

# Board of Education Meeting

Liberty School Board Room

December 10, 2024, at 6:30 PM



## MINUTES

### Mission

*We, the Saline Area Schools, will equip all students with the knowledge, technological proficiency, and personal skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex society. We expect that our students, staff, and the Saline Community will share in these responsibilities.*

### OPENING

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Education meeting of December 10th was called to order at 6:30 pm by President Michael McVey.

**Board Members Present:** Susan Estep, Brad Gerbe, Lauren Gold, Michael McVey, Jennifer Miller

**Board Members Absent:** Tim Austin, Jennifer Steben

**Central Administration Present:** Superintendent Laatsch, Assistant Superintendents Diglio and Owsley, Executive Directors Clary, Davis, and Voelker

#### 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

#### 3. BOARD PRESIDENT'S RECOGNITION

*Presentation of Board Service plaques to outgoing Trustees Susan Estep (2019-2024) and Jenny Miller (2021-2024).*

#### 4. PUBLIC COMMENT

#### STUDENTS

**Elise Zhu, Student** - Spoke regarding Woodland Meadows if it became an early childhood center.

#### OTHER PUBLIC STAKEHOLDERS

**Amy Tesolin** - Spoke regarding the Nondiscrimination Policy and efforts regarding Title IX. Thank you to Trustee Estep.

**Tiffanie Alexander** - Spoke regarding Administrative Guidelines. Also expressed gratitude to Trustee Estep for her hard work and dedication.

**David Hayward** - Thank you to Trustee Estep for her hard work and dedication championing the rights of all students.

5. **RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC COMMENT**

<b>AGENDA</b>
---------------

6. **REVISIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION** made by Secretary Miller, support Trustee Estep **to approve the agenda as printed.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

7. **ACTION ITEMS**

A. **MOTION** made by Secretary Miller, support Treasurer Gerbe **to adopt New Policy 2264 - (Thrun Edition) Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities as recommended by the Policy Committee.**

**Vote**

Ayes - Gerbe, Gold, McVey, Miller

Nay - Estep

**MOTION CARRIED 4-1**

B. **MOTION** made by Treasurer Gerbe, support Trustee Estep **to approve the closed session minutes of November 12, 2024 for the purpose of Disciplinary Action against a School Employee (8a) of the Open Meetings Act.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

C. **MOTION** made by Treasurer Gerbe, support Trustee Estep **to approve the closed session minutes of November 18, 2024 for the purpose of Superintendent Evaluation 8(a) of the Open Meetings Act.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

D. **MOTION** made by Secretary Miller, support Treasurer Gerbe **to approve the 2024 Final Superintendent's Evaluation as completed and read at the November 18th Special Board of Education Meeting. The evaluation with ratings is reflected in the minutes of the November 18th Special Board of Education meeting minutes.**

**Vote**

Ayes - Gerbe, Gold, McVey, Miller

Nays - Estep

**MOTION CARRIED 4-1**

- E. **MOTION** made by Secretary Miller, support Treasurer Gerbe **to approve the allocation of funds for the Round I 24/25 CARES Grants in the amount of \$86,999.36 as submitted by Brian Puffer, Director of Community Education.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- F. **MOTION** made by Trustee Gold, support Trustee Estep **to approve the 25/26 new courses to the Saline HS Course Catalog as submitted by Executive Director of Teaching & Learning Kara Davis**

1. Data Science
2. Grammar and Composition
3. Video Game Design & Development
4. Drone and ROV Technologies
5. Pilot Program: Job Shadowing

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- G. **MOTION** made by Treasurer Gerbe, support Secretary Miller **to approve the recommended award to MTD Construction in the amount of \$2,106,000.00 for the Saline High School Solar Integrated Roofing replacement as recommended by Executive Director of Operations, Rex Clary.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

**8. SCHEDULED REPORT**

- A. **State of the District**

*Presenter: Superintendent Laatsch*

The goals for the district have not changed for the last three years. They are (1) academic rigor centered around the SAS compass, (2) culture of equity, (3) civility and unity, and (4) improving the district for the future. While the district has made lots of progress in all these four goal areas, there is still work to be done. Currently the SAS compass is being revised to reflect the needs of the district staying connected to the strategic framework and becoming a more equitable environment for all students, families and staff. The recent passing of the \$180M bond will be used to improve the district's future. The district is also leveraging over \$1M in grant funds to support student, staff and operational needs.

**Curriculum:** The district is in year three of its curriculum review cycle. This works to ensure that curriculum is aligned across grade levels from PreK to 26. The review process also helps to identify and address gaps, supports teacher collaboration and professional development as well as enhancing student outcomes and success. The district has started to explore the use of AI in education and looking at different AI tools.

**Special Education:** The special education department has been focused on building community partnerships and supporting student success. This has included: growing unified

sports teams and competing in local events, partnering with local business to fundraise for the department, continuing the annual holiday shopping trip for life skills classes.

**Finance:** The district's fund balance is currently equivalent to 2.9 months of operation. This allows for time to adjust to declining enrollment and right-size staffing, flexibility to make changes in the district and the avoidance of borrowing from the state and paying interest. The district has not had to borrow from the state since 2022. The state budget and student count will have a significant impact on district finances over the next couple of years.

**Human Resources:** The HR department is focusing on implementing systems and transparency to impact the entire district and improve the employee experience. Creation of "Whom to Ask" staff links that allows employees to access and interact with documents, forms, and procedures across the district. Also development of individual calendars for each collective bargaining agreement for clearer communication. The hiring process and trainings are focused on sharpening internships, improving the onboarding process and implementing an exit survey to analyze why employees may leave the district. The district is dedicated to building relationships through contract negotiations with the SEA and other contract groups.

**Communications and Community Relations:** The district is going to be introducing a new communications platform called ParentSquare to provide greater equity and make systems easier to navigate for parents and students. Also updating and standardizing SAS brand templates to increase accessibility for building communications. The district is also working to standardize volunteer processes to ensure a similar entry point across roles and ensure safety for students.

**Operations:** The new ESP contact has helped the district in getting more staff to apply and stay within the district. In transportation, food service and buildings & grounds, they are almost at 100% staffing level. The district has completed the 28,000 sq ft Operations Center in just over 2 years. Other projects ongoing include a new HS STEAM Center, a new athletic facility and a solar integrated roofing project. Regarding Safety and Security, the district has adopted the School Standard Response Protocols and implemented them in all 7 buildings. Building safety manuals have been updated, training admin team on standard response and reunification methods, integration with Informacast.

**Overall:** Saline has the highest AP pass rate in years with over 93% of students passing their AP exams. M-Step and SAT scores consistently rank in the top 20 in Michigan, students excel in Career Tech programs which provide valuable hands-on learning, a district that prioritizes music education, recognizing its importance in a well-rounded curriculum. The district offers a wide range of extracurricular activities in addition to having been rated as in the top of Michigan high schools for athletics.

## 9. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. Report from ad hoc committee on Third Party Review of Athletics**  
Facilitator: President McVey

Defined more about what is a “Third Party Review” and what possibly it would look like. Adhoc committee consists of President McVey, Trustees Austin and Gold. Also made some phone calls to people who actually perform these types of reviews. The review could include interviews with coaches, parents, players, administrative staff if necessary, possible surveys, departmental audits on communication with families and students, compliance with MSHAA, compliance with Title IX, department finances and team fundraising, leadership development and mentorship programs, recruiting and hiring staff, evaluation of staff, process for incoming student athletes and the role of the athletic department in that process. Cost for such a review could range from \$6000 to \$10,000.

After board discussion, the following motion was offered:

**MOTION** made by Secretary Miller, support Treasurer Gerbe **to empower the Board President to reconvene the adhoc committee to continue its work and generate comparisons of potential review groups for the Board to consider.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

## 10. ADMINISTRATION / BOARD UPDATES

**Superintendent Laatsch:** Congratulations to the SHS eSports teams and MS Robotics teams for their recent outstanding performances. The Superintendent announced his retirement, effective July 1, 2025. He has had 27 years of service in the district.

**Student Representatives:** Thanked the outgoing Board members for their work.

**President McVey:** Recently attended the SWWC Open House.

**Treasurer Gerbe:** Expressed appreciation and gratitude to outgoing Trustees Miller and Estep for their service to the Board and to the community. Expressed the importance of the stability of an organization is crucial for its success. A stable organization is one that is able to maintain its core values and mission despite changes in the environment. Expressed that meddling and undermining can be detrimental to the stability of an organization. Also expressed gratitude to Superintendent Laatsch for his outstanding job in leading the district.

**Trustee Gold:** Thank you to Trustees Estep and Miller for their service to our Board and community and for their guidance and support as a mentor. Looking forward to the concerts coming up this month. Wishing families happy holidays.

**Trustee Estep:** Proud of the student achievements of the eSports and Robotics Teams. Reflective of her years as a Board member and proud accomplishments including representation and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ and underrepresented communities in our district, role of the first openly LGBTQ+ Board Trustee in SAS. The importance of continued advocacy. Proud of both the Transgender and Non-Binary Student Policy and DEI Advisory Policy. Reminded the Board about the importance of recording and reporting data on bullying, and the need for systemic change and accountability in addressing these issues. Also the role of the board in uplifting the recommendations of the DEIAC and

implementing action steps. Expressed her sincere appreciation to fellow trustees on the board for their dedication and partnership.

**Trustee Miller:** Thank you to her family for their support during these last four years. Also thanked the families of all the trustees for supporting their loved ones while doing the important work of the district. Thank you to fellow Trustee Gerbe for his friendship and support as a fellow K12 educator. Expressed gratitude for the dedication and partnership of all the trustees. Thank you to the staff and CORE team for their expertise and pursuit of excellence. Expressed deepest gratitude to Superintendent Laatsch for his exceptional leadership and guidance.

**11. CONSENT AGENDA**

**MOTION** made by Secretary Miller, support Trustee Estep **to authorize the Consent Agenda as printed**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

- A. **Approval** of the Board of Education Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2024
- B. **Approval** of the Board Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2024
- C. **Approval** of the Special Board of Education Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2024
- D. **Approval of Payment** of the General Fund Accounts Payable of December 10, 2024, in the amount of \$3,417,697.81
- E. **Approval of Payment** of Bond Series III Accounts Payable of December 10, 2024, in the amount of \$14,276.54
- F. **Approval of Payment** of 2023 Bond Fund Series I Accounts Payable of December 10, 2024, in the amount of \$1,081,439.72
- G. **Receive and File** Finance and Human Resources Reports
- H. **Approval** of the 2025 Board of Education Regular Meeting Calendar

<b>CLOSING</b>
----------------

**12. ITEMS SCHEDULED ON NEXT AGENDA**

Election of Officers  
Recognition of eSports and MS Robotics Team

**13. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**STUDENTS - None**

**OTHER PUBLIC STAKEHOLDERS**

**Tiffany Alexander, Parent** - Spoke regarding the need for improvements in the district  
**David Hayward, Parent** - Spoke regarding the Title IX policy and possible implications on the other policies if laws would change.

**Dave Rosenfeld, Community Member** - Thank you to Trustee Estep. Spoke regarding the Title IX policy and possible implications on the transgender policy if laws would change.

**14. NEXT MEETING**

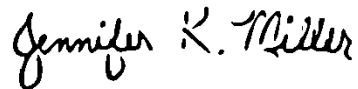
The next regular Board of Education Meeting will be held on January 14, 2025, at 6:30 PM.

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** made by Trustee Estep, support Secretary Miller **to adjourn the Regular Board of Education Meeting of December 10, 2024, at 9:28 PM.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 5-0**

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Miller  
Board Secretary

*Recorded by: Betty Jabnke*