



Dr. Klint W. Willert, Superintendent
Sonja Ortman, MS/HS Principal
Jennifer Moravetz, Elementary Principal
Len Burzynski, Maintenance Director
Lisa Pease, Coordinator of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning, and Continuous Improvement

Jacque Kennedy, Business Manager
Rick Zollner, Activities Director
Josh Stukel, Technology Director
Kim Tuin, Food Service Director

December School Board Report

Well, it may not look like Christmas outside (sorry snow enthusiasts) but we know the calendar says we are close. We are in our last week of school before the Christmas Holiday break. As we close out December, here are a few items of interest for the board.

1. **Mediation** – The board negotiations team and the Educational Support Professionals team met with a mediator from the Bureau of Mediation Services on December 13, 2024 from 9:00 am until approximately 3:30 pm. Despite best efforts, the mediation session was not successful. Therefore, the Board has provided the ESP group a last best final offer. For the custodians, secretaries, accounts payable and technology support the compensation increase would be 5.57% in year one and 3.96% increase in year two. For the paraprofessionals, the compensation increase would be 5.67% in year one and an increase of 4.03% in compensation in year two. These final proposals do not include a longevity incentive the district provides the employees that is additional compensation increases for longevity in the Pipestone Area Schools. Overall, the best final offer reflects a strong commitment to the district employees while also maintaining the financial responsibility the board has to the taxpayers of the district.
2. **State Budget Forecast** – The state recently released the budget forecast for the state's finances. Schools and school district budgets are closely tied to these forecasted numbers, so it is an important indicator for boards to consider. According to the forecast, "While Minnesota is expected to have a surplus of \$616 million for the 2026-2027 biennium, there is a \$5.1 Billion deficit brewing for fiscal years 2028-2029 unless the legislature takes measures to prevent it." This is concerning for local districts and will require us to maintain fiscal discipline in the face of state budget uncertainty. I have included the article in my board report.
3. **Communications Tower** – We have been discussing needs in the district regarding communications improvements during crisis moments. As we have discussed how to better utilize hand-held radio communications, we have started to talk to the community of emergency responders about a shared communications system and tower. There appears to be some growing interest in a joint venture. We may need to have a consider this in our capital projects budget planning as we look to the future.
4. **Community Education** – We have received information from a few interested in parties in providing some community education courses for the district. We are interested in knowing if others in the community are interested in providing a course. If so, they can reach out to Rick Zollner or the school district office to share their interest.

"Inspire life-long learners. Build Character. Prepare them for their future."

5. **Reorganization Meeting** – The board will hold the reorganization meeting on January 6, 2025. At that time, the new board member will be seated and the board will act on other annual items for the board.

6. **Minnesota School Boards Association Conference** – The MSBA 2025 Leadership Conference is scheduled for January 16 and 17 in Minneapolis. The event will be at the Minneapolis Convention Center. This is typically an excellent professional development event for school board members. Here is a link: [MSBA Leadership Conference – Minnesota School Boards Association](#)

I want to close by wishing each of you a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. Thank you for your service and contributions to the work of the Pipestone Area Schools!

