

**OFFICE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2909
MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026, 6:00 P.M.**

**ROCK RIDGE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 1405 PROGRESS PARKWAY, VIRGINIA, MN 55792
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**

Members Present:

Jennifer Bonner	Tim Riordan
Nicole Culbert-Dahl	Jodi Westby
Brandi Lautigar	Lisa Westby
	John Uhan

Other Staff Present:

Dr. Noel Schmidt, Superintendent
Andrea Lintula, Business Manager
Sheena Stefanich, North Star Principal
Willie Spelts, Director of School to Work Engagement,
Fundraising Coordinator
Maria Poderzay, Indigenous Education Director

Members Absent: None

- I. Chair UHAN called the Organizational Meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.
- II. **APPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING AGENDA:** Motion to **approve the agenda** made by RIORDAN, seconded by L. WESTBY. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. **ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS:**
 - A. CHAIR: J. WESTBY nominated UHAN. CULBERT-DAHL nominated L. WESTBY. L. WESTBY declined nomination. No other nominations. **UHAN elected CHAIR.**
 - B. VICE CHAIR: RIORDAN nominated L. WESTBY. No other nominations. **L. WESTBY elected VICE CHAIR.**
 - C. CLERK: LAUTIGAR nominated CULBERT-DAHL. No other nominations. **CULBERT-DAHL elected CLERK.**
 - D. TREASURER: BONNER nominated LAUTIGAR. No other nominations. **LAUTIGAR elected TREASURER.**
 - E. ALTERNATE CLERK: RIORDAN nominated BONNER. No other nominations. **BONNER elected ALT. CLERK.**
- IV. **ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS:**
 - A. Motion to **set the salaries the same as 2025 (Board members reimbursed \$300/month with the Vice Chair receiving \$325 and the Chair receiving \$350/month. Negotiations Committee reimbursement \$50 for each session lasting up to three hours/\$100 for sessions of three hours or more)** made by UHAN, seconded by CULBERT-DAHL. Motion passed unanimously.
 - B. Motion to **approve that Columbus Day is not a school holiday** made by RIORDAN, seconded by UHAN. Motion passed 5-2 with L. WESTBY and J. WESTBY voting NO.
 - C. Motion to set the **2026 regular meeting dates and times as presented** made by LAUTIGAR, seconded by BONNER. Discussion was held regarding an interest and need for more regularly scheduled working sessions. Motion passed unanimously.
 - D. Motion to **approve the mileage rate at the IRS standard mileage rate of 72.5 cents per mile beginning January 1, 2026** made by CULBERT-DAHL, seconded by L. WESTBY. Motion passed unanimously.
 - E. Motion to **designate Frandsen Bank & Trust, MSDLAF, and MNTrust/PMA, Miners National Bank and First National Bank of Gilbert** made by L. WESTBY, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed 6-0-1 with UHAN abstaining.
 - F. Motion to **authorize the hiring of a school attorney on an as-needed basis: Colosimo, Patchin, & Kearney, Ltd., Rupp, Anderson, Squires, & Waldspurger, P.A. and Ratwik, Rozak & Maloney, P.A.** made by LAUTIGAR, seconded by RIORDAN. It was noted that Colosimo, Patchin, & Kearney, Ltd. has become Cope Law Group, Ltd. effective January 1, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

- G. Motion to **establish the Mesabi Tribune as the legal publication for school business for 2026** made by UHAN, seconded by CULBERT-DAHL. Motion passed unanimously.
 - H. Motion to **allow the Superintendent and Business Manager to conduct wire transfer funds from Miners National Bank of Eveleth to Frandsen Bank and Trust, General Account** made by BONNER, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
 - I. Motion to **allow the Superintendent and Business Manager to conduct wire transfer funds from First National Bank of Gilbert to Frandsen Bank and Trust, General Account** made by LAUTIGAR, seconded by BONNER. Motion passed unanimously.
 - J. Motion to **authorize the business manager and superintendent to make electronic fund transfers** made by L. WESTBY, seconded by RIORDAN. Motion passed unanimously.
 - K. Motion to **authorize the business manager to use the current signature plate until a new plate is secured, if necessary** made by L. WESTBY, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
 - L. Motion to **authorize school board members to attend instate meetings** made by RIORDAN, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
 - M. Motion to **authorize the superintendent to approve instate travel requirements of employees during the school year** made by BONNER, seconded by J. WESTBY. Motion passed unanimously.
 - N. Motion to **authorize the superintendent to employ additional instructional, library, maintenance, and clerical assistance as shall become necessary** made by RIORDAN, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
 - O. Motion to **approve the Resolution Directing the Administration to Make Recommendations for Reductions in Programs and Positions and Reasons Therefor** made by BONNER, seconded by RIORDAN. Motion passed unanimously.
 - P. Motion to **approve the resolution naming Dr. Noel Schmidt as the Identified Official with Authority (IOwa) for Rock Ridge Public Schools** made by LAUTIGAR, seconded by RIORDAN. Motion passed unanimously.
 - Q. Motion to **designate Dr. Noel Schmidt as the responsible authority under the Minnesota Data Practices Act and Open Meeting Law** made by CULBERT-DAHL, seconded by J. WESTBY. Motion passed unanimously.
 - R. Motion to **maintain Committee assignments from 2025 with the following changes: L. Westby added to “Meet and Confer”; Lautigar, Culbert-Dahl, and Bonner added to the new committee, “AFSCME Labor Management Relations”** made by RIORDAN, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
- V. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to **adjourn the Organizational Meeting** made by L. WESTBY, seconded by J. WESTBY. Motion passed unanimously at 6:21 P.M.
- VI. Chair UHAN called the regular meeting to order.
- VII. **APPROVE AGENDA:** Motion to **approve the agenda** made by RIORDAN, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
- VIII. **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS AND VISITOR INPUT:** Paul Gregersen – support of renewing Dr. Noel Schmidt’s superintendent contract.
- IX. Motion to **approve the Gilbert school land offer** made by LAUTIGAR, seconded by J. WESTBY. Motion passed 6-0-1 with CULBERT-DAHL abstaining.
- X. **AUDIT REPORT (2024-2025):**
- A. A representative from Brady Martz & Associates presented the 2024-2025 Audit Report.
 - B. Motion to **approve the 2024-2025 Audit Report** made by LAUTIGAR, seconded by RIORDAN. Motion passed unanimously.

- XI. **CONSENT AGENDA:** Motion to **approve the Consent Agenda** made BONNER seconded by CULBERT-DAHL. Motion passed unanimously.
- A. Approval of December 8, 2025 regular meeting minutes.
 - B. Approval of hire of Danielle Santa for the Playground/Cafeteria Aide (PES) position at a rate of \$14.00/hour effective December 8, 2025.
 - C. Approval of hire of Amanda Schugg for the Playground Aide (NSE) position at a rate of \$14.00/hour effective December 16, 2025.
 - D. Approval of hire of Justin Abramson for the Casual Bus Driver position at a rate of \$23.64/hour effective December 24, 2025.
 - E. Approval of hire of Ethan Hillman for the Paraprofessional (NSE) position at a rate of \$19.97/hour effective January 5, 2026.
 - F. Approval of hire of Mia Goggleye for the Paraprofessional (LES) position at a rate of \$19.97/hour effective January 5, 2026.
 - G. Approval of hire of Amber Schwartz for the Assistant Speech Coach position with a stipend of \$2,112 for the 2025-2026 school year.
 - H. Approval of hire of Darren Aho for the Assistant Softball Coach position with a stipend of \$4,791 for the 2025-2026 school year.
 - I. Correction of hire date for Co-Directors Tricia Fierst and Terri Kowalski from 2024-2025 school year to 2025-2026 school year.
 - J. Approval of overload for the following staff at Laurentian Elementary for the 2025-2026 school year (2nd semester): Amanda Rasmussen (0.08 FTE Art \$2,821.66), Shanon Kush-Jeffery (0.08 FTE Art \$3,087.40).
 - K. Approval of transfer of Paraprofessional Jessica Rahkola from Parkview Elementary to North Star Elementary effective January 5, 2026.
 - L. Approval of volunteer coaches for the 2025-2026 school year: (Alpine Skiing) James Eichholz; (Archery) Tracey Oates, Benjamin Dall.
 - M. Approval of unpaid medical leave for Jordyn Collins following her completion of paid leave benefits from Spring 2026 through the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
 - N. Acceptance of resignation of John Stanaway from the Assistant Football Coach position effective December 11, 2025.
 - O. Acceptance of resignation of Steve Manninen from the Paraprofessional position effective January 7, 2026.
 - P. Approval of 2025-2026 winter athletic overnight and/or out-of-state travel requests.
 - Q. Approval of overnight field trip for Construction Club to visit various companies located in Northern MN (such as Marvin Windows, Arctic Cat, and Polaris). Construction Club will cover all expenses. Dates to be determined.
 - R. Approval of out-of-state travel for members of the A Cappella Choir and Senior High Orchestra March 26 - 31, 2026 to Chicago, IL. There is no cost to the district.
 - S. Permission for Dr. Noel Schmidt to attend the National Association of School Superintendents and Apple Leadership meeting at Apple Headquarters in Austin, Texas, January 21 - 23, 2026. There is no cost to the school district.
 - T. Acceptance and appreciation of a donation of hats and mittens from the Big Life Team / Mitten Mission Project for students in need of these items at Laurentian Elementary.
 - U. Acceptance and appreciation of a donation of hats, mittens, socks, jackets, and snowpants from United in Christ Lutheran Church for students in need of these items at Laurentian Elementary.
 - V. Acceptance and appreciation of donations from the Golden Bear Foundation (Fall 2025) in the amounts of \$4,187.35 and \$4,275.
 - W. Acceptance and appreciation of a donation to the Rock Ridge Construction Club in the amount \$100 from Jeff and Cathy Erpelding in memory of Al Williams.
 - X. Acceptance and appreciation of a donation from Pohaki in the amount of \$8,906.13 as part of the Naming Rights Agreement.

XII. **REPORTS:**

- A. Willie Spelts gave a school to work engagement and fundraising update.
- B. Maria Poderzay, Indigenous Education Director, Meredith TwoCrow, President of AIPAC, and Paul Gregersen, Exec. Director CHAIR informed the board and community of two upcoming live broadcasts of a Rock Ridge Girls and a Rock Ridge Boys Hockey game – all presented in the Ojibwe language (January 20 & January 30, 2026).
- C. Principal Sheena Stefanich shared some highlights and happenings at Parkview Elementary.
- D. Supt. Schmidt provided a recap of the informational & dialogue sessions held in Eveleth, Gilbert, and Virginia, and the feedback provided by those community members who attended the sessions.
- E. Motion to **approve the payment of the bills** made by J. WESTBY, seconded by RIORDAN. Motion passed unanimously.

XIII. **ADMINISTRATION ITEMS:**

- A. The school board and Dr. Schmidt agreed to begin discussions on possibly renewing the superintendent’s contract. There was discussion on the process of conducting a superintendent evaluation as well.
- B. Motion to **approve the Agreement For Use Of City Tennis Facilities between the City of Virginia and ISD 2909 effective 2026-2029** made by CULBERT-DAHL, seconded by BONNER. Motion passed unanimously.
- C. Motion to **approve the Easement Request** made by CULBERT-DAHL, seconded by RIORDAN. Motion passed unanimously.
- D. Motion to **approve the Memorandum of Understanding between ISD 2909 and Education MN Rock Ridge - Local 7394 regarding contract time for employee Misty Elliott** made by CULBERT-DAHL, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.
- E. Motion to **approve the 2026 RAMS (Range Association of Municipalities and Schools) membership dues in the amount of \$2,161** made by L. WESTBY, seconded by LAUTIGAR. Motion passed unanimously.

XIV. **MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS** were made.

XV. **ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 7:56 P.M.

CHAIR

CLERK