

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2026
ISD 197 District Office, Mendota Heights, MN

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, October 12, 2026 beginning at 6:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by current School Board Chair Larsen at 6:00 p.m. The following School Board members were present: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz. School Board student representatives Aubrey McMahon and Clara Rebhan were present. Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog was present.

Also present for the meeting were: Peter Mau, Assistant Superintendent; Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Sara Lein, Director of Special Programs; Brian Schultz, Director of Finance; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources, Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education; Mark Fortman, Director of Operations.

Agenda

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Aune to approve the agenda as presented.

*Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz
Nay: none*

The motion carried (7-0).

Consent Agenda

It was moved by Ms. Walz and seconded by Mr. Vaupel to approve the consent agenda items as presented:

- Approval of the September 28, 2026 School Board Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Administrative Review of Policy 421: Gifts to Employees
- Approval of August 2026 Accounts Payable Report
- Approval of August 2026 Treasurer's Report
- Approval of September 2026 Wire Transfers Report
- Approval of TRHS Key Club Field Trip
- Approval of Gifts to the District

*Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz
Nay: none*

The motion carried (7-0).

Student Representatives' Report

Student representatives Clara Rebhan and Aubrey McMahon shared updates highlighting student activities, community engagement, and school events throughout the district. Elementary schools celebrated fall festivals, fundraisers, family activities, and outdoor learning opportunities, while middle school students participated in cultural exchanges, environmental education, and school spirit events. At Two Rivers High School, students celebrated Homecoming, participated in the Warrior 5K, and demonstrated leadership through Future Warrior Day and community service activities. The representatives also highlighted athletic accomplishments, academic

recognition, and student involvement in charitable initiatives.

Recognitions

The School Board recognized the Heritage E-STEM Mariachi Band, led by Cristela Koski, for sharing their musical talents at school and community events. Two Rivers High School students Adam Hauth and Grant Jedlicka were recognized as National Merit Semifinalists, and Archer Jedlicka was recognized as a National Merit Commended Student. The Board also honored retired district employee Stacie O'Leary, recipient of the National School-Based Health Alliance's G.R.I.T. Award, for her leadership in establishing Warrior Care at Two Rivers High School. Additionally, Tim Johnson and Brenda Myran were recognized for their work supporting programming for adults age 55 and older at Thompson Park Activity Center.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog highlighted a positive start to the school year, including Homecoming celebrations, Future Warrior Day, and the Warrior 5K and Family Mile benefiting the ISD 197 Education Foundation. He recognized the 2026 Warrior Hall of Fame inductees: Phil Haig, Ann Kennedy, Joe Stinziani, and Avery Vogen, for their accomplishments in athletics and contributions beyond high school. The Superintendent also acknowledged Hispanic Heritage Month and Indigenous Peoples Day, emphasizing the district's commitment to celebrating diverse cultures and honoring the Dakota people's historical and ongoing connection to the land. He concluded by recognizing district principals for their leadership and dedication during National Principals Month.

Site Report: Early Learning Center

Laurie Hume, Assistant Director of Early Learning, presented an update highlighting the Early Learning Center's commitment to providing high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences. Points of pride included expanded nature-based learning opportunities, a reorganization of Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) to strengthen family outreach, and partnerships with community organizations. Looking ahead, the Early Learning Center is piloting three curricula, including Frog Street, Creative Curriculum for Preschool, and TeachTown, and will welcome three Early Learning Reading Corps tutors. Staff, including paraprofessionals, will also participate in Ready for Rigor equity training to support inclusive learning environments.

Site Report: Branch Out

Rachel Johnston, Special Education Supervisor, presented an update on the Branch Out Transition Program, which supports students in developing independent living, employment, and self-advocacy skills. Highlights included the grant-funded Ambassadors for Respect initiative, an accessible outdoor classroom, and Career Climber Awards recognizing student accomplishments. The program is expanding community-based employment opportunities and partnerships, including an Adopt-a-Stop initiative with Metro Transit that provides volunteer experiences and transportation benefits. Future priorities include improving pedestrian and transit accessibility, expanding vocational training sites, and offering additional educational opportunities through community and postsecondary partnerships.

Presentation of Levy Update

Superintendent Olson-Skog presented an informational update regarding the proposed capital project levy appearing on the November 3, 2026, ballot. The presentation outlined the district's approximately \$2 million annual funding gap, more than \$3.2 million in budget reductions over the past two years, and the proposed levy, which would generate approximately \$4.6 million annually for 10 years beginning in the 2027-28 school year. Funds would support existing eligible expenses, including instructional materials, safety and security, building maintenance, utilities, and transportation, while helping rebuild the district's fund balance toward its 8% target. The presentation also addressed estimated property tax impacts, potential additional budget reductions of \$2 million to \$4 million if the levy is not approved, and the separate Permanent School Fund constitutional amendment appearing on the November ballot.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Ms. Steele to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

***Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz
Nay: none***

The motion carried (7-0).

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, October 26, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. It will be held in the School District 197 District Office Training Room, 1897 Delaware Avenue, Mendota Heights. *Please refer to the district website for possible changes to any meeting times/locations.*

Upon approval by the School Board, official minutes will be available at the District Office, 1897 Delaware Avenue, Mendota Heights, and on the district website. The full meeting materials are available for public inspection at the administrative offices of the school district and on the district website.

Sarah Larsen
School Board Chair

Jon Vaupel
School Board Clerk