

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, February 23, 2026
ISD 197 District Office, Mendota Heights, MN

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, February 23, 2026 beginning at 5:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by current Vice-Chair Vaupel at 5:00 p.m. The following School Board members were present: Tim Aune, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz. School Board members absent: Sarah Larsen, Morgan Steele. Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog was present. Student representatives Rhys Walsh and Evangeline Fuentes were 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; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education; Brian Schultz, Director of Finance.

Agenda

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

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (5-0)

Consent Agenda

Approval of TRHS Wrestling Field Trip was added to the consent agenda.

It was moved by Mr. Hill and seconded by Mr. Aune to approve the consent agenda items as amended:

- Approval of the February 9, 2026 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Gifts to the District
- Approval of ATPPS Update
- Approval of Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County for Childhood Vaccinations
- Approval of TRHS Key Club Field Trip
- Approval of TRHS Model UN Field Trip
- Administrative Review of Policy 526, Hazing Prohibition
- Administrative Review of Policy 806, Crisis Management
- Approval of TRHS Wrestling Field Trip

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (5-0)

Comments to the School Board

There were no comments to the School Board.

Recognitions

Members of the Mendota Elementary Black History Month Choir performed “I Can See Clearly Now” and were recognized for another terrific performance given to School District 197 audiences. The group, under the direction of Music Teacher Patrick Hayes, has also performed recently at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service Event at Two Rivers High School and the Black History Month Luncheon held at Mendota Elementary.

Presentation of AIPAC Vote of Concurrence or Non-Concurrence

The American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC), presented to the School Board regarding the District’s American Indian Education Program and compliance with statutory requirements. Representing 161 identified American Indian students in ISD 197, the committee voted Non-Concurrence, determining that the District is not fully meeting the needs of American Indian students and submitted formal recommendations for improvement. The first recommendation calls for the creation of a second dedicated position to support American Indian elementary students, along with the development of a transparent and sustainable funding model that aligns with statutory requirements that funds supplement, not supplant, existing services. The second recommendation requests a formal evaluation of the American Indian Coordinator position, including a review of responsibilities and compensation, to ensure equitable staffing structures and sustained program effectiveness.

First Reading of Policy 415, Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults

Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources, presented the first reading of Policy 415, Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults, to the School Board. An administrative review confirmed the policy aligns with current District processes and procedures and reflects updates made after comparison with the MSBA model policy, including reorganization of definitions, minor language revisions, and the addition of a cross reference. The policy was also reviewed using the District’s Four-Way Equity Test to ensure consistent guidelines and reduce the potential for unconscious or implicit bias in mandated reporting practices under Minnesota statutes. No action was required at this time, and the policy will return for a second reading at a future meeting.

Discussion of Budget Framework, Long Range Budgeting, and Levies

Brian Schultz, Director of Finance, presented a financial update for FY2024-25 and the proposed General Fund budget framework for FY2026-27, outlining audit timelines, revised budget processes, and long-range planning assumptions. The FY2024-25 results reflect a projected General Fund operating deficit of \$359,967 and an ending fund balance of \$5,534,815, with multi-year projections indicating structural budget challenges if no changes are implemented. To address these pressures, the framework proposes a \$2.5 million cost containment target for FY2026-27, separate from enrollment-driven adjustments, to ensure long-term financial sustainability. Key parameters include maintaining current class size ratios, prioritizing direct student instruction, freezing supply budgets, projecting slight enrollment declines, and aligning staffing and compensation with collective bargaining agreements.

Legislative Update

Superintendent Olson-Skog presented a Legislative Update to the board, highlighting three key areas of advocacy for School District 197: fund flexibility, compensatory revenue, and repealing the required cut to Special Education funding. Fund flexibility advocates for the mobility of excess funds out of the construction fund, whose major projects have been completed, into the general fund with the goal of approaching a board-approved balance. Compensatory revenue is critical funding for districts and serves students who meet certain economic criteria; as it stands, School District 197 stands to lose up to \$750,000 in funding based on the new formula of calculation, regardless of how student economic demographics have not changed drastically from one year to the next. Lastly, the state faces a \$250 million cut to Special Education funding. The administration is advocating for urgency in these legislative moves, as the district is planning for staffing now but the legislative task forces aren’t scheduled to approve these fiduciary items until October.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Ms. Walz to adjourn the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (5-0)

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, March 2, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. It will be held at the City of Mendota Heights Council Chambers, 1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights, MN. *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