

**MILAN AREA SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday April 23, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Milan Area Schools Board of Education was called to order in the Milan Area Schools District Board Room located at 100 Big Red Drive, Milan MI, 48160, by President Cislo at 7:00 p.m. on April 23, 2025.

Board Members Present: Cislo, Faro, Gutierrez, Burdette, Heikka, Meray

Board Members Absent: Prior

Signed in Staff: Bryan Girbach, Ryan McMahon, Margaret Durkee, Sara Beckman

Signed in Guests: Sara Norton, Andrea Bennink

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment:

- Andrea Bennink announced several upcoming special education-related events. She shared that the Public Education Town Hall, hosted by the Washtenaw Superintendent Association and the Washtenaw Association of School Boards, will be held on April 30 at Washtenaw Community College. The event will feature Pamela Pugh, Senator Jeff Irwin, Representative Jimmy Wilson Jr., and local educational leaders to discuss federal policy and funding changes. Flyers were made available in the superintendent's office. She also highlighted Coffee and Conversation, a WISD event on May 14 from 8:15–11:00 a.m., which will include presentations from Community Mental Health and cover Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Additionally, she promoted an upcoming webinar by the Work and Play Special Needs Resource Center, which will address concerns about IDEA, ADA, and IEPs under potential federal changes. Bennink also praised PAC nominee Sarah Norton for her initiative in collaborating with staff to develop a special education guidebook for families in Milan.

Motion by Heikka supported by Gutierrez to approve the minutes of the special meeting of April 9, 2025. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Faro supported by Burdette to approve the minutes of the special meeting closed session of April 9, 2025. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Heikka supported by Meray to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 9, 2025. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Burdette supported by Gutierrez to approve the minutes of the regular meeting closed session of April 9, 2025. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Faro supported by Gutierrez to approve the 2025-2026 Schools-of-Choice Resolution as provided in Attachment A. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Heikka supported by Burdette to approve the 2025-2026 Budget and Truth-in-Taxation Hearing Announcement as provided in Attachment B. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Meray supported by Heikka to renew the Food Service Management Company Contract for the 2025-2026 school year with Chartwells School Dining Service Management Company as described in Attachment C. Further, to authorize the superintendent or designee to sign all necessary documents. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Motion by Gutierrez supported by Faro to recommend Sarah Norton to the Washtenaw Intermediate School District Board of Education for appointment to the Washtenaw Intermediate School District Parent Advisory Committee. All Ayes. Carried 6-0

Public Comment:

- Andrea Bennink noted that other interested PAC applicants had found alternate ways to stay involved and encouraged all families to engage in school communities, including volunteering and PTO involvement, emphasizing that strong family-school connections benefit both students and the community.
- Margaret Durkee thanked the district's administrative assistants in recognition of Administrative Professionals Day, noting their vital contributions to daily operations.

Student Board Member Comments: None

Assistant Superintendent Comments were heard on the following topics:

- ELL Grant Update
- Paddock Principal Hiring Process Update

Superintendent Comments were heard on the following topics:

- MMS Productions Dates for Wizard of Oz
- Chamber Choir Performances at State Solo and Ensemble
- Vickie Morey's (Symons Teacher) father passing away
- Christine Bell's (MMS Counselor) husband passing away
- Big Red Board Chat on May 8
- WISD Town Hall
- Thank You to Sarah Norton for Serving as a WISD PAC Representative
- 2025-2026 Preliminary Budget

Board Member Comments:

- Heikka expressed appreciation for administrative assistants and emphasized their role in supporting students and school operations. She encouraged attendance at *The Wizard of Oz* and invited the community to *Family Fun Day* at Immaculate Conception on April 27. She congratulated the choir and recognized the dedication of student performers. Heikka noted the need to amend the 2024–25 budget due to the lack of reliable state funding estimates, calling on community members to contact state legislators. She stressed the difficulty of district planning without timely budget projections.
- Faro thanked administrative assistants for their ongoing support and asked whether a fall district calendar and teacher negotiation schedule had been established with the MEA. He confirmed that benchmark assessment data had been posted online and shared upcoming graduation dates: May 21 for Adult Education (7:00 p.m. at Milan High School) and May 29 for the Young Adult Program (12pm in the middle school Librarium).
- Burdette joined in recognizing administrative assistants and shared his experience attending recent chamber choir performances, highlighting the tenor-bass ensemble's freshman talent. He noted the group will perform at the State Choral Festival on May 1 at Leslie High School. Burdette voiced enthusiasm for *The Wizard of Oz* and emphasized the

value of arts education. He also reported attending several girls' soccer games, noting upcoming matches at Grosse Ile and a tournament in Williamston.

- Meray shared her appreciation to administrative assistants, specifically recognizing Jennifer Edelbrock for her recent support of the *Wizard of Oz* production. She emphasized their behind-the-scenes work that keeps the district running smoothly. Meray also thanked staff and students for a successful 6th grade camp and praised the YMCA for hosting this long-standing Milan tradition. She reiterated details about the April 30 *Public Education Town Hall* and shared the registration website. She raised concerns about the proposed elimination of the federal Head Start program, highlighting its vital role in education, nutrition, and child care for working families. Meray also addressed recent ableist remarks made by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kennedy, affirming Milan's commitment to neurodiverse students and inclusive practices. She closed by thanking theater staff and volunteers for their contributions to the *Wizard of Oz* set and production under a tight timeline.
- Gutierrez echoed concerns shared by Ms. Meray about Secretary Kennedy's comments, but shared gratitude for the Sun Times News for sharing a positive story about Neurodiversity Month at Milan Middle School. She specifically thanked the article's author, Karen Lambert, for highlighting the spirit of inclusion in Milan Area Schools and encouraged the community to read it. She then expressed gratitude to the staff, students, and families who helped make 6th grade camp a success, noting the importance of shared experiences in a small district. Further, thanked administrative assistants for the tremendous amount of work they do. She encouraged community participation in staff appreciation week activities during the week of May 5. She echoed congratulations to choral students, and reiterated details for the Public Education Town Hall. She emphasized the value of registering in advance to submit specific questions. She inquired about the availability of a virtual option for the event and committed to sharing any updates with the superintendent. Gutierrez also promoted the upcoming First Responder Safety Day, hosted by the Milan Area Fire Department and Police Department, designed for neurodivergent children and older adults. She thanked Ms. Heikka for underscoring the urgency of receiving state budget information, particularly in a year with contract negotiations and new sinking fund revenue.
- Cislo gave a brief clarification that the Wizard of Oz performance is held at the high school and is not walkable from the Immaculate Conception Family Fun Day. He thanked staff and community members who consistently provide board members with updates and news, including email communications highlighting staff and student accomplishments.

Time of Adjournment: 7:45 p.m.