

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625  
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING  
360 Colborne Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**January 6, 2026  
4:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by Vice Chair Valliant.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Board of Education: E. Valliant, J. Vue, C. Franco, Y. Carrillo, H. Henderson, U. Ward, C. Allen

Staff: Superintendent Stanley, K. Bergstrom, S. Dahlke

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA**

**MOTION: Director Valliant moved to approve the other of the main agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Henderson. It passed by acclaim.**

**4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Superintendent Stanley noted that at board member spaces at the meeting, there are two pieces from the Dignity Index, and this is a tool being used at Leadership Advance, where leaders from the district meet every three months, and this is a new tool that was recently introduced at a conference, and felt it was good to bring back to the Board in the efforts to focus on belonging and dignity.

Director Henderson requested information if this has been used in other spaces, and how this will be used in a classroom setting. Dr. Stanley noted that this was a recent conference in October, and eventually, we want every staff member to use this, and it complements the 415 policy. This will bring greater clarity to the work as leaders to cascade that down throughout the organization.

Director Allen noted questions about how this tool will be used in alignment with the Courageous Conversations and tools currently being used. Dr. Stanley noted this is not replacing the Courageous Conversations framework, but another tool of cultural proficiency, and they will compliment one another. She also noted the book study, *Belonging Through Dignity*, and these tools, coupled with the work of Zaretta Hammond for culturally responsive instruction. These are tools that will allow us to assess the organization, and allow us to declare what we are going to and healthy behaviors inside the organization. We all need the knowledge for this application and tools to apply learning around cultural competency to help transform the organization. Cultural competency is about understanding another person's experience and bring that to the classroom through students and parents. It's important work to move in this district. The Tools of Cultural Proficiency is an inside-out approach to look at ourselves as individuals and as a system. We are the staff with our students most of the day, and this work starts at the personal, local, immediate level, and will them move outwards. Director Carrillo noted the tools available and to think of student experiences, as well as out own as leaders, and to get to a place where we are curious about differences and disagreements and how to perceive the world differently. It will be important to help the Board govern better and to be better listeners of the community. It is a tumultuous time, and we are being asked to process all those

things differently in the community, and then turn around and govern effectively. It's difficult because we are also humans and are carrying a lot and each person has a different experience.

## **5. SPPS ATHLETICS UPDATE**

Andrea Schmidt, Districtwide Athletic Director, then presented this report. Included in the presentation was a review of athletic participation trends, examination of fall survey feedback, updated on processes and structure, sharing of what is on the horizon, and short- and long-term priorities.

Data on middle school participation was shown, with program trends, middle school fall survey data inside snapshot data and reported strengths and opportunities for improvement. Data on high school athletics participation was also shown, as well as survey data, such as snapshot information, strengths, and opportunities for improvement. Other updates included athletic training services, cooperative teams, high school coach evaluation process, middle school pathways/continuation.

Within the updated on the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL), details were provided on girls flag football and girls wrestling, as well as compliance updates.

Short-term goals, as well as long-term goals, were also shown for SPPS athletics.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Carrillo noted ways to collaborate with Parks and Rec in the city to open access to facilities for soccer and basketball, which are the most impacted with applicants to the team.
- Director Henderson noted the capacity conversation and the city development of space, and ways to be partners of the land with the city and the impacts to the neighborhood.
- Director Allen noted partnerships with Community Education to offer camps and opportunities for students to try athletics. Ms. Schmidt noted that there are many supports in community, however, it is usually for PreK-8 grade levels, and it would be helpful to see consistency at the high school level as well. There are many supports, however, they don't often communicate with each other and there are different clinics throughout the city, so we need to be careful to not "spread ourselves too thin" and find gaps that are not addressed. It's a delicate balance to support these entities who are feeding students into our programs in ways that are benefiting them and us, but also not placing too much on our families.
- Director Allen noted the rising popularity of girl's wrestling, and ways to support and encourage younger students. Those investments in Community Education programs to support our students in something they love and can succeed are important. Ms. Schmidt noted that wrestling is one of the lowest-cost sports offered by MSHSL, and St. Paul has one of the best youth programs. A lot of folks in Saint Paul are invested in wrestling. There was recently a large tournament at Como for a middle school wrestling competition.
- Director Franco noted questions about co-ops, and reasons for them, as well as how our schools are encouraging participating in sports not hosted by the home school, with the hopes and intentions of returning to full-strength that offers a standalone sport. He also requested information if there is a two-year commitment required. Response: Ms. Schmidt noted a few examples. Hockey is not a sport that is growing in Saint Paul, but gymnastics is one of the recent larger co-ops where we can tell the youth who are coming into the program. For the two-year expectation, it is from the MSHSL, and a way to protect themselves so that teams are not picking when to be a co-op based on players. There's also language stating that schools involved in the co-op can apply for dissolution, but the amount of time, effort, funding, emotions, parent involvement – it's very impactful to co-op and de-co-op a team. The sport is a culture piece and it's important to not disrupt that and we want to continue to offer opportunities to our students.
- Director Franco also requested information on the academics side of athletics, and supports for those students – especially if they may only be behind a credit or two and not able to participate. We know that for some students participation in sports is a min driver of their attendance at school.

There needs to be a way for students to still be a part of the team, even if they are not playing every week, and to know there are adults who care and support them. We ask a lot of our coaches, and want to also see our students be successful.

- He also noted questions about ways to prioritize the competitiveness of programs and growth in development, ways that we are supporting our coaches, and ways athletic directors are supporting coaches as well.
- He also noted that as a school board member appointed to MSHSL, he appreciates being in that space, and is able to support for progress.
- He went on to note the Athletics Advisory Council, and ways to expand that group to invite more folks involved in youth and community sports in the city to think about the rebuild of middle school sports and strengthened high school sports. Those partnerships are important, and would be happy to be part of that work and help recruit to see the growth and expansions of those programs. He appreciates this group and the guiding direction of the district, with some separate strategic planning of feedback will be important.
- Director Allen noted the need for academic input around athletics and would like to see AVID or similar programs in conjunction with athletics. Response: We want to work with athletes to succeed, and athletics are so important for many students to encourage them to attend school. There are academic interventions plans for each student, and they usually involve attendance. If students are showing up, they will be fairly successful to move forward. There are also small stipends for study halls, and many teams have study halls. There is work being done, but it is inconsistent. We find most coaches value education, but don't always have the time or resources, but it is a work in progress.
  - Director Allen noted an idea for the athletic director in the building to work with the counseling office. Ms. Schmidt noted that most work is done with a coach, assistant principal or counselor and regular check-ins.
  - It was also noted that Administration is open for suggestions on how to collect data in real-time and consistently, because there are many students who "fly under the radar" and coaches may not know they are struggling. There are a lot of students in athletics and teachers ensure they are connecting with students, and there needs to be a way for coaches to have access to that information as well.
- Dr. Stanley noted a future meeting with Director Allen and Director Franco, as well as Ms. Schmidt to further discuss the direction for this work
- Director Valliant also shared a personal story about profiling at a school and the importance of athletics to the students.

## **8. MOTION TO AMENDA THE MAIN AGENDA**

**MOTION: Director Ward to amend the main agenda, and to include discussion on the process for filing a board vacancy and the Resolution Establishing Process for Filling Board Vacancy to follow the Policy Update. The motion was seconded by Director Henderson. The motion passed by acclaim.**

## **6. FISCAL YEAR 2027 (FY27) BUDGET UPDATE**

Tom Sager, Executive Chief of Financial Services, then provided this report, including an update on FY26 budget and fund balance, review of the FY27 budget assumptions, budget engagement summary to date, and the review of the FY27 budget timeline and important dates.

Within the FY25 and FY26 budget and fund balance update it was noted that for FY26, the the District has budgeted a decrease in total fund balance by \$35.5 million. This will bring the unassigned fund balance to 5.13 percent of general operating expense. For FY 26, lower than expected K-12 enrollment by roughly 500 students will impact revenue.

Within FY27 budget assumptions, the key drivers to a school district budget were reviewed, as well as other assumptions including adherence to the minimum of a 5% unassigned fund balance, preliminary enrollment

projection, no other changes to the other parts of the funding formula, and slight increases to special education and English learner revenue formula. There is a decrease of additional 400 students for SY26-27; this is in addition to the 500 fewer-than-projected students in SY25-26. Additional assumptions include the inflationary increases to non-employment expenses, Paid Family Leave expenses, and four critical employment contracts are settled for the FY27 budget year.

Information was also shared on the voter-approved increase to the operating levy, and FY27 anticipated revenue, FY27 anticipated expenses, FY27 fund balance outlook. Based on these assumptions, the District's estimated expense could exceed its revenue in FY27 by approximately \$15.1 million, which is 1.88% of the total budget. Factors that could alter this estimated shortfall: Enrollment, state funding formula, employment contracts, operational savings in areas such as substitute teaching and supplemental pay, impact of new federal policies and structure pertaining to education and the economy. The pathway forward was also discussed with an anticipated ending FY26 Fund Balance: \$39.38 million, or 5.13%. The FY27 shortfall can be addressed via normal employee attrition and disciplined spending on discretionary choices. No anticipated need to use fund balance.

Budget engagement was also reviewed, including the December 11 budget meetings and themes from those meetings, and data from the 2026-27 budget survey.

The 2026-2027 budget timeline was also shown.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

#### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Ward noted the significant decrease in enrollment and further details. Response: We will be looking more into that. The enrollment report from the previous year was also noted, and there was data that was indicative, and we will be looking more into this data.
- Director Franco noted the change to compensatory funding – and if there can be more information provided in terms of asks to state legislature to change back to make it whole again. Response: There is a Blue Ribbon Commission around compensatory education, and they don't need to report their findings back before budget is finalized for FY27. We will meet with legislators soon. Some groups who note that the hold harmless would expire on June 30<sup>th</sup>, before the budget would take place and before a decision by the commission. Some advocacy groups have language that would continue the hold harmless through and until a decision is made, or recommendation, and the legislature acts on the recommendation from the commission. We need to consider that we are down \$2M, and hope they determine the next steps. We will know more around early- to mid-February with the compensatory aid from MDE, and will have a better estimate.
- Director Ward noted the activity at the federal government level, and to what degree our budget will be affected. Response: It is difficult to determine at this point. We are watching it. So far special education and Title funds seem to be in place, however if those went away, there is a series of strategies to deploy. How it will roll out is to be determined. Title I appears to be solid, but we do receive funding for Title II, III, and IV. If the pattern holds with attempts to restrict other Titles, which are about \$2M each, then we could be impacted, and would mean shifts in how we fund and what we fund. It is possible, and we are watching it carefully, and it is possible to any shifts with Title funds, but we don't know how quickly. With the ICE efforts, it's fair to say it is volatile right now, and we don't know the impacts. We are anticipating being down 400 students, and we don't know the impacts of the ICE efforts.
- It's important to provide the clarity as much as possible because it is significant. The \$37.2M did help to stabilize us, and reductions in the budget, and we are stabilizing, yet not knowing the true impact on the future and ICE efforts, and realistically, it could be more.
- There are other funds that receive federal resources, including Community Education, that could be impacted, and Nutrition program. It is widespread across the district.

## **7. POLICY UPDATE**

### **a. Policy 701.00 - Investment and Banking**

Daniel Moser, Executive Director of Financial Services, the presented this proposed update. Changes include merging three policies (701.00, 703.00, and 705.00) into one policy, a transition to the new format, new section of policy purpose, general statement of policy, electronic fund transfers (EFTs), and position title changes.

The full presentation and draft of the proposed policy revisions can be found in the BoardBook.

**QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Henderson noted that for policies titles have been typically removed, and they have been changed to the “Superintendent or designee”, so mentions of a specific title should be changed.
- Director Ward noted the passing of the resolution to divest in fossil fuels and the resolution to divest in private prisons, and to raise those in regards to this policy. The Board discussed a possible amendment to this revision, as resolutions are generally for short-term changes. A solution may be within the cross-references in the policy.
- The policy draft will need to be updated to include “The Board shall designate depositories” instead of “approve” as noted in the presentation.
- Director Valliant noted questions about Electronic Fund Transfers, and if it includes payroll. Response: This refers to external transfers.

**MOTION:** Director Valliant moved to approve that the review of Policy 701.00 at the January 6, 2026 Committee of the Board meeting be considered the First Reading of the three reading process, and that the review of the policy at the January 20, 2026 Board of Education meeting will be considered the Second Reading. The motion was seconded by Director Franco. The motion passed by acclaim.

**b. Rescissions of Policy 703.00 - Annuities & Policy 705.00 – Investments**

Daniel Moser, Executive Director of Financial Services, the presented the proposed rescissions of these policies because they are moving to the proposed updated to 701.00 – Investments and Banking.

The full presentation and draft of the proposed rescissions can be found in the BoardBook.

**QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- None

**MOTION:** Director Valliant moved to approve the review of the rescissions of Policies 703.00 and 705.00 at the January 6, 2026 Committee of the Board meeting be considered the First Reading of the three reading process, and that the review of the policy at the January 20, 2026 Board of Education meeting will be considered the Second Reading. The motion was seconded by Director Allen. The motion passed by acclaim.

**c. Policy 706.00 - Grants and Gifts**

Daniel Moser, Executive Director of Financial Services, the presented the proposed updates of this policy, which included a transition to the new policy format including a policy purpose and general statement of policy, and more substance than the previous policy which include “The School Board supports accepting grants, gifts, and bequests that align with the district’s mission and policies. Donations require appropriate approvals, with gifts over \$5,000 needing Board approval, and all accepted contributions becoming district property, documented, and used according to donor intent under the Superintendent’s oversight.” Once a gift/grant is accepted, it becomes district property and ensure it is used for the “public purpose.”

The full presentation and draft of the proposed policy revisions can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Henderson noted the formatting of the policy draft, and identification of new language versus the existing language, and will need to be adjusted.
- Director Vue requested information on the \$5,000 threshold, which can be provided at the next reading.

**MOTION:** Director Valliant moved to approve that the review of Policy 706.00 at the January 6, 2026 Committee of the Board meeting be considered the First Reading of the three reading process, and that the review of the policy at the January 20, 2026 Board of Education meeting will be considered the Second Reading. The motion was seconded by Director Henderson. The motion passed by acclaim.

## **9. RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING PROCESS FOR FILLING BOARD VACANCY**

Director Ward noted that there is a Board vacancy to fill with the resignation of Director Vue, and the proposed resolution outlines a process to fill that expediently. It is a different process than in previous years. This process is more closely aligned to the search process for the superintendent and general counsel, which feels more open and transparent. It charges the Chair to create and issue an open call for applications, and included information on the qualifications and eligibility of candidates. He noted that the candidate must not intend to run for the seat in the November election, so as not to exert the institutional power to pick someone and influence the election. The Executive Committee will then review applications, and attempt to bring 2-4 finalists to the Board for small group discussions. The rationale for 2-4 finalists was discussed. The goal is to complete the search in March, and it will move quickly.

Director Franco noted there would be no public interview of the finalists? This seems like it is small group interviews, but the deliberation with the full Board would be the only full Board discussion? The last board vacancy, there was a public interview with the full Board. He noted it would be a wise decision to have a public interview. Director Henderson also noted being in favor of a full public interview, to create additional transparency, and that is important to a seat that represents the community, and some availability for community to have a perspective.

Director Ward noted a public interview instead of small groups, or in addition to?

Director Franco noted that there would be the Executive Committee to vet through the preliminary applicants, and some interviews of the Executive Committee to conduct to get to 2-4 finalists, and then present those finalists to the Board with information, and that would align with the superintendent search process. Director Henderson noted that small groups and public interviews may be redundant; Director Carrillo also agreed and shared his experience in the interim board member process a few years ago. He noted an in-person meeting, and the pre-selection process may be necessary if there are many applicants. If there is a large amount of applicants, there could be a preselection process with public deliberations, and process, with questions to leadership about a public way to get to a select group of finalists. There were interviews, and deliberations immediately after all in one meeting.

General Counsel noted the state statute that sets forth the system to do this, as well as Policy 202.02. The Minnesota School Board Association also shares guidance on this process, including questions within the application and interview for transparency. She also noted a special meeting in March for the public forum, and there is a 30-day waiting period for a petition. The candidate would then be able to start in April.

Director Carrillo noted adding eligibility requirements on the application. He also noted accepting applications from those who state they will not run, but they are not legally bound by that, and may run. Director Ward noted background checks of applicants, and also in statute and eligibility, and to include in the notice. Data practices were also noted, and to include in the application and public data.

Director Franco noted questions on the legal process to post process until the position is vacant, or allowed to post as soon as possible? General Counsel noted the signed resolution begins the process.

There was a recommendation to amend the resolution to strike out small group meetings, and only have a public interview.

Director Vue noted making the least barriers as possible to get the best candidates, and to be transparent and follow the process, but also do not make it more difficult than it should be.

There were also questions about the age requirement.

**BF 34546** Resolution Establishing Process for Filling Board Vacancy

**MOTION: Director Ward moved Resolution Establishing Process for Filling Board Vacancy, with the amendment to strike out “small group” under 5 and “small group” under 7. The motion was seconded by Director Franco. It passed by acclaim.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ward	Absent
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Absent
Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes

Director Ward thanked Director Henderson for her work, and in serving as her Vice Chair, he was able to learn from her, and allowed Director Ward to be a better board member and elsewhere.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

**Director Valliant moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Carrillo seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.**

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Ward	Absent
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Absent
Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

**11. WORK SESSION**

The Board then conducted a work session regarding the 2026 Graduation Ceremony Schedule - Board Member Attendance; and determination of a date for the Board Retreat.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke, Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education