

**BUDGET HEARING AGENDA
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Held at: 45 E. Buena Vista Street
Highland Park, MI 48203-3322

**Wednesday, September 9, 2026
6:00 PM**

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER –

The meeting was called to order by President Cheryl Sanford at 6:08 PM.

ROLL CALL –

Ms. Cheryl Sanford, President, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent
Ms. Famika Roberts, Vice President, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent
Ms. Yolanda Harrison, Secretary & Sergeant-at-Arms, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent
Ms. Cassandra Walker, Treasurer, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent
Ms. Doris Harris, Member, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent
Ms. Linda Wheeler, Member, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent
Ms. Janet Spight-White, Member, Board of Education	☒ Present	☐ Absent

COMMUNICATIONS

- (1) HP Journal- Copies provided for the BOE and public

APPROVE MEETING AGENDA

MOTION: TREASURER WALKER MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 9, 2026 MEETING AGENDA

SUPPORT: VICE PRESIDENT ROBERTS SECONDED.

DISCUSSION:

☐ AS PRESENTED.

☐ WITH MODIFICATION, REMOVING THE CLOSED SESSION

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Cheryl Sanford, President, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No
Ms. Famika Roberts, Vice President, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No
Ms. Yolanda Harrison, Secretary & Sergeant-at-Arms, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No
Ms. Cassandra Walker, Treasurer, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No
Ms. Doris Harris, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No
Ms. Linda Wheeler, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No
Ms. Janet Spight-White, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes	☐ No

MOTION CARRIED 7-0

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only – 3 minutes only)

- **Alexis Ramsey:** Ms. Ramsey thanked the Board and Mr. Pettway for their continued hard work and leadership in rebuilding, rebranding, and restructuring the district. She expressed her support for the resolution regarding the cleanup at Ford School and congratulated the district on the Highland Park Promise initiative. She emphasized the importance of working together with the common goal of supporting students and the success of the district.
- **Dushawn Burt:** Mr. Burt introduced himself as a community canvasser with Community Rising and shared that he is actively involved in community outreach in Highland Park, Detroit, and Ferndale. He stated that his work focuses on building relationships with residents and connecting communities with resources. He offered information about available funding for up to six community events through December and encouraged the Board and local organizations to contact him regarding programs or organizations that could benefit from additional resources and support.

MOTION TO APPROVE AUGUST 11, 2026, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: TREASURER WALKER MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 11, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

SUPPORT: VICE PRESIDENT ROBERTS SECONDED.

DISCUSSION:

☒ AS PRESENTED.

☐ WITH CORRECTIONS,

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Cheryl Sanford, President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Famika Roberts, Vice President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Yolanda Harrison, Secretary & Sergeant-at-Arms, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Cassandra Walker, Treasurer, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Doris Harris, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Linda Wheeler, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Janet Spight-White, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No

MOTION CARRIED 7-0

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

President Sanford: President Sanford shared that the recent evening Coffee and Conversation provided a valuable opportunity for community members to engage with the Board, discuss ideas, and provide input. She noted that the evening format was well received and indicated that the district plans to continue offering evening sessions. Community members were encouraged to attend future sessions, with information available on the district website.

DISTRICT DEPARTMENT REPORTS AND INFORMATION

- (1) **HPSD REPORT- MR. ISAIAH PETTWAY, CEO MR. PETTWAY-** Mr. Pettway provided updates on several district initiatives. He reported that the Highland Park Promise application process is underway in partnership with the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN), with a demonstration of the electronic application expected by the end of the month. He also announced the launch of a media campaign to increase public awareness of the Highland Park Promise.

Mr. Pettway shared that the district is seeking community support and ambassadors to promote the positive work taking place in the district. He also reported that a community supporter has committed to redirecting an annual philanthropic contribution to support the Highland Park Promise, making this the program's first corporate sponsorship. He further reported that the district is obtaining three quotes for ADA-compliant curb improvements, with the goal of completing the work in October and presenting the quotes to the Board for consideration. Mr. Pettway also provided an update on Barber Prep, noting that enrollment is approaching 400 students and introducing Dr. Sabrina Turner as the school's new principal. He thanked Dr. Farris for ensuring a smooth start to the school year and stated that Dr. Turner and Dr. Farris are expected to appear before the Board at the following month's meeting.

(2) FINANCE-ALLEN C. YOUNG, PC.-BUDGET PRESENTATION

PRESENTER: MR. ISAIAH PETTWAY, CEO MR. PETTWAY- Several board members asked questions regarding the Board redemption and Mr. Pettway answered.

MOTION TO APPROVE AUGUST 2026 FINANCIALS

MOTION: VICE PRESIDENT ROBERTS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AUGUST FINANCIALS.

SUPPORT: SECRETARY HARRISON SECONDED.

DISCUSSION:

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Cheryl Sanford, President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Famika Roberts, Vice President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Yolanda Harrison, Secretary & Sergeant-at-Arms, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Cassandra Walker, Treasurer, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Doris Harris, Member, Board of Education	☐ Yes ☒ No
Ms. Linda Wheeler, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Janet Spight-White, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No

MOTION CARRIED 6-1.

(2) BOARD GOVERNANCE/OVERSIGHT REPORT VANESSA GULLEY, PROVISION- Mrs. Gulley had no formal report but mentioned that she is still working on the podcast.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS-

- (1) Resolution to Approve the use of sinking funds to pay for the increase cost of the elevator- Several board members asked questions regarding the elevator reconstruction, the invoices, what is left to be done, and has there been any issues with the elevator since the first phase of reconstruction. Mr. Pettway answered all board members questions.

Motion to Approve THE USE OF SINKING FUNDS TO PAY FOR THE INCREASE COST OF THE ELEVATOR

MOTION: MEMBER HARRIS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE USE OF SINKING FUNDS TO PAY FOR THE INCREASE COST OF THE ELEVATOR SUPPORT: SECRETARY HARRISON SECONDED.

DISCUSSION: NONE

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Cheryl Sanford, President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Famika Roberts, Vice President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Yolanda Harrison, Secretary & Sergeant-at-Arms, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Cassandra Walker, Treasurer, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Doris Harris, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Linda Wheeler, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Janet Spight-White, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No

MOTION CARRIED 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

- (1.) Resolution to Approve community cleanup at Ford School: Board Member asked several questions regarding the cleanup and specifics of the resolution. Mr. Pettway clarified.

Motion to Approve RESOLUTION TO APPROVE COMMUNITY CLEANUP AT FORD SCHOOL

MOTION: SECRETARY HARRISON MADE A MOTION TO Approve RESOLUTION TO APPROVE COMMUNITY CLEANUP AT FORD SCHOOL TO SUPPORT: MEMBER HARRIS SECONDED.

DISCUSSION:

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Cheryl Sanford, President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Famika Roberts, Vice President, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Yolanda Harrison, Secretary & Sergeant-at-Arms, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Cassandra Walker, Treasurer, Board of Education	☐ Yes ☒ No
Ms. Doris Harris, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Linda Wheeler, Member, Board of Education	☒ Yes ☐ No
Ms. Janet Spight-White, Member, Board of Education	☐ Yes ☒ No

MOTION CARRIED 5-2

EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only – 3 minutes only)

- **Dushawn Burt**-Mr. Burt shared that Community Rising is seeking to connect with local organizations and community partners. He stated that he has been provided with a \$300 budget to support community initiatives and offered the funds for district-related needs or programs, such as providing school supplies or lunchboxes for students. He encouraged the Board to contact him regarding opportunities for Community Rising to provide support.
- **Runae Ford**-Ms. Ford thanked the Board for approving sinking fund funding for the elevator, noting that the elevator is particularly helpful to her due to difficulty using the stairs. She also thanked the Board for supporting opportunities for local young people to organize and participate in community activities. Ms. Ford encouraged the Board to continue building partnerships with these individuals and organizations, noting that their efforts could provide ongoing support to the district and community.
- **Darthanian Nichols**-Mr. Nichols expressed his support for the Board's approach to addressing property maintenance and commended the resolution as a positive step. He encouraged the district and community to maintain consistent communication and involvement rather than treating the effort as a one-time initiative. He also emphasized the importance of keeping the focus on the needs of Highland Park and finding common ground to support the continued improvement of the community.
- **Haider Almad**- Mr. Ahmad, a Highland Park resident and parent, acknowledged the district's recent progress and emphasized the importance of continued community involvement in improving the school

system. He encouraged collaboration among parents, residents, teachers, and students, with students remaining the primary focus. He also expressed concerns regarding his recent interactions with district representatives and encouraged respectful communication, dialogue, and opportunities for the community and Board to work together toward shared goals.

(Ms. Harris walks out at 7:14pm walks back in at 7:15pm)

BOARD OF EDUCATION AFFAIRS & COMMENTS

Linda Wheeler: Ms. Wheeler expressed appreciation for the community's participation and stated that open dialogue and communication are important. She welcomed continued community engagement and encouraged residents to remain involved with the district.

Yolanda Harrison: Ms. Harrison expressed her commitment to serving the Highland Park community and putting students first. She emphasized the importance of community strength, transparency, and communication regarding the Board, educational system, and community initiatives, and encouraged residents to remain informed and engaged.

Cassandra Walker: Ms. Walker thanked the community for its participation and emphasized the importance of following established procedures and maintaining financial accountability. She expressed concern about activities involving district property or resources being undertaken without proper communication or authorization and stressed the need to protect the district from potential financial or liability risks. She encouraged community members who wish to support the district to communicate with the Board or appropriate community entities and reiterated her commitment to maintaining order and responsible financial oversight.

Janet White: Ms. White expressed her appreciation for the Highland Park community and emphasized its history of coming together to support and improve the community. She clarified that community members have consistently shown up when called upon and expressed concern about statements suggesting otherwise. She also shared concerns regarding a lack of response to a previous email and emphasized the importance of communication and community involvement.

Doris Harris: Had no comment.

Cheryl Sanford: Thanked Ms. Harris for bringing the Ford cleanup effort to the attention of the Board. President Sanford stated that although the parties did not initially agree, a compromise was reached to address the needs of both the community and the Board. She noted that the issue extends beyond one building and encouraged consideration of vacant and blighted properties throughout Highland Park. She expressed hope that the effort would encourage broader community action and thanked Ms. Harris again.

Famika Roberts: VP Roberts expressed appreciation for the community's participation and emphasized the importance of continued community engagement. She supported maintaining regular discussion regarding district properties to ensure concerns are addressed consistently. She also encouraged accountability, respectful communication, collaboration among Board members and the community, and continued efforts to work together toward the betterment of Highland Park.

Isaiah Pettway: Mr. Pettway emphasized the importance of Board unity, collective decision-making, and supporting the work being carried out on behalf of the district. He noted that the district's contractors have worked extensively to address district matters and highlighted ongoing initiatives, including the Highland Park Promise, efforts to restore community college opportunities, improvements at Barber Preparatory Academy and K-8 programming, student food resources, and transportation support.

Mr. Pettway also addressed concerns regarding Ford School, explaining that the district has had numerous competing priorities and has made significant progress, including resolving the district's deficit ahead of schedule. He encouraged the Board and community to respond to concerns through constructive communication and collaboration, rather than assigning

blame, and reiterated that the primary focus should remain on serving students.

Ms. Walker ended with quote Truth is a poison to those who live in illusions

Ms. White ended with Children's First was their statement years way before all this started. They had big banners on the expressway. Children First has been with them since 2018. It's nothing new, they need to put children first.

Ms. Harrison Leaves @7:21pm

CONFIRMATION OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

REGULAR MEETING: Wednesday October 14th, 2026 @6:00pm. (Monday 10/13 is Columbus Day)

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 7:39PM

MOTION: MEMBER HARRIS MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:39 PM

SUPPORT: VICE PRESIDENT ROBERTS SECONDED.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

Respectfully submitted by:

Yolanda Harrison

Yolanda Harrison, HPBOE Secretary

09/16/2026

Date

Signature: 
[Yolanda Harrison \(Sep 17, 2026 16:37:28 EDT\)](#)

Email: harrisony@hipark.org

School District of the City of Highland Park

Final Audit Report

2026-09-17

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