

MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

February 4, 2025

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held on February 4, 2025, at the Morton Education and Administration Center. The meeting included the District Goals of Achievement, Communication, Climate, Facilities, and Finance.

REGULAR MEETING –

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, Mrs. Amanda Leman, Mr. Andrew Roth, Mr. Tom Neeley, Mr. Rudd, Dr. Smock, Dr. Joseph Sander, and Mrs. Valerie Smith. Absent: Dr. Diane Krall

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

Recognition of Excellence — Morton Red Wings (Special Olympics) First Place Bowler, Matthew Klokkenga, was introduced to the Board of Education. The Board greeted and congratulated the Matthew and Coach Darci Slocum.

Administrative Reports—

Superintendent’s Report— Dr. Craig Smock

- Security film is being applied to facility windows to increase security and safety. The new glass at MHS already has the security film on the glass panels.
- Dr. Smock shared renovation updates. Architects are putting together design ideas for potential renovations/additions to create space for programs at Grundy and the Bertha Frank Lobby.
- PowerSchool Data experienced a data breach that involved some demographic data. No Social Security numbers were involved in the breach. PowerSchool is working with the FBI. PowerSchool will be offering a credit monitoring program at PowerSchool’s expense.
- Flu season has brought an increase from 5% - 10 % absenteeism.
- We did not receive the property tax relief grant. We did move up the list again this year. 143 Districts applied. 34 received it. We are 24th on the list of 109 districts who applied and did not receive it. We will continue to try and save the taxpayers money.
- The District 2025-26 School Year calendar will be approved tonight.
- We have used on emergency day. May 23, 2025, is the last day for students. May, 27, 2025 is the last teacher day.
- March 12, 2025, the Chamber of Commerce is hosting a “Meet the Candidate” night at Bertha Frank that involves the candidates for school board. The event begins at 6:00 p.m. Election Day is April 1st.

President’s Report and Agenda Building – Dr. David Cross

Dr. Cross noted that the Board is looking forward to touring the renovated and new spaces. Dr. Smock noted that we are waiting on floors to be polished. One of the second meeting dates in reserve may be used for a tour.

Discussion Items–

MHS GPA Presentation – Mr. Kirk Edwards, MHS Principal

Mr. Kirk Edwards, MHS Principal, presented the final recommendations of the GPA review committee to the Board of Education. The goal to from the beginning has been to improve our process without harming students.

The committee took a long, hard look at all aspects and the potential impact on students. The current calculation formula has been in place for forty years. The MHS current grading scale does not line up with ICC's scale, impacting students who take ICC classes. The current formula frustrates the college application process for some students. Updating the GPA and Grading Scale guidelines will benefit students and be more user friendly for students, parents, and college admissions teams. An additional proposed change is increasing the Physical Education from .25 to .5 credits per semester. 100 parents/caregivers responded to the survey sent out for feedback. There was a positive response to the proposed changes from parents.

A summary of the changes include:

- GPA moves to a “traditional” model
- Grading scale changes to a 10% scale
- Semester weighting changes to 80/20
- PE credit increases to .5 and becomes part of the GPA
- This applies to 9th - 11th grade students
- Letter grades will be reflected on transcripts

The Board discussed and asked questions for clarity. The change is recommended for the 2025-26 school year by the Administration.

District Cell Phone Policy – Dr. Troy Teater, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Technology

Dr. Troy Teater presented an update to the Board of Education on cell phone policies. He reviewed what schools are doing locally and in other places to manage the growing concerns about the negative impact of cell phones in classrooms. He shared that a “ban” does not mean no use at any time. MHS had 41 referrals for cell phone usage in the Fall. MHS students are conversing and engaging during social times. There were 15 MHS referrals in January 2025. Students admit they feel less distracted when their phones are not present.

The Care-U Podcast and the District book study have addressed the concerns of cell phones and social media. The community has an interest in the topic and has engaged. Dr. Kyle Boerke, PSY.D from Behavioral Ambulatory Services at OSF presented to staff at the TLC meeting on some of the issues they are seeing in health care settings. The presentation was excellent and it is taped for sharing.

The Board discussed the presentation and asked Dr. Teater questions. Board members shared concerns and gave input. Some states are banning cell phones in schools. The Board supports local control. Smartphone and social media are a concern in education everywhere. Cell phone use with younger children on buses are a concern, too. Education parents of the dangers is important. The Board is interested in hearing from parents.

The Board thanked Dr. Teater for his work.

Vision 2030 – Dr. Craig Smock, Superintendent & Dr. Joe Sander, Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Smock presented to the Board on Vision 2030. He reviewed some of the history of the previous initiative and the intent of a Vision 2030 Board Resolution. Vision 2030 centers around keeping students safe, keeping high-quality educators in front of students, enhancing post-secondary success, and improving measurement of what is working. Vision 2030 priorities include: future focused learning, shared accountability, and predictable funding.

Keeping student's safe, keeping local control, reforming the mandate process, and measuring student skills beyond academics are components of Vision 2030. The Board will vote on the resolution at the March 4, 2025, board meeting.

Electricity Options –Mr. Adam Jacob, Director of Business Services

Mr. Adam Jacob, Director of Business Services, presented to the Board on electricity options. The live electricity procurement auction was on April 13, 2022. The District signed a 3-year contract with Mid-American to supply our energy. Mr. Adam Jacob and Ms. Lisa Kowalski, CFO, have been reviewing our options moving forward. There is always an element of risk, but the last contract ended saved the District around \$250,000. With the previous contract, a Broker/Consultant helped the business office navigate the process at a cost. There would be an additional savings to the District if the business office manages the process for the next contract and purchases the electricity directly from the supplier. The Board had an opportunity to ask questions for clarification.

The Administration recommends that the Board of Education approve the threshold rates (not to exceed) of \$.076/kWh for a 1-year term, \$.077/kWh for a 2 year term, \$.078/kWh for a 3-year term, and \$.08/kWh thereafter for up to a 5-year term, allowing the district administration to sign on a contract if the energy rate falls at or below the threshold terms. With the current quotes, the District has the potential of savings of \$50,000 per year when compared to the District's current contract.

Action Item(s)–

2025-26 District Calendar—

Mr. Roth made a motion for the Board to approve the that the Board of Education approve the 2025-26 District School Calendar as presented. Mrs. Leman supported.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

Motion carried.

Action on Electricity Options---

Mr. Rudd made a motion for the Board of Education to approve the Electricity Acceptable Thresholds as presented for up to a five-year term, allowing district administration to sign on a contract if the energy rate falls at or below the threshold terms. Mr. Braker supported.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

Motion carried. The Board and Administration thanked Mr. Adam Jacob and Mrs. Lisa Kowalski for their work.

Consent Agenda –

Mr. Neeley moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mrs. Leman supported the motion.

- Approve Personnel Report
- Approve Overnight Trip per Board Policy 6:240 MHS Student Council – Lombard, IL- 2025
- Approve Overnight/Out-of-State Trip per Board Policy 6:240 – MHS Marching Band – BOA Regionals St. Louis- October 2025
- Approve Overnight/Out-of-State Trip per Board Policy 6:240 – MHS Marching Band – BOA Grand Nationals- Indianapolis- November 2025
- Approve Donation Report
- Approve Recommendation to Keep Executive Session Minutes Closed – July 2024 – December 2024
- Approve Minutes of the January 14, 2025, Regular Meeting; January 14, 2025, Regular Meeting Closed Session

- Approve Bills and Payroll

	Bills 1-22-25	Bills 1-24-25 1-27-25	Payroll 1-3-25	Payroll 1-17-25	Payroll 1-31-25
Ed. Fund (10)	\$306,585.08	\$207,425.27	\$962,882.66	\$900,780.11	\$1,064,540.05
Bldg. Fund (20)		\$139,384.09	55,560.78	56,962.32	61,767.20
Trans. Fund (40)	\$88,726.67	\$31,153.67	26,568.77	16,462.85	29,976.53
IMRF (50)			44,083.83	37,133.08	540,19.92
Capital Projects (60)		\$334,296.31			
TORT (80)		\$7,249.00			

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0 Absent 0

Motion carried.

Dr. Smock noted appreciation for L & F Electric’s donation to the wrestling program on the Donation Report.

Non-Agenda Related Audience Presentations – Ms. Dee Fogal presented to the Board of Education for five minutes.

Closed Session-

President Cross called for a Closed Session to discuss Personnel and a Confidential Student Concern as stated in the Open Meetings Act (ILSC 120/2). Mr. Roth motioned for the Board to enter into closed session. Mr. Rudd supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

The Board entered Closed Session at 7:37 p.m.

Return to Open Session –

Mr. Roth made a motion for the Board to return to Open Session. Mr. Braker supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

The Board re-entered Open Session at 8:34 p.m.

Action on Hiring of the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Technology, and Safety –

Mr. Neeley made a motion for the Board to Mrs. Kate Wyman as the new Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Technology, and Safety. Mrs. Leman supported.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

Motion carried.

Action on Revised Personnel Report –

Mr. Rudd made a motion for the Board to approve the Revised Personnel Report as presented. Mr. Roth supported.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

Motion carried.

The Administration and Board congratulated Mrs. Wyman on her new position.

Re-enter Closed Session-

President Cross called for a motion to re-enter Closed Session to discuss Personnel and a Confidential Student Concern as stated in the Open Meetings Act (ILSC 120/2). Mr. Roth motioned for the Board to re-enter into closed session. Mrs. Leman supported the motion.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

Motion carried. The Board re-entered closed session at 8:38 p.m.

The Board re-entered Open Session at 9:14 p.m.

Adjournment –

Mr. Braker made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call: Yea 6 Nay 0 Absent 1

The motion carried with a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Recorded by,

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Smith, Recording Secretary

Amanda Leman, Secretary

David Cross, President