

**GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD**  
**GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1**  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
January 12, 2026

The School Board of Grand Forks Public School District No. 1 held a special meeting on Monday, January 12, 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, 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; Branden Shepperd, GFAFB School Board Liaison; Brady Olson, President of the Grand Forks Education Association; Dr. Gabe Dahl, Associate Principal, Grand Forks Central High School; Jon Strandell, Principal, Grand Forks Central High School; Dr. Kris Arason; Principal Red River High School; Kevin Ohnstad, Principal, Phoenix Elementary School; Travis Thorvilson, Principal, Lake Agassiz Elementary School; Travis Neil, Principal, South Middle School; David Nowatzki, Principal, Schroeder Middle School; Amy Bartsch, Chief Academic Officer; and Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

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

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m., and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Reading of School Board Meeting Norms.**

Dr. Houdek read aloud the school board's meeting norms.

**Budget Realignment Discussion – Criteria, Conditions, and Ongoing Deliberations.**

Dr. Brenner read a memorandum outlining the District's budget realignment framework, criteria, and process. He reviewed the origin of the budget realignment work, noting it began at the August 14, 2025, School Board Retreat and has since included multiple board retreats, administrative meetings, staff engagement, association meetings, surveys, and public report-outs. He emphasized that the process has been deliberate, inclusive, and transparent, with consideration given to student, operational, financial, and community impacts. Fifty-two

realignment concepts, aligned under previously identified framework areas and agreed upon and recommended by elementary, middle, and high school principals, directors, and district leadership, were presented. These concepts will continue to be discussed at upcoming board retreats and meetings as part of the ongoing budget realignment process.

Larson joined the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

Baumbach presented an overview of the district's budgetary circumstances, citing increased student needs, slowing and capped property tax revenues, reduced federal support, and declining enrollment, which collectively require at least \$4.4 million in expenditure reductions next year.

**Public Comments.**

Berger provided opening remarks outlining expectations for decorum and the process for public comments.

Listed below are the names of citizens who spoke before the Board, along with the topics they indicated on their comment cards. The topics reflect what was written and may differ from the details of their spoken remarks.

1. Michelle Cremers – Phys. Ed. credit reduction.
2. Mark Varriano – HS requirements.
3. Jeff Bakke - proposed budget cuts to physical education.
4. Bill Lorenz – credit reduction at the HS level.
5. Andrea Charlebois – physical education credit reduction.
6. Stetson Carr – transparency, PE requirements.
7. Tyler York – proposed budget adjustments to the 2025-2026 budget.
8. Miley Pisen – budget cuts.
9. Bricker McGillicuddy – proposed budget savings measures for GFPS.
10. Paul Barta – cuts to the music program.
11. Amy DeWitt – elementary music CODA cuts.
12. Niska Kempenich – budget cuts – music activity fees and removing classes.
13. Alexander Humble – proposal to cut the German 3/4 class at GFC.
14. Patricia Humble – proposal to remove German III/IV from Central.
15. Erika Feole – support for upper level German.
16. JoAnna Helms – transportation director.
17. Dale Helms – transportation layoff.
18. Jimmy Sweat – Grand Forks Virtual High School program.
19. Carlie Hoffman – reduction of school nurses by one position.

During citizen comments, Board members, executive administrators, and other administrative staff periodically offered clarifications and general explanations regarding current programs and proposed changes.

Berger and Dr. Brenner provided closing remarks. Dr. Brenner reminded attendees of the upcoming Board retreat scheduled for Friday, January 16, from 8:00 a.m. to noon, at the First Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Houdek concluded that the Board received an “A” for following its meeting norms.

**Adjournment.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

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Dave Berger, President

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Brandon Baumbach, Business Manager