

The Board of Education of LaHarpe Community School District #347 held a regular School Board meeting on 15 April 2025 in the Board room. President Dustin Detherage called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Roll call was answered by Allen, Blythe, Collins, Deitrich, Detherage, and Walker. Gebhardt was absent. Superintendent Janet Gladu, Board Secretary Liz McCarter, and Principal Ryan Hopper were also in attendance.

Visitors in attendance were Chad Burt, Melissa Burt, Marlie Deeter, Heather Moore, Stacey Pence, Karen Nudd, Aspyr Beasley, Lacey Barrera, Nichelle Pence, Amber Pence, Courtney Painter, Ashley Cox, Julie Garrison, Cassie Bundy, Garek Mason, Joni Dowell, Stella Bennett, Danielle McIntyre, Dayna Bundy, Pam Bundy, Jonah Burt, Leslie Fisher

A Moment of Silence was observed.

Public Comment: Detherage stated that anyone speaking about a specific staff members performance needs to be done in closed session. Per policy on personnel privacy.

Marlie Deeter read a letter stating that she has spoken with several employees who feel undervalued and unheard. She feels that some staff members are unprofessional and have a dismissive attitude when concerns are brought up. She feels that the school needs to have a time for regular employee feedback and a way for staff to share their concerns/suggestions openly or anonymously. She feels that there are staff members who need to take a class on professionalism in the workplace. She urged the board to address her concerns. Leandra asked if Marlie could please get them a copy of what she had read. Marlie stated that she would.

Business Items:

The Consent Agenda included the Open Meeting Minutes of the 18 March 2025 Regular Board Meeting of the LaHarpe CSD 347 School, Open Meeting Minutes of the 12 March 2025 Committee of the Whole Special Meeting, Open Meeting Minutes of the 20 March 2025 Committee of the Whole Special Meeting, Open Meeting Minutes of the 26 March 2025 Committee of the Whole Special Meeting, Open Meeting Minutes of the 27 March 2025 Curriculum Committee Special Meeting, Approval of Final School Calendar, Permission for Superintendent to seek fuel bids, IESA annual membership renewal, Financial Reports, Individual Fund Balances, Payment of Bills, and action to delete the verbatim closed session meeting recordings that were 18 months and older.

Individual Fund Balances (chart below)

Fund	FY 2025
Education	\$2,543,838.27
Building	\$260,734.40
Debt Services	\$108,637.22
Transportation	\$149,327.98
IMRF	\$74,433.16
Capital Projects	\$0
Working Cash	\$42,541.78
TORT Immunity	\$195,266.99
Fire Prevention & Safety	\$258,358.86
Total	\$3,543,138.66
Annual Change	-4.81% (last month was -7%)
Comparison Year	
FY 2024	\$3,722,357.17
FY 2023	\$2,846,850.39
FY 2022	\$2,342,020.82

FY 2021	\$2,371,491.88
FY 2020	\$1,575,763.80
FY 2019	\$1,255,496.87

A motion was made by Collins with a second by Walker to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda: Minutes from March 12, 18, 20, 26, 27, 2025, regular minutes, financial reports, payment of bills, and the deletion of verbatim closed session recordings older than 18 months, 2024-2025 Final School Calendar, permission for the Superintendent to seek fuel bids, 2025-2026 IESA Membership, and FOIA requests. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes; Gebhardt - Absent. Motion Carried 6-0.

Student Recognition. Stella Bennett was recognized for winning 1st prize in the 36th Annual Carl Sandburg Poetry Contest. She came and presented her poem, "Cry Me A River" to the board. The board presented her with a signed certificate for her achievement.

IASB Board Leader Recognition. Superintendent Gladu presented Dustin Detherage with a certificate that IASB sent to Dustin for his outstanding continued service to LaHarpe Schools.

2025-2026 Student Fees. Superintendent Gladu stated that we have not charged student registration fees for the last two years. In the past the student fees were \$70 per year. The board elected to waive student fees again next year.

A motion was made by Blythe with a second by Deitrich to set student fees for the 2025-2026 school year at \$0. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Authorization to expend funds. A motion was made by Detherage with a second by Collins to authorize Superintendent Gladu to expend funds to cover expenses and liabilities between July 1 2025 and the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Adoption. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Bus Barn Cameras. Superintendent Gladu stated that we received a quote from Verkada for the camera installation for one camera at the bus barn. The largest part of the quote was in the cellular connection. They are working to see if there is a different way to get the signal from the bus barn to the main building. Due to the cost, there is no action on this item. Superintendent Gladu stated that she will continue to look for other alternatives.

Cafeteria Update. Superintendent Gladu stated that we do not have official results from the election. Detherage and Superintendent Gladu met with the architects on Tuesday. They are planning on having the project ready for bid by January 2026 with construction starting March/April 2026. They are estimating 8-9 months of construction. The potential move-in date for the cafeteria is January 2027. The architects recommend combining the bathroom projects with the cafeteria project to save money. They are estimating to have a contract ready for us in the next month to continue the project. Nothing will be done until the election is final.

Election Update. Superintendent Gladu stated she does not have final election results yet. She does not expect to have them until April 22.

Special Board Meeting. Superintendent Gladu stated we need to have a special board meeting to seat the new board. It will just be to finalize business of the current board (sine die) and seat the new board. It has to be after April 22 when we get the final election results and before May 11.

A motion was made by Deitrich with a second by Walker to set a special board meeting on 23 April 2025 to sine die the current Board of Education and seat the New Board of Education. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Social Studies Curriculum. Superintendent Gladu stated that the Curriculum Committee has decided on Social Studies Curriculum. Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd will use McGraw Hill. 3rd, 4th, and 5th will use Savvas. 6th, 7th and 8th will use McGraw Hill.

Science Curriculum. Superintendent Gladu stated that the Curriculum Committee has decided on Science Curriculum. Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd will use Savvas. 3rd, 4th, and 5th will use McGraw Hill.

Reports:

Board Committee. Nothing to report.

Board Members. Nothing to report.

Principal/Transportation Director/Athletic Director. Hopper talked about the Art Festival. There was a great turnout. PTO will have some great surprises at the end of the year with the funds raised. He mentioned that Miss Hensley has baby chicks that have hatched and the kids are loving that. He also mentioned that State Testing is completed. Students enjoyed the daily prizes from the local businesses. He stated that AIMS Web testing will begin the week of May 5th. He mentioned Teacher Appreciation is May 5th-9th. The school as well as some organizations have some special things planned for staff. He talked about Science Olympiad and their accomplishments at the State Competition in Champaign. They placed 18th overall and 4 students came home with medals in their events. He stated that everything with transportation is going smoothly.

Superintendent. Dr Gladu stated that Science Olympiad would like to come to next month's meeting. She let the board know she is still waiting on the plates for the new bus. She stated that Courtney Painter is the March Staff Member of the Month.

Motion by Blythe with a second by Deitrich to adjourn to closed session at 6:22 pm to discuss items per 5ILCS 120/2/(c)(1). The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District; and (15) closed session minutes. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Motion by Deitrich with a second by Detherage to adjourn the closed session meeting at 6:41 pm. Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Motion by Collins with a second by Blythe to return to open session at 6:42 pm. Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Detherage called the open meeting to order at 6:43 pm. Detherage stated that Melissa Burt with her union reps Ashley Cox and Julie Garrison waived her right to exception #1. Detherage returned the meeting to public comment.

Melissa Burt stated that in an email from Detherage short term approval was taken off the table in March 2025. She read the email from Detherage. Said she has done regular check ins that were required with little to no feedback and no mentoring at all from Superintendent. She said she was given until March of 2026 to complete all the things required by the board and she was let go in March of 2025. She stated she was not given a reason as to why she was let go. She said she was let go for teaching performance and effectiveness, licensure, and failure to timely procure adequate licensure as directed. She said of her last three evaluations, one was excellent, the other two were proficient. Said that Craig Burns said she has every right to be frustrated because she has jumped through all the hoops she has been asked to jump through. He told her however, the board has taken all of the proper steps. She told the board "just because you took the proper steps it doesn't mean you did the right thing." She said she is disappointed and would like another chance. She said she did submit an application to reapply for the job after other staff members told her she should. She stated office staff saw her turn in the application and she never received a call or an interview.

Heather Moore – Said that as a parent she feels like the board has made a mistake. Band meant a lot to her growing up and it means a lot to her son who plays the trumpet. She stated that he has come a long way with Mrs. Burt as his teacher. She feels that you have to have the right name to play sports here but you don't have to have a certain name to be in the band. She said that as a parent she disagrees with the decision the board has made.

Aspen Beasley – said that she has learned so much from Mrs. Burt. She said the only reason she has stayed in band and is continuing band in High School is because of Mrs. Burt and the influence she had in her life. She said that she is an excellent and inspiring teacher. She stated that you can tell Mrs. Burt loves the students and loves what she does.

Lacey Barrera – She said she is Aspen's mom. She said since they have moved here they have seen Junior High Teachers come and go. She said Mrs. Burt being let go makes her sad for the children. She said her experience with band and with Mrs. Burt has been exceptional. She stated that Mrs. Burt is the reason Aspen has done High School Band. She stated that there is not a lot of representation from LH/DC kids in activities at Illini West. She said Aspen proudly represents the school at Illini West because of what Mrs. Burt has taught her. She said not many people at LaHarpe supported or encouraged Aspen in music but Mrs. Burt always did. She stated that Mrs. Burt is a cheerleader for her students and cares about each one of them. She said she puts a lot into her job and she cares about the creative kids who don't get a lot of support.

Stacey Pence – she said that Mrs. Burt is her cousin. She stated that Mrs. Mencil was amazing. She said she told Mrs. Burt in the beginning that the band here sounded better than the high school band at Illini West. She said her granddaughter Tinley plays the trumpet because of Mrs. Burt and is learning to play the piano. She said that her grandson Elliot plays the drums. She said Mrs. Burt is an asset to our community and to our school. She is local and she cares about our community. She talked about how most of the board is local, she commented on how most of them were at least giving them some kind of eye contact. She then stated that the superintendent was not even making eye contact while all of them were making their comments. She stated that a little more attentiveness from the superintendent would be nice.

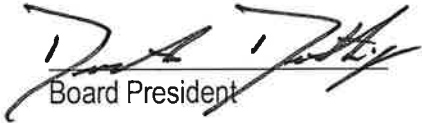
Motion by Detherage with a second by Collins to approve the closed session minutes from 18 March 2025. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Motion by Detherage with a second by Walker to hire John Draws as a certified staff member. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Motion by Collins with a second by Walker to hire Haley Dixon as a certified staff member. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Motion by Blythe with a second by Deitrich to hire Kevin Mershon as Co-Head Boys Basketball Coach for the 2025/2026 Basketball season. Roll Call: Blythe – yes; Collins- yes; Deitrich – yes; Detherage – yes; Allen – yes; Walker – yes. Motion Carried 6-0.

Motion by Detherage with a second by Allen to adjourn the April 2025 Board Meeting at 7:02pm. Voice Vote.


Board President
Board Secretary

