

MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

November 19, 2024

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held on November 19, 2024, at the Morton Education and Administration Center. The meeting included the District Goals of Achievement, Communication, Climate, Facilities, and Finance.

Call to Order and Roll Call – President Cross called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Members present: Mr. Tim Braker, Dr. David Cross, Dr. Diane Krall, Mrs. Amanda Leman, Mr. Andrew Roth, Mr. Tom Neeley, Mr. Rudd, Dr. Smock, and Mrs. Valerie Smith. Absent: Dr. Joseph Sander

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Recognition of Excellence – The Board recognized the Morton High School Marching Band for winning its 19th consecutive Class 2A Illinois State University Championship and achieving Overall Grand Champion for the third consecutive year. MHS Associate Principal Mrs. Jamie Adophson reflected on the band's exceptional season. Band Co-Directors Mrs. Katrina Fitzpatrick and Mr. Andrew Empey expressed gratitude for the support of the community, parents, Board, and Administration. They provided highlights of the season's accomplishments.

Administrative Reports—

Superintendent's Report— Dr. Craig Smock

- **National Education Week:** Faculty and staff received donuts from the Board and Administration as a token of appreciation for their hard work.
- **Board Member Appreciation Day:** Observed on November 15th. Dr. Smock expressed gratitude to the Board for their dedication, time, and commitment to serving students and the community in their unpaid roles. He acknowledged their efforts on behalf of students and taxpayers. The Board received notes of appreciation from students and staff.
- **Recognition:** Mr. Todd Herrmann was named Central Illinois Valley Assistant Principal of the Year and will be recognized at the next Board meeting.
- **Jefferson Crosswalk Project:** The project is underway and will resemble the crosswalks at MJHS and MHS. The cost is being shared with the Village of Morton. Dr. Smock thanked the Village for partnering to enhance student and community safety.
- **Renovation Updates:** Progress continues with sidewalks in place, cement polishing underway, and interior projects advancing. Locker rooms are nearing completion and will soon be available for student use.
- **School Report Card:** Dr. Troy Teater presented a comprehensive analysis of the data from the School Report Card. All district schools received high ratings, with Lincoln, Grundy, and Brown earning the designation of Exemplary, while Jefferson, MJHS, and MHS were designated as Commendable. Morton Academy is too small to be measured. Dr. Teater provided an in-depth explanation of each school's results, noting that the distinction between Commendable and Exemplary was very close. To offer a broader perspective, he incorporated data from previous years. Dr. Teater highlighted the success of Morton 709 students and the excellent work of our teachers. The data also identified specific areas for future growth and improvement. He discussed moving forward with the implementation of S.M.A.R.T. goals—goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. The Board asked questions and expressed appreciation for Dr. Teater's thorough analysis and efforts.

President's Report – Dr. David Cross

- Dr. Cross noted the IASB Conference is coming up this weekend. Mr. Roth is ready for the Delegate Assembly.
- The Board discussed the policy review schedule. The Board will start with the two-year review schedule next year.
- The Board noted the impressive work of the Marching Band. The level of excellence requires a high level of commitment, work ethic, and dedication.

Discussion Items–

Property Tax Relief Grant–

Ms. Lisa Kowalski, CFO, provided an update on the Property Tax Relief Grant, which the District has applied for in previous years. While we have not yet been awarded the grant, our position on the list has improved with each submission. The grant is based on evidence-based funding, which requires a two-year tax abatement. After the abatement period, the District would receive annual funding. Some districts cannot afford the abatement, which increases the District's chances of winning the grant. Ms. Kowalski's initial recommendation is to allocate any received funds to replenish the depleted Education Fund. They thanked Ms. Kowalski for her work.

IASB 2024 Joint Annual Conference Selections—

The Board Members and Administration discussed the upcoming School Board Convention offerings. Board members noted that the sessions are consistently valuable, with topics including IHSA updates, AI-related sessions, community engagement, leadership, tax levy, effective school board governance, and more.

Food Services Breakfast Program Report & Expansion Recommendation—

Ms. Lisa Kowalski, CFO, presented data, survey responses, staff observations, and the Administration's recommendation to expand the Morton Food Services breakfast program to all elementary schools starting in January. Feedback from Jefferson School indicated a positive impact, as students no longer need to visit the office for snacks in the morning and can focus on learning. Crystal Lohnes, Food Services Director, and Cortney Spencer, Assistant Director, provided delicious food samples for the Board and Administration, demonstrating their confidence in staffing and program success.

The presentation also included plans to introduce grab-and-go breakfast options at MJHS and MHS in the spring. Ms. Kowalski commended Ms. Lohnes, Mrs. Spencer, and the entire food service team for their outstanding work. The breakfast price for the January expansion to elementary schools will remain \$1.60, with a focus on using local food sources when available. The Board will vote on the program expansion at the December 10, 2024 meeting. The goal is to provide nutritious meals for students while ensuring that any surplus supports equipment needs and repairs. The Board and Administration expressed their appreciation for the team's efforts.

Board Protocols—

The Board tabled the Board Protocol discussion until the next meeting to allow Dr. Sander to be present.

Facilities and Finance Discussion- MHS Renovations (Phase 2)—

Phase 1 of the MHS renovations is nearing completion, and planning for Phase 2 is progressing. Dr. Smock and Mr. Lee Gerrietts from Keach Architectural Design presented proposed updates to the initial Phase 2 plan, which include enhancing multipurpose spaces, improving building safety, and upgrading the Bertha Frank Lobby. These changes aim to accommodate additional students for learning, practices, and lunch, while also improving ADA accessibility. The estimated cost for the project is \$1.5 million. Ms. Kowalski emphasized fiscal responsibility by presenting a plan to fund the updates using available resources, ensuring the District's financial stability remains secure. A Request for Bid Documents is the next step.

Action Item(s)—

Action on 2025-2026 Tentative Budget and 2024 Tentative Levy—

There have been no changes since the last budget presentation. Mr. Neeley moved to approve the 2025-2026 Tentative Budget and 2024 Tentative Levy as prepared and presented. Mr. Rudd supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Action on Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Extra Duty Stipends—

The Administration and MEA have discussed the MOU. They recommend approving the MOU for the remaining term of the 2024-27 CBA. Mrs. Leman made a motion for the Board to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Extra Duty Stipends as presented. Dr. Krall supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Action on Request for Bid Documents on MHS East Gym Renovation and Weight Training Facility with BFPAC Lobby Expansion as an Alternate –

Mr. Rudd motioned for the Board of Education to approve the Request for Bid Documents on MHS East Gym Renovation and Weight Training Facility with BFPAC Lobby Expansion as an Alternate. Mr. Neeley supported. The Board noted appreciation for the work done in preparation for the discussion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Action on Non-Resident Tuition Student for 2025-26 School Year–

Mr. Rudd made a motion to approve the Non-Resident Tuition Student for the 2025-26 School Year. Mr. Roth supported the motion. The non-resident student will be a freshman at MHS in the fall of 2025.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Action on Resolution for Property Tax Abatement– Precision Planting –

The District, along with other taxing bodies, entered into an agreement to abate taxes of Precision Planting for a five-year period. That period begins with 2024 taxes and includes 90% abatement in year 1, 70% abatement in year 2, and 50% abatement in years 3, 4 and 5.

Mr. Roth moved to approve the Resolution for Property Tax Abatement for Precision Planting as presented. Mr. Rudd supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Consent Agenda –

Mr. Rudd moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mrs. Lemman supported the motion.

- Approve Personnel Report
- Approve Treasurer’s Report - August 2024
- Approve School Maintenance Project Grant Submission
- Approve Donation Report
- Approve Out-of-State Trip per Board Policy 6:240 – MHS Softball Trip – March 2025
- Approve Minutes of the October 29, 2024, Regular Meeting; October 29, 2024, Regular Meeting Closed Session Minutes
- Approve Bills

	Bills 11-1-24 11-4-24	Bills 11-15-24 11-18-24
Ed. Fund (10)	\$257,408.39	\$218,159.45
Bldg. Fund (20)	82,412.32	75,511.43
Trans. Fund (40)	10,050.58	25,175.47
Capital Projects (60)		\$228,549.77
TORT (80)	956.36	\$554.00

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Non-Agenda Related Audience Presentations—

Ms. Dee Fogal addressed the Board of Education for five minutes.

Closed Session-

President Cross noted that there were no Closed Session topics.

Adjournment –

Mr. Rudd made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

The motion carried with a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Recorded by,

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Smith, Recording Secretary

Amanda Leman, Secretary

David Cross, President