

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, January 12, 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, Tim Aune, Morgan Steele, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz, Jon Vaupel. School Board members absent: Byron Schwab. 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; Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education; Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources; Mark Fortman, Director of Operations.

Election of Officers

School Board Chair:

Current Chair Larsen called for nominations for School Board Chair. Jon Vaupel nominated Sarah Larsen. Chair Larsen called for nominations three times. No other nominations were made.

Sarah Larsen was re-elected as School Board Chair (6-0)

Vice-Chair/Clerk:

Chair Larsen called for nominations for Vice-Chair/Clerk. Marcus Hill nominated Jon Vaupel. Chair Larsen called for nominations three times. No further nominations were made.

Jon Vaupel was re-elected as School Board Vice-Chair/Clerk (6-0)

Treasurer:

Chair Larsen called for nominations for Treasurer. Sarah Larsen nominated Byron Schwab. Chair Larsen called for nominations three times. No further nominations were made.

Byron Schwab was re-elected as School Board Treasurer (6-0)

Agenda

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

Aye: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the December 8, 2025 School Board Regular Meeting Minutes

- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Approval of Friendly Hills Middle School Field Trip
- Approval of September 2025 Treasurer's Report
- Approval of September 2025 Accounts Payable Report
- Approval of December 2025 Wire Transfers Report
- Approval of Gifts to the District
- Administrative Review of Policy 720, Vending Machines
- Final Reading of Policy 905, Advertising

Aye: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

Student Representatives' Report

Student representatives Evangeline and Rhys provided a comprehensive report highlighting recent activities and achievements across elementary, middle, and high schools, reflecting strong engagement, creativity, and community involvement districtwide. At the elementary level, schools reported on literacy initiatives, STEM activities, arts integration, service learning, and family engagement events, including Odyssey of the Mind, reading buddies, music exploration, and charitable giving efforts. Middle schools shared updates on enrichment opportunities such as Lunch and Learn sessions, partnerships with community organizations, outdoor learning experiences, academic competitions, and successful athletics and extracurricular programs. At the high school, students reported a positive start to the year with progress on registration, finals preparation, student involvement in sports and activities, and notable athletic achievements. The report also highlighted student leadership and equity-focused initiatives, including participation in the Youth Ambassadors program and anticipation for the upcoming Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog presented a report highlighting key accomplishments and upcoming priorities as the district begins 2026, recognizing student, staff, and program successes across School District 197.

Highlights included statewide recognition of Erik Kluznik, a Two Rivers High School teacher and cross-country coach, student participation and leadership in Metro State's Model Legislature, and Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School earning Project Lead the Way Distinguished School status. The Superintendent also shared updates on expanded student supports, including the launch of the Warrior Care school-based health clinic at Two Rivers High School and the implementation of full-day, tuition-free Voluntary Prekindergarten at Pilot Knob.

Additional updates emphasized the district's commitment to lifelong learning through adult education and enrichment programs. Looking ahead, the report outlined upcoming enrollment activities, including Kindergarten Enrollment Night and middle school transition events, and encouraged community participation in the Two Rivers Key Club's Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

Site Report: Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School

Tom Benson, principal of Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School, presented a site report highlighting the school's mission to foster a diverse, inclusive learning community focused on developing 21st-century skills through STEM-based instruction and strong literacy foundations. The presentation shared points of pride including the development of an inclusive playground supported by community fundraising, a strong focus on individual student growth through data-driven instruction, and robust family engagement efforts. Academic programming highlights included robotics and coding opportunities across grade levels, book clubs to support literacy and comprehension, and collaborative instructional practices that celebrate student progress. Mr. Benson also reported continued growth, including the school's designation as a Title I site, expansion of intervention and family engagement staff, the addition of specialized classrooms, and the launch of all-day preschool. Looking

ahead, Pilot Knob plans to strengthen partnerships, expand STEM leadership opportunities through participation in the National STEM Honor Society, and continue supporting student achievement and future readiness.

Site Report: Two Rivers High School

Dr. Jessica Cabak, principal of Two Rivers High School, presented a site report highlighting the school's mission to provide a rigorous academic program within a personalized learning environment that fosters strong relationships and prepares students for postsecondary education and careers. The presentation shared points of pride, emphasizing the #WarriorStrong culture, student engagement in academics and the arts, and positive school community connections. Work-based learning opportunities were showcased as a key component of student success, with students gaining real-world experience aligned to career pathways. The report also highlighted the school's ongoing commitment to striving toward excellence through innovative instructional practices and student-centered learning. Looking ahead, Dr. Cabak outlined continued focus on monitoring systems through data and feedback, expanding opportunities such as work-based learning and concurrent enrollment, and engaging staff in upcoming professional learning.

ISD 917 Annual Update

Dr. Michael Favor, Superintendent of Intermediate School District 917, presented an overview of the district's mission, governance, and services, emphasizing its role as a cooperative educational partner established under Minnesota statute to provide specialized programming across member districts. The presentation highlighted ISD 917's mission to deliver high-quality, equitable, and personalized programs through strong collaboration with member districts, guided by core values such as empathy, integrity, innovation, and stewardship. An overview of student programming was provided, including special education services from birth to age 22, alternative learning options through Dakota County Alternative Learning School (DCALS), and multiple Career and Technical Education pathways. Data specific to ISD 197 detailed student participation in special education, itinerant services, DCALS, and CTE programming over recent years, demonstrating sustained utilization of ISD 917 services. The Superintendent also outlined the district's strategic partnerships and reinforced ISD 917's commitment to serving as a center of excellence that complements member district programming and supports student success.

Equity Focus Area Update

Peter Mau, Assistant Superintendent, Kevin Sheridan, Educational Equity Coordinator, and Sara Blair, Director of Communications, presented an Equity Implementation Target Update aligned to the district's Strategic Framework, outlining progress across multiple focus areas intended to build equitable systems and supports districtwide. The update emphasized shared responsibility for equity among the School Board, district leadership, staff, students, and families, supported by input from the Equity Advisory. Key initiatives included expanding diverse and inclusive programming, strengthening teacher and leader quality through targeted professional learning, and prioritizing equitable resource allocation, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Highlights included participation in the Learning from Place: Bdote immersive experience, development of culturally responsive curriculum initiatives such as an Ojibwe language course, and implementation of equitable practices in special education and grading. The presentation also addressed efforts to foster inclusive school and classroom environments, elevate student voice and leadership, and strengthen family and community partnerships through improved language access and interpretation services.

Action Item: Approval of 2025-2027 Agreement between ISD 197 and Principals

Tye Michaels, Director of Human Resources, presented a report recommending approval of a tentative agreement with the School District 197 Principals' Unit for the 2025-2027 contract years, noting the agreement has been ratified by the union and applies to approximately 13 principals. The proposed settlement includes salary schedule increases of 1.5 percent in the first year and 1.75 percent in the second year, along with a \$750 annual increase in longevity pay and a \$250 increase to the Health Care Savings Plan. Effective July 1, 2026, changes to insurance benefits include updated copays, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums, with an

actuarial value of 82.5 percent and increased prescription rates, while district contribution levels remain unchanged. The report also noted that minor language revisions were made to the agreement.

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Hill to approve the 2025-2027 Agreement between ISD 197 and Principals as presented.

Aye: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Aune and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Sarah Larsen, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel, Marcus Hill, Randi Walz

Nay: none

The motion carried (6-0)

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, January 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