

**Snake River School Board of Trustees**  
**Held at Moreland Elementary**  
**185 N. 750 W., Blackfoot, ID 83221**  
**Wednesday, November 19, 2025**

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chairman Lon Harrington called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Other board members present were Carol Hepworth, Josh Sorensen, Larin Mortimer, and Toni Ibarra. Also attending was Superintendent Mark Kress.

**2. PRAYER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Carol Hepworth opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**A motion was made by Josh Sorensen and seconded by Toni Ibarra to approve the agenda as presented. All board members present voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**4. PUBLIC INPUT**

There were no comments during Public Input.

**5. ACTION ITEMS**

**a. Consent Agenda**

**Minutes:** Minutes of Regular Meeting of October 15, 2025

**Resignations:** Zachariah Shepard, Custodian

**New Hires:** Cameron Baker, High School Special Ed Parapro; Ashlee Thompson, SROHS Student Success Coach; Jennifer Reynolds, SROHS Student Success Coach; Malori Giles, Custodian; Tanya Bullock, Custodian; Christine Walters, Moreland Preschool Parapro.

**Payroll Status Change:** Sherry Buck, Bus Driver, from 6.75 to 8 hours.

**Budget Report, Payroll, and Claims Payable for October 2025; Reconciliation (July-October 2025)**

**Counseling Internship:** Lisa Young will doing her Counseling Internship with SROHS.

**A motion was made by Larin Mortimer and seconded by Carol Hepworth to table the July to October 2025 reconciliation reports but to approve the rest of the Consent Agenda as presented. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**b. 2024-2025 Financial Audit**

Kurt Folke from Quest CPAs, P.C. joined board meeting via conference call and presented the results of the financial statement audit. The audit began in the summer of 2024 and covered the last fiscal year through June 30, 2025. Mr. Folke briefly discussed the three independent audit reports that are contained within the full audit report. The first report (pages 1-4) addresses the financial statement, which says that based on their audit, Quest CPAs believes that the numbers are accurate and can be relied upon to make decisions. The second report (pages 40-41) is on Internal Controls and Compliance. Internal controls are the processes that the district goes through to make sure that the financial records and numbers are accurate i.e., bank reconciliations, keeping supporting documentation such as invoices and payroll transactions, etc. There are no findings this year. The last report (pages 42-44) is Federal Compliance over Federal Awards including Title I, Child Nutrition Program, etc. Again, there were no findings found. Mr. Folke then continued with the Financial Performance of the District: 1. The general fund had a net increase of \$2,322,480 for the last fiscal year. A couple of reasons for this increase include the online school program tends to be very good and then there is also good depository control, which helps as well. The ending fund balance of \$14,958,098 which is about a six-month operating reserve at the current expenditure rate and is in a strong position. (Fund balance of \$14,958,098)

2. The Child Nutrition fund had a decrease of \$90,282. It was a tough year for Child Nutrition because of higher food costs, higher labor costs, insurance costs, etc. This isn't original to just the Snake River School District but it is the same across the state with losses in in this fund. This fund started out with a good reserve to absorb the loss but at some point there may be a need to subsidize a little from the general fund. (Fund balance of \$60,941)

3. The Bond R&I Fund had a loss of \$356,921, which was intentional. There is a strong reserve. This fund balance is sufficient for the district to pay future bond payments. (Fund balance of \$1,889,000)

4. In the Plant Facility fund, there were a lot of maintenance projects and repairs last year and there is a small increase of \$47,864 to carry into this next year. (Fund balance of \$47,864)

5. The Modernization Facilities Fund is a new fund for school districts across the state this year. The state basically bonded for about a billion dollars and spread it across the school districts. The Snake River District's portion is \$8,026,081 and this money will be spent over the next ten years depending what the district's facility plan is. In Fiscal year 2025, the district only spent about \$328,637 so there is still \$7,762,014 left. (Fund balance of \$7,762,014)

6. Net change in fund balance was \$9,687,067 and the Total Government Fund balance was **\$26,280,690.**

Superintendent Kress discussed future school facility projects and intends to use these funds instead of levying patrons.

**A motion was made by Carol Hepworth and seconded by Josh Sorensen to approve the district's Financial Audit Report for the 2024-2025 school year as presented. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**c. Weight Room Engineering Proposal**

Superintendent Kress reported that the district previously selected its top-ranked engineering firm for the high school weight room addition, but their engineering proposal exceeded \$300,000, leading the board to reject it. The district then moved to its second choice, Steadman Construction, a local company. Steadman's engineering proposal is approximately \$130,000, less than half the original cost, and covers all engineering work, including plans, electrical, and HVAC design. (Continued)

**Weight Room Engineering Proposal (Continued)**

Early construction cost estimates also appear significantly lower, at roughly 50–60% of the original firm’s projected \$350–\$425 per square foot.

**Josh Sorensen moved and Larin Mortimer seconded to approve the high school weight room engineering bid from Steadman Construction and listed associates in the amount of \$146,856.64, as presented. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**d. Grading District Bus Parking Lots:**

Superintendent Kress explained that the district office consistently floods because the building sits below surrounding road levels and snow removal worsens because the ground slopes toward the building. This has caused repeated icing issues and several injury claims. To address this, the district requested a proposal from Gale Lim Construction for initial drainage and grading work (phase one), costing about \$109,000. This phase would install multiple drain fields and bring in gravel; paving would occur later as a separate, more expensive project requiring bids.

Board members discussed whether to seek additional quotes; Superintendent Kress noted the district is below the bid threshold and Gale Lim has historically provided the lowest prices. Doing all work at once is not possible due to temperatures needed for asphalt, but the company’s future paving estimate is expected to remain competitive.

Members also discussed involving students from the heavy-equipment and CTE programs as a learning opportunity. Superintendent Kress explained that the project will involve removing and regrading about 15–18 inches of soil, with much of the material reused. Students could observe or assist with basic surveying as part of their heavy-equipment coursework. The drainage plan includes installing several French drains: one along the east fence line by the bus barn, another along Thomas Road on the north side (with water directed based on the natural “turtle-back” slope), a third near the bus shop door with soil raised so runoff flows into the grassy area, and an additional drain field that would lead into a drywell south of the building near the gas tanks to collect water from the bus traffic areas.

Gale Lim Construction could begin work between Thanksgiving and Christmas, completing it in approximately two weeks, during which buses would need to park elsewhere.

**It was moved by Josh Sorensen and seconded by Larin Mortimer to approve the quote from Gale Lim Construction for grading and drains for the district bus parking lots in the amount of \$109,051.50, as presented. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**e. General Fund Appropriation Employee Recognition Bonus**

Superintendent Kress explained that the district has a strong fund balance carryover from the previous year, and because they had previously committed to sharing leftover funds with employees, he is proposing a one-time Christmas bonus. Rather than adding the money to the permanent salary schedule, which is hard to sustain, he recommends a \$3,000 bonus per full FTE, prorated according to each employee’s actual FTE status. With about 260 total FTE, the bonus payout would cost roughly \$780,000, or about \$950,000–\$1 million once benefits (PERSI, Social Security, Medicare) are added. Employees hired before the start of the school year would receive the full prorated bonus; new hires brought in after the school year began would receive \$300 (classified) or \$500 (certified), provided they have worked at least 90 days. The district expects almost all teachers to be full FTE, while most classified staff work around 0.7 FTE. This would be the largest bonus the district has given, fulfilling commitments made during salary negotiations and reflecting that much of the carryover came from hiring fewer teachers than the district qualifies for. Remaining carryover funds, about \$800,000, would be reserved for district projects.

**It was moved by Josh Sorensen and seconded by Toni Ibarra to approve the appropriation of funds in amount of \$3,000 per employee FTE, as presented. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**f. Jr. High Emergency Closure October 22, 2025**

On October 22, an emergency closure of the Jr. High was called because the water and furnace were not working. A Certificate of Closure was sent to the state. No makeup days are needed at this time.

**It was moved by Larin Mortimer and seconded by Carol Hepworth to approve the Emergency Closure of the Jr. High on October 22, 2025 due to the water and furnace not working. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**6. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**a. Child Nutrition Report:** Rene Osman, Child Nutrition Director, reported that all nutrition programs are operating, though rising food and labor costs continue to strain the budget. The district’s free/reduced rate is 35.35%, a slight decrease of from last year. Participation has dipped slightly but remains generally steady. She explained how federal meal reimbursement works and noted that the program consistently operates in the red because revenues do not cover actual meal costs, especially with multiple kitchens and rising prices. Lunch prices were raised by 20 cents this year, but breaking even would require increases of \$1.50 or more, which would significantly reduce participation. Despite this, the district will continue subsidizing lunches to avoid burdening families. Mrs. Osman highlighted 100% staff retention, an increase in scratch-made meals, the launch of a Child Nutrition Facebook page, and upgrades to the district freezer. The district received the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant for Moreland, Riverside, and Rockford, allowing students to try new produce twice a week. Feedback from teachers and students has been positive. The department also obtained a \$1,200 KitchenAid mixer through a giveaway and secured hydroponic growing systems for the junior high and high school to support curriculum and potential use in meal preparation. Mrs. Osman thanked the board for its continued support.

b. **2026-2027 District Calendar:** Superintendent Kress reviewed feedback from teachers on three proposed calendar options for 2026–2027. All options begin the school year later than this year to avoid principals and new staff returning in late July or early August. Most calendars still allow the year to end shortly after Memorial Day, though one version ended before Memorial Day but shortened Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks. Teacher responses showed Calendars 1 and 2 were strongly favored, with Calendar 1 the clear top choice. Calendar 3, which started later and extended into June, received only about 10% support. Superintendent Kress noted minor errors in the draft calendars (e.g., misdated Memorial Day) that will be corrected. He also discussed community feedback about possibly shifting Spud Harvest later by a week, stating the district can adjust if farmers reach consensus. He emphasized the importance of avoiding two-day school weeks, as they lead to poor attendance, and noted that Calendar 1 best aligns with that goal. He reminded the board that teacher feedback is advisory only and that the board has full authority over the final calendar. He plans to refine Calendars 1 and 2 and send them back out for additional teacher review before bringing a final recommendation to the board.

c. **District Advocacy Plan:**

Superintendent Kress reviewed the district’s annual advocacy plan, prepared ahead of the legislative session. He emphasized the importance of presenting a unified message when speaking with legislators. The district’s top concern remains the shift from attendance-based funding to enrollment-based funding, noting that current policy penalizes schools financially when students are absent, even though absent students require more instructional support. The board also reviewed the existing advocacy priorities, which remain relevant:

1. Consistent and stable funding
2. Support for traditional public schools and charters, without diverting public funds to private or religious institutions
3. Increased funding for classified staff, who are significantly underfunded statewide
4. School safety needs that often go unfunded
5. Technology support
6. Continued support for the Idaho LAUNCH program

The board discussed possibly prioritizing the advocacy items and agreed to individually rank them before the December meeting. Members were encouraged to communicate regularly with legislators and add new ideas if needed.

d. **ISBA Annual Conference Report:** Superintendent Kress highlighted the value of the annual ISBA conference, noting that state reimbursable sessions allow board members to network with trustees and superintendents statewide, share challenges, and learn from others. Four of five board members attended, which was higher participation than many districts. Board members shared their experiences. Larin described the resolutions session as especially meaningful, praising the respectful debate among 600+ attendees and noting that it renewed his confidence in both the democratic process and public education governance. Carol emphasized the need for improved communication with the community, given the loss of the local newspaper and limits on board member social media use. The Board also discussed fiscal concerns presented at the conference, including the state’s \$79 million tax revenue shortfall. Although the governor expressed confidence that education would be protected, board members noted they should realistically expect a 3% holdback later in the year. Overall, the conference was viewed as beneficial and informative

e. **Superintendent Report**

1. **General Fund-Dedicated Facility Projects:** Superintendent Kress briefly discussed this throughout the meeting.
2. **I-Work Report:** Superintendent Kress reported that the district continues using the I-Work system to track classroom facility and technology requests. He noted that IT response times are slower because the department is short one staff member, impacting completion of work orders.
3. **School District Fall Activities Report:** Superintendent Kress reported that the Idaho Information Technology Services team, supported by the National Guard, completed a full security audit of all district technology. The district performed well, with only a few recommended improvements, including adding a \$1,000/year security device to monitor outside intrusion attempts and securing networked printers behind firewalls. Plans are also underway to strengthen data backups to prevent ransomware loss. He also highlighted fall student activities: the girls’ cross-country team placed second at state, the boys placed fifth, and girls’ soccer earned academic state champion honors. The high school play was described as outstanding, with strong student participation and community support, and Superintendent Kress praised the drama program as a major point of pride for the district.

f. **Upcoming Events**

1. **Thanksgiving Break will begin November 24<sup>th</sup> and students return December 1, 2025**
2. **School Christmas Program Schedule:** A schedule was given to each board member.

7. **POLICY READINGS**

**Second Readings:**

**Policy 4210F1-Facility Use and Rental Agreement:** The kitchen staff rates were increased this year and this policy needs to be updated. If renting the facilities and a kitchen cook needs to be used, a cook must be present. The fee needs to be increased from \$15 per hour up to \$23 per hour.

**Policy 5110-Criminal History/Background Checks:** These edits are for clarity and readability. At the last board meeting, the question about the time period of five days after starting employment or unsupervised contact with students, whichever is sooner, was brought up. The wording changes that are in the policy are following Idaho Code. In our district, we will not start employment with someone until the fingerprints have been done at least 3 days in advance unless there are extenuating circumstances.

**A motion was made by Josh Sorensen and seconded by Carol Hepworth to approve the first reading of Policy 4210F1-Facility Use and Rental Agreement and Policy 5110, Criminal History/Background Checks. All board members present voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.**

**First Readings: (Policy Updates ISBA)**

**Policy 2320-Health, Sex Education, and Human Sexuality:** ISBA suggested adding a line to this policy reiterating that instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity (along with other aspects of human sexuality, as defined in Idaho Code) is only permitted if it is age appropriate, developmentally appropriate, and in accordance with state standards. HB 352 requires school boards to have a policy stating that instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity that does not meet these requirements is prohibited. After ISBA received questions from members who had difficulty finding this policy language, we've added this new line for additional clarity. **This is a recommended update to a required policy.**  
**Policy 2395 and 2395 P, IDLA Classes and Procedure:** The High School counselors have submitted these changes for your review.

**Policy 2470 and 2470P, Self-Directed Learners Policy and Procedure:** This update is updated on the procedure for Snake River Online.

**Policy 7400, Miscellaneous Procurement Standards:** This update changes the maximum value of micro-purchases from \$3,000 to an amount of \$10,000 or less chosen by the board. This optional change was suggested by an attorney ISBA consults on policy and brings the general purchasing micro-purchase threshold into alignment with the threshold in the school meals purchasing policy, 7403. **This is an optional update to a required policy.**

**Policy 7403, Procurement of Goods and Services for School Meal Programs:** This update changes threshold amounts for different purchasing requirements, bringing them into alignment with State Department of Education guidance. In accordance with advice provided by the State Department of Education, we've also added cost-reimbursable contracts and line item bidding as acceptable contract types along with firm fixed price contracts. **This is an optional update to a required policy.**

**Policy 8100, Transportation:** The edits to this policy are based on HB 396. These changes allow non-public school students to ride other authorized vehicles in the same way that they can ride school buses if they meet the additional requirements for use of other authorized vehicles. These changes also extend the requirement to establish rules for emergency drills and student conduct to authorized vehicles as well as buses. It also extends to all drivers who transport students the requirement for training on the district or charter school disaster and emergency preparedness plan. The edits also include minor language clean-up, including changes of language to accommodate the newly permitted use of vehicles other than school buses, such as changing "bus stop" to "transportation stop." **This is a recommended update to a required policy.**

**Policy 8103, Vehicles other than School Buses to Transport Students:** This is a new policy based on HB 396. It outlines the groups of students who can be routinely transported to and from school in a vehicle other than a school bus and notes that such vehicles may be used for trips that are a part of the instructional program and for which a school bus can't be reasonably provided. It lists types of safety equipment these vehicles must carry; notes that the district, charter school, or contractor name must be clearly marked on the vehicle; and notes the requirements to inspect the vehicle and comply with restrictions provided by the manufacturer. **This is a new recommended policy.**

**Policy 8105, Extracurricular Transportation:** These edits are also based on HB 396. They expand discussion of school buses used to provide extracurricular transportation to include other vehicles used for this purpose. This includes noting that restrictions on lending buses to outside groups also apply to other vehicles. It similarly expands requirements related to passenger lists, requirements for students to be transported from school to the activity and back, and on supervision of activity trips. **This is a recommended update to a required policy.**

**Policy 8105P, Extracurricular Transportation, Discipline:** Based on HB 396, this update broadens the procedure's discussion of school rules to vehicle rules. It also includes some rephrasing for clarity and readability. **This is a recommended update to a required procedure.**

**Policy 8110, Safety Busing:** These edits are based on HB 396. They note that safety busing includes cases where the student is transported by a vehicle other than a bus. It also includes some minor cleanup for readability, including replacing a mention of an exhibit related to safety busing with a specific reference to a new form: 8110-F. **This is a recommended update to a required policy.**

**Policy 8110F, Safety Busing Measuring and Scoring Instrument:** This new form is a placeholder for the district or charter school's own scoring instrument, which the Standards for Idaho School Buses and Operations require districts and charter schools to have if they provide transportation to students directly or via a contracted transportation provider. The State Department of Education offers a model measuring instrument on their website. We added this item to help clarify which document was being referred to in Policy 8110. **This is a new required form.**

**Policy 8120, Bus Routes, Stops, and Non-Transportation Zones:** These are more edits based on HB 396. They change discussion of buses and busing to refer more generally to district or charter school-provided transportation. This includes applying requirements for bus stop siting to all transportation stops and applying bus safety rules and procedures to all district or charter school vehicles. Similarly, practices related to bus transportation in inclement weather are also applied to other types of transportation. As in 8110, this update also replaces a mention of an exhibit with a specific reference to Form 8110-F. A redundant reference to this form and its use in making bus stop siting decisions has also been removed. Finally, these edits note that safety busing includes cases where the student is transported by a vehicle other than a bus. It also includes some minor cleanup for readability, including replacing a mention of an exhibit related to safety busing with a specific reference to a new form: 8110-F. **This is a recommended update to a required policy.** (Continued)

(Continued)

A motion was made by Larin Mortimer and seconded by Toni Ibarra to approve the first reading of Policy 2320-Health, Sex Education, and Human Sexuality; Policy 2395 and 2395 P, IDLA Classes and Procedure; Policy 2470 and 2470P, Self-Directed Learners Policy and Procedure; Policy 7400, Miscellaneous Procurement Standards; Policy 7403, Procurement of Goods and Services for School Meal Programs; Policy 8100, Transportation; Policy 8103, Vehicles other than School Buses to Transport Students; Policy 8105, Extracurricular Transportation; Policy 8105P Extracurricular Transportation, Discipline; Policy 8110, Safety Busing; Policy 8110F: Safety Busing Measuring and Scoring Instrument; and Policy 8120, Bus Routes, Stops, and Non-Transportation Zones. All board members present voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

#### 8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Under Idaho Code 74-206 (1)(c) To acquire an interest in real property not owned by a public agency, Toni Ibarra moved and Josh Sorensen seconded to go into Executive Session. Roll call vote was taken: Josh Sorensen, aye; Toni Ibarra, aye; Carol Hepworth, aye; Larin Mortimer, aye; and Lon Harrington, aye. Motion passed 5-0.

The board went into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. Idaho Code 74-206 (1)(c) was discussed until 8:55 p.m.

At 8:55 p.m., the doors were opened and the board returned to Regular Session.

#### 9. ACTION ITEM

No action items were needed at this time.

A motion was made by Larin Mortimer and seconded by Toni Ibarra to table the action item at this time. All board members voted aye. Motion passed 5-0.

#### 10. CLOSING INFORMATION ITEMS

The next regular Board Meeting will be December 17, 2025 at Snake River Jr. High at 7:00 p.m.

#### 11. ADJOURN

Larin Mortimer moved and Toni Ibarra seconded to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

ATTEST:

---

Terisa Coombs  
Clerk

---

Lon Harrington  
Chairman

---

December 17, 2025  
Date