

**MILAN AREA SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, January 28, 2026
MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Milan Area Schools Board of Education was called to order in the District Office Boardroom located at 100 Big Red Drive, Milan MI, 48160, by President Faro at 7:01 p.m. on January 28, 2026.

Board Members Present: Faro, Gutierrez, Meray, Heikka, Cislo, Prior, Burdette

Board Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Kolette Comstock, Annette Apple, Jim Brousseau, Ashley Harwood, Margaret Durkee, Dawn Werstein, Kristen Laver, Cassidy Schettenhelm, Abby Drieberg, Tonya Saragoza, Vicki Etter, Heather Gruber, Melissa Fiederlein, McKenzie Chappell, Adam Gilles, Erin Keel, Noah Genson, Katherine Hicks, Juliana Naccarato, Rachel Staley, Jake LaCross, Amy Hertler, Jenni Smith, Christina Matrosic, Anna DiMelis, Vaughn Price, Andrea Bennink, Bre Boateng, Brooke Tomalak, Nicole McGuinn, Jen Young, Christopher West, Krista Learman, Krista, Allison Davis, Lindsay Kutschman, Mary Jo Monroe, Jennifer Barker, Courtney Jeffers, Cameron Vocke, Jennifer Rydman, Jackson Hawkins, Jessica Stafford, Allison Jordet, Angela Creech, Craig McMahon

Guests Present: Josh, Kofflin, Sarah Norton, Molly West, Amila West, Imara West, Steve Werstein, Ash Eichner Pendell, Kelly Powers, Heather Finch, Alexandra Thacker, Jennifer Elrod, Jennifer Corker, Krista Grutt

Motion by Heikka supported by Gutierrez to recess and relocate the Board of Education Meeting from the Board Room to the Milan High School Theater.
All Ayes. Carried 7-0.

Time entered into recess: 7:01 p.m.

Time returned from recess: 7:05 p.m.

Public Comments:

- Jim Brusseau: Requested and was granted additional time to provide a statement on behalf of the MEA regarding contract negotiations and teacher compensation.
- Molly West: Gave a statement as a parent, taxpayer, and spouse of an educator in support of increased teacher compensation.
- Andrea Bennink: Advocated for staff compensation and expressed concern regarding the utilization of excess WISD Special Education fund balances.

- Ashley Eichner-Pendell: Spoke in support of staff compensation and requested that the district establish formal protocols regarding ICE activity in the community.
- Krista Grutt: Expressed support for staff compensation while sharing concerns regarding student services and facility maintenance issues.
- Jennifer Corker: Shared frustrations regarding her child's educational experiences and advocated for improved teacher compensation.
- Alexandra Thacker: Supported teacher compensation and shared concerns regarding ICE enforcement activity near district bus stops.
- Christopher West: Shared his perspective as both a district teacher and parent regarding the importance of teacher compensation.

Motion Burdette supported by Gutierrez to allow Jim Brousseau to speak longer than three minutes during public comments. Motion passed by majority voice vote.

Motion by Heikka supported by Gutierrez to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 14, 2026. All Ayes. Carried 7-0.

Motion by Meray supported by Gutierrez to approve the minutes of the regular meeting closed session of January 14, 2026. All Ayes. Carried 7-0.

The Board heard the WISD PAC update by Sarah Norton.

Motion by Heikka supported by Burdette to recess and relocate the Board of Education Meeting from the Milan High School theater to the Board Room. All Ayes. Carried 7-0.

Time entered into recess: 7:46 p.m.

Time returned from recess: 7:50 p.m.

Motion by Meray supported by Burdette to approve the Non-Affiliated Staff Salary Schedule Update. All Ayes. Carried 7-0.

Student Board Member Comments: None

Public Comments:

- Josh Kofflin: Spoke as a district alumnus and former councilperson in support of the Board of Education and staff, citing the role teachers played in his collegiate and professional success.
- Andrea Bennink: Provided additional comment in support of staff compensation, noting her respect for the educators and paraprofessionals who have served her children.

Assistant Superintendent Comments:

- Assistant Superintendent Bookout took a moment to highlight our professional development day on January 16.
- Each building planned the day around its own needs, but there were some clear themes across the district. Staff spent time strengthening Tier 1 instruction, continuing our MTSS work, and collaborating around curriculum, data, and student supports. The day was intentionally designed to include both learning and work time so teams could immediately apply what they were discussing.
- Assistant Superintendent Bookout wanted to thank our building administrators for the thoughtful planning that went into the day, and our teachers and support staff for their engagement and professionalism. Days like this are an important part of how we continue to grow and strengthen the systems that support student learning.

Superintendent Comments:

- Superintendent McMahon shared that the district has reached tentative agreements with the MASSS group (representing Administrative Assistants, Custodians, and Paraprofessionals) as well as the Transportation group. The offers that have been verbally accepted by both negotiating teams are based on a 3.23% raise, for consistency across union groups. Both groups will bring the offers to their membership for approval before the agreements come before the Board.
- Superintendent McMahon updated the Board on the search for the next Executive Director of Student Services. We received 25 applications for the position and we have screened the candidates towards first-round interviews this Friday. We have staff members from across the district on the first-round interview panel. We will move forward with second-round interviews next week, with a goal of having a candidate to bring to the Board at the February 11 meeting.
- Superintendent McMahon shared with the Board comments about the recent school cancellations. He offered appreciation to the community and staff for their patience as we do everything we can to safely conduct each school day. Sometimes the decision to cancel school is clear and sometimes it is not clear, like our recent experiences during this time of extremely cold weather. Superintendent McMahon clarified that the decision to conduct school is always made with the safety of staff and students at the forefront. Additionally, Superintendent McMahon thanks Gary Cox and his maintenance team, along with Doug Orr, Jeannie Baber, and our bus drivers for all the extra work they put into making our buildings and buses safe places for students.
- Superintendent McMahon officially welcomed Tom Faro and Carrie Gutierrez to their new leadership positions on the School Board and thanked Andrew Cislo for his leadership service as President.

Board Member Comments:

- Faro: Read a statement on behalf of the board regarding negotiations with the MEA.
- Prior: Shared the plans of the Policy Committee to conduct a structured review of Board Policies and reported on progress to date. She noted that the committee is reviewing several policy sections and will discuss revisions to the student board member nomination process at the next meeting.
- Heikka: Thanked the community for engaging in public discourse and sharing their feedback. She shared deadlines for the GMACF and Ann Arbor Community Foundation scholarships, welcomed Mr. Faro to the presidency, and thanked Mr. Cislo for his leadership.
- Gutierrez: Thanked Ms. Norton and Ms. Bennink for their PAC updates and service, noting that receiving those updates via email is helpful. She thanked Ms. Eichner-Pendell and Ms. Thacker for raising concerns about ICE enforcement and echoed scholarship information, encouraging parents to check the high school newsletter in PowerSchool for details.
- Meray: Congratulated the new board officers and expressed gratitude to Mr. Cislo for his leadership. She thanked staff and students for their work on the Comprehensive Needs Assessments (CNAs), highlighted volunteer needs for the middle school "Sneaker Ball," and wished Mr. Smith well in his retirement.
- Burdette: Welcomed Mr. Trott as the new Milan High School Varsity Football Coach. He also shared that the MMS and MHS choirs will compete this weekend at the MSVMA regional competition and encouraged the community to support them.
- Cislo: Thanked Ms. Beckman for publishing the Board Code of Ethics and providing copies and posters for the boardroom. He reminded the community about the next Big Red Board Chat on February 10th, thanked Mr. McMahon for his leadership during recent challenges, and shared thoughts on the importance of the democratic process and collaboration. He thanked Mr. Brusseau for his statement.
- Faro: Thanked Mr. Cislo and Mr. McMahon for their collaboration as he takes on the presidency. He noted that the CNAs are available on the district website, thanked the buildings for engaging in that work, and mentioned the need to schedule summer board meetings and confirm board members for upcoming Big Red Board Chats.

Motion by Heikka supported by Burdette to enter into closed session pursuant to Section 8(1)(c) of the Michigan Open Meetings Act for Negotiation Strategies. All Ayes.
Carried 7-0.

Time entered closed session 8:23 p.m.

Time returned to open session 9:22 p.m.

Time of Adjournment 9:22 p.m.