

## SPRING LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING, JULY 21, 2025

The Spring Lake Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Monday, July 21, 2025 in person at the SLIS/MS Media Center. Jennifer Nicles called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Board members present: Jennifer Nicles, Kelly VanderHoek, Curt Theune, Paul Aldridge, Courtney Holmes and Dustin Brown. Absent: Christopher Beck

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **PRESENTATION**

#### **CURRICULUM UPDATE**

Kate Drake, Curriculum Director, provided a curriculum update to the Board which highlighted the following:

- Communication, bright spots and next steps
- Data points
- Evidence of collaboration
- Accountability
- Reciprocal credibility and trust-building
- Focus areas for the curriculum department:
  - MTSS – Multi-tiered System of Support
  - DIT – District Implementation Team
  - CAC – Curriculum Advisory Council
- OAISD partnership via Project AWARE
- Celebrations including:
  - 2024 state testing data
  - 2024 PSAT data
  - iReady benchmarking data
  - SLHS AP, dual enrollment and early college enrolment numbers
  - Seal of Biliteracy
  - Summer credit recovery
  - Multi-Language Learners WIDA test results
  - CAC
  - Collaboration and PLCs
  - Focus Area 4 of School Culture & Climate Survey
  - 2024-25 survey data points
  - DIT – SMART goals around Climate
  - Continuous improvement & systems
  - In-progress and what's ahead for DIT
  - Stakeholder Engagement/Feedback Loop – Spring Lake Assessment Matrix 25-26

Questions from the Board followed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Kelly VanderHoek moved, supported by Dustin Brown, to approve the Minutes of the Budget Hearing, Regular Meeting and Closed Session of June 16, 2025, as presented.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

**ITEMS RECEIVED TOO LATE FOR PRINTED AGENDA**

Action Item 7b – New Hires – add 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Holmes, Stephanie Bannink

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Michelle Prince 15165 Wildfield Dr, SL – provided information on the Early College program and that according to her brother, who is a teacher at Grand Haven Public Schools, Grand Haven schools are abandoning their elementary Spanish program.

Nancy Ireland, 1830 Pine Court, Grand Haven – commented on reducing music instruction time at the elementary level and the impact of moving music education to a half time program, including the elimination of concerts. She provided her findings of Spanish programs within other neighboring districts and indicated they are failing due to students not retaining the language and problems finding quality teachers. She indicated Mona Shores, Coopersville and Grand Haven have eliminated elementary Spanish.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

- Accounts Payable – Food Service, SLCFAC, General Fund, Student Activity, etc. – totaling \$1,976,975.
- Payroll – totaling \$3,006,773.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

**ACTION ITEMS**

**ELEMENTARY SPANISH**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek, to approve the addition of K-4 Spanish beginning with the 2025-26 school year as presented.

Dennis Furton, Superintendent, expressed his excitement about this opportunity and provided that concerts would still be a part of the music program. He indicated there is ample research that shows the benefits of learning language early but there are no expectations of fluency by the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade. He stated that the elementary principals strongly support this implementation and understand the

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concerns but see the opportunities students would have with this change. He indicated that if the Board approves this addition, goals for the program will be established and progress monitored.

Questions and comments from the Board followed, including:

Jen Nicles inquired about adding Spanish as a 5<sup>th</sup> special, and Mr. Furton advised that the district is not able to do that at this time due to budgetary constraints.

Curt Theune inquired about scheduling and if it would be a 50/50 split for Spanish and music. Mr. Furton indicated that, if approved, specials teachers will then meet with principals to determine the schedule for all specials

Kelly VanderHoek inquired if there would be any changes or impact to Intermediate vocal music. Mr. Furton indicated not this year, but there may be in 26-27 with expanding options for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and implementing some different strategies to increase vocal music participation in High School.

Courtney Holmes commented that she loves how passionate the teachers are and that she is excited about the opportunity to offer Spanish to elementary students.

Paul Aldridge provided that the take away is to not to come away with Spanish speaking students after elementary, but to provide culture improvements and culture awareness and to enhance learning abilities. He stated the need to set meaningful goals that can be measured.

Dustin Brown provided that while music has been a huge part of his life and that of his children, he wishes he had the ability to speak a foreign language. He stated that it is not just about learning the language, it is about learning cultures, rounding ourselves out, and that he is incredibly excited for the possibility of where this could go.

Kelly VanderHoek further provided that through the decades the district has added new classes, new offerings, new bands, new choirs, new clubs, new sports, which are necessary to consistently evolve and grow, offering new opportunities to help spark an interest for those students who might not be able to realize it any other way.

Jen Nicles shared at the request of Chris Beck, who was not able to be present for the meeting, that he would have voted no on this action item if he had been present.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

NEW HIRES

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek, to approve the following new hires as presented:

- Gavin Sundberg..... PE Teacher..... Jeffers Elementary
- Jenna Miller..... K-4 Spanish Teacher .....Holmes/Jeffers
- Eva Hawley..... Instructional Parapro..... Jeffers Elementary
- Leanne Darling ..... Food Service Assistant .....Intermediate/Middle Schools
- Stefanie Bannink ..... 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher..... Holmes Elementary

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Mr. Furton provided details on the new teaching staff and that all teaching positions are now filled.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

SCHOOL LOAN REVOLVING FUND ANNUAL LOAN APPLICATION RESOLUTION

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek, to approve the School Loan Revolving Fund Annual Loan Application resolution as presented.

Mr. Furton provided that this allows the district to have a set rate and maintain 7 mills on our debt.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

OFFICIAL DEPOSITORY FOR SCHOOL FUNDS RESOLUTION

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek, to approve the Official Depository for School Funds Resolution as presented.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

DISTRICT PROVIDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek, to approve August 20 and 21, 2025, and February 6, 2026 as student instructional time for the 2025-26 school year as presented.

Mr. Furton provided that there are 180 days of student contact time required and the state allows the district to count up to four PD days within that 180-day requirement as student instructional time. He noted that the district meets or exceeds the yearly minimum hours of instruction requirement even with these three PD days in the school schedule.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

HS CROSS COUNTRY TEAM OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

Curt Theune moved, supported by Paul Aldridge, to approve the HS Cross Country team overnight trip to the Leelanau Outdoor Center in Maple City, Michigan for August 13 through August 16, 2025 as presented.

Mr. Furton provided that district policy requires overnight trips to be approved by the Board.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

None

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**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Katlyn Almer 17586 Brucker St, GH – commented that, as a specials Art teacher in the district, she is having a hard time imagining what concerts would look like and stated there are numerous interruptions in a week to specials programs making it difficult to fit everything in. She believes that doubling the teaching load would make it harder to get to know the students and help them grow.

**SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Superintendent Furton reported on the following:

- Legislative Update – None
- Personnel – The paraprofessionals voted to unionize. There are 57 eligible members, 38 voted and 29 voted yes. Next steps will begin and be reported back to the Board.
- Calendar/Events:
  - August 11 – Tentative Ribbon Cutting
  - August 12 – New Teacher Orientation & Board Luncheon
  - August 20 & 21 – Professional Development

Curt Theune inquired about the unionize of the paraprofessionals and Mr. Furton indicated that negotiations will begin with their current work conditions and will be incorporated into the current Spring Lake Educational Support Personnel Association (SLESPA) collective bargaining agreement.

**UPCOMING MEETING**

- Regular Board Meeting – August 18, 2025, 6:00 p.m., IS/MS Media Center

**ADJOURNMENT**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kelly VanderHoek to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

Jennifer Nicles adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Board Secretary