

NEW JERSEY STATE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

1161 Route 130 North

Robbinsville, NJ 08691

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 15, 2025

Roll Call - The meeting of the Executive Committee, held on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at the NJSIAA Administration Building in Robbinsville, New Jersey, was called to order by the President, Judy Finch Johnson, at 11:02 am.

The following members were present: Assemblyman Al Abdelaziz, Jeff Baldino, Michael Baldwin, Sr., Mike Bartram, Brian Bosworth, Jeremy Braverman, Christopher Chiera, Jason Corley, Maria Crowley, Dr. Robert Fisicaro, Barry Fitzgerald, John Fraraccio, Michael Gallo, John Germano, Dr. Kimberly Gruccio, Dr. Brack Healy, Steven Jenkins, Jennifer Killough-Herrera, Greg Lasher, Brendan McGovern, Dr. Anne Mucci, Russell Petrocelli, Dr. Timothy Purnell, Michael Raimondi, Steve Shohfi, Dr. Gregory Troxell, Joseph Ursino, Dennis Vinson, Tripp Welborne, Cynthia Wilks, and Sjoquelyn Winstead. Also present: Colleen Maguire, Executive Director; Paul Popadiuk, Chief Compliance Officer; Tony Maselli, Chief Operating Officer; Al Stumpf, Derryk Sellers and Sandy Mamary, Assistant Directors; Steven P. Goodell, Esq., NJSIAA Counsel. The following sportswriters were in attendance: Jake Aferiat, *NJ Advance Media*; Darren Cooper, *NorthJersey.com*; and Mike McGarry, *Press of Atlantic City*. Also present: Josh Mehl, Freehold Twp Athletic Director, Mark Toscano, Esq., representing Freehold Twp School District. In addition, Alicia Scelso, Principal, and Michael Mendes, District Athletic Supervisor, were present on behalf of the school district.

Approval of Minutes - A motion was made by Dr. Gregory Troxell, seconded by Russell Petrocelli, to accept the minutes of the September 17, 2025 Executive Committee meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Update (Paul Anzano) - A listing of bills related to high school athletics being considered by the legislature was distributed. Mr. Anzano was unable to attend today's meeting, so Ms. Finch-Johnson gave his report. The legislature has not met since June but there is nothing imminent affecting high school sports at the current time.

Executive Director Update – Colleen Maguire

Audited Financial Statements/Form 990 – Mercadien CPA Presentation– Roll Call Vote – Kyle Neeld, Partner and RJ Carletti, Manager from Mercadien, P.C. reviewed the June 30, 2025 year-ending audit results with both the Finance Committee and the Executive Committee. Special thanks were given to Michele Perez, Accounting Manager, for another seamless audit. The association received an unmodified opinion and there were no material adjustments necessary or issues as a result of the audit. Form 990 is a public document so all executive committee members from 2024-2025 will be listed in it. A motion was made by Brian Bosworth, seconded by Michael Raimondi, to approve the FYE 2025 financial audit statements and Form 990. A roll call vote was taken. Final Vote: Yes-28; No-0; Abstain-0. Motion carried unanimously.

NJ Youth Sports Conference – The Prudential Center – Wednesday, November 5 – The NJ Devils Foundation is hosting a NJ Youth Sports Conference on 11/5 at the Prudential Center. Six professional sports teams are participating along with NJSIAA. It is open to all HS administrators and coaches.

Football Updates – Week 7 is complete. Hand, foot and mouth disease ran rampant through several teams, but Ms. Maguire commended the affected schools for working together to make sure all the games were played. Ms. Maguire then thanked Executive Committee member, Jason Corley, for serving

on the Non-Public Football Seeding Committee. The public tournament will be seeded on Sunday, 10/26, then a week later the non-public tournament on 11/2. Four championship games will be played at MetLife on 11/28, with the remaining finals played at Rutgers on 11/30. If there's a team that makes the finals, but has a Thanksgiving Day game, their game is scheduled for Wednesday, 12/3 at Rutgers.

Program Review

Twelve members of the Program Review committee met virtually on Friday, 10/10, and unanimously endorsed the following three proposals.

Swimming – Use of Backstroke Ledges – One Reading – Voice Vote – Since the NFHS approved the use of backstroke ledges (BSL) in high school swimming, Ms. Mamary spoke with league officers and swim coaches, who all agreed to endorse its use. It aims to enhance swimmer safety, fairness, and performance consistency in high school competitions. Backstroke starts are among the most injury-prone aspects of competitive swimming, and ledges provide a stable platform that reduces slip hazards, improves leverage, and minimizes the risk of shoulder and back injuries.

NJSIAA proposed a phased approach for the implementation, so schools have time to incorporate this apparatus in school budgets. Also, each lane must have the same ledge, made by the same manufacturer. This plan addresses both regular season and state tournament participation, gradually increasing accessibility while maintaining standardized procedures. This proposal will begin with the 2025-26 winter season. The full proposal is below:

2025–2026

Regular Season: Mutual agreement between schools is required to utilize backstroke ledges if the facility is equipped with them. The mutual agreement is all lanes or no lanes.

State Tournament: Backstroke ledges will be used at the Meet of Champions for both the prelims and finals. Individual swimmers may choose not to use them; however, that will not deny the other swimmers from using them. Backstroke ledges are not permitted at any other tournament round except for the Meet of Champions.

2026–2027

Regular Season: No mutual agreement between schools is required to utilize backstroke ledges if the facility is equipped with them. Individuals and or the team may choose not to use them; however, that will not deny the other school from using them.

State Tournament: Backstroke ledges will be used at the Meet of Champions for both the prelims and finals. Individual swimmers may choose not to use them; however, that will not deny the other swimmers from using them. Backstroke ledges will be used at the team sectionals, semifinals, and finals. Individuals and/or the team may choose not to use them; however, that will not deny the other school from using them.

2027–2028

Regular Season: No mutual agreement between schools is required to utilize backstroke ledges if the facility is equipped with them. Individuals and/or the team may choose not to use them, however that will not deny the other school from using them.

State Tournament: Backstroke ledges will be used at the Meet of Champions for both the prelims and finals. Individual swimmers may choose not to use them, however that will not deny the other swimmers from using them. Backstroke ledges will be used at the team sectionals, semifinals, and finals. Individuals and/or the team may choose not to use them; however, that will not deny the other school from using them. Backstroke ledges may be utilized at all preliminary rounds. Individual schools may choose not to use them; however, that will not deny the other school from using them.

Important Notes

- The facility must provide and agree to utilize the ledges.
- All facilities may choose which type of BSL to use provided they are from the same manufacturer.
- All BSL must be used as the manufacture intended and must not be altered in any way.
- Under no circumstances may a school provide and use their own backstroke ledges.
- Each school must have a clear procedure established for inserting and removing the ledges from the pool. This is not the facilities responsibility.
- Pools must maintain a 6-foot water depth, measured from the starting end wall to at least 16 feet-5 inches (5 meters) from that wall to be eligible for backstroke ledges.

A motion was made by Steve Jenkins, seconded by Maria Crowley, to approve the phased implementation of backstroke ledges (BSL) in both regular season and state tournament participation, beginning with the 2025-26 winter season. Motion carried unanimously.

Tournament Criteria and Procedures – One Reading – Voice Vote – As a safety measure, each sport has a maximum limit of games that can be played but county tournaments are not included in that maximum count. Since some counties don't host a tournament, those schools are given permission to participate in one additional tournament that will not count towards the maximum number of games. The problem is there is no uniform standard for what constitutes a tournament under NJSIAA's maximum game limit rule so this lack of clarity can create inconsistencies in scheduling and enforcement. By setting eligibility requirements, minimum and maximum tournament sizes, and limits on the number of games, the NJSIAA can prevent the misapplication of the maximum game limit rule while still allowing schools to benefit from the competitive opportunities that tournaments provide.

The following framework was proposed to protect the integrity of competition, maintain fairness across member schools, and provide a clear framework for how tournaments fit within the maximum game limit rule. It is important to note that this is a working proposal and that Mr. Maselli expects continual additions to the section titled "Current NJSIAA Approved County/Conference/League-Equivalent Tournaments" as more tournaments are screened and meet the criteria listed below. The critical component of this new proposal is that the minimum number of schools participating in a tournament is at least eight schools.

NJSIAA Tournament Criteria & Procedures

Tournament Criteria

1. Eligibility: Only NJSIAA member schools may participate.
2. Minimum Size: At least 8 schools, with teams playing no more than 3 games.
3. Maximum Size: Up to 32 schools, with teams playing no more than 5 games.
4. Brackets & Scores:
 - Tournament brackets must be published on NJ.com.
 - All game results must be entered on NJ.com after each game.
5. Event Organizer: Must be run by a county, conference, or NJSIAA-approved affiliated organization (such as a NJ coaches association).
 - Third-party event organizers are not eligible.

Tournament Procedures

1. County/Conference/League Tournaments
 - If your county, conference, or league runs a tournament that all schools can participate in, you must participate unless you are formally released from the tournament.
 - County/Conference/League tournaments do not count toward the maximum number of games limit.
 - If you are released and you choose to enter another tournament, only NJSIAA approved tournaments will not count towards the maximum game limit.

2. Qualifying Tournaments

- NJSIAA approved tournaments that require qualification to enter, and you do not qualify, you may enter another tournament.
- If you choose to enter another tournament, only NJSIAA approved tournaments will not count towards the maximum game limit.

3. Invitational Tournaments

- Only NJSIAA approved tournaments will not count towards the maximum game limit.

4. Participation in multiple approved tournaments

- In the event you have participated in two or more NJSIAA approved tournaments, you must declare only one as a non-counting tournament by the cutoff date for that particular sport.

Current NJSIAA Approved County/Conference/League-Equivalent Tournaments

1. South Jersey Soccer Coaches Cup – B/G Soccer
2. South Jersey Tournament of Champions – Field Hockey
3. South Jersey Invitational Basketball Tournament – G Basketball
4. Joe Hartmann Diamond Classic – Baseball

Discussion took place. A motion was made by Joseph Ursino, seconded by Steven Jenkins, to approve the proposed tournament criteria for an event to be excluded from a sport's maximum game limit rule. This proposal will begin with the 2025-26 winter season. Motion carried unanimously.

Girls Flag Football Pilot Program – One Reading – Voice Vote – In December 2023, the NJSIAA Executive Committee unanimously approved a two-year pilot program for the sport of girls flag football. During the two-year pilot program, all five football leagues and conferences organized interscholastic competition with approximately 4,200 girls competing during the 2024-2025 school year. NJSIAA staff has received positive feedback from its leagues and conferences and consensus support to submit a proposal to the Advisory Committee in December 2025 to adopt girls flag football as a sanctioned sport, which cannot be approved until May at the annual meeting. Therefore, in the interim, Ms. Maguire proposed that NJSIAA extend the pilot program for one additional school year.

Ms. Maguire and Executive Committee member/Football Rules Interpreter, Mike Bartram, worked all summer talking to other states who have sanctioned flag football years to create NJ's rules for flag football, which mirrors the association's tackle football rules. The final product was presented to the leagues and conference officers last month. During this one-year extension of the pilot program, all schools will adhere to the following requirements:

- Student-athletes will meet all NJSIAA eligibility requirements.
- Interscholastic competition across every league and conference will be played in accordance with NFHS rules and specific state adoptions listed below.
- NFHS rules require four 12-minute quarters with a 1-minute intermission between quarters.
- Schools will be required to submit complete schedules and timely game results to NJ.com via njschoolsports.com – power points will be maintained during the season.
- Disqualifications will be submitted to NJSIAA staff – leagues and conferences will be expected to adhere to NJSIAA disqualification rules for participation in league or conference tournaments.
- Schools will be required to adhere to the NJSIAA Sportsmanship Policy and Spectator Code of Conduct Policy.
- Student-athletes who choose to wear leggings/sweatpants will be required to have shorts and/or skirts worn over the leggings/sweatpants.

The only rule that will not apply this year will be the uniform rule. Schools will have one more year before they need to follow the official NFHS uniform rules. Schools will continue to have the autonomy to adopt

their own strenuous sports participation policy. However, if a school allows a student-athlete to participate in two (2) strenuous sports during the spring season, then the school must notify the student-athlete and family in writing that this will no longer be allowable if the proposal to adopt girls flag football is approved at the May 2026 Annual Meeting.

Summary of State Adoptions:

NFHS Rule 1 Section 7 identifies certain rules that may be subject to state adoption. Below is a list of the rules that schools will be required to adhere to during the 2025 - 2026 school year and moving forward.

Field Dimension - NFHS field diagram #1 - (goal lines/sidelines must follow field diagram)

Number of Game Officials

1. Regular season – minimum of 3 officials – maximum of 4 officials
2. State tournament – 4 officials

Establish Overtime Procedures

- Coin toss is held before overtime – visiting team calls the toss
- Winner of the coin toss chooses: Offense or defense first, or Which end the overtime is played
- First overtime period: Each team gets one possession consisting of a series of 4 downs (unless a new series is awarded by rule) starting on the 20-yard line
- Second overtime period: Each team will be allowed to run one play from the 3-yard line or 10-yard line. (1 point from the 3-yard line and 2 points from the 10-yard line)
- During the regular season, a maximum of 3 overtime periods will be played.
- During the state tournament, the second overtime period procedure will continue until a winner is declared
- The order of offense and defense flips with each overtime period
- Each team gets 1 timeout per overtime period (non-cumulative)
- During each overtime period, when the defensive teams secures possession, the ball is dead, and the possession is over

Establish a Running Clock Rule - Once the score differential reaches 19 points or more in the 2nd half, the clock will stop only for a score, time out, penalty or injury – normal timing will not resume.

Establish a Suspended/Interrupted Game Rule - Games interrupted/suspended due to reasons beyond anyone's control (i.e., electrical storms, torrential rains, etc.) shall be continued at the site of the interrupted game unless otherwise agreed upon by the competing schools.

Leagues and conferences shall have established guidelines on how to resolve suspended games if the competing schools do not agree. For non-league and conference games, NJSIAA will follow the same Suspended Football Games guidelines found in the NJSIAA Guidelines, Policies and Procedures – see p. 46.

Length of Halftime - 5 minutes *

**May increase to a maximum of 10 minutes upon mutual agreement of both schools prior to the start of the game and upon communication to all officials prior to the start of the game.*

Lastly, upon adoption, all schools will be required to adhere to NFHS rules around uniforms, including the use of flags which are subject to state adoption (see below), during the 2026-2027 season.

Determine the Style and Measurements of Flags

- One-piece quick release belt
- 3 flags – 1 on each side and 1 in the center of the back

- Must be 1 ½" wide by 14" long
- Must be solid color that is contrasting to the player's shorts
- Must be solid color that is contrasting to the opponent's flags
- Excess flag belt must be tucked into the shorts and must not be visible

Mr. Braverman asked if NJSIAA must be cc'ed on letters to families about playing two strenuous sports in the spring. Answer is no. Also asked was if flag football players must adhere to the six-day practice rule? Answer is yes. A motion was made by John Fraraccio, seconded by Tripp Welborne, to extend the pilot program for flag football for one additional school year, but with the guidelines outlined in today's meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Chief Compliance Officer Update (Paul Popadiuk)

Transfers Update – No update.

Eligibility Updates – No update.

Disqualification Updates – Mr. Popadiuk ran a disqualification report and found that numbers are up significantly from last year. There were 191 total disqualifications to date. 60% (114 total) are from boys soccer and 37% (61 total) are from football. The rest took place in girls soccer and field hockey. Eight teams are currently ineligible for the state tournament (3 football; 5 soccer). Another disheartening trend is the increase in coach disqualifications.

Bylaws – Host Families Clarification – First Reading – Voice Vote – In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of student-athletes living with host families, playing for club athletic teams and enrolling in our public schools to play NJSIAA sports. NJSIAA has received numerous complaints regarding the competitive advantage that these schools have when enrolling students whose parents may be living in other parts of the state or country. Additionally, there have been safety concerns regarding the lack of oversight of these host families. In an effort to ensure a level playing field, mitigate recruitment and ensure the safety of our student-athletes, Mr. Popadiuk proposed adding the following clause to Bylaws Article V, Section 1:

CL 2: Students who are residing with a host family while their parents/guardians are domiciled elsewhere in the United States are not eligible for interscholastic competition at NJSIAA member schools unless the host family has obtained full, court appointed guardianship.

The proposal is consistent with the practices of other state organizations in NFHS Section 1 and clarifies, in writing, NJSIAA's current practice. A motion to add a second clause to the NJSIAA Bylaws Article V, Section 1, that states "Students who are residing with a host family while their parents/guardians are domiciled elsewhere in the United States are not eligible for interscholastic competition at NJSIAA member schools unless the host family has obtained full, court appointed guardianship." was made by Steve Shohfi, seconded by Russell Petrocelli. Motion passed first reading unanimously.

Chief Operating Officer Update (Tony Maselli)

Fall State Tournament Entries – Schools were notified that tournament entry forms have officially been closed. Now it's time for seeding. The start of fall tournaments is right around the corner.

Sports Medical Advisory Committee Meeting – The committee met last week and focused on two agenda items. The first topic of discussion was who can stop a game during play when there's a suspected concussion. The second main conversation focused on NJSIAA's heat acclimatization policy. What happens if practices are cancelled due to the heat policy – how does that affect the six practices rule before a first scrimmage/game can be played. Mr. Maselli is available to explain what to do in that scenario if anyone wants further details.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct Procedure – Mr. Maselli has encouraged officials to fill out a form detailing unsportsmanlike behavior as a way of tracking behavior. This is the last step before issuing an official disqualification. Most of the forms received were detailing poor fan behavior. If NJSIAA receives one of these reports, the school is contacted. Examples received: officials being threatened in parking lots, fans thrown out, etc. Mr. Maselli has asked soccer officials to control the sidelines, which is probably part of the uptick of disqualifications in boys soccer. He expects things to be ugly for a few years, but expects this policy being in place will help decrease the unsportsmanlike behavior in the long term.

Al Stumpf Assistant Director Update

Soccer and Cross Country Update – Seeding for the soccer tournament takes place on 10/29. For cross country, MileSplit will stay open until 10/25, and the tournament will begin with sectionals on 11/1.

NJ Basketball Coaches Association Clinic – 154 coaches attended the NJBCA clinic at Fort Monmouth. The coaches were treated to distinguished speakers including both Rutgers' men's and women's basketball coaches, and retired Auburn basketball coach Bruce Pearl.

Derryk Sellers Assistant Director Update

Gymnastics, Girls Volleyball and Soccer Update – Seeding for all tournaments is soon.

NJSCA Clinics – At the Bowling Coaches Clinic on 10/8 at Howell Lanes, 126 new bowling balls were given out. Mr. Sellers also hosted the Fencing Coaches Clinic at Bernards HS on 10/11 and will hold the Golf Coaches Clinic on 10/17 at the Galloping Hills Golf Course.

Sandy Mamary Assistant Director Update

Girls Tennis and Field Hockey Updates – The tennis tournament is well underway. The semifinals take place tomorrow, 10/16 with the finals being played two days later on 10/18. This past weekend's rounds were played at Princeton University's indoor facility and it was beautiful.

Power points for the field hockey tournament close on 10/26. Seeding will take place on 10/28.

NJPSA Workshop Series – The following four workshops have been scheduled. The first one is in-person; the rest will be virtual. An alert was sent to schools with all dates. Signup links for individual workshops will be sent separately.

1. October 29, 2025: Enforcing Expectations around Sportsmanship for Spectators, Parents, Athletes, and Staff (in-Person at the NJSIAA building)
 2. November 11, 2025: Athletics and Human Resources: Elevating Professionalism in Athletics (discussing job description of AD)
 3. December 17, 2025: Connecting the Dots: Moving the Athletic Program from an Island to a Team Approach
 4. January 14, 2026: Athletics and School Finance
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Finance Committee Update – Judy Finch-Johnson

Approval of Monthly Checks – The September 16, 2025 through October 13, 2025 checkbook was approved by the finance committee and all checks were approved per policy before they were disbursed. Russell Petrocelli made a motion, seconded by Brian Bosworth, to approve the September 16, 2025 through October 13, 2025 check registers. Motion carried unanimously.

Report of Counsel (Steven P. Goodell) – No report.

Old Business / New Business – none

State Tournament Disqualification Appeal – Freehold Township HS – Boys Soccer – Over the course of the fall 2025 season, the Freehold Township High School boys soccer team accumulated three disqualifications. Under the NJSIAA three disqualification rule, any team that accumulates three or more disqualifications is ineligible for the state tournament. Freehold Regional High School District appealed the team's disqualification and requested a waiver of the disqualification rule.

The Executive Committee received a 35-page submission from Freehold Township, which included a certification and exhibits. Mark Toscano, Esquire, represented Freehold Township High School at the hearing. First NJSIAA Chief Compliance Officer Paul Popadiuk read the disqualification reports. Then Mr. Toscano presented his oral argument on behalf of Freehold Township HS. Last Executive Committee members asked questions of both Mr. Toscano and Ms. Maguire. The hearing was transcribed by a certified shorthand reporter.

After reviewing the evidence, hearing oral argument, deliberating in closed session, the committee returned to open session for a vote. Russell Petrocelli made a motion, seconded by John Fraraccio, to deny Freehold Regional High School District request for a waiver of the disqualification rule. A roll call vote was taken. Final Vote: Yes-30; No-0; Abstain-1. Motion carried.

Adjournment - There being no further business, a motion was made by Barry Fitzgerald, seconded by Brendan McGovern to adjourn the meeting at 12:50 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Maguire
Executive Director

CEM: In