



Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative

720 9th Ave, Howard Lake, MN 55349

Joint Powers Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 - 5:30 pm

Meeting Minutes - *Official*

Present: Sarah Baker, Gena Jacobson, Jessica Johnson, Cindy Miller, Kelsey Puncochar, Jen Rasset
Absent: Alex Carlson
Others Present: Melissa Hanson, Kim Geurts, Kate Ryan

I. Call to Order/ Board Roll Call

The Regular meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm.

A roll call was conducted:

Sarah Baker: present

Alex Carlson: absent

Gena Jacobson: present

Jessica Johnson: present

Cindy Miller: present

Kelsey Puncochar: present

Jen Rasset: present

A quorum of six board members was established.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Meeting Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Sarah Baker. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Election of Board Officers

A. Board Chairperson

Kelsey Puncochar nominated Jessica Johnson for the position of Board Chairperson. Jessica Johnson accepted the nomination. With no additional nominations, the board closed nominations. By acclamation, the board elected Jessica Johnson as Chairperson of the MAWSECO Board for 2026.

B. Board Vice Chairperson

Cindy Miller nominated Gena Jacobson for the position of Board Vice Chairperson. Gena Jacobson accepted the nomination. With no additional nominations, the board closed nominations. By acclamation, the board elected Gena Jacobson as Vice Chairperson of the MAWSECO Board for 2026.

C. Board Treasurer

Gena Jacobson nominated Kelsey Puncochar for the position of Board Treasurer. Kelsey Puncochar accepted the nomination. With no additional nominations, the



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board closed nominations. By acclamation, the board elected Kelsey Puncochar as Treasurer of the MAWSECO Board for 2026.

D. Board Clerk

Jessica Johnson nominated Cindy Miller for the position of Board Clerk. Cindy Miller accepted the nomination. With no additional nominations, the board closed nominations. By acclamation, the board elected Cindy Miller as Clerk of the MAWSECO Board for 2026.

V. Resolution to Delegate Clerk and Treasurer Duties

Board member Kelsey Puncochar introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption: Resolution to delegate the Clerk and Treasurer duties to the specified employees of the District Office of the Cooperative. The motion for adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Sarah Baker and upon vote being taken thereon the following voted in favor thereof by roll call vote:

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

The Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

VI. Annual Designations

A. Setting of the Meeting, Place, Date, and Time

The Joint Powers Board of Directors meets monthly at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month, barring conflicts, typically at the MAWSECO Education Center, 720 9th Avenue, Howard Lake, Minnesota. Sarah Baker moved to approve the proposed meeting schedule with a revision to the March meeting date. Jen Rasset seconded the motion. The board approved the motion unanimously.

B. Consent Agenda for Annual Designations

1. Designation of Official Newspaper

MAWSECO has designated the Wright County Journal Press as the organization's Official Newspaper.

2. Designation of Official Legal Counsel for 2026

Squires, Waldspurger, and Mac, P.A. has been designated as the official MAWSECO Legal Counsel, but MAWSECO may utilize services from other firms depending upon the nature of the issue.

3. Authorization for Director of Finance to Make Electronic Fund Transfers



The Director of Finance may make electronic fund transfer from our PFM/Liquid Assets account to our Kensington Checking account in order to pay bills/payrolls.

4. Authorization for the Executive Director to Employ Necessary Personnel on a Short Term Basis

In order to ensure appropriate staffing to meet the needs of students and to ensure the organization runs smoothly, the Executive Director is authorized to employ necessary personnel on a short term basis prior to board approval.

5. Authorization to Execute all Business Affairs within Approved Budget

MAWSECO's Executive Director and Director of Finance may execute all business affairs of MAWSECO for 2026 within the approved budget guidelines.

6. Board Meeting Per Diem Rates and Mileage Allowance

The board meeting per diem rate is \$65.00 for each regular board meeting with all other meetings at \$50.00. The mileage allowance is based on the IRS standard mileage rate.

7. Authorization to Pay Monthly Board Bills in the Event of No Quorum at Regular Monthly Meetings

MAWSECO is authorized to pay monthly board bills in the event of no quorum at regular monthly meetings. This authorization protects the organization's ability to meet payment obligations in the event of no quorum at a regular monthly board meeting.

8. Authority with Official Depositories for 2026

The Board approved these individuals to be given the following authority with official depositories:

- Authority to sign checks (all signatures required)
 - Governing Board Chair
 - Governing Board Clerk
- Authority to transfer MSDLAF/PFM Funds
 - Director of Finance
- Authority to transfer funds between local banks
 - Director of Finance
- Authority to open and close accounts
 - Executive Director
 - Director of Finance

Motion to approve the Annual Designation items VI. B. 1 through VI. B. 8. was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Gena Jacobson. Motion carried unanimously.



C. Board Committee Appointments

- Non-Union Contracts
 - Sarah Baker
 - Jessica Johnson
 - Kelsey Puncochar
- Negotiations with Union Contracts (EdMN MAWSECO, MSEA, Special Education Supervisors
 - Jessica Johnson
 - Cindy Miller
 - Jen Rasset
- Facilities (Ad Hoc)
 - Gena Jacobson
 - Kelsey Puncochar
- Health Insurance
 - Sarah Baker
 - Cindy Miller
- Meeting & Confer/Committee at Large
 - Cindy Miller
 - Kelsey Puncochar
- Policy Review
 - Alex Carlson
 - Gena Jacobson
 - Jen Rasset

Motion to approve the 2026 Board Committee assignments was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Sarah Baker. Motion carried unanimously.

D. EDIAM Resolution designation the Identified Official with Authority (IoWA)

Board member Kelsey Puncochar introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption: EDIAM Resolution designating Melissa Hanson, Executive Director, as the Identified Official with Authority (IoWA). The motion for adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Jen Rasset and upon vote being taken thereon the following voted in favor thereof by roll call vote:

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Pucochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

The Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.



E. Resolution Designating Depositor and Accounts

Board member Cindy Miller introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption: Resolution Designating Depositor and Accounts. The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Jen Rasset and upon vote being taken thereon the following voted in favor thereof by roll call vote:

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Pucchar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

The Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

F. Resolution Authorizing Issuance of Individual Procurement Cards

Board member Gena Jacobson introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption: Resolution Authorizing Issuance of Individual Procurement Cards. The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Kelsey Pucchar and upon vote being taken thereon the following voted in favor thereof by roll call vote:

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Pucchar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

The Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

VII. Consent Agenda

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Jen Rasset. The board unanimously approved the consent agenda which included:

- Minutes of Previous Board Meeting
- Bills for payment and other financial reports as attached
- Personnel Items
 - Retirements/Resignations/Terminations
 - Retirement: Caren Heltne, Assistant Director of Care & Treatment Programs, Effective January 6, 2026
 - Retirement: Wendy Hennessey, Special Education Teacher, VRAP, Effective June 5, 2026
 - Resignation: Emma Martin, On-Call Substitute Paraprofessional, Effective January 8, 2026



- Recommendations for Employment
 - Employment: Sarah Long, 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional, STEP, Effective January 12, 2026
- Contract Changes/Approvals/Position Changes
 - Lane Change: Olivia Engel, Special Education Teacher, moving from BA+40/MA to BA+60/MA+20, Effective January 15, 2026
 - Lane Change: Danielle Gehrman, School Psychologist, moving from MA+45 to MA+60, Effective January 15, 2026
 - Rescission of Employment Offer: Susan Kubasch, On-Call Substitute Teacher, Effective January 14, 2026
- At-Will Agreements
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Lea Dobbs, ECSE Coordinator
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Marie Erickson, Behavior Analyst
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2026, Allison Johnson, Language Facilitator
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Jolie Holland, Licensed School Nurse
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Amber Michels, Mental Health Professional
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2026, Rachel Seppala, Behavior Analyst Intern
 - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Alexis Waldin, Behavior Analyst

VIII. Acknowledgements

A. Paraprofessional Recognition Week, January 19-25, 2026

A motion for the board to acknowledge and recognize the hard work and dedication of the paraprofessionals was made by Jessica Johnson and seconded by Sarah Baker. Motion carried unanimously.

IX. Informational Items

A. Executive Director Report

Cyber Security

Tech Tip Tuesdays was launched in January 2026 and is a simple, practical initiative designed to strengthen cybersecurity across the cooperative by delivering a short, focused tech tip to staff every Tuesday. Each email highlights a single topic, explains why it matters, and provides a few easy steps that can be applied immediately in daily work. The tips are intentionally quick to read, relevant, and actionable, supporting the goals of protecting student and staff information, reducing disruptions from cyber incidents, and building consistent, shared cybersecurity practices across MAWSECO.

Dassel-Cokato Board Visit/Tour

On January 12, the Dassel-Cokato School Board visited the Ed Center to tour and learn about the three special education programs located there. The tour



was very enlightening to the board members and provided added perspective about the students we support and programs we operate.

STEP Transition Program - Planning for FY27 and Beyond

Students Transitioning in Educational Programming (STEP) has historically capped enrollment at 25 students due to space and staffing limitations. Current enrollment is 17 students, with 16 expected to return in 2026–27. Supervisors have identified 17 potential referrals for 2026–27, which could exceed program capacity. An additional STEP teacher position has been posted to explore possible expansion; however, increased enrollment depends on securing appropriately licensed staff and addressing space and programming constraints. If staffing is not secured, enrollment will be limited to the current two-teacher model. Not all students ages 18–22 with transition needs are appropriate for STEP, and member districts will need to provide alternative transition services for some students.

Executive Director Professional Goals

Executive Director Hanson provided a mid-year progress update on her goals for the year. She is making good progress on all three and expects to achieve them by the end of the fiscal year, as planned.

B. Director of Finance Report

The teacher contract back pay and increase was processed on the 12/15/25 paycheck, which increased payroll. The additional payroll on the Board Finance Summary was due to the short time frame between meetings in December and accounts for the increase in A/P and wires. Vendor 1099 forms were sent out on January 20th. The finance department is continuing to work on department budgets and beginning to work on the revised budget.

C. Policy Review [First Reading]

The following policies were brought to the board for a first reading. No action was taken.

1. Policy 401 - Equal Employment Opportunity
2. Policy 402 - Disability Nondiscrimination Policy
3. Policy 410 - Family and Medical Leave Policy
4. Policy 416 - Drug, Alcohol, and Cannabis Testing

D. Policy Rescission [First Reading]

The following policies were brought to the board for a first reading. No action was taken.

1. Policy 431 - Direct Deposit
2. Policy 451 - Teacher Probation and Evaluation



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X. Action Items

A. New Business

1. Resolution Accepting Donation

A motion to approve the Resolution Accepting Donation was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Cindy Miller.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Pucocar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

2. Ratification of 2025-2027 Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative Supervisor Collective Bargaining Agreement

A motion to approve the Ratification of 2025-2027 Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative Supervisor Collective Bargaining Agreement was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Jen Rasset. Motion carried unanimously.

XI. Executive Director Negotiations Strategy - Closed Session

A motion to go into closed session for the Executive Director Negotiations Strategy was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

The board entered into a closed session at 6:40 pm.

A motion to reopen the meeting was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Gena Jacobson.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye



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Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

The board reopened the meeting at 7:03 pm.

XII. Future Board Meetings

- A. February 24, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
- B. March 31, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
- C. April 28, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, Sholund School for Girls, Annandale

XIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Sarah Baker. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 pm.

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