

GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD
GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
January 5, 2026

The School Board of Grand Forks Public School District No. 1 held a regular meeting on Monday, January 5, 2026, at the Mark Sanford Education Center, with President Dave Berger presiding.

Board Members Present: Josh Anderson, Dave Berger, Amber Flynn, Dr. Sherry Houdek, Jay Kleven, Joel Larson, Eric Lunn, Jeff Manley (via phone), and Bill Palmiscno.

Board Members Absent: None.

Student Board Members Present: None.

Student Board Members Absent: Adrianna Tande and McKayla Sagini.

Others Present: Dr. Terry Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Brandon Baumbach, Business Manager; Dr. Catherine Gillach, Associate Superintendent of Secondary Education; Matt Bakke, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education; Joe Drumm, Vice President of the Grand Forks Education Association; and Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

Call to Order and Voluntary Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Reading of School Board Meeting Norms.

Lunn read aloud the school board's meeting norms.

Approval of Agenda.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Kleven to approve the agenda as written. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Larson, Palmiscno, Kleven, Lunn, Anderson, Houdek, Flynn, and Berger. Nay: None. Absent: Manley.

Public Comments.

None.

Manley joined the meeting via phone at 6:04 pm.

Recap of December 12, 2025, Board Retreat.

Baumbach provided a recap of the December 12, 2025, school board retreat, during which board members and administrators discussed school district priorities and budget allocations. Board

members can expect to receive the administration's recommendations at the school board's special meeting scheduled for January 12.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Discussion.

The board held a philosophical discussion regarding the PILOT process, noting that key aspects are governed by state law and cannot be modified by the board and that the district's primary lens is the impact on students.

Concerns were raised about the timing of district involvement, as PILOT requests often reach the board late in the process, limiting meaningful negotiation and creating forced decisions within statutory response timelines. There was general agreement that earlier and more coordinated engagement among all taxing entities would improve transparency, shared understanding, and collaboration.

The board discussed whether policies, rubrics, or best practices could help guide the process. While a policy was viewed as potentially limiting due to changing project conditions, there was interest in establishing clearer expectations to

better evaluate financial impacts, feasibility, and long-term sustainability. Overall, the discussion highlighted the need for improved communication, earlier information sharing, and better coordination among governing entities.

Finance Committee Report.

Palmiscno reported on the December 15, 2025, Finance Committee meeting. The committee received an update on safety and security projects, noting that bid documents are complete and bids for the GFC project are being solicited. The overall project estimate has decreased compared to earlier projections. One remaining consideration is coordinating with a city traffic study to ensure the proper placement of an entry point at Phoenix Elementary School.

The possibility of opening the new parking lot at Wilder Elementary School for teacher use was discussed.

Baumbach noted that the project process has improved over time, putting the district in a budget-positive position with contingencies in place.

Appreciation was expressed for the successful referendum, which enabled the district to move forward with these projects.

Consent Agenda.

It was moved by Palmiscno and seconded by Kleven to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- Correction to November 24, 2025, school board meeting minutes;
- Approval of December 8, 12, and 15, 2025, school board meeting minutes as written;
- Student travel request to Kanuma, Japan, October 8-18, 2026;
- Open enrollment applications as presented;
- Third-party request for access to student information for wow.boomlearning.com, Sign Glasses, Grand Forks Taxi, and MV Learning, LLC;

Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Palmiscno, Anderson, Lunn,

Flynn, Larson, Manley, Kleven, Houdek, and Berger. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Consideration of Architectural Services Proposal as a Building Fund Expense.

Baumbach provided an update on a 2023 on-site civil rights compliance review and on one remaining compliance issue: the slope of the Rider Room ramp to the stage area does not fully meet accessibility standards under older regulations. A proposal was presented to address the issue within bidding thresholds, with work planned for this summer. Compliance will result in some seating loss.

The discussion included a review of the proposed contract terms, noting that certain provisions differed from standard contract language. It was clarified that board action would be limited to approval of funding from the building fund, with contract terms to be finalized through administrative and legal processes.

It was moved by Kleven and seconded by Anderson to approve the proposal to pay up to \$14,200 from the building fund for the Rider Room ramp project. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Flynn, Kleven, Anderson, Houdek, Palmiscno, Lunn, Manley, Larson, and Berger. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Announcements.

- Today was noted as a great day for the new Valley Middle School, and tomorrow, when students arrive. Staff and visitors were rejoicing about the prospect of properly functioning heating and air conditioning.
- The new student transportation process, in which students scan their badges on the bus, started today. It is a great security improvement that allows parents to track when their students are getting on and off the bus through an app on their phone.

Board Requests for Future Consideration.

None.

School Board Meeting Norms—How Did We Do?

Lunn concluded that the board followed its meeting norms 100%.

Adjournment.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
(Date)

Dave Berger, President

Brandon Baumbach, Business Manager