

Harrisburg School District  
Board of School Directors  
Special School Board Meeting

District Administration Building Board Room  
1010 N. 7th Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Minutes  
August 4, 2026

## **1. Opening of Meeting**

*Prior to calling the meeting to order, President Copeland welcomed all attendees and reiterated the importance of maintaining mutual respect among Board members, Administration, community members, students, and those participating virtually.*

### **1. A. Call to Order**

*Ms. Roslyn Copeland, Board President, called the meeting to order at 5:41 p.m.*

### **1. B. Pledge of Allegiance**

*Ms. Roslyn Copeland, Board President, led the Pledge of Allegiance.*

### **1. C. Roll Call**

*Board Secretary, Ms. Jatoya Drayton, called the roll:*

|                                            |                      |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Ms. Roslyn Copeland, President          | Present              |
| 2. Ms. Autumn Anderson, Vice-President     | Present              |
| 3. Mr. Brian Carter                        | Present at 5:44 p.m. |
| 4. Ms. Annie Hughes                        | Present              |
| 5. Ms. Jaime Johnsen                       | Present              |
| 6. Ms. Terricia Radcliff                   | Present              |
| 7. Ms. Danielle Robinson                   | Absent               |
| 8. Mr. Ellis Roy                           | Present via Zoom     |
| 9. Mr. Doug Thompson Leader                | Present              |
| 10. Dr. Lori Suski, Chief Recovery Officer | Present              |

*The Board Secretary confirmed that a quorum was present.*

## **2. Approval of Minutes and Agenda**

### **2. A. Approval of Minutes from June 30, 2026, Special School Board Meeting.**

*Ms. Roslyn Copeland, Board President*

*Motion to approve the minutes of the June 30, 2026, Special School Board Meeting.*

|                  |              |                     |               |                 |        |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------|
| <b>Moved By:</b> | Annie Hughes | <b>Seconded By:</b> | Jaime Johnsen |                 |        |
| Anderson         | Aye          | Hughes              | Aye           | Robinson        | Absent |
| Carter           | Aye          | Johnsen             | Aye           | Roy             | Aye    |
| Copeland         | Aye          | Radcliff            | Aye           | Thompson Leader | Aye    |
| <b>Yes:</b>      | 8            |                     |               |                 |        |
| <b>No:</b>       | 0            |                     |               |                 |        |
| <b>Absent:</b>   | 1            |                     |               |                 |        |
| <b>Abstain:</b>  | 0            |                     |               |                 |        |

*The motion carried.*

## **2. B. Approval of Agenda for August 4, 2026, Special School Board Meeting**

*Ms. Roslyn Copeland, Board President*

*Motion to approve the agenda for the August 4, 2026, Special School Board Meeting.*

|                  |              |                     |                      |                 |        |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------|
| <b>Moved By:</b> | Brian Carter | <b>Seconded By:</b> | Doug Thompson Leader |                 |        |
| Anderson         | Aye          | Hughes              | Aye                  | Robinson        | Absent |
| Carter           | Aye          | Johnsen             | Aye                  | Roy             | Aye    |
| Copeland         | Aye          | Radcliff            | Aye                  | Thompson Leader | Aye    |
| <b>Yes:</b>      | 8            |                     |                      |                 |        |
| <b>No:</b>       | 0            |                     |                      |                 |        |
| <b>Absent:</b>   | 1            |                     |                      |                 |        |
| <b>Abstain:</b>  | 0            |                     |                      |                 |        |

*The motion carried.*

## **3. Public Comment – Agenda Items Only**

*Ms. Roslyn Copeland, Board President*

*This public comment period is reserved for agenda items only. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes, and each commenter must register in advance.*

### **Guidelines for Public Comment**

*The Board President will follow Board Policy 903.*

*Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per participant registered with the Board Secretary in advance of the meeting. No participant may cede his/her time to another participant.*

*Comment registration slips are located on the table at the entrance of the Board Room.*

*The Board Secretary will acknowledge those participants who are registered to come forward to the podium to address the Board during the public comment period.*

**Melanie Cook – Harrisburg, PA**

*Ms. Cook recognized Dr. Marcia Stokes for her years of service to the Harrisburg School District. She praised Dr. Stokes' financial leadership, stating that she had been instrumental in maintaining the District's fiscal stability and commended her efforts to limit the tax burden on residents despite recommendations for higher tax increases. Ms. Cook expressed her appreciation for Dr. Stokes' service and wished her continued success in her future endeavors.*

*Ms. Cook also expressed concern regarding the Board's meeting practices, noting that the meeting had begun later than its scheduled start time. She encouraged the Board to model the same expectations of punctuality and preparedness that it expected of students. In addition, she observed that the special meeting had been scheduled on the same evening as National Night Out, creating a conflict for families and community members wishing to participate in both events. She encouraged the Board to consider scheduling future meetings in a manner that would avoid conflicts with major community activities.*

*Ms. Cook further addressed the ongoing William Penn High School demolition project, noting that she resided near the project site. She stated that she and other neighborhood residents had sought information regarding the demolition schedule, methodology, and environmental protections. Ms. Cook advised that community members had contacted the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regarding those concerns and noted that information related to the demolition project had subsequently been posted on the District's website. She encouraged the District to continue providing transparent communication with residents regarding the project and concluded her remarks by again extending her best wishes to Dr. Stokes.*

**Jen Dutson – Harrisburg, PA**

*Ms. Dutson addressed the Board regarding communication with residents surrounding the William Penn High School demolition project. She stated that she and other neighbors had received little advanced notice before demolition activities began and noted that they only became aware of the project approximately one week before work commenced. Ms. Dutson remarked that, unlike other infrastructure projects where nearby residents typically receive written notices or door-to-door communication, neighborhood residents had not received similar notification regarding the demolition.*

*Ms. Dutson explained that a representative from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Environmental Justice had visited the neighborhood to answer questions and distribute informational materials. However, she noted that many residents, including herself, had not received the information and were unaware of the demolition project or its potential impacts. She asked the District to consider improving communication with surrounding neighborhoods for future projects to ensure residents would be informed in advance.*

*Ms. Dutson also shared that she had contacted Dauphin County Commissioner Justin Douglas and State Representative Nate Davidson to seek guidance regarding the matter and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak.*

### **Rosie Waller – Harrisburg, PA**

*Ms. Waller addressed the Board regarding concerns about Special Education services provided to her three daughters, all of whom are students with Autism enrolled in the Harrisburg School District. She stated that she no longer believed her daughters were consistently safe at school or receiving the educational services to which they were entitled.*

*Ms. Waller described several incidents that she believed demonstrated ongoing concerns regarding student safety, bullying, and implementation of special education services. She alleged that her youngest daughter had experienced inappropriate interactions with a staff member and that communication following a separate incident involving her daughter's whereabouts had been inadequate. She further stated that her middle daughter had experienced repeated bullying that negatively affected her emotional well-being and academic performance despite changes in classroom placement. Ms. Waller also reported that her oldest daughter had been physically assaulted by other students and expressed concern that appropriate supervision and support had not been provided.*

*In addition, Ms. Waller expressed concerns that her daughters' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were not being fully implemented. She stated that certain services had been reduced or discontinued and advised that she had not signed one of her daughter's recent IEPs because she disagreed with the proposed placement and the removal of speech therapy services. Ms. Waller stated that she did not believe her concerns had been adequately addressed by the District.*

*Ms. Waller requested that the Board prioritize accountability and meaningful improvements within the District's special education program. She asked that all appropriate educational placement options be carefully considered to ensure her daughters receive a free and appropriate public education in a safe learning environment and highlighted that no parent should fear for their child's safety while attending school.*

### **Kendra Simpson, Harrisburg, PA**

*Ms. Simpson addressed the Board regarding concerns with the transition process for students moving from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school. She stated that families had not received sufficient assistance or information regarding appropriate accommodations and supports available during these transitions.*

*Ms. Simpson shared that she had requested the District consider hosting a Special Education open house that would provide students and their families with an opportunity to tour their new schools in a smaller, less stimulating environment before the start of the school year. She explained that such an event would allow students to become familiar with the building, meet teachers and staff, and reduce sensory overload associated with larger orientation events. Ms. Simpson noted that although the idea had reportedly been discussed, it had not yet been implemented and requested the Board's assistance in moving the initiative forward.*

*Additionally, Ms. Simpson proposed the creation of a District-wide Special Education parent advisory group where families from elementary through high school could meet to discuss questions, concerns, and recommendations. She stated that many parents felt their concerns were not always heard and that interactions with District staff sometimes felt adversarial rather than collaborative. Ms. Simpson encouraged the District to establish opportunities for more consistent communication and partnership with families of students receiving special education services.*

*Following public comment, President Copeland acknowledged the seriousness of the issues raised regarding special education services and student safety. Speaking both as Board President and as a parent, she highlighted that student safety remained one of her highest priorities and stated that the purpose of Board meetings was to provide members of the public with an opportunity to raise concerns so the Board could advocate appropriately and hold the District accountable.*

*President Copeland explained that while the Board does not oversee the District's day-to-day operations, Board members are elected to represent the community and ensure that concerns brought forward receive appropriate attention. She encouraged parents and community members to communicate directly with Board members and noted that Board members' email addresses are available on the Harrisburg School District website. She stated that the Board's role is not to assign blame but to ensure that concerns are addressed and that appropriate accountability exists.*

*President Copeland further commented on the importance of transparency and encouraged families to continue bringing concerns before the Board rather than allowing issues to go unreported. She assured the speakers that she would personally monitor the concerns raised and invited parents to copy her on future correspondence to help ensure appropriate follow-up. She concluded by reiterating the Board's commitment to advocating for students and maintaining accountability while recognizing that the Superintendent is responsible for overseeing the District's daily operations. President Copeland then invited other Board members to offer comments.*

*Mr. Carter asked the parents who had spoken during public comment to identify whom they had contacted within the District regarding their concerns. He also asked whether they had been provided with the appropriate chain of communication or protocol for reporting and resolving their concerns. Mr. Carter sought to determine whether the established process had been followed and whether families had received adequate guidance and support in addressing the issues they raised.*

*In response to Mr. Carter's question, Ms. Waller explained that her daughters attended Marshall Math Science Academy and would be transitioning to John Harris High School because they had not been accepted to Dauphin County Technical School. She stated that she and another parent had attempted to work collaboratively with District staff by organizing a meeting to discuss autism support services; however, she reported that no District representatives attended the meeting.*

*Ms. Waller further explained that she had communicated her concerns with her daughters' autism support teachers and with Mr. Ryan Jones, who served as principal of Marshall Math Science Academy at the time. Although Mr. Jones documented the concerns discussed during those meetings, Ms. Waller stated that she did not observe meaningful follow-up or resolution. She also indicated that she had met with staff at John Harris High School regarding her daughters' transition but remained concerned that insufficient information had been provided regarding available supports and accommodations.*

*Ms. Waller expressed continued concern about her daughters' transition to the high school, citing both the District's existing safety challenges and her belief that additional planning and support were necessary for students with disabilities. She highlighted the importance of*

*ensuring that students with special needs receive appropriate accommodations and that parents have confidence their children will be safe and supported throughout the transition process.*

*President Copeland encouraged Ms. Waller to submit her concerns in writing by email, explaining that written communication creates a documented record that can be tracked and followed through. She stated that maintaining an email trail helps ensure accountability, facilitates follow-up, and provides a clear record of the concerns raised and the actions taken to address them.*

*Ms. Simpson added that both she and Ms. Waller had disagreed with their children's Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and, as a result, had not signed the proposed IEPs. She stated that the IEPs had therefore not been finalized and expressed concern that the situation remained unresolved despite their efforts to address the matter before the start of the upcoming school year. Ms. Simpson reported that neither family had received follow-up communication from the District and stated that they remained uncertain about how their children's educational services and placements would proceed.*

*Dr. Henry acknowledged the concerns raised by Ms. Waller and Ms. Simpson and assured them that Ms. Krystal Palmer, Chief of Student Services, would contact both families to review their concerns and work toward resolving the outstanding issues related to their children's special education services and transition plans. He stated that the Administration would follow up directly with each family to seek an appropriate resolution.*

#### **4. New Business**

**4. A. IMMEDIATE ACTION ITEM:** A motion to accept the resignation of Dr. Marcia Stokes, effective as of the close of business on September 14, 2026, as an immediate action item.

*Ms. Anderson expressed her appreciation to Dr. Marcia Stokes for her years of service to the Harrisburg School District. She commended Dr. Stokes for her leadership in strengthening the District's financial position and stated that she had been an invaluable resource to the Board throughout the budget development process. Ms. Anderson noted that Dr. Stokes consistently provided detailed financial information and guidance that helped Board members better understand the District's budget and fiscal planning. She also recognized Dr. Stokes' commitment to maintaining a responsible financial plan while advocating for the lowest possible tax impact on District residents. Ms. Anderson concluded by thanking Dr. Stokes for her service and wishing her continued success in her new role.*

*President Copeland expressed her appreciation for Dr. Marcia Stokes' service to the Harrisburg School District, noting that although Dr. Stokes was not in attendance, the Board wished to publicly recognize her contributions. President Copeland stated that Dr. Stokes had played a significant role in strengthening the District's financial position, particularly through the development and implementation of its comprehensive financial plan following the District's exit from receivership. She also highlighted the District's recent improvement in its bond rating, noting that the District had advanced from an A- rating to an A rating, which she credited in part to Dr. Stokes' financial leadership and commitment to accountability.*

*President Copeland further explained that the special meeting had been convened following receipt of Dr. Stokes' letter of resignation. She noted that, under applicable legal requirements, the Board was required to hold a public meeting to address the resignation in a timely manner.*

*President Copeland acknowledged that the scheduling of the special meeting coincided with National Night Out but explained that the meeting was necessary to comply with statutory requirements and ensure transparency for the community. She concluded by thanking Dr. Stokes for her dedicated service to the District and wishing her continued success in her future endeavors.*

|                  |                         |                     |                    |                    |        |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| <b>Moved By:</b> | Doug Thompson<br>Leader | <b>Seconded By:</b> | Autumn<br>Anderson |                    |        |
| Anderson         | Aye                     | Hughes              | Aye                | Robinson           | Absent |
| Carter           | Aye                     | Johnsen             | Aye                | Roy                | Aye    |
| Copeland         | Aye                     | Radcliff            | Aye                | Thompson<br>Leader | Aye    |
| <b>Yes:</b>      | 8                       |                     |                    |                    |        |
| <b>No:</b>       | 0                       |                     |                    |                    |        |
| <b>Absent:</b>   | 1                       |                     |                    |                    |        |
| <b>Abstain:</b>  | 0                       |                     |                    |                    |        |

*The motion carried.*

## **5. Public Comment – Non-Agenda Items - None**

*Ms. Roslyn Copeland, Board President*

This public comment period is reserved for general comments not related to Board agenda items. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes, and each commenter must register in advance.

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## **6. Adjourn Meeting**

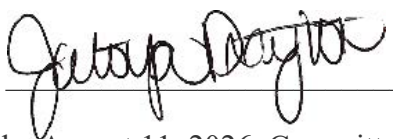
### **6. A. Motion to adjourn the meeting to the Board Retreat.**

*The meeting was adjourned to the Board Retreat at 6:09 p.m.*

|                  |                    |                     |              |                 |        |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------|
| <b>Moved By:</b> | Autumn<br>Anderson | <b>Seconded By:</b> | Annie Hughes |                 |        |
| Anderson         | Aye                | Hughes              | Aye          | Robinson        | Absent |
| Carter           | Aye                | Johnsen             | Aye          | Roy             | Aye    |
| Copeland         | Aye                | Radcliff            | Aye          | Thompson Leader | Aye    |
| <b>Yes:</b>      | 8                  |                     |              |                 |        |

|                 |   |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| <b>No:</b>      | 0 |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Absent:</b>  | 1 |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Abstain:</b> | 0 |  |  |  |  |

*The motion carried.*

Submitted by 

Approved at the August 11, 2026, Committee of the Whole Board Meeting:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ms. Roslyn Copeland, President