

**The Hickman N.E.S.T.
MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING OF THE N.E.S.T.**

August General Meeting

Aug 17, 2026

A meeting of the Board of Directors (the “**Board**”) of The Hickman N.E.S.T., a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, was held on August 17, 2026, via ZOOM. This open August General Meeting included the Executive Board, Committee Leads, Hickman Principal, Teacher Liaisons, and welcomed community members.

Executive Board Members Present:

Amy Dichoso, President
Dominique Fite, VP Fundraising
Isabel Taku, VP Communications
Patty Kotnik, Treasurer
Stefanie Kairs, Secretary

Committee Leads Present:

Zena Hovda, STEAM
Claire Gorsuch, Science
Liesel Labios, Garden Club
Gary Toney, Hickman Hollows
Kristin Costas, Scholastic Book Fair

Also Present:

Jena Beane, Principal
Marilyn Tilos Thatcher, Teacher Liaison
Michaela Grocott, Teacher Liaison
Amy Thorne, Treasurer Elect
Rebecca Monson, Communications: Social Media
Community members¹

Executive Board Members Absent:

Pascale Susi, VP Volunteers
Scott Eisold, VP Volunteers

Call to Order

Amy Dichoso called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM, and Stefanie Kairs recorded the minutes. A quorum of five directors was present. Committee Leads, the school Principal, and Teacher Liaisons were also in attendance. The meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.

¹ See Appendix A for screen shots of the Zoom attendance capturing community members present but not named in these minutes.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the July 31, 2026 meeting of the Board, Principal, and ESA were presented by Stefanie Kairs for review and approval. Upon motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously adopted, the minutes were approved as presented.

President Report

Amy Dichoso reviewed the agenda² and welcomed everyone to the meeting and the school year. She noted that turnout for the start of school events was historically high with a lot of community enthusiasm and the Board hopes to carry that engagement into the school year. Attendees were directed to the volunteer interest forms on the NEST website to sign up for upcoming committees and events.

The President also shared that the Hickman Hallows committee spent a day converting the top storage boxes to fire-code compliant boxes in advance of the routine fire marshall inspection. The new boxes offer a compliant and visually consistent solution that will be easy for the marshall to evaluate. The agenda captures the relevant fire code information dictating placement of items near the ceiling and fire suppression systems for any who are interested in further information. The old bins are available for other committees to use. On-going storage clear out and organization projects need volunteer support to clear out expired food and other excess items.

Principal Report

Principal Jena Beane provided an update on the opening weeks of the school year, noting a positive transition into classroom routines for both students and teachers.

The Principal reported on the following administrative and campus items:

- **Air Quality and Local Fire Monitoring:** Following district guidelines regarding the recent Sorrento Valley brush fires, campus conditions remained clear. Student outdoor activities proceeded as normal on Monday under close monitoring by staff and the physical education department to ensure safety regarding regional air quality. The school was not threatened or directly impacted by the fires.
- **PrimeTime After-School Program Growth:** The PrimeTime after-school program has experienced significant growth, tripling its capacity to approximately 245 enrolled students under universal access guidelines. The Principal is collaborating daily with the new Site Lead, Ms Katy, and the regional manager to streamline background logistics, staffing, and shared classroom rotation schedules. This coordination ensures that classrooms utilized after hours remain fully prepared for morning instruction.
- **Parent Communication Cadence:** The bi-weekly school newsletter will maintain its established frequency but has shifted its distribution time from noon to 6:00 PM on alternating Sundays to optimize parent readership. The newsletter will continue to

² [W 2026-08-17_Open Board Meeting_Agenda.docx](#)

aggregate updates across campus departments, including counseling, wellness, the Leader in Me initiative, and NEST announcements.

Teacher Liaison(s) Report

Teacher Liaisons Marilyn Tilos Thatcher and Michaela Grocott provided feedback regarding the recent Sniffle Drive fundraiser. On behalf of the classroom teachers, they expressed sincere appreciation for the community's generosity and the volume of supplies collected.

To improve future supply drives, the liaisons requested the NEST provide explicit instructions to the teaching staff via the liaisons regarding the tracking and tallying process before the drive begins. Because classroom teachers naturally organize and store incoming donations immediately, early clarification is needed on whether teachers or NEST volunteers are responsible for logging items. The teachers also suggested establishing a standardized system for donor labeling before the first day of school to ensure proper raffle attribution and donor acknowledgment, preventing items from becoming separated from their donor forms during the high-volume drop-off period.

Secretary Report

Stefanie Kairs addressed several housekeeping items for record keeping including recording two votes taken previously outside of traditional meetings and moving for a formal vote to record the changed strategy for the fun run vendor.

The Secretary reported that committee budgets had been sent via email prior to the meeting and any committee lead who mistakenly did not receive their budget or who has questions about their budget grant should reach out to the President and Treasurer and copy the Secretary account.

She also shared an update from School Clerk Jaimie Kolbeck confirming that existing district volunteer clearance paperwork will be rolled over from the previous school year where applicable, potentially exempting returning volunteers from some steps when applying for this year.

Recording of Prior Votes

- **SuperPledge Classroom Incentives** (Approved August 4, 2026): President Amy Dichoso moved to establish performance incentives for the top three fundraising classrooms during the SuperPledge campaign, structured as follows: 1st Place (\$300 teacher fund & pizza party), 2nd Place (\$200 teacher fund & ice cream party), and 3rd Place (\$100 teacher fund & popcorn party). The motion was seconded and unanimously approved. A quorum was achieved with four directors participating.
- **Specialized Staff Grant Eligibility** (Approved August 5, 2026): President Amy Dichoso moved to expand the teacher grant eligibility pool to include the school speech pathologist and school psychologist, authorizing individual grants of \$150 each. The

motion was seconded and unanimously approved. A quorum was achieved with four directors participating.

Housekeeping: Updating Fun Run Decision

The Secretary expressed appreciation to the Board members who conducted extensive market research and logistical coordination to secure a viable school-wide fun run fundraiser. This housekeeping measure is to align the official records with the Board's updated decision after additional information had been submitted and reviewed.

Stefanie Kairs moved to rescind the electronic prior approval granted on July 17, 2026, which selected APEX as the vendor. Stefanie Kairs further moved to approve Booster as the authorized 2026–2027 Fun Run vendor and to establish the official event date as March 3, 2027.

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Super Pledge Duration

The Board discussed the timeline and closing date for the upcoming SuperPledge fundraising drive. Executive Board members and a community member discussed logistical constraints, school award booking deadlines, promotional timelines, and overlapping campus fundraisers. There was also a question and brief discussion about how voting works pursuant to corporate bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order.

To resolve the date, the Board utilized a fill-in-the-blanks voting procedure for four proposed closing dates: November 15, October 30, September 30, and September 15.

Stefanie Kairs moved to determine the SuperPledge campaign closing date via a fill-in-the-blanks vote. The motion was seconded and approved.

The voting proceeded in chronological order of the proposed dates:

- November 15 closing date: Received 2 votes. The option failed to achieve the required majority of directors present.
- October 30 closing date: Received 4 votes. The option achieved the required majority of directors present.

Following the fill-in-the-blanks selection, Stefanie Kairs moved to formally set the closing date of the SuperPledge campaign as October 30, 2026. The motion was seconded and approved by a majority of the directors present.

Treasurer Report

Patty Kotnik provided an update on the NEST's expenses, noting that there were only a few transactions processed in August. She also celebrated the First Company Sponsorship Donation of the year, which is \$500 from Davis Orthodontics.

August Expenditures:

- Educational software expenses paid:
 - \$10,482 for Achieve 3000 license
 - \$5,000 for LIM annual membership
 - \$355 Starfall
- Pending expenses:
 - Razz Kids & Benchmark Phonics ~\$5,500
- Reimbursements for following hospitality events:
 - \$187 for TK/K playdate
 - \$907 for teacher move-in breakfast
 - \$287 for Boo Hoo/Yahoo breakfast

VP Fundraising Update

Dominique Fite presented the financial targets, promotional strategies, and upcoming event calendar for the 2026–2027 academic year.

Annual Fundraising Targets & Campaigns

- **Organizational Revenue Goal:** The global fundraising target for the school year is established at \$100,000.00. This includes a specific \$30,000.00 target for the upcoming SuperPledge campaign, which is scheduled to initiate on Monday, August 24, 2026.
- **Fun Run Vendor Transition:** Following the Board's decision to contract with Booster as the new fitness fundraiser vendor, Dominique noted that the vendor has provided a baseline financial match commitment equivalent to the prior year's net revenue of approximately \$47,000.00. Campus volunteer coordination will be adjusted to accommodate shifts in on-campus vendor personnel layout during the event.
- **Corporate Grants Initiative:** A supplemental corporate grants program has been initiated to secure independent funding from regional corporate community foundations (e.g., Vons). Revenue generated through these grants will sit outside the core \$100,000.00 target to offset any potential campaign variances or fund auxiliary projects.

Community Partnerships & Corporate Sponsorships

- **Banner Partnerships:** The campus banner partnership program has been restructured into standardized giving tiers ranging from \$50.00 to \$500.00+, expanding eligibility to family dedications and digital website recognition.
- **Pipeline Commitments:** In addition to the received payment from Davis Orthodontics, Kumon has issued a financial commitment of \$500.00, bringing total booked banner partnership revenue to \$1,000.00. All partnership tiers ensure 100% of proceeds directly benefit Hickman Elementary.

Upcoming Fundraisers and Calendar Events

The VP of Fundraising and VP of Communications reviewed the promotional timelines, digital distribution flows, and marketing collateral schedules for the upcoming events. Dominique will release a comprehensive fundraising calendar to families on Friday. The immediate schedule includes:

- **Tasty Tuesday** (Dine-Out Fundraiser): Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at The Kebab Shop (all-day event, yielding a 25% return to the organization). Future dine-out fundraisers will be centralized on Tuesdays, with potential expansion to a bi-weekly cadence.
- **Family Night Out**: Friday, August 28, 2026, at Chuck E. Cheese from 3:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- **Electronic Waste (E-Waste) Recycling Drive**: Sunday, August 30, 2026, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM on the school campus.

VP Volunteers Update

Co-VPs of Volunteers Pascale Susi and Scott Eisold were absent. In their stead, the President requested and received confirmation that the digital volunteer interest forms are fully active on the website. To lower barriers to entry and capture maximum parent engagement, the interest forms include a flexible "general interest" registration option, allowing community members to volunteer for upcoming school initiatives without being restricted to a specific committee assignment.

COMMITTEE LEADS

5TH GRADE COMMITTEE

The Board reviewed the autumn event schedule and structural funding updates for the 5th Grade Committee:

- **September Program Alignment**: The committee will host the "Bingo, Baskets, and Books" community event in September, running concurrently with the Scholastic Book Fair. This event updates and replaces the historical Friday movie night program to foster active, off-screen family engagement. The event features free community bingo gameplay, a silent auction featuring curated gift baskets, open book fair shopping hours, and food concessions available for purchase.
- **Double Good Popcorn Fundraiser**: The annual Double Good popcorn fundraising campaign is scheduled to launch on September 28, 2026, with proceeds directly supporting 5th-grade promotional events.
- **5th Grade Legacy Program Initiative**: To resolve year-over-year funding volatility and reduce the single-year fundraising burden on incoming families, the organization has established the "5th Grade Legacy Program." Under this new framework, the organization guarantees a baseline starting balance of \$5,000.00³ in the 5th-grade

³ Please see Unfinished & New Business section for a record correction on the legacy program.

account at the start of each academic year. If carryover funds from the graduating class fall short of this amount, the NEST will issue a stabilizing grant to bridge the variance up to the \$5,000.00 cap.

Garden Club Committee

Committee Lead Liezel Labios provided a comprehensive update on strategic growth plans, grant funding, and community partnerships for the 2026–2027 school year:

- **Expanded Student Garden Access:** The committee has established a goal to provide monthly garden instruction for every classroom across all grade levels. This expands upon the historical format, which restricted garden access to 3rd through 5th-grade students during recess due to playground proximity.
- **Classroom Garden Parent Program:** To ensure campus safety and logistical order during high-volume classroom garden sessions (20 to 30+ students), the committee will heavily recruit "Classroom Garden Parents" to actively assist teachers with outdoor instruction and behavioral monitoring. Promotional flyers and digital announcements will be distributed to families shortly.
- **Teacher Support Initiative:** To incentivize and equip teachers for outdoor instruction, the committee distributed instructional welcome packages on Friday, August 14, 2026. The packages included specialized garden aprons, utility gloves, and signaling whistles to facilitate student coordination in an outdoor classroom environment.
- **Grant Revenue & Consulting Partnerships:** The committee successfully secured \$5,750.00 in grant funding from the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation and the Master Gardeners Association of San Diego County. The Master Gardeners of San Diego County will also serve as corporate school garden consultants, providing model lessons and direct, intermittent classroom instructional support throughout the academic year.

Upcoming Calendar Dates:

- **Campus Beautification Day:** Scheduled for Saturday, September 12, 2026.
- **Sprouts Award Ceremony:** Scheduled for Saturday, September 19, 2026, at 9:00 AM at the Mira Mesa Sprouts storefront. The store manager will present the award and offer a photo-op to commemorate the grant partnership. All campus families and staff are encouraged to attend wearing school spirit shirts for a the group photograph.

Hickman Hallows Committee

Gary Toney provided an update on Hickman Hallows festival preparations, noting that the budget is set and supplies are being purchased for the October 24 event. The physical layout has been finalized to include the garden and playground playset.

Dominique Fite shared an idea from the recent Mira Mesa Cluster meeting regarding a potential joint event at a local park with other area elementary school PTAs/PTOs. A joint park event would bypass current school-site restrictions on food trucks and bounce houses. However,

because current preparations are already heavily underway, the committee determined it is too late to pivot for the upcoming October event. The committee agreed to revisit this collaboration next summer to plan for the following school year.

Scholastic Book Fair

Kristin Costas provided an update on the Fall Book Fair, which is scheduled for September 14 - 18, 2026:

- **Schedule:** Classrooms will have 30-minute visiting slots spread across two days. The fair will also be open before and after school, and during Family Fun Night on Friday, September 18.
- **Logistics:** Delivery windows are set with Scholastic, and the co-leads are coordinating with the front office. Promotional materials will be distributed via ClassDojo in coordination with the Communications Committee.
- **Clearance Level:** The event has been designated as a **Category C** volunteering event. This requires volunteers to pass a background check, complete a TB test, and watch a new mandatory training video.
- **Recruitment Strategy:** The committee will continue last year's practice of asking teachers to recruit volunteers directly from their own classrooms, as parents respond better to personal requests.
- **Administrative Support:** To ease the burden on teachers, the Book Fair committee will handle the communication regarding clearance steps and verify volunteer eligibility directly so teachers do not have to vet candidates.

Additional information regarding volunteers

Principal Beane reported that the School Clerk Jaimie Kolbeck maintains the authority on volunteer clearances and is creating a live, updated roster for committee chair verification.

To ensure accessibility, the NEST will create a volunteer information page that mirrors or links to the official school requirements, with committee leads and the Board coordinating with administration to determine specific clearance levels for events.

For more details, visit the Hickman Welcome Packet Volunteer's page⁴ or San Diego Unified School District volunteer information page.

STEAM

Zena Havda reported that the STEAM budget has been officially approved. The committee aims to establish a promotional presence at the upcoming Back to School Night to recruit new parent volunteers. Interested volunteers can sign up via email or through the NEST volunteer form. Plans are underway for a membership kickoff meeting in the coming weeks following Back to

⁴ https://sites.google.com/sandi.net/hickmanwelcomepacket2026-27/volunteer-info/Volunteer-Info_2

School Night. Proposed initiatives for the school year include community outreach events, community hikes, and fundraising activities.

Unfinished / New Business

Review of Historic Action Items and Tabling of Legacy Funding

The Secretary reported on an administrative audit of the minutes from the preceding two Board sessions to identify outstanding agenda items, pending discussions, and unassigned historical action items requiring future Board attention. In the interest of time, the Old Business items for this meeting were tabled for a future meeting. The compiled legacy items will be systematically reintroduced to upcoming meeting agendas to track completion.

The Secretary also provided a clarification regarding the 5th Grade Legacy Program framework introduced during the committee reports. While the concept of the 5th-grade "nest egg" initiative was formally established at a prior meeting, the precise funding mechanisms, baseline parameters, and financial allocation amounts were explicitly tabled for future consideration. Because a formal vote was not scheduled for this session, the determination of the final funding amounts will be added to a forthcoming meeting agenda for formal Board evaluation and action.

New Business

The VPs of Communications and Fundraising discussed coordination for the countdown/kick off to the SuperPledge drive including the social media campaign, parent letter and thermometer progress posters.

Dominique Fite requested that Amy Dichoso's fundraising and spending diagram get added to the website.

Amy Dichoso read through the calendar of upcoming events, noting that Back To School Night has been postponed to Sep 3, 2026 . The NEST plans to provide a vendor or venue for parent volunteers to do their fingerprinting at Back to School Night, to make that requirement more accessible and hopefully increase volunteer recruitment. Volunteers who need to complete fingerprinting and plan to work the book fair should do so before Back to School Night as the turn around time on district clearance is unclear.

Open Forum

Kristin Costas suggested providing printed copies of all required volunteer forms at Back to School Night to capture immediate parent interest.

Principal Beane confirmed that only the official SDUSD mandated reporter training satisfies the volunteer clearance requirement. External certifications or similar trainings completed for other organizations cannot be substituted.

Rebecca Monson noted that the digitally distributed school welcome packet went out on the third day of school rather than the first. Principal Beane clarified that the delay was unintentional, the target remains the first day of school, and administration is investigating the bottleneck for future communications.

Liezel Labios inquired about the approval timeline for Class Dojo posts. The VP of Communications clarified that all event details and materials must be submitted before the end of the previous calendar month (e.g., September event information must be submitted by late August). This allows the Communications team to construct a monthly calendar, draft weekly and day-of reminders, and secure administrative approval prior to posting.

The Secretary and the VP of Communications agreed to co-develop the "Upcoming Events" agenda section for future meetings to ensure administrative notes and promotional calendars are fully aligned.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stefanie Kairs, Recording Secretary

Appendix A

Public Attendance Log

Screenshots documenting Zoom attendance for general audience members.
(Screenshots captured at 6:02 PM and 7:13 PM)



