



COLUMBIA HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Independent School District 13
Columbia Heights, Minnesota
Community Room

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

January 20, 2026

Chair Granlund called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Student School Board Representative Swearing-in of Christian Pena and Kadence Hanson.

Clerk Palmer called the roll.

Members present: Ms. Granlund, Ms. Medearis, Ms. Houle, Ms. Palmer, Ms. Pettway, Ms. Mueller, Ms. Anwar, Ms. Hanson, Mr. Pena Velez, Superintendent Stenvik

Members absent: None

Hylander Highlight, Amjad Mohamed, was honored by the Minnesota State High School Soccer Association with Class AA All-State second Team selection. He was a leader on the Soccer team during his years playing at the varsity level.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mueller, seconded by Medearis, to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor. Motion Carried.

Announcements

January 26, No School

February 5, Flex Learning Day

February 6 No School

February 10, 5:30 School Board Work Session, Community Room

February 17, 4:45 Subcommittee of Policy, Superintendent Conference Room

COMMUNICATION TO THE BOARD – None

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Houle, seconded by Palmer, to approve the action required to implement the items on the consent agenda. **Minutes** January 6, 2026, and January 13, 2026, **Treasury Report**- September 25 and October 2025 **Personal Report**: BACKGROUND: Support Patty Pappas: Change to Mini Adv Club Supv, 6.0 hrs/day, Comm Ed, effective 1/5/26. Margarita Donayre: Change to Mini Adv Club Asst, 3.75 hrs/day, Comm Ed, effective 1/5/26. Miriam Rivas Mendez: Change to Mini Adv Club Asst, 5.5 hrs/day, Comm Ed, effective 1/5/26. Robert Hallin: Change to Day Custodian, NP, current employee, effective 1/5/26. Coach/Advisor/Additional

Assignment Devon Minke: ENCORE Teacher Sub, NP, Current employee, effective school year 2025-2026. Logan Spears: Building Leadership Team, VV, current employee, effective school year 2025-2026. Logan Spears: Co-Student Patrol, VV, current employee, effective school year 2025-2026. Tiffany Jiang: Co-Student Patrol, VV, current employee, effective school year 2025-2026. Eli Forsline: Assistant Boys Basketball Coach, CA, current employee, effective school year 2025-2026. Jen Heveron: Assistant Boys Basketball Coach, CA, current employee, effective school year 2025-2026. Resignations/Terminations Pashia Scott: Educ Asst, CHHS, effective 12/19/25. Reason: Resignation. Jennifer Thompson: Early Childhood/Developmental Screener Sub, Comm Ed, effective 10/15/25. Reason: Temporary Assignment. Annie Kuznik: School Psychologist, CA/VV, effective 6/11/26. Reason: Resignation. Stan Mraz: Teacher, NP, effective 6/11/26. Reason: Retirement. Meredith Shafer: Teacher, NP, effective 6/11/26. Reason: Resignation. Duc Nguyen: Boys Volleyball Coach, CHHS, effective 6/15/25. Reason: Seasonal. Patrick Baumgardner: Asst Wrestling Coach, CHHS, effective 3/5/25. Reason: Seasonal. All in Favor. Motion Carried.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS RESOLUTION

Member Palmer introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption: Minnesota Statute 123B.02 permits school boards to “...receive, for the benefit of the district, bequests, donations, or gifts for any proper purpose and apply the same to the purpose designated. On that behalf, the board may act as trustee of any trust created for the benefit of the district and for the benefit of pupils thereof.” Therefore, the School Board of Columbia Heights Public Schools, Independent School District No. 13, resolves to accept with appreciation the \$27,793.50 in monetary contributions detailed in the background.

Monetary

- Tami Fisher and Nicole Halabi both donated \$100.00 to the Retired Staff Scholarship Fund.
- Anonymous Donation of \$10,000 to Valley View Elementary Sunshine Fund to Support Scholarship Fund for Students.
- Anonymous Donation of \$150 to North Park for School Supplies.
- Anonymous donation of \$6,000 to Valley View Elementary for the Scholarship Fund.
- Michelene Verlautz donated \$1,000 to Valley View for the food shelf.
- Karissa Ouren and an Anonymous donor each donated \$25, Kristen Stuenkel and Corinne Linderman each donated \$50.00 to Columbia Heights Public Schools Early Childhood Program.
- Zach Garman donated \$200.00 to North Park School for Innovation.
- Nikki Wakal donated \$25 to Columbia Academy.
- Joan Leonard donated \$50 and NorthBeast Petcare, LLC donated \$100 to Columbia Heights Public Schools.
- Veit Automotive Foundation: History Museum donated \$500.00 to Highland Elementary Food Shelf.
- Box Top donated \$80.00 to Highland Elementary.
- Valley View PTO donated \$1,038.50, Valley View Sunshine Committee donated \$700.00, and Maria O'Phelan donated \$200.00 to Valley View Elementary for school use.

- Italian American Club Foundation donated \$5,000 to Columbia Heights High School for Staff Appreciation.
- Trevor Major donated \$100, and Brothers Empowered donated \$1,000 to the Athletics Department to support Boys Basketball.
- Dean Bliss & Joyce Bliss donated \$2,000 to the Columbia Heights High School 2026 Scholarship Fund.

In-Kind

- Anonymous Donor donated Snow pants, Boots, Gloves/Hats, Jackets, and a Gift Card for purchase of additional winter clothing valued at 454.60 to North Park School for Innovation
- Anonymous Donor donated Blankets for Families valued at \$487.92 to Highland Elementary
- Anonymous Donor donated Food for the Community Gathering valued at \$200.00 to Cookie Cart delivery for the Community Gathering
- Anonymous Donor donated food valued at \$74.20 to Valley View Elementary to support Families.
- Anonymous Donor donated Gift Cards to the School District valued at \$475.00 to Columbia Heights Public Schools to Support acknowledgement of substitute teachers.

The total fiscal year 2025-2026 monetary contributions to date: \$51782.06. The motion for the adoption of the preceding resolution was duly seconded by Member Pettway, and upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof: Granlund –Aye, Houle-Aye, Medearis-Aye, Mueller-Aye, Palmer-Aye, Pettway-Aye; the following voted against the same: None. Thereupon, the said resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

BOARD REPORTS

Granlund, I have been out in the community comforting a community member who had a child taken by ICE today. I have spent the last two weeks in our community making efforts to keep our students, staff, and families safe. I have seen the power of community. Grateful for the people who are stepping up to ensure the community is safe and that all families have access to food and what they need. We will continue to do our best to live our mission and values.

Houle - participated in the work session and the community engagement/legislative action committee meeting.

Medearis -participated in the December legislative exchange program meeting at North Park School for Innovation, sharing the wonderful, unique programming in the district. Attended the band concert at Columbia Academy, Holiday baking class with Community Education, PTO meetings at Columbia Academy and Highland, the Board Organizational Meeting, Work session, and Policy Subcommittee meeting. Personal message to the community and surrounding communities as a parent, school board member, and neighbor, feeling in the roles seeing how many people are stepping up and serving others in really traumatic and changing times you know who you are and I would like to extend appreciation for everything everyone is doing to make sure our students are safe at school and that they can continue to learn.

Mueller participated in the work session, closed session, and the subcommittee on community engagement meetings. Held conversations with many community members and sending a huge thank-you to those who continue to come out to help students get to and from school safely.

Palmer attended the organizational meeting and a couple of negotiation meetings with Local 710 and the subcommittee on policy.

Pettway, in December, I attended the Columbia Academy band concert. In January, I attended a work session, the closed sessions, and the MSBA conference, which provided great fellowship with other Board members across Minnesota. Participated in my first chair meeting and first community engagement/legislative action committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT For the last 6 years, I have always said my top priority is the safety of children, staff, families, and community members. I have been empowered to be in this position to do that job. That job has become increasingly more challenging. I want to take a moment and thank our staff who are working around the clock trying to support families that have had small children taken, like today. My heart is shattered for our families. I will continue to uphold our mission and vision and all the work we are here to do to help support children.

STUDENT SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVES

Anwar – Attended the Organizational meeting, the speech team mock trial, it was fun to see all the new members on the team, a boys' basketball, they did not win but it was a close game, Columbia Heights High School sit-in the PAC, it was a wonderful experience seeing fellow classmates and staff come listen to what our community members were saying and student experiences during this difficult time in our community.

Hanson- Lately attending AI committee meetings with fellow students, staff, community members, and parents, and hearing the varying opinions on AI use in our schools. I've learned a lot about how AI can impact our environment. Working on the Heights Herald. It's been very stressful and a very hard time in our class because we decided it would be safer not to report on any current ICE activity. It is very hard and disheartening because we don't have to be censored anymore necessarily, but we are choosing to censor ourselves because we don't want to have our school be unsafe or be targeted because of what we are saying. This has been very disheartening and very hard for many in the class.

Rena Velez, recently, due to mental health reasons, I have actually, instead of coming to school, been attending PHP. I still stay connected. I just learned now that we are choosing not to report on Ice because I was not informed. It truly feels horrible, especially when we can't share the passion for telling the truth and telling others how to stay safe and protect their families, even when we can't report on it. I've missed my time with the paper, but I am proud of our students' efforts. My friends help organize the sit-in in the PAC. I'm proud of seeing students come at such an unknown time, especially since a lot more people are in danger, and there has been more violence in our community and the surrounding area. It is tragic to see all of this happen. I think our community is still finding a way to stay strong even in the most uncertain times. We still have something to fight for at the end of the day. I have a sense of pride in our community. Being able to confidently say that I am proud of the people in this room.

Policy First Reading

The following Policies were reviewed at the December 9th policy subcommittee meeting and will be presented to the Board for a second reading and approval at a future board meeting.

407- Employee Right to Know-Hazardous Substances

412- Expense Reimbursements

Discontinuance of Programs and Positions for 2026-2027

Member Palmer introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption:

BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE ADMINISTRATION TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCTIONS IN PROGRAMS AND POSITIONS AND REASONS THEREFORE.

WHEREAS, the Compensatory Aide funding stream is uncertain, with the potential for Columbia Heights Public Schools to see a reduction of approximately \$4 million dollars, and

WHEREAS, the School District continues to have a Special Education cross-subsidy of over \$3.2 million, requiring the School District's general fund to cover this obligation, and

WHEREAS, the School District continues to have an English Learner cross-subsidy of approximately \$350,000 with funding uncertainties and requires the School District's general fund to cover this obligation, and

WHEREAS, enrollment is declining, which affects the School District budget, and

WHEREAS, the new voter-approved operating levy funding remains well below the metro average, and

WHEREAS, the financial condition of the School District is dependent on Federal, State, and local revenues, and these have not been sufficient to cover the total cost of ownership for School District expenses, and

WHEREAS, transportation costs are projected to increase, and

WHEREAS, the School District has an obligation to balance the budget on an annual basis and remain within the School Board Fund Balance Policy, and

WHEREAS, reductions in expenditures and school finances may include discontinuance of positions and discontinuance or curtailment of programs, if necessary, and

WHEREAS, a determination must be made as to which faculty and staff contracts and programs may be terminated and not renewed and which licensed staff may be placed on unrequested leave of absence without pay or fringe benefits in effecting discontinuance of positions and programs,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the School Board of Independent School District No. 13 Columbia Heights hereby directs the Superintendent of Schools and Administration to consider the discontinuance of positions and/or programs to effectuate economies in the School District and reduce expenditures, make recommendations to the School Board for the discontinuance of positions, curtailment of positions, discontinuance of programs, curtailment of programs, in order to balance the School District budget.

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Member Mueller and upon vote being taken thereon, the following

voted in favor thereof: Granlund, Houle, Medearis, Mueller, Palmer, Pettway

and the following voted against the same: None

whereupon said resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Audit FY 2025

Motion by Pettway, seconded by Houle, to accept the Audit FY 2025

The Board held a very robust conversation with Jim Eichten from RB Carlson, who presented our FY 2025 audit at the work session on January 13, 2026.

All in Favor. Motion Carries

Board Topics

Granlund, it is really cold out there, and my hope is that everyone stays safe and warm.

Pettway- Priorities for our day at the capital. Priorities at our district beyond compensatory aid, anything else we would like us to focus on in a helpful way to our community

- **Christian**- Mental health impact, what we can do to support the students who suffer from Mental Health issues. Challenging to set up meetings with staff where we can lead our students for help to keep them safe, especially for our students who need mental Health support.
- **Medearis** – Subcommittee suggestion to explore MSBA, MASA, and AMSD 2026 legislative priorities that would impact our district. Additional focus on special Education costs. Encourage participation at the MASA March 9th joint day at the capital
- **Parmer** Mandates without funding are causing financial hardship to our districts. Goal to limit unfunded mandates.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Pettway, seconded by Palmer, to adjourn at 7:15 PM.

February 17, 2026

Date minutes approved

Laura Palmer, Clerk, Board of Education.

Independent School District 13