School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, March 2, 2026
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, March 2, 2026 beginning at 6:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by current Chair Larsen at 6:00 p.m. School Board members present: Sarah Larsen, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz. School Board members absent: Tim Aune. 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; Sara Lein, Director of Special Programs; Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Brian Schultz, Director of Finance; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Dave Sandum, Director of Technology; Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education; Mark Fortman, Director of Operations.

Agenda

Agenda items 11 and 12 were reordered.

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Vaupel to approve the agenda as amended.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the January 26, 2026 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Second Reading of Policy 415, Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Recognitions
The Board recognized student groups from Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School and Somerset Elementary School. Fourth-grade gifted and talented students from Pilot Knob were acknowledged for publishing the winter edition of the *PK Press*, a student-written publication featuring articles on school operations, community interviews, and the role of the school board, reflecting strong curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. Somerset Elementary students were recognized for leading the school's 8th annual Kindness Day, held in partnership with

Doing Good Together, where students participated in hands-on service projects benefiting organizations such as People Serving People, Neighborhood House, and the Animal Humane Society.

Student Representatives' Report

Elementary schools celebrated a wide range of activities, including Mendota's llama classroom visits and 100th Day of School celebration; Pilot Knob's Winter Carnival, Ojibwe cultural learning experience, and ISD 197 Foundation grant for LEGO education kits; Moreland's preparations for its upcoming student musical and SPARKS Day; Garlough's Jumpathon Glow Day and African American Parent Involvement Day; and Somerset's recognition of two teachers as Minnesota Teacher of the Year candidates. Across the elementary level, students also marked I Love to Read Month with spirit weeks and upcoming high school reader visits. At Heritage Middle School, highlights included Dodge Nature Center field experiences, recognition of WEB leaders, a Sambusa tasting event, STEM career learning with the Minnesota Zoo, and student innovation projects in hydroponics and entrepreneurship. At Two Rivers High School, Charlotte Chandler received the 2026 St. Paul Athena Award, winter athletic teams concluded successful seasons including state participation in dance and wrestling, and senior nights were held as the school transitions toward spring activities.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Olson-Skog presented a report highlighting recent student and district activities. Two Rivers High School hosted its annual College Fair in partnership with the Minnesota Education Foundation, connecting students in grades 10-12 with more than 100 representatives from colleges, technical programs, military branches, and career-focused organizations to support post-secondary planning. Friendly Hills Middle School students earned 3rd place at the regional Future City Competition for their sustainability-focused city, "Croppolis," and received additional honors for Best City Presentation and Best Model; the school also recognized School Bus Driver Appreciation Day with student-created thank-you cards. Mendota Elementary celebrated Black History Month with a community luncheon featuring student performances and a Two Rivers High School Cheer Team appearance, while Moreland Arts and Health Science Magnet prepares for its upcoming March 13 performance of Shrek the Musical Kids; the district also joined schools nationwide in recognizing Public Schools Week.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Focus Area Update

Sara Lein, Director of Special Programs, and Jennifer Veenendall, Assistive Technology Specialist and Lead Occupational Therapist, presented on the 2025-2026 Strategic Framework Implementation Targets for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL.) The presentation outlined efforts to establish a district-wide SEL system through integrated SEL instruction, supportive discipline practices, aligned community partnerships, and authentic family engagement. Key initiatives include implementing the AMAZEworks curriculum in elementary special education classrooms, developing an Executive Functioning Skills Toolbox, and introducing sensory and movement-based regulation strategies in collaboration with occupational therapists. The district is also engaging the School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) for feedback and developing a family SEL engagement guide to strengthen home-school collaboration and ensure SEL efforts are connected to student success.

School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) Update

Stacie O'Leary, District School Health Services Coordinator, presented to the board regarding the work of the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC.) SHAC's purpose is to facilitate collaboration and communication among the district, community, and parents to ensure high-quality health programs in every school, guided by a vision of coordinated efforts to provide healthy and safe learning environments for all students. Updates for 2025-2026 include continued development of the school-based health clinic at Two Rivers, strengthened partnerships with Riverland Clinic, staff immunization clinics, wellness initiatives, and SHIP grant funding. The presentation also highlighted the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child framework and shared student feedback underscoring the accessibility and impact of the Warrior Care school-based health clinic.

Action Item: Approval of Budget Framework

Brian Schultz, Director of Finance, presented the FY2026-2027 General Fund Budget Framework plan at the February 23, 2026 school board meeting and recommended approval from the board during this meeting. To recap, the framework serves as a guiding document aligned to the district's Strategic Framework focus areas and establishes assumptions related to enrollment, funding, expenditures, and budget development parameters. Projected enrollment reflects a decline from 5,720 to 5,661 Adjusted Pupil Units (APU), and the plan includes a $2.5 million cost-containment target separate from enrollment-driven adjustments, while maintaining current attendance boundaries, transportation fees, staffing ratios, and per-pupil allocation levels.

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Ms. Walz to approve the FY27 Budget Framework as presented.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Legislative Priorities Overview

Superintendent Olson-Skog presented an overview of School District 197's 2026 Legislative Platform, outlining priorities for the current legislative session. The overview described the current fiscal context, including inflationary pressures, rising labor and healthcare costs, federal funding uncertainty, structural cross-subsidies, and formula volatility impacting FY2027 budgeting. Legislative priorities include extending the compensatory revenue hold harmless provision for FY2027 due to a projected $500,000-$750,000 loss tied to formula changes, seeking greater flexibility to redirect excess one-time restricted funds to stabilize the general fund, and repealing the proposed $250 million statewide reduction to prevent renewed structural shortfalls in special education.

Action Item: Approval of Agreement between School District 197 and Child Nutrition Staff

Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources, presented the tentative agreement between School District 197 and Child Nutrition Staff for the contract years 2025-2027. The tentative agreement with Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local No. 284, represents approximately 40 child nutrition employees, includes salary schedule increases of 1.75% in Year 1 and 1.25% in Year 2, adjustments to certification pay, the addition of New Year's Eve as a holiday, and updated insurance provisions effective July 1, 2026. Insurance changes include revised copays, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums, while maintaining the district's contribution at 95% for single coverage and 80% for single plus one and family coverage.

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Vaupel to approve the Agreement between School District 197 and Child Nutrition Staff as presented.

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

The motion carried (6-0)

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Aye: Sarah Larsen, Marcus Hill, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, March 16, 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.

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Sarah Larsen	Jon Vaupel
School Board Chair	School Board Clerk