

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

December 18, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

Cambridge Agriculture Complex Conference Room*

The location of the Regular Board of Education meeting has been changed from Cambridge Elementary School to the Cambridge Agriculture Complex Conference Room.

300 South West Street

Cambridge, Illinois 61238

The Cambridge Community Unit School District #227 Board of Education met for a regularly scheduled meeting on December 18, 2025. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited. President Edmund called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a roll call attendance.

- **Members Present:** Lance Edmund, Chad Humphrey, Dianne Jeffries, Culley Medley, Jared Brewer, and Becky Blackert
- **Members Absent:** Carrie Boelens
- **Also Present:** Jenna Bibb, Superintendent; Bob Reagan, Jr./Sr. High School Principal; Heather Pine, Elementary Principal; Susan Sullivan, Recording Secretary; and members of the public.

Public Hearing: Truth in Taxation

Mr. Edmund called the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing to order.

- **Members Present:** Lance Edmund, Chad Humphrey, Dianne Jeffries, Culley Medley, Jared Brewer, and Becky Blackert, Carrie Boelens
- **Members Absent:** None

Mrs. Bibb presented a 2025 Tax Levy presentation, including historical EAV and tax rate information, the tax rates of surrounding districts, and an overview of the proposed 2025 Tax Levy. The proposed levy centered on an estimated 2.498% increase in Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) for Henry County, totaling approximately \$80,483,720. To maximize the district's financial position, the levy was ballooned to achieve a maximum estimated tax rate of 5.2677. Key components of the plan include a 22.76% increase in the Tort Fund levy to align with the updated Risk Management Plan, the reinstatement of levies for IMRF and Social Security to stabilize fund balances, and continued funding for required Health Life Safety projects. The proposed strategy involves shifting eligible expenses from the Education Fund to the Tort levy to alleviate the projected shortfall in the Education Fund. She also explained the process that the Board of Education had completed over the last several months, planning for flat funding from the state and federal governments and preparing for a shortfall, particularly in the Education and Transportation Funds due to rising costs and decreased funding in mandated categorical reimbursements.

The Board was presented with written testimony from two community members opposing the tax increase. In response to a suggestion to make cuts before raising taxes, Mrs. Bibb shared several examples of operational cost savings methods, such as changing providers for fire monitoring, security, and phone service, transitioning the bus fleet away from leases due to higher interest rates, and not replacing staff who have resigned. In response to a question about the tax rate increase due to the agriculture complex bond, Board members and Mrs. Bibb shared that the bond tax rate has stayed stable due to strategically staggered bonds. Board members also asked for examples of possible cost savings measures from the Education Fund and for Mrs. Bibb to explain the process of a Reduction in Force.

Truth in Taxation Public Participation:

During Public Participation, several community members asked questions and expressed their opinions regarding the potential tax increase. One community member praised Cambridge Schools and expressed the value of small public schools with small classes, and encouraged the Board to pass the tax increase. Several community members expressed concern about the number of people and businesses in Cambridge that would be affected by a tax increase and the potential ramifications of such an increase. There were questions about consolidation, the future of the schools, and whether a tax increase would benefit Cambridge schools or just maintain current programming. Two citizens who are staff members expressed support for the staff, concern about potential cuts, and did not want to lose the local school.

One citizen also encouraged everyone to contact their legislators about fully funding mandated categoricals, such as special education and transportation.

After public participation, Mr. Edmund thanked the citizens for their comments and closed the public hearing.

Consent Agenda:

A motion was made by Mr. Brewer, seconded by Mrs. Boelens, to approve the consent agenda.

Items approved under the consent agenda were:

- Minutes of the November 17, 2025 regular meeting.
- The bills through December 18, 2025.
- Revolving Fund through November 2025.
- Treasurer's Report for November 2025.
- Grade School Activity Report and the Junior/Senior High School Activity Report for November.
- FOIA Report.

A roll call vote was held. Aye: Humphrey, Boelens, Jeffries, Medley, Brewer, Blackert, Edmund. Nay: None. Motion carried.

Public Participation:

There were no public comments.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Bibb shared a brief report from the Henry-Stark Governing Board meeting that she attended as Mrs. Boelens' proxy. The Board approved the annual audit and received an update on Wings Academy.

Mrs. Bibb, Mrs. Pine, and Mrs. Blackert shared information about valuable sessions at the Joint Annual Conference, including sessions on strategic planning, facilities, finance, and school improvement. Mrs. Bibb represented Cambridge on a panel about the District Office Transformation project, and Mrs. Blackert represented Cambridge at the delegate assembly. The Board discussed suggesting a Zoom option for the conference as a way to save costs.

Administrative Reports:

Mrs. Pine, Elementary Principal, shared the following report for Cambridge Elementary:

- **Shop with a Cop:** On December 5th, 11 students were taken to Kewanee for the Shop with a Cop event. Appreciation was expressed to the Henry County Sheriff's Department for their continued partnership in making this program possible.
- **Caring Hearts:** The 2025 Caring Hearts program concluded last Wednesday, serving 18 families and a total of 40 students. Recognition was given to the Cambridge and Osco churches, community members who took tags, Farm and Fleet for toy donations, and Gary Snitchler for his coordination efforts.
- **Holiday Shop:** The Cambridge Parents Club hosted a Holiday Shop where students were able to purchase gifts for family members for \$2.00 each.
- **Christmas Programs:** Successful Christmas concerts were held, with special thanks given to Mrs. Higgs for her hard work on these programs.
- **BizTown:** Fifth-grade students traveled to BizTown in Moline on December 12th. This simulated town provided a learning experience for students to manage businesses, operate banks, and make connections to real-world applications.
- **Veterans Assembly:** The High School FFA organization visited the elementary school last Friday for a Veterans assembly as part of the "Wreaths for Ag Warriors" event.
- **Cambridge Academic Foundation Gala:** Notice was given for the upcoming "Murder at the Mall: The Class Reunion" mystery play and gala scheduled for Saturday, February 28th at the Midland Golf Club. The event will include live and silent auctions and a 50/50 raffle.

Mr. Reagan, Jr/Sr High Principal, shared the following report:

- **Student Recognition:** Congratulations were extended to the four Illinois State Scholars: Jolene Blakert, Emily Doubet, Emily Downing, and Addie Jewett. Additionally, Courtney Thomas (High School) and Garren Boelens (Junior High) were recognized as Students of the Quarter.
- **Staff Appreciation:** A special thanks was given to the school cooks for providing healthy food options and a fantastic Thanksgiving Dinner.
- **Classroom Highlights:** Mrs. Humphrey's math students practiced solving equations outdoors in the snow. In science, Mrs. Bennett's 8th-grade students built balloon cars to study physics.
- **Community and Mental Health:** The SALT organization sponsored a "Finals Fun Week" with various themed dress-up days. They also created a snowflake display in the runway featuring things students are thankful for. The "Gray Matters" mental health night held during a home basketball game was successful in raising funds for future programming. Furthermore, the "Miles for Minds" 5K event had over 100 participants.
- **Music and Arts:** Choir students from the elementary, junior high, and high school levels performed carols at "Christmas on the Square," and the annual Christmas Concerts were noted as a success.
- **FFA Activities and Achievements:**
 - The FFA hosted the "Wreaths for Warriors" assembly and a well-attended "Christmas Connections" event where participants created centerpieces and ornaments.
 - Six junior members attended the Illinois FFA BUILD Conference to focus on leadership development.
 - Students competed in the Section 3 Vet Science CDE, finishing as the 3rd place team. Mason Palmer placed 6th overall.
 - At the Section 3/Hog Capital Horse Evaluation, the team placed 2nd overall in "Reasons". Individual honors included Mason Palmer (2nd) and Courtney Thomas (5th).
 - In the "Questions" category, the Greenhand team placed 3rd overall, with Monica Harrel placing 3rd and Lloyd Martens placing 5th. The Varsity team placed 4th overall, with Max Baum placing 7th.
- **Athletics:** Mr. Spivey was congratulated for being featured in the IESA "Athletic Director Spotlight".

Mrs. Bibb, Superintendent, shared the following:

- **Meetings Attended:** She reported on her attendance at several regional meetings, including the ROE Superintendents' Meeting and the Henry-Stark Executive Board Meeting. She provided an update on the proposed ISBE accountability model and shared insights from the Prairie State Insurance Cooperative Mid-Year Meeting regarding risk minimization.
- **School Maintenance Project Grant (SMPG):** Planning is being finalized for this year's SMPG. She shared plans to write the grant to replace the football bleachers. 50% of the expense would come from the SMPG. The district's portion of the funding would be covered by School Facility Sales Tax proceeds from Fund 60.
- **Personnel and Professional Development:** The ROE has offered the AIM coordinator position to Brandy Swanson, with a start date following Christmas Break. The Joint Instructional Leadership Teams also met to review the 2025-2026 Professional Development Plan.
- **District Leadership and Facilities:** Sub-committees have been formed to finalize action steps for the District Leadership Team (DLT) plan. An initial site visit for a second-opinion Facility Review is scheduled for December 30th.
- **Bond Compliance:** Mrs. Bibb completed the annual Post-Issuance Compliance Report, confirming the District's compliance with all bond covenants and tax-exempt status requirements.
- **Financial Update:** At 42% of the way through the fiscal year, most funds are within expected spending limits. The Transportation fund is currently at 65.3% due to bus leases and purchases paid at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Correspondence:

Mr. Edmund announced the following letters of resignation:

- Mitch Elder – Assistant Track Coach.
- Ashton Schmoll – Title Paraprofessional.
- Toni Litton – Volleyball Coach.
- Staci Sipp – Freshman Volleyball Coach.

Unfinished Business:

Hearing no questions about the PRESS Policy Review: Issue 119, a motion was made by Mrs. Boelens, seconded by Mrs. Jeffries, to approve the second reading of the enclosed policies. Motion carried 7-0.

Mrs. Bibb shared highlights from the updated Risk Management Plan, including expanded personnel allocations and updating language to improve legal defensibility. Additionally, the plan formalizes the use of the Tort Fund for specific non-salary expenditures. A motion was made by Mr. Medley, seconded by Mrs. Blackert to accept the Risk Management Plan as presented. A roll call vote was held: Aye: Boelens, Jeffries, Medley, Brewer, Blackert, Edmund, Humphrey. Nay: None. Motion carried.

After a discussion about the three different levy options and reviewing public feedback, Board members elected to vote on the proposed tax levy while acknowledging the need to look at ways to reduce expenses. Mr. Edmund asked for a motion to approve the 2025 tax levy of \$4,080,821 plus bond and interest. Mrs. Jeffries made that motion. Mrs. Boelens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held: Aye: Jeffries, Medley, Brewer, Blackert, Edmund, Humphrey, Boelens. Nay: None. Motion carried.

New Business:

Mrs. Bibb shared audited fund balances as required by statute. In the three operating funds, the ratio of cash reserves to expenditures is 0.428 years, below the required 2.5 years. No action taken.

A motion was made by Mr. Humphrey, seconded by Medley to approve a resolution (i) transferring \$104,600.00 from the school facility occupation tax fund (Fund 60) to the bond and interest fund (Fund 30) and (ii) abating the taxes heretofore levied for the year 2025 to pay debt service on the General Obligation School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2017A. A roll call vote was held: Aye: Medley, Brewer, Blackert, Edmund, Humphrey, Boelens, Jeffries. Nay: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mrs. Boelens, seconded by Mr. Edmund, to approve the employments listed:

- Maddie Stevens – Substitute Custodian
- Ryan Hansen – Volunteer High School Boys Basketball Coach
- Aaron Carlson – Transfer to Volunteer High School Baseball Coach

A roll call vote was held: Aye: Brewer, Blackert, Edmund, Humphrey, Boelens, Jeffries, Medley. Nay: None. Motion carried.

Executive Session

At 9:01 pm, a motion was made by Mr. Medley, seconded by Mrs. Boelens, to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or student discipline. A roll call vote was held: Aye: Brewer, Blackert, Edmund, Humphrey, Boelens, Jeffries, Medley. Nay: None. Motion carried.

At 9:47 pm, a motion was made by Mr. Brewer, seconded by Mr. Medley, to exit executive session. A roll call vote was held: Aye: Blackert, Edmund, Humphrey, Boelens, Jeffries, Medley, Brewer. Nay: None. Motion carried.

At 9:48 pm, Mrs. Boelens made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Edmund seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-0.

President

Secretary