

# **PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE LEGAL SERVICES FOR**

## **Independent School District No. 2753 Long Prairie Grey Eagle School District**



**SUBMITTED BY THE LAW FIRM OF:  
SQUIRES, WALDSPURGER & MACE, P.A.  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. (“SWM”) is the premier school law firm representing Minnesota and Wisconsin school districts. Shareholders Michael (Mick) Waldspurger, Amy Mace, Trevor Helmers, John Edison, Liz Vieira, Kristin Nierengarten, Zachary Cronen, Michael (Mike) Ervin, and Abigail (Abbi) Kelzer have dedicated their careers to working exclusively with school districts, charter schools, private schools, cities, counties, and towns. The firm’s shareholders have served more than 150 school districts and other public entities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In addition to the nine shareholders, the firm employs eight (soon to be nine) associate attorneys with extensive experience in school and other municipal law. The firm’s offices are centrally located in downtown Minneapolis.

SWM was founded with a common vision and a common commitment. Specifically, the firm is committed to:

Creative problem solving;  
Tenacious representation of clients;  
Goal-oriented advice;  
Cost-effective service; and  
Timely work product.

The attorneys at SWM have experience in virtually all areas of school law. By way of example, but without limitation, the firm’s attorneys have experience advising and representing schools in the following areas:

### **General School Law**

- Board governance and training
- Open Meeting Law
- Data privacy issues, including Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and Family Educational Rights and Privacy (FERPA) compliance, and responses to data requests and media inquiries
- Policy review
- Contracts and leases
- Joint powers agreements
- Election laws
- School closings
- Constitutional law and civil rights (such as freedom of speech and religion, due process, freedom of religion, search and seizure, equal protection, and allegations of discrimination)
- Conflicts of interest
- In-services/presentations to school groups
- Investigations
- Litigation

## **Labor and Employment Law**

- Drafting and reviewing employment agreements
- Drafting and reviewing personnel policies and employee handbooks
- Wage and overtime issues (Fair Labor Standards Act)
- Leave issues (ADA, Family Medical Leave Act, ESST, and MPL)
- Reasonable accommodations
- Employee dress and hygiene
- Drug and alcohol testing
- Veterans' preference in hiring and firing
- Negotiating and interpreting collective bargaining agreements
- Unit clarification hearings
- Arbitration hearings
- Employee investigations and discipline
- Continuing Contract Law
- Employee discipline
- Responding to charges of discrimination
- Constitutional and civil rights applicable to public employees
- Layoffs and restructuring
- Maltreatment of minors reporting

## **Student Rights/Discipline/Special Education**

- Student discipline proceedings
- Student suspensions and expulsions under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act
- Access to school facilities (Equal Access Act)
- Athletic eligibility and MSHSL hearings
- Responding to requests for educational data
- Student dress
- Pupil fee laws
- Open enrollment issues
- Transportation laws
- Curriculum issues
- Responding to parent complaints
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Rights and obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act
- Due process hearings and appeals
- Advice and assistance with due process compliance
- Advice and assistance with drafting IEPs and other special education documents
- Discipline issues involving special education students
- Responding to MDE complaints and OCR complaints
- Special education due process hearings and appeals
- Litigation

## Business Office

- Contract review, including AIA documents and energy efficiency contracts
- Bid law
- Best value purchasing
- Land purchase and sale
- Eminent domain
- Leases and lease purchase agreements
- Environmental issues
- Recreational use agreements

## Teaching and Learning

- Teacher evaluations
- Staff development and in-services
- Data retention requirements
- Teacher licensing issues
- Student rights and student support services

## ATTORNEYS/QUALIFICATIONS

**Michael (Mike) Ervin** is a shareholder of SWM. His areas of practice include school law, general municipal law, labor and employment law, and civil litigation. Mike also devotes a portion of his practice to land-use and property matters. Mike earned his B.A., *magna cum laude*, from Bethel University and his J.D., *summa cum laude*, from William Mitchell College of Law. While in law school, Mike worked as a law clerk in the Washington County Attorney's Office and in the United States Attorney's Office. Before joining the firm, Mike clerked for the Honorable Matthew E. Johnson at the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Mike is admitted to practice in Minnesota and Wisconsin state courts, the Minnesota Federal District Court, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Abigail (Abbi) Kelzer** is a shareholder of SWM. Her areas of practice include general municipal law, school law, labor and employment, and civil litigation. Abbi is admitted to practice in Minnesota state and federal courts. She received her B.A., *with highest honors*, from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and her J.D., *cum laude*, from the University of Minnesota Law School. Abbi previously served as a civil division law clerk in the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office and as judicial law clerk to the Honorable Caroline H. Lennon in Scott County District Court.

**Michael (Mick) Waldspurgen** is a founding shareholder of SWM. Mick is dedicated to providing practical, proactive, and effective legal advice to his clients. He represents Minnesota and Wisconsin school districts in all areas of school law, including labor and employment law, special education, student discipline, data practices, board governance, and civil litigation. Mick's successful litigation experience includes lawsuits, arbitration

proceedings, due process hearings, and countless other administrative actions. Sharing the experience he has gained in the field, Mick frequently presents at school workshops, training sessions, and state-wide conferences. Mick has also been a keynote speaker at the national level on labor negotiations. Mick is a member of the Wisconsin School Attorneys Association and the Minnesota Council of School Attorneys. After graduating from law school, Mick had the honor of serving as a law clerk to the Honorable Justice Donald Steinmetz of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Mick received his B.A., *cum laude*, from Knox College and his J.D., *cum laude*, from Marquette University Law School, where he was an Executive Editor of the Marquette Law Review.

**Amy Mace** is a shareholder of SWM. Before founding SWM, Amy was a shareholder in another law firm where she represented charter schools and school districts for more than 17 years. Amy currently represents numerous charter schools and school districts in Minnesota. Her primary areas of practice include general school law, charter school law, labor and employment law, special education, student rights, student discipline, data practices, open meeting law issues, and civil litigation. Amy frequently presents at staff in-services and speaks to professional groups in the areas of her practice. Amy received her B.A., *magna cum laude*, from the University of Minnesota and her J.D., *magna cum laude*, from the University of Minnesota Law School.

**Trevor Helmers** is a shareholder of SWM. He joined SWM with the founding shareholders after having worked with them as an associate attorney. Trevor practices in all areas of school law, labor and employment law, construction disputes, contract negotiations, and civil and appellate litigation. He provides counsel to public schools, charter schools, and private schools. As an advisor, he works with clients to find practical, cost-effective solutions to a broad range of legal issues related to schools, such as open meetings and data privacy matters, conducting investigations, addressing allegations of student and staff misconduct, and drafting and reviewing contracts, ordinances, resolutions and other documents. His successful litigation experience includes lawsuits, arbitration proceedings, special education hearings, and a host of other administrative actions. Trevor also regularly presents on topics and conducts training sessions on all areas of his practice. He is a member of the Minnesota Council of School Attorneys and the Wisconsin School Attorneys Association, and he has served as a Board Member for the Minnesota School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys and the Hennepin County Bar Foundation. He earned his B.A. *with honors and distinction* from Iowa State University, and his J.D., *cum laude*, from the University of Minnesota Law School.

**John Edison** is a shareholder of SWM. He joined SWM with the founding shareholders after having worked with them as an associate attorney. John has devoted his entire legal career to working primarily with cities, counties, school districts and other government entities. As an advocate, John has experience making appearances in State and Federal District Court, the Minnesota Court of Appeals, administrative agency hearings, arbitration hearings and mediations. John frequently conducts training sessions and presentations on school law topics, and has served as lead negotiator for collective bargaining. Before transitioning to private practice, John worked as a law clerk and Assistant County Attorney in the Civil Division of

the Ramsey County Attorney's Office in St. Paul, Minnesota. John received a B.A., *summa cum laude*, from the University of North Dakota and his J.D., *summa cum laude*, from Hamline University School of Law

**Elizabeth (Liz) Vieira** is a shareholder of SWM. Her areas of practice include school law, charter school law, labor and employment law, and civil litigation. She is admitted to practice in state courts in Minnesota and Wisconsin and is a member of the Minnesota State Bar Association, Hennepin County Bar Association, Minnesota Women Lawyers, and the Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society. She earned her B.A., *magna cum laude*, from the University of Minnesota and her J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School. Prior to joining the firm, Liz served as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Marilyn Brown Rosenbaum in Hennepin County District Court.

**Kristin Nierengarten** is a shareholder of SWM. Her areas of practice include school law, charter school law, labor and employment, and civil litigation. She earned her B.A., *cum laude*, from Carleton College, and her J.D., *magna cum laude*, from William Mitchell College of Law. She is admitted to practice in state and federal courts in Minnesota and is a member of the Minnesota State Bar Association and Minnesota Women Lawyers. Prior to joining the firm, Kristin served as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Terri J. Stoneburner and the Honorable Peter M. Reyes, Jr. at the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

**Zachary (Zach) Cronen** is a shareholder of SWM. His areas of practice include general municipal law, school law, labor and employment, and civil litigation. He earned his B.A. from the University of Minnesota and his J.D., *summa cum laude*, from William Mitchell College of Law. While in law school, Zach served as an intern for Federal Magistrate Judge Tony N. Leung and for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Zach is admitted to practice in state and federal courts in Minnesota.

**Tessa Wagner** is a staff attorney at SWM. Before joining SWM, Tessa was an associate attorney in another law firm where she represented school districts for several years. Her primary areas of practice include general school law, charter school law, labor and employment law, data practices, open meeting law issues, and student discipline. Tessa earned her B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her J.D., *magna cum laude*, from William Mitchell College of Law.

**Marcus Jardine** is a senior associate attorney at SWM. His areas of practice include general municipal law, school law, labor and employment, and civil litigation. He earned his B.A. from the University of Prince Edward Island, M.A. from the University of Victoria, and J.D., *summa cum laude*, from Mitchell Hamline School of Law. While in law school, Marcus worked as a research assistant at a nonprofit, clerked at two law firms, and externed for the Honorable Donovan W. Frank at the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota. Before joining the firm, Marcus clerked for the Honorable Diane B. Bratvold at the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Marcus is admitted to practice in state, federal and court of appeals courts in Minnesota.

**William (Will) Seiler** is an associate attorney at SWM. His areas of practice include general municipal law, school law, labor and employment, and civil litigation. Will earned his B.A. from Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, and his J.D., *magna cum laude*, from Mitchell Hamline School of Law. While attending law school, Will participated in Mitchell Hamline's Self-Help Clinic, was a student ambassador in the admissions office, and clerked in both the private and public sector. Will is admitted to practice in Minnesota state court.

**Jesse C. Peterson** is an associate attorney with Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. His areas of practice include school law, general municipal law, and labor and employment. Jesse earned his B.A. from Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia before receiving his J.D. from the University of St. Thomas School of Law. While attending law school, Jesse served as a research assistant at a municipal law nonprofit organization and President of the University's Employment & Labor Law Association. Prior to joining the firm, Jesse worked in a paralegal role in the higher education field.

**Daina B. Strub Kabitz** is an associate attorney with Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. Her areas of practice include school law, labor and employment, municipal law, and civil litigation. Daina earned her B.S. and her Master of Public Health from the University of Minnesota. Before attending law school, Daina worked as the operations director for a food-justice-focused nonprofit. Daina received her J.D., *summa cum laude*, from Mitchell Hamline School of Law. In law school, Daina clerked at the Public Health Law Center, the Minnesota State Court of Administrative Hearings, and the Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan. She also clerked through Mitchell Hamline's Self-Help and Health Law clinics. Prior to joining the firm, Daina served as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Louise Dovre Bjorkman on the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Daina is admitted to practice in Minnesota state court.

**Theo M. Britton** is an associate attorney with Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. His areas of practice include general municipal law, school law, labor and employment, and civil litigation. He earned his bachelor's degree in history, *summa cum laude*, from Macalester College, and his J.D., *cum laude*, from the University of St. Thomas School of Law. While in law school, Theo served as director of St. Thomas' moot court programs, competed on St. Thomas' ABA moot court team, and earned four Dean's Awards. Theo also clerked in-house at the University of St. Thomas. Theo is admitted to practice in Minnesota state court.

**Jordan R. Kleinschmidt** is an associate attorney with Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. Her areas of practice include school law, labor and employment, municipal law, and civil litigation. Jordan earned her bachelor's degree from North Central University in Minneapolis, MN, and her J.D. from St. Thomas School of Law. While attending law school, Jordan participated in Moot Court, clerked in the Minnesota Governor's Office, worked in Hennepin County Attorney's Office, and clerked for the Office of the Solicitor for the Department of the Interior. Jordan clerked for the Honorable Judge Patrick Diamond and Referee Kathryn Bergstrom in Ramsey County, and Honorable Judge Douglas Micko in U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. Jordan is admitted to practice in Minnesota state court.

**Gregory (Greg) B. Lansing** is an associate attorney with Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. His areas of practice include school law, labor and employment, municipal law, and civil litigation. Greg earned his bachelor's degree, cum laude, from Iowa State University, and his J.D. from Gonzaga University School of Law. While in law school, Greg participated in Gonzaga's Business Innovation Clinic, served as Operations Editor Volume 60 of the Gonzaga Law Review, and completed a federal judicial externship with the U.S. District Court for Eastern District of Washington. Gregory is admitted to practice in Minnesota state court.

## **TEAM APPROACH**

SWM represents all of its clients with a team approach. It is our belief that clients receive better service if we work together to ensure that someone in the firm is always available to respond to calls or emails within a reasonable amount of time. It is also more cost-effective to allow us to assign individual projects that may be within one of our attorney's focus areas. Thus, we would consider your School District to be a client of SWM, and not a client of any individual attorney. With that said, we have found it helpful to designate lead attorneys to serve as the primary point of contact. The firm proposes that Mike Ervin and Abbi Kelzer serve as the initial lead attorneys working with your District.

## **OFFICE LOCATION, SUPPORT PERSONNEL, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND COMPUTER SYSTEM**

Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A. is located in the SPS Tower in downtown Minneapolis. Our office is equipped with conference rooms capable of hosting mediations, depositions, arbitrations, and meetings.

In addition to a staff of eighteen (soon to be nineteen) attorneys, SWM employs an office manager, an assistant office manager, a billing specialist, a legal assistant, and a receptionist. Our staffing model is designed to ensure that we are able to provide cost-effective service to our clients.

The firm's attorneys take a number of steps to keep current in the law that affects our municipal client base. We subscribe to services and belong to multiple organizations that keep us abreast of issues affecting our public sector clients. We also attend seminars and training, and frequently provide training ourselves to our clients to be sure we remain current in the law.

The firm utilizes a state-of-the-art computer network and modern case management software. Each attorney in the firm can connect to the firm's entire document management system from any location that has internet access. Attorneys regularly use electronic resources, including Lexis, to conduct cost-effective legal research. The firm also has convenient access to the vast resources that are available through the Hennepin County Law Library.

## STATEMENT OF CONFLICTS

No attorney at the firm has ever been disciplined for a violation of ethical rules. No attorney at the firm has ever committed malpractice. SWM will ensure that all attorneys providing legal services to the school district are properly licensed, are in good standing, and are covered by professional liability insurance. We are unaware of any conflicts of interest that would preclude our firm from representing your District in any pending or future matter.

When new matters come into the office, the firm's attorneys consult one another and run a conflict check to ensure that no conflict of interest exists. In the event of a potential conflict of interest, the firm will promptly notify each client or prospective client. In the event our firm's relationship with an existing client could be materially limited by our relationship with a prospective client, we will not represent the prospective client.

## FEE STRUCTURE

### Attorney Rates

The hourly rate for all services provided by shareholders of SWM, including travel time, is two hundred ninety dollars (\$290.00). The hourly rate for all services provided by senior associates of SWM is two hundred sixty dollars (\$260.00). The hourly rate for all other associate attorneys of SWM is two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00). The hourly rate for paralegals or law clerks is one hundred sixty dollars (\$160.00). The firm reviews its rates on an annual basis in December. The rates stated above are the rates for 2026.

### Reimbursable Costs

SWM bills for the actual costs and expenses that the firm incurs in representing clients, including, but not limited to, the cost of any long-distance telephone calls, the cost of legal research services, the prevailing IRS rate for mileage, the cost of reasonable meals when providing services outside the office during a meal period, filing fees, and the cost of electronic research. SWM also bills for photocopies at the rate of twenty cents per page. The charge for producing transcripts from an audio recording is fifty dollars (\$50.00) per hour.

Our billing statements include the date of service, a detailed description of the services performed by each attorney, the time spent on the services, and the fees for those services. Our billing is done for actual time incurred in six-minute increments.

## REFERENCES

We represent school districts across the State of Minnesota and would be happy for you to talk to any of our clients. Our firm has had a long-standing relationship with many school districts,

and we hope to work with your District in 2026 and beyond. The following are just a few references you could consider contacting:

- Brian Masterson, Superintendent
  - Hinckley-Finlayson Schools (ISD 2165)
  - P: (320) 384-6277
  - [bmasterson@isd2165.org](mailto:bmasterson@isd2165.org)
- Janell Bullard, Superintendent
  - Paynesville Area Schools (ISD 741)
  - P: (320) 243-3410
  - [jbullard@isd741.org](mailto:jbullard@isd741.org)
- Josie Dingmann, Superintendent
  - Belgrade-Brooten-Elrose Schools (ISD 2364)
  - P: (320) 254-8211
  - [jdingmann@bbejaguars.org](mailto:jdingmann@bbejaguars.org)

We are happy to provide different or additional references, if you would like.

Please contact us if you have any questions or need any further information.

Respectfully Submitted:

**SQUIRES, WALDSPURGER & MACE, P.A.**

*Mike Ervin*

*Abbi Kelyer*