginning of the year. So it's not till we get into May and June that we start to see what that claims data might be. So far, so good. Knock on wood, for this year we are looking to be within the projected 10% range. We did have to take the larger increase last year. But that helped us rebuild our reserves that were depleted in the prior year. We are hopeful that the trend continues, and we can be within that range. The plan design changes help with that as well.

Mrs. Crowley: You might have said it, and I might have missed it, but is there a reason behind the deadline changes?

Mrs. Swearingen: I'm not sure. I know, years ago, when they moved it from October to November, it was so that districts that were on the ballot in November had the opportunity to incorporate that win or loss in the forecast, so that it was as accurate as possible. I am not sure why those deadlines were moved back. There's also supposed to be one less year presented in the forecast – the current year plus three projected years instead of the current year plus four projected years.

C. ROUTINES

- C1 The agenda is correct as submitted.
- C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda.
- C3 The Board of Education approved the July 2025 Treasurer's Report.

Mr. Vorst: Highlights low lights, no lights.

Mrs. Swearingen: We're just one month into the year, so far, so good.

- C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
 - a. July 9, 2025, Regular Meeting
 - b. July 9, 2025, Regular Notes

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

Cindy Rieman

Thank you for letting me speak tonight. I've spoken a couple of times in the past, but just to remind you that I have been a part of the Hilliard school system for over 40 years. First as a parent, then as a teacher, and then as a volunteer. I've spoken before about why I feel that you should get on the lawsuit that is going forward about the voucher system.

And since I've spoken about that, I've been reading a lot more about the vouchers. My biggest concern, personally, is that down the road, we are not going to have enough money to pay for a lot of the special programs that Hilliard offers. And I think that's what makes Hilliard such an excellent school system. It's that if your child is gifted, they have something for you. If your child needs a special classroom, they have something for you. But I see the vouchers as taking money away from Hilliard schools and going to private schools.

Another one of my worries is that down the road again the vouchers...if I was a young mother and I'm in the Hilliard school district and now lots of people have left because they've taken the vouchers and they've gone other places. That leaves the school district with not a very good rounded group of students that they're educating. And I might actually think, wait a minute, I have to think of my child first. So I'm going to take my child out of Hilliard school system and I'm going to move them into a private school, even though they may have stood for the Hilliard school system for many years. And we're going to end up with a segregated school system with the haves and the have-nots. From what I read about what our state is doing, I don't really think that's a fantasy anymore. I think that might become a reality, and I believe that we really need to band with our fellow educators and fight any chance of this happening.

I think that when you're a child, you're taught right and wrong. Everything's kind of black and white. And then as you grow up and you mature, you see lots of gray. But, I guess in my mind, I see this as black and white. I see that giving tax dollars to any other schools except for the public school where it was meant to go is wrong. So, I guess I would ask you to think about what the future might hold and how we can work together as educators.

Debbie Cochran

Hi. Thank you again for listening to me tonight and for your service. I've been a public school, public educator for nearly 40 years. As you know, the state has decided to appeal the recent court ruling that the EdChoice voucher program is unconstitutional in three out of the five issues presented. I encourage you once again to consider joining the other Ohio School districts continuing to fight against the erosion of our public schools.

Our public school financial resources are being drained in a very systematic and strategic way. The investment of excellent education we want to make in our students, teachers, and the community is in danger of disappearing due to the disproportionate funding going to private schools – unaccountable and unconstitutional funding going to private schools. The EdChoice voucher program is doing this. It is a blatant act of injustice that the state is giving more money for a student attending a private school than to that of a student attending a Hilliard City School District school. It is a blatant act of injustice against our children. You know it, and I know it. You have the power and the responsibility to take action at a very small cost to our current district budget providing long-term financial benefits to our public schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Myers

Good evening, Superintendent Stewart, President Crowley. I am here tonight to encourage the school board to join the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, and I'm going to accidentally piggyback off what Cindy said.

The EdChoice voucher program is designed to help low-income students in underfunded districts, because our school funding is unconstitutional, attend a private school. But the EdChoice expansion of 2023 lifted restrictions. So any family, of any income, in any district could receive this voucher taken from taxpayers, by the way, to attend a private school. And this is how it played out in Hilliard.

The year before the expansion from 2022-2023, 216 students in Hilliard were taking EdChoice vouchers, and 76% of them were low-income qualified. The year after the expansion, 2023-2024, 950 students took EdChoice vouchers, and only 14% of them were low-income qualified. The Hillard public school population did not radically decrease as students fled to private schools. These were families already sending their kids to private schools. Now they could just get a taxpayer-funded rebate at the expense of our public schools.

In Hilliard in 2023-2024, approximately 94% of the students who live in our area were attending public school. The district received \$2,618 for each of them from the state, the line item budget. During that same time, 6% of students living in the Hilliard area were taking the EdChoice vouchers, and private schools could receive \$8,407 from the state for them, from the taxpayers. So that year, state funding for education for students in the Hilliard area was almost \$50 million. Voucher students received approximately 16% of that funding. From the 2023-2024 school year, that's what the latest statistics we have access to. 16% of taxpayer funds were going to unaccountable private school vouchers that don't work like Hilliard does to reach every student without exception. Please consider joining the lawsuit to fight this. Thank you.

E. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board of Education approved the consent agenda, items E1 through E2. Action by the Board of Education in "Adoption of the Consent Agenda" means that all E items are adopted by one single motion unless a member of the board or the Superintendent requests that any such item be removed from the consent agenda and voted upon separately. Employments, where applicable, are contingent upon 1) Verification of education, 2) Proof of proper certification, and 3) Positive results from a criminal records check.

E1 Approved the following Certified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.

E2 Approved the following Classified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.

Mr. Stewart: In that consent agenda, you just approved some administrative changes. The timing is unusual, but we were able to make some significant changes that improve our team, and we're excited about that. One change that we're not completely excited about, though, is that Roy Walker is retiring at the end of September. But we are very excited about bringing Melissa Klosterman-Lando on board. She's currently the Executive Director of Human Relations in Bexley and will be coming as Executive Director of Human Resources here in Hilliard. So, I'll invite Melissa to say a couple of quick words and to meet you.

Mrs. Klosterman-Lando: Good evening, everyone. Thank you so much for your service.

It's...*(unintelligible)*...and what you do is important not only for each and every kid, but also to the teachers, classified staff, and administrators. My name's Melissa Klosterman-Lando. Like he said, I'm

currently the Director of Employee Relations and HR for Bexley City Schools. I've previously been an intervention specialist for years, and I started my career very fortunately here in Hilliard City Schools in 1999. I was here for nine years and loved every minute of it. It was my whole base of being an educator. I was also a part of the Hilliard Education Association, which I think sparked a lot of my leadership skills, and so I'm very grateful for the HEA as well. And from there, I became an administrator for the next 16 years, and I've worked in other school districts and love what I do. I am thankful for this opportunity, and I'm excited for Mr. Walker and his new adventures. So thank you so much. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: You also approved Erin Dooley as our next Director of Secondary Education. You already know Erin, but...

Mrs. Dooley: I want to thank Mr. Stewart and you, the board, for this opportunity. My passion for Hilliard Schools is great, and I believe strongly in the amazing things we do here. So, I'm very much looking forward to joining this team and working with the curriculum department to serve the district in this new role. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: Last but certainly not least, replacing Erin as the principal of Station Sixth Grade Building is Matt Trombitas.

Mr. Trombitas: Super excited to be a part of this. Glad to have the opportunity to be at Station in a leadership role. If we had to lose Erin Dooley, who was a phenomenal leader, having Lauren Schmidt join us would be a great option. She's going to be super excited, especially because she's already been helping us out. I'm excited to get the year started.

Mr. Stewart: Matt mentioned Lauren Schmidt, who you are all also familiar with. Lauren is going to be rejoining us as the assistant principal. I won't make her come up and say anything, but we're also very excited to have her back on the team.

F. ACTION AGENDA

F1 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

AUTHORIZING AGREEMENT WITH MUSCO SPORTS LIGHTING, LLC FOR THE STADIUM LIGHTING RETROFITS PROJECT PURSUANT TO O.R.C. 167.081 FOR CONTRACTS PROCURED THROUGH A REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The Chief Operating Officer ("COO") recommends the Board authorize an agreement with Musco Sports Lighting, LLC ("Musco") for the Stadium Lighting Retrofits Project (the "Project") pursuant to R.C. 167.081 for contracts procured through a regional council of governments.

Rationale:

1. The District has identified a need for the Project.
2. R.C. 167.081 allows a school district to participate in a construction contract of a regional council of governments (a "COG") without the need to engage in its own competitive bidding process. Specifically, R.C. 167.081 states that a COG may enter into a contract that establishes a unit price for, and provides upon a per unit basis, materials, labor, services, overhead, profit, and associated

expenses for the repair, enlargement, improvement, or demolition of a building or structure if the contract is awarded pursuant to a competitive bidding procedure of a public entity that is a member of the COG or a competitive bidding procedure of a statewide or multistate consortium of which the COG is a member.

3. The Cooperative Council of Governments (“CCOG”) is a regional council of governments and political subdivision formed under Chapter 167 of the Ohio Revised Code, and serves as a lead agency for the Equalis Group, a national purchasing cooperative.
4. By virtue of its membership in the Equalis Group, the Board is automatically designated by CCOG as a CCOG member. As a result, vendors procured by the Board through CCOG meet the requirements of R.C. 167.081.
5. Equalis has procured and entered into an agreement with Musco, under Equalis Contract COG-2166A, to perform the types of work needed for the Project in which agreement the Board may participate.
6. Musco is an experienced contractor and has provided a proposal for the Project in the amount of \$906,815 (the “Contract Sum”), which is based on unit pricing set forth under its Master Intergovernmental Agreement COG-2166A with Equalis Group and CCOG.
7. The COO recommends awarding the contract for the Project to Musco in an amount not to exceed the Contract Sum.
8. The COO also requests authority for the COO and Treasurer to enter into change orders on behalf of the Board in a total amount not to exceed 10% of the Contract Sum to address changes to the work necessary to complete the Project; change orders in excess of that amount, in the aggregate, will be brought to the Board for its approval.

The Board of Education resolves as follows:

1. Based upon the information provided and exercising the authority given in R.C. 167.081, the Board authorizes the procurement of Musco for the Project.
2. The Board authorizes the COO, Treasurer, and Board President, working with other administrators and legal counsel, to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Musco in an amount not to exceed the Contract Sum, and to sign any related documents consistent with the intent of this resolution.
3. The Board further authorizes the COO and Treasurer to enter into change orders on behalf of the Board in a total amount not to exceed 10% of the Contract Sum; change orders in excess of that amount, in the aggregate, will be brought to the Board for its approval.

Mr. Perry: Are these the folks who originally installed the lights or new...(unintelligible)...

Mr. McDonough: This project was one of the bond promises we made to the community. We tried hard to secure a grant to help offset some of these costs. Unfortunately, we were not awarded that grant. But we've been working with legal counsel this whole time. Musco is probably the leader in the stadium lighting industry. It's about a five-day install per school. Given the lead times, we're not going to be able to

get it done before this fall season, but we will get it done as soon as the season's over. It'll be ready to go for spring for sure.

Mr. Perry: Do we have an estimated lifespan of these units?

Mr. Dudgeon: 10 years is what they advertise. But as you know from LED lighting experiences in your home, a lot of these lights will last much longer than that. Typically, right now it's not so much about the lifespan of a light as what it's going to be in our total energy reduction, going from our traditional halogen lights to LED.

Mr. Perry: Is there a warranty for 10 years?

Mr. Dudgeon: It is a 10-year warranty.

G. REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM

- G1 Policies submitted for a second reading
- a. IGBLA – Promoting Parental Involvement
 - b. JECE – Student Withdrawal from School
 - c. JED – Student Absences and Excuses
 - d. JEDA – Truancy
 - e. JFCJ – Weapons in the Schools

G2 Committee Reports

Ms. Arnold: No committee report per se, but both Kara and I were able to attend the new teacher induction. It's great to see some fresh faces coming into our district, and we're super excited for those folks. And I will say that both Dave and Mike were great storytellers, getting those folks going. And then I popped back in later in the day to watch an administrative panel, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Not only to hear the passion of our administrative folk and the things that excite them, but also some of the questions that Joyce likes to throw at them. Things like, what would you be doing if you weren't doing this job? There were some interesting responses there. And of course, the infamous walk-up song. What would your walk-up song be? I think that we should, anytime you have to present, you have to come up with a walk-up song.

Also, Mark Tremayne and his student panel. Again, I got to witness that last year, and I came back for that this year. It's always great to see these kids. Three of them are graduates, and one is a rising senior. They talk about amazing things. The overarching thought among all of them was the opportunities that our district provides. It was really good stuff. Proud of our people.

Mrs. Crowley: I'll jump in with that and remind everybody, for the record, that the elders won the game show. If you wanna go ahead and put that on the record. I think it was seven to six, but it was what Generation Z or Y. (Someone said "G") Z, okay. So we showed up and represented. Mr. Warfield, Mr. McDonough, and Mr. Stewart, you guys were great with the questions. You handled them wonderfully. And Kelley and I said we had a great time there. Joyce, you were a wonderful MC of that event as well as the meet the team night at Davidson. I loved your commentary that evening. I texted Mr. Stewart and said, We have such a diamond with Joyce. She's just the best.

And then Kelley and I got to attend the first-time bus riders event this past Saturday. We had the time of our lives. We got to meet a bunch of our incoming kindergarten families, which was amazing. We got to ride the bus. We got to drive the bus, which is amazing. We had such a great opportunity, but it was an even better reminder. It was so hot that day, and our bus drivers were incredible. They showed up. They brought energy and made these families feel so welcome and comfortable. Driving the bus gave me an even greater appreciation for them. I want to shout out to them and everybody who was involved in that event.

EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT

H1 The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.