

**Minutes of the
Freshwater Education District # 6004
Organizational & Regular Board Meeting Agenda
January 28, 2026
2222 Industrial Drive, Wadena, MN**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Huttunen at 5 P.M.

Roll Call – Board Present: **Chair** - Rod Huttunen-Sebeka; **Vice Chair** - Barb Tumberg-Wadena-Deer Creek; **Clerk** - Scott Veronen-Verndale; **Treasurer** - Jodi Hillmer-Browerville; Russ VanDenheuvel-Bertha-Hewitt; Rodney Thalmann – Henning; Katie Howard-Menahga; Ryan Wright-Staples-Motley; Chuck Wolf- Long Prairie-Grey Eagle.

Superintendent: Lee Westrum- Wadena-Deer Creek & Scott Vedbraaten-Browerville.

Administration: Eric Weber, Executive Director; Jamie Wothe, Special Ed Director; Jordan Anderson, Finance Manager; Sharon Thiel, Recorder. Others in attendance: Brian Opshal, Brady Martz & Associates; Jena Osberg & Sara Lenz.

MOTIONED by VanDenheuvel and seconded by Tumberg to approve the agenda as presented. VOTE- U/C

Assignment of Officers

MOTIONED by Thalmann and seconded by Veronen to appoint the following officers for the calendar year 2026 and lay to rest the 2025 officer responsibilities.

Chair...Rod Huttunen – Sebeka; Vice-Chair...Barb Tumberg – Wadena Deer Creek;

Clerk...Scott Veronen – Verndale; Treasurer...Jodi Hillmer – Browerville.

VOTE- U/C

Presentations- Brian Opsahl, CPA, from Brady Martz, presenting FY25 Audit Report. *E. Weber expressed appreciation to J. Anderson and D. Wegschied for their contribution to the financial audit process.*

~~~~~ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS~~~~~

MOTIONED by VanDenheuvel and seconded by Wright to authorize R. Huttunen, S. Veronen and J. Hillmer as authorized signers for the Freshwater Education District’s official depositories and to authorize the use of a signature plate using the following signatures:

Rod Huttunen - Chair; **Scott Veronen** - Clerk, **Jodi Hillmer** – Treasurer; and that the following are authorized to sign the necessary documents on behalf of the Freshwater Education District: *E. Weber – Ex. Director, J. Wothe - SPED Director, J. Anderson- Finance Manager, J. Ashbaugh - Payroll Lead, and S. DeMars- Accounts Payable Clerk.*

VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Howard and seconded by Hillmer to name the following as official depositories: **1st International Bank** of Staples, MN, **Wadena State Bank** of Wadena, MN, **First National Bank** of Ottertail, MN, and **Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund**, plus any other Minnesota FDIC financial institution, as well as authorizing *E. Weber, J.*

Anderson, J. Ashbaugh & S. DeMars to invest funds in these institutions with evidence of sufficient collateral. VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Veronen and seconded by Thalmann to authorize *E. Weber, J. Anderson, J. Ashbaugh & S. DeMars* to make electronic fund transfers as outlined by State Statutes.

VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Tumberg and seconded by VanDenheuvel to approve the Board per diem for regular, special, and committee meetings to be set at the per diem rate of \$70 for meetings of 4 hours or less and \$130 for meetings over 4 hours. Mileage is to be reimbursed at the current Federal rate. VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Tumberg and seconded by Hillmer to set the Regular Board meeting dates as follows, with a starting time of 5 p.m. on *March 25, April 29, June 24, August 19; and October 28, 2026*, at Freshwater Education District, 2222 Industrial Drive, Wadena, MN, with Special Board Meetings called as needed. VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Thalmann and seconded by VanDenheuvel to name the *Long Prairie Leader, Long Prairie, MN*, the 2026 official newspaper. VOTE- U/C

Chair Huttunen has named Board Members S. Veronen, B. Tumberg & R. Thalmann as the 2026 Personnel Committee Members.

Chair Huttunen has appointed R. Thalmann to the Otter Tail County Collaborative: R. VanDenheuvel to the Todd County Collaborative, and L. Westrum and S. Vedbraaten as the Supervising Superintendents.

The Chair acknowledges the annual associate membership in the MREA and full membership in MSBA.

MOTIONED by Veronen and seconded by Wright to acknowledge the annual review of Policies 506, 722, and 806, and the action to direct the Executive Director is to maintain the District Policy Manual per any MSBA-recommended legal revisions and/or legislative mandatory revisions. VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Wright and seconded by Howard to name *Hitesman & Associates, P.A.*, Maple Grove; *Kennedy & Graven*, Minneapolis; *Pederson & Pederson P.A.*, Wadena, as well as *Pemberton Law*, Fergus Falls, as the 2026 Consulting Law Firms for the Freshwater Education District, and to limit authorization to contact the *Ex. Director*, the *SPED Director*, and the *Board Chair*. VOTE- U/C

MOTIONED by Thalmann and seconded by VanDenheuvel to name *J. Anderson, Finance Manager & J. Ashbaugh, Payroll Lead*, as FED E-Service contacts. VOTE- U/C

~~~~~ **END OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING TOPICS** ~~~~~

MOTIONED by Howard and seconded by Tumberg to approve the consent agenda as presented.

October 22, 2025, Regular Board Meeting Minutes.

Personnel December 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes.

November 12, 2025, and January 14, 2026, Superintendent Advisory Meeting Minutes:

Payments 66961-67364

First & Final Reading of Policy 400.11L - Salary and Benefits Policy & Policy 524.5 - Personal Electronic Communication Devices.

Seniority Lists for the following: Teacher-Itinerant, Non-Tenured Teacher, Speech Language Pathologist Assistants, Paraprofessionals, SPED RVR Drivers.

ATI Transportation Agreement for Nov, '25 – Jan, '26.

School Year Menu Options from the following Districts: #786, #23, #2153, #549, #116, #820, #818.

Receipt and Review of FY25 Financial Audit.

Resignation of: H. Burke, SpEd Para; J. Storry, SpEd 3rd Party Finance Assistant/HR Clerk.

Hiring of: M. Janson, Program Assistant, WALC & Para Sub; K. Boutiette, Occupational Therapist; M. Trumbull, Occupational Therapist; C. Steigerwald, ECSE Para; S. Wojtowicz, SPED Para.

Increase in Hours: S. Johannes, SPED Para; J. Beavers, ECSE Para; P. Rowe, ECSE Para.

Status Change: K. Hemberger, OT, from BA/Therapist to MA/Therapist.

Lane Change: A. Truax, ECSE Teacher, from BA+10 to MA, effective January 1, 2026. VOTE- U/C

Superintendent Report, *E. Weber*

General: Reviewed the Annual Administrative Memo Regarding Probationary and Term Employee and Policy Employees. Discussion with PAWN Sped Coop regarding potential partnership in services.

ALC: Online Learning is going well with the current ratio of 30 students to 1 Teacher.

SR/ECFE: Running strong overall, and added a classroom in Bertha - Hewitt.

Technology: Reviewed the State Telecom Program Reduction.

SPED Director, *J. Wothe*

General: Update on Academies transitioning students back to their home district. Working on upcoming trainings for Paras, New Teachers, and shared the invite to Board Members to attend the Spring Fling on April 26th, in New York Mills.

Finance Reports, *J. Anderson*

General: Reviewed FY 26 Qtr. 2 Finance Report, LTFM Plans, SPED Tuition Billing, SPED & ALC Opportunities, and Region 5 Superintendents Letter to the Editor.

New Business:

MOTIONED by VanDenheuvel and seconded by Hillmer to accept the donation of \$300 from Lincoln Scandia Valley Lions Club, Motley, for the Reading for the Future Program. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by Thalmann and seconded by Wolf to direct administration to evaluate and make recommendations to the Board regarding the potential reduction and/or discontinuation of programs and positions. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by Tumberg and seconded by Wright to approve the Wadena County FSC and Freshwater Wadena ALC, effective October 23, 2025, through January 31, 2026. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by VanDenheuvel and seconded by Hillmer to approve the Wadena County FSC and Freshwater Wadena ALC, effective October 23, 2025, through May 31, 2026. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by Tumberg and seconded by Veronen to approve the fiscal year 2026 revision II budget and assessment manual. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by Thalmann and seconded by Hillmer to approve the updated 25.26 Employee Handbook as presented. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by VanDenheuvel and seconded by Wright to authorize the Freshwater Ed District Administration to advertise a request for proposal for Mental Health Services for the 26/27 SY Academy Program. VOTE: U/C

MOTIONED by Howard and seconded by Thalmann to approve the master agreement between the Freshwater Education District #6004 and the Education Minnesota-Freshwater Education District No. 7335 for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027. VOTE: U/C.

MOTIONED by VanDenheuvel and seconded by Hillmer to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m. VOTE: U/C