

School District 197
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools
Regular Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024
Mendota Heights City Hall, Council Chambers

A meeting of the School Board of Independent School District 197 was held on Monday, December 9, 2024 beginning at 6:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Larsen at 6:00 p.m. The following School Board members were present: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, and Jon Vaupel. Board member Randi Walz was absent. Superintendent Peter Olson-Skog was also present. Student Representatives Patrick Bohmbach and Nawal Hassan were present.

Also present for the meeting were Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Sara Lein, Director of Special Services; Jason Stegeman, Director of Finance; Mark Fortman, Director of Operations; Sara Blair, Director of Communications; and Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education.

Agenda

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Schwab to approve the agenda as presented.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of the November 18, 2024, Regular School Board Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Personnel Recommendations
- Approval of Apple Computer Lease Schedule
- Second Reading of Policy 419, Tobacco-Free Environment; Possession and Use of Tobacco; Tobacco-Related Devices and Electronic Delivery Devices; Vaping Awareness and Prevention Instruction.
- Approval of Gifts to the District
- Approval of Field Trip for Two Rivers High School Nordic Ski Team

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

Listening Session Report

Board member Tim Aune stated that no one attended tonight's Listening Session.

Recognitions

Superintendent Olson-Skog introduced three student groups - Garlough Student Council, Friendly Hills Student Council, and student-athletes from Two Rivers High School.

Garlough Student Council students were nominated by their peers in third grade, allowing them to step into their leadership roles as fourth graders. The students have worked with kindergarteners, helped with morning announcements, and participated in monthly assemblies and school-wide incentive challenges. Counselor Sarah Orman introduced the following students: August Haas; Dary Rubi Leiva; Noelle Joubert; Melia Abrego; Rex Harwood; Ramona Saenz-Wilhelm; Sabrina Saice; and Evangellyn Correa Matos.

Friendly Hills Student Council students develop leadership skills by organizing school events and serving as a voice for the student body. Counselor Kristin Quinn and Cultural Liaison Ashley Hall introduced the following students: Carter Dorsey; Zoey Horowitz; Logan Kartes Logan; Halima Zahid; Zavier Brown; Ahmad Zahid; Yonae Ayele; Camilo Bicanich; Nolan Melcher; Jackson Osmonson; Naomi Snyder; Anna Kolb; Sophie Phillips; Bea Douah; Saudi Moore; Karsen Diaz; Milo Scharfenber; Jayden Omana Briones; Noah Vaupel; Meba Assefa; Camila Sandoval; Idil Osman; Thomas Dunst; Mehin Mammadova; Kim Haugh; Honora Moore; Jetsy Reyes; Jacob Milz; Leeah Powell; Henry Barclay; Sam Mollner; Hannah Baion; Anna Larsen; Nathan Larrive; Sam Drieman; Bennett Fischer; Netelia Jackson; Aubree Flanagan; Ana Ljubisavljevic; Elizabeth Kronschnabel; Leah Hammes; Lucy Peltier; and Mya Castillo.

Two Rivers High School cross country coach, Erik Kluznik, who was also named Metro East Conference Coach of the Year, introduced cross country students who qualified for state: Boys - Lucas Esten; Quinn Keyes; Silas Bloom; Niah Fernandes; Hakkon Hanson; George Dahlager; Max Molinaro; Riley Tillander; and Brady Sullivan. Girls - Sophia Agan; Josie Miller; and Charlotte Chandler. Jess Cabak, Associate Principal at Two Rivers High School, introduced girls diving state qualifier, Sada Gustafson. Two Rivers High School teacher, Jordyn Sanders, introduced the Dakota United CI Adapted Soccer state champions: Ryan Errigo; Addie Smith; and Oran Hill.

Taxes Payable 2025 Truth-in-Taxation Public Hearing

Jason Stegeman, Director of Finance, presented the Truth-in-Taxation public hearing for taxes payable in 2025. State law requires that the presentation include information on the current year's budget, prior year actual revenue and expenditures, proposed property tax levy including percentage increase or decrease and specific purposes and reasons for which taxes are being increased if applicable. The district must also allow time for public comment.

Mr. Stegeman presented background on school funding, property tax levies and budgets. Since 2002-2003, the state General Education Revenue has not kept pace with inflation. Underfunding of special education continues to be a concern. Options for school districts to bridge that funding gap are to cut regular program budgets or increase referendum revenue. Most school districts have done both.

Information on the district's budget, and the proposed tax levy for taxes payable in 2025 was presented. All school district budgets are divided into separate funds, based on purposes of revenue, as required by law. A little over 70% of the district's revenue comes from the state, 27% from local and 2.4% from the federal level. The majority of the district's budget goes towards instructional purposes. Mr. Stegeman stated that the proposed 2025 property tax levy is \$39,811,438 which is an increase from last year. Reasons for that include:

- Operating referendum authority is calculated on estimated enrollment and includes an annual inflationary increase
- Initial levies are based on estimates that are then updated and retroactively adjusted
- The issuance of Facilities Maintenance Bonds to fund indoor air quality projects

No one was in attendance to make a public comment on this topic. By statute, a School Board must adopt their final property tax levy by December 30 and certify the levy to the county auditor. Once approved, staff will follow through with the required associated tasks.

Action Item – Adopt 2024 Payable 2025 Property Tax Levy

Jason Stegeman, Director of Finance, presented the proposed 2024 payable 2025 property tax levy. On or before December 28, 2024, each school district must adopt its final 2024 payable 2025 property tax levy and certify it to the county auditor. The final property tax levy may be less than, but may not exceed, the proposed property tax levy, except for allowable “Add-on” levies approved by voters after the proposed levy was certified. A Truth-in-Taxation hearing was held earlier in the meeting. Mr. Stegeman recommended that the board adopt the 2025 property tax levy of \$39,811,438. Overall, the 2025 levy is increasing due to the voter approved operating referendum increase, increased enrollment (which drives many of the levy calculations), as well as prior adjustments for increases in actual enrollment at the time of the previous levy adoption.

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Aune to approve that the final 2024 payable 2025 property tax levy is adopted in the amount of \$39,811,438 and, further, that the School Board Clerk is authorized to sign the document used to certify the levy to the county auditor.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

Student Representative’s Report

Student Representatives Patrick Bohmbach and Nawal Hassan presented their student report. At the elementary level, Moreland finished their annual fundraiser, Square 1 Art which allowed parents to buy keepsakes of their children’s artwork. The Moreland library received a grant from the Minneapolis Foundation and Mdewakanton Sioux community. This money will be used to purchase approximately 100 new books. Pilot Knob implemented their first day of STEM SPARKS. Garlough hosted a rollerblading event and several families participated. Mendota’s Kindergarten showcase went smoothly and had a great turnout. At the middle level, district 8th graders toured Two Rivers High School. Heritage hosted a successful book fair. 8th graders visited the University of Minnesota’s college of biological sciences department. At the high school level, Two Rivers earned a spot on the AP Honor Roll, which celebrates Schools that do an exceptional job of teaching and offering Advanced Placement classes. 48% of the Class of 2024 have taken an AP exam, and 34% have earned college credit. Students sampled new potential school lunch menu items and helped decide which items would be added to the lunch menu. Students hosted a Harvest Pack and packed 20,000 bags of food. The AP Government classes had the opportunity to do a mock legislature at the Capitol. Students chose a bill and followed it through committees to the house floor. The Two Rivers Debate team placed 3rd at the MN Classic Debate tournament. Tommy Larsen and McKinley Cherrier placed 3rd, one of only eight varsity teams at the tournament. Two Rivers had the top two novice teams with Levi Paper and Saakar Basyal winning the tournament.

Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Olson-Skog gave a shoutout to the district’s curriculum department, school leaders, and staff for their work on creating a smooth transition process for fourth and eighth graders. Transition years are full of excitement and uncertainty, and district staff have helped students acclimate. Middle school music staff will visit elementary schools to introduce students to various instruments and music options. Kindergarten Registration Night will be on January 23. At Two Rivers High School, 464 student-athletes and 48 activity participants showcased dedication and success on and off the field. Collectively, fall activities teams earned an average GPA of 3.36, and the program retention rate reached 72%. Over the 11-week season, Two Rivers hosted 116 home games and events, including four Minnesota State High School League Section events. Coach Erik Kluznik was named Metro East Conference Coach of the Year for his leadership with the boys and girls cross-country teams, both of which secured first-place conference finishes. Boys soccer and football claimed conference championships, while girls swim and dive earned a third-place finish. Last week, the school district

recognized National Special Education Day, celebrating the anniversary of the nation’s first federal special education law. The district thanks the students, families, educators, and advocates who make the district an inclusive and supportive community. Winter break is December 20 through January 1. Classes resume on January 2.

Site Report from Moreland Arts and Health Sciences Magnet School

Principal Rob Sahli presented a site report from Moreland Arts and Health Sciences Magnet School. Moreland is a vibrant community committed to cultivating creativity, healthy living, and achievement through active learning. Points of Pride include:

- On SPARKS days, students are given the opportunity to select a class of interest where they are able to learn and explore new topics.
- The school has established community partnerships in the Arts.
- Students participated in a kindness event.
- 4th grade students will present their musical “Finding Nemo Kids” in March.
- A student showcase event will be held in March.

Looking ahead, the school will implement the READ Act, work on math instruction and CT’s, increase family engagement, and create space for new partnerships.

Strategic Framework Social Emotional Learning Implementation Target Update

Sara Lein, Director of Special Services, and Dr. Jessica Cabak, Two Rivers High School Associate Principal, presented an update on the Strategic Framework Social and Emotional Learning Implementation Target. SEL is an educational method that aims to foster social and emotional skills within the school curriculum. A district wide system of SEL integrates academic, social and emotional learning across all school contexts. This approach provides a learning environment that promotes equitable outcomes for all students. The 2024-2025 learning actions in this area include:

- Explicit SEL instruction – provides students with consistent opportunities to practice competencies that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive
- Integrated SEL with academic instruction – integrates into instructional content and teaching strategies
- Youth voice and engagement – elevates student perspectives and experiences
- Supportive school and classroom climate – creates learning environments that are supportive, culturally responsive and focused on building relationships and community
- Focus on adult SEL – provides staff with consistent opportunities to collaborate and build relationships
- Supportive discipline – creates practices that are appropriate and equitably applied
- A continuum of integrated supports – ensures that SEL is integrated into the continuum of supports to ensure that all student needs are met
- Authentic family partnerships – provides families and staff with regular opportunities to build relationships and collaborate
- Aligned community partnerships – ensures that staff and community partners are aligned on common language
- Systems for continuous improvement – ensures outcome data are used to continuously improve all SEL related systems

Action Item – Approval of School Age Care and Early Learning Fee Increases

Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education, presented information on proposed School Age Care (SAC) fee increases. This was presented to board members in detail at their meeting on November 18, 2024. To recap, the administration recommended a 3% increase to the SAC fees for the next two school years to address inflation in operating expenses. The fees remain within the range of comparison districts' fees for this year.

- The registration fee will remain at \$45.00 for 25-26 and 26-27

- The daily rate will increase from \$28.25 to \$29.25 in 25-26 and to \$30.25 in 26-27
- AM K-4 rates will increase from \$8.00 to \$8.25 in 25-26 and \$8.50 in 26-27
- AM 5-8 rates will increase from \$12.25 to \$12.75 in 25-26 and \$13.25 in 26-27
- PM K-4 rates will increase from \$20.25 to \$21.00 in 25-26 and \$21.75 in 26-27
- PM 5-8 rates will increase from \$16.00 to \$16.50 in 25-26 and \$17.00 in 26-27
- Non-school day rates will increase from \$54.00 to \$55.50 in 25-26 and \$57.25 in 26-27
- Summer daily rates will increase from \$44.00 to \$45.25 in 25-26 and \$46.50 in 26-27

It was moved by Ms. Steele and seconded by Mr. Vaupel to approve the School Age Care fee increases for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 as presented.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

These fees will be published in the School Age Care brochures and mailed to homes in January.

Lisa Grathen, Director of Community Education, and Laurie Hume, Assistant Director of Early Learning, presented information on proposed Early Learning fee increases. This was presented to board members in detail at their meeting on November 18, 2024. To recap, the administration recommended a 3% increase to the Early Learning fees for the next two school years, with one exception. Given market comparison and program costs, the administration proposes a larger increase for the extended school day program. These fees are more complicated than simply using a daily rate given holidays and other non-school days a particular program would not meet. The fees are determined based on the total number of programming days in a year.

- The registration fee will increase from \$55.00 to \$60.00 in 25-26 and remain at \$60.00 in 26-27
- Monthly rates will increase from:
 - 2 day: increase from \$176.00 to \$181.00 in 25-26 and \$186.50 in 26-27
 - 3 day: increase from \$246.00 to \$253.00 in 25-26 and \$261.00 in 26-27
 - 5 day: increase from \$396.00 to \$408.00 in 25-26 and \$420.00 in 26-27
 - All day: will remain at \$980.00 in 25-26 and in 26-27
- Extended day rates will increase from \$12.00/day to \$14.00/day in 25-26 and \$14.50/day in 26-27

It was moved by Mr. Aune and seconded by Mr. Schwab to approve the Early Learning fee increases for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 as presented.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

These fees will be published in the community preschool brochures and mailed to homes in February.

Action Item – Approval of Updates to the School Board Roles, Standards and Expectations Document

Board member Steele presented a draft of a the revised “School Board Roles, Standards, and Expectations” document. At previous meetings, board members reviewed drafts of the revised “School Board Roles, Standards, and Expectations” document. In response to community interest in serving on the school board, the district has prepared this guide to advise current and prospective school board candidates on the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the board. This guide is also meant to inform the community on how the board fulfills its role.

It was moved by Mr. Hill and seconded by Mr. Aune to approve the revisions to the School Board Roles, Standards and Expectations document as presented.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

End of Year Report on 2024 School Board Goals

Board member Byron Schwab presented the end-of-year report on the 2024 School Board goals. The goals were approved on March 4, 2024. A midyear report was presented on August 5, 2024. The update included:

- Goal 1 - Identify resources (e.g., book, podcast, article) that will help the board deepen its knowledge on topics related to the strategic framework or other topics of interest.
 - This goal is completed.
- Goal 2 - Engage in regular development sessions to better understand district professional development, best practices in board governance, and other topics of interest.
 - Three sessions have been completed and focused on supporting LGBTQIA+ students, families and staff, Robert's Rules, and Governance vs. Management.
- Goal 3 - Update the Planning Committee charge statement to explicitly lay out intended collaboration around political advocacy with partner organizations.
 - This goal is completed and helps define and expand political advocacy partnerships.
- Goal 4 - Create a written document detailing the roles and expectations of board members in their school and committee liaison roles.
 - This goal is completed and helps clarify the role of the school and committee liaison.
- Goal 5 - Design a 197 t-shirt that helps community members identify Board members and feel welcome and encouraged to engage in conversation.
 - This goal is completed and helps increase awareness of the board and encourage dialogue with the community.

Summary of 2024 School Board Self-Evaluation

Board member Byron Schwab presented a summary of the 2024 School Board self-evaluation. Annually, board members and the Superintendent complete a self-evaluation. This was completed in late October. Results were compiled, shared, and discussed during a board development session on November 11, 2024. Board members and the Superintendent responded and rated themselves in five different competencies on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- #1 Board's performance in developing and maintaining a trusting relationship between the Board and the Superintendent and individual board members and the need for ongoing open and honest communication and collaboration. Rating 50% strongly agree, and 50% agree.
- #2 Board's performance in working with the Superintendent to formulate district policy, defining mutual expectations of performance with the Superintendent, and demonstrating good school governance to all district stakeholders. Rating 75% strongly agree, and 25% agree.
- #3 Board's performance in understanding and the modeling of appropriate value systems, ethics, and moral leadership. Rating 87.5% strongly agree, and 12.5% agree.
- #4 Board's performance in developing each board member's understanding of broad educational issues, trends, and best practices. Rating 57.14% strongly agree, and 28.57 % agree.
- #5 Board's performance in thoughtfully planning for the future and regularly making necessary adjustments to ensure continuous progress toward achieving stated goals. Rating 87.5% strongly agree, and 12.5% agree.

Major conclusions as areas of strength in all competencies included that the board is a positive, respectful, and collegial board that operates in a productive, effective, and efficient manner to keep learning, innovation, and student success at the center of our responsibilities. Major conclusions as areas of further development or improvement in all competencies included that there is a strong desire to have a deeper understanding of the use of data and various educational topics to be more effective, efficient, and empathetic leaders for District 197 and our broader community.

Board Committee Report

Chair Larsen presented a committee report on the Parent Ambassador Committee (PAN). PAN brings together representatives serving on their school's PTA, PTO, or Booster organizations for monthly meetings with the superintendent. These sessions provide a platform to share ideas and advise on district issues. Topics discussed so far this year include PTA/PTO fundraising, transportation, child nutrition, and more, fostering collaboration and engagement across the district.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Schwab and seconded by Mr. Hill to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Aye: Tim Aune, Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, Byron Schwab, Morgan Steele, Jon Vaupel. Nay: none.

The motion carried (6-0).

The next regularly scheduled School Board meeting of Independent School District 197 will be Monday, January 6, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. It will be held at the Mendota Heights Council Chambers, 1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights, MN.

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