DRAFT MINUTES

STERLING BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
October 21, 2026 • Community Room • 6:00 p.m.
"EXCELLENCE WITH KINDNESS"

I. Call to Order

- **Meeting called to order by:** Courtney Langlois (Board Chair) at 6:00 p.m.

- **Board Members Present**: Jennifer Mossner (Vice Chair); Victoria Robinson-Lewis (Treasurer); John Brady (Vice Treasurer); Catherine Malo (Board Member); Benjamin Johnston (Board Member)

- **Administration/Staff Present:** Theodore Friend (Superintendent); Heather Nickerson (Principal); Laura Smith (Clinical Supervisor); Kristen Lanzillo (Director of Student Services/School Psychologist); Sara Howley (Business Manager); Christine Chandler (Board Clerk)

II. Pledge of Allegiance

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. Public Comment

- No one had comments

IV. Reports and Communications

A. **Correspondence**

- EASTCONN Board of Directors invitation
- Thank you note from Leatrice Shippee

B. **Consent Agenda**

1. Minutes of Special Meeting September 16, 2026
2. Minutes of Meeting September 16, 2026
3. Superintendent's Report
4. Special Education Director's Report
5. Principal's Report
6. Clinical Supervisor's Report
7. Monthly Check Register

- *Discussion:* The Board Chair, C. Langlois, requested the removal of the Monthly Check Register from future agendas and Board of Education packets. The Board reached a consensus to remove it. Because this adjustment involves board policy, the matter will be referred to the Policy Committee and brought to a vote at the next scheduled Board meeting.

- A motion was made byV. Robinson-Lewis and seconded by J. Mossner to approve the Consent Agenda as presented..
    - Vote: All in favor.
    - Motion: Passed.

C. **Budget and Expense Report**

S. Howley reviewed the financial and budget reports. She provided an update on the funds awarded to the school by the Beagary Trust Foundation during the 2013–2014 school year, noting that a balance of $43,000 remains in the account. Following communications with the head of the Beagary Trust Foundation, the school has been authorized to spend these remaining funds. The head of the Foundation will meet with school administration regarding the potential award of additional funds in 2027.

- A motion was made by C. Malo and seconded by J. Brady to approve the Agenda as presented.
    - Vote: All in favor
    - Motion: Passed

D. **Plainfield Board of Education Liaison**

It was noted that the Sterling Board liaison was unable to attend the Plainfield Board of Education meeting on October 14, 2026.

E**.** **Personnel - Resignation/Retirement/New Hire**

Paraeducator - Terminated - did not complete 90 days.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Update on Culligan installation of 2 water filtration units in the kitchen and 4 water bottle/drinking stations.

T. Friend reported that payment has been issued for the installation of two kitchen water filtration units and four water bottle filling/drinking stations. Culligan will coordinate directly with Facilities Director Kevin to schedule the installation.

VI. New Business

A. Presentation of the Academic Assessment Scores by Heather Nickerson, Principal.

The Principal, H. Nickerson, delivered a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the student Academic Assessment Scores. The presentation utilized graphs and charts to illustrate performance and data trends across grade levels.

B. Review, discussion, and possible approval of an **Immutable Backup Solution**.
We are requesting $5,899.07 to purchase a new backup server for the school. Our current backup solution, while still working, does not support a feature which we feel is vital towards securing our data from ransomware. The backup server will provide us with the capability of storing **Immutable Backups**, which prevents anyone from deleting data before it reaches the specified retention period. Modern ransomware not only targets your devices, but also targets any available backup target(s) and/or connected drives, including flash drives or portable hard drives. This will provide us with assurance in the event of a ransomware attack, that our data cannot be tampered with or destroyed.

Option 1: $5,899.07 - one time cost
Option 2: $7,441.34

- A motion was made by V. Robinson-Lewis and seconded by B. Johnston to accept Option 1: $5899.07 for an **Immutable Backup Solution**.
  - Vote: All in favor
  - Motion: Passed

C. Review, discussion, and possible approval of **E-mail Security**.
There has been a significant uptick in the number of malicious e-mails sent to Staff & Faculty in the district in the past couple of years. While we have been extremely proactive with MFA (Multi-Factor Authentication) and implementing other safeguards for e-mail protection, we are reaching a point where we are receiving reports of several malicious emails reaching the mailboxes of our Staff & Faculty per week. In the past 3 years, we have had two instances of an account compromise, though one of these was prevented due to us using MFA. These solutions provide additional security and detections, above and beyond what our current email provider (Google) can filter, and prevent these messages from landing in our users inbox entirely. We are recommending ProofPoint, as it has the best pricing and is widely adopted in the Edu/Gov sector.

Sophos: $10,835.43
KnowBe4: $6,061.61
ProofPoint: $4,858.77 - Annual Cost/Town of Sterling is responsible for a portion of the cost.

- A motion was made by C. Malo and seconded by J. Mossner to approve the ProofPoint: $4858.77 **E-mail Security**.
    - Vote: All in favor
    - Motion: Passed

VII. Review, discussion, and possible appointment of a representative and an alternate to the EASTCONN Board of Directors.

The Board decided to table the appointment of a representative and an alternate to the EASTCONN Board of Directors pending additional information regarding meeting times and specific service expectations.

VIII. <u>Committee Updates</u>

A. Policy - Meeting on November 5, 2026
B. Budget - to be discussed during the December Board of Education Meeting
C. Negotiations - Meeting with the UPSEU Representative after January 1, 2027

IX. <u>Recommendations, Questions and/or Comments</u>

- C. Chandler presented the draft Tri-Board Meeting Schedule included in the Board packet. She confirmed she will notify Ashley at Town Hall that the schedule is acceptable to the Board.

- C. Langlois shared updates from her participation in regional board chair meetings alongside local superintendents. The collaborative group focuses on state-level advocacy and shared-service opportunities for small, rural towns. The group is currently drafting support letters to state legislators and the Blue Ribbon Commission on funding ahead of the Commission's December report to the Governor. Key advocacy priorities include:

    - Increasing the education cost-sharing base with adjustments for inflation.
    - Maintaining "hold harmless" town funding protections.
    - Utilizing a 3-to-5-year average enrollment trend for funding calculations.
    - Re-evaluating the current state wealth index metrics.

C. Langlois will distribute the information to board members who wish to send individual letters of support to state representatives and the Governor.

X. Public Comment

Principal H. Nickerson shared that the school's NAEYC-accredited program recently received a surprise evaluation visit. The subsequent decision report indicated that the program achieved a 100% pass rate across all required compliance areas and scored 92% on classroom performance indicators.

XI. Executive Session

An executive session was not required.

XII. Adjournment

- A motion was made by V. Robinson-Lewis and seconded by C. Malo to adjourn the meeting.
    - Vote: All in favor
    - Motion: Passed
    - Meeting adjourned: 7:17 p.m.