

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**March 10, 2026
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Erica Valliant, Vice Chair.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: E. Valliant, Y. Carrillo, C. Franco, H. Henderson
U. Ward and C. Allen were absent.

Staff: Superintendent Stanley; Katie Bergstrom, General Counsel; Sarah Dahlke, Secretary to the Board

II. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: Director Valliant moved approval of the Order of the Main Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Franco.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Interview of Candidates to Fill Vacant Board Position

The Board interviewed candidates to fill the interim Board vacancy created by the resignation of Jim Vue effective February 17, 2026. They asked the candidates to address these questions:

1. In a few sentences, please share a little about yourself with us.

2. Do you anticipate running for the school board seat in November?
3. What motivates your interest in serving on the Board through this interim appointment?
4. How do you understand the role and responsibilities of a board member, and in what ways do your experiences and interests align with those responsibilities?
5. What skills or perspectives would you bring to help broaden and strengthen our understanding of what is necessary to support a successful academic experience for all students?
6. How do you view collaborative leadership, and what experience have you had working in collaborative leadership environments?
7. Please share an example of a time when you intentionally applied an equity lens while working with individuals whose perspectives differed from your own. What did you learn from that experience, and how did it influence the outcome?

Candidates interviewed included:

1. Robin Feickert
2. Lesley Lavery
3. Brandon Lowe
4. Beth Mork
5. Carson Starkey

Upon completion of the interviews, the Board took a recess to review their notes and collect their thoughts on the group of candidates.

B. Nomination & Selection of Candidate to Serve Interim Term

The Chair called for nominations from the Board Members for individuals to fill the interim term for the vacant position on the Board and noted the nomination process as outlined in Board Policy 202.02: "In filling the vacancy, the Chair shall call for nominations from the members of the board. No member of the Board may nominate more than one person; no second for the nomination is required. The appointment shall be filled by roll-call vote. Appointment shall require a majority vote of the total membership of the Board. If no nominee receives a majority vote, the Chair shall reopen nominations."

Since only four board members were present, a candidate must receive all four votes in order to be selected.

If a candidate does not receive unanimous support from all four members present, the Board will continue with nominations and voting until a candidate receives the votes required for selection. Once a candidate is selected, the appointment will be announced and confirmed by a roll-call vote.

It was also noted that the selected candidate will be announced at this meeting, and that the candidate/appointee will assume office 30-days later, unless a valid petition to reject the appointee is filed with the school district clerk (Chauntyll Allen). The appointee will serve the remainder of former Director Jim Vue's term (through December 31, 2026).

The Vice Chair then opened for nominations.

Director Henderson nominated Brandon Lowe.
Director Carrillo nominated Beth Mork.

It was then opened for discussion on the nominees.

Director Henderson provided the rationale for her nomination of Brandon Lowe, including that he is Brandon Lowe is grounded in his ability to strike a vital balance between the pragmatic operational needs of the district and the long-term educational goals for its students. A central theme of his candidacy is the value he places on families who intentionally choose the district; by centering and learning from these perspectives, he offers unique insights into what makes the school system a destination for growth. Furthermore, his commitment to serving as a "bridge" provides a sense of stability and continuity, ensuring a smooth transition into the board's next iteration while maintaining a clear focus on the perspectives necessary for the remainder of his interim term.

Director Carrillo then provided the rationale for his nomination of Beth Mork, and the centering on her unique ability to bring a "listening-first" orientation to the board, a skill set deeply rooted in her professional background as a physician. Unlike the self-promotional nature often found in traditional elective politics, Dr. Mork offers a refreshing alternative focused on diagnostic listening and a long-standing, sincere commitment to the West Side community. Her expertise allows her to provide an analytical and empathetic perspective that is typically sought out through external hiring rather than through the electoral process. Ultimately, her career-long dedication to care and community advocacy makes her an exceptionally qualified candidate to serve out the remainder of the current term.

Director Henderson and Director Franco also expressed gratitude to all candidates, and it is exciting to hear from different perspectives. They noted that there were exceptionally qualified candidates, which is what led to the change to bring forth all five candidates who applied for the interim position.

The Chair called for the closure of nominations and asked for a vote of written ballot.

There were two (2) votes for Beth Mork.
There were two (2) votes for Brandon Lowe.

As there was no majority decision (4), nominations were reopened.

Director Henderson nominated Brandon Lowe.
Director Carrillo nominated Beth Mork,
Director Valliant nominated Brandon Lowe.

It was then opened for discussion on the nominees.

Director Carrillo noted a discussion centered on the perspectives of those nominates and could be gained with each in order to understand the differences between the candidates.

Director Henderson noted that her nomination of Brandon Lowe is further supported by his professional ability to interpret data without losing sight of the broader "horizon" of student life and school culture. He offers a practical solution to the common board challenge of becoming so focused on metrics that the human element of education is obscured. His professional background provides him with the evidence-based tools to help the board navigate moments where progress typically stalls, particularly during this critical transition period. Furthermore, his perspective as a parent who explicitly chooses the district for its diversity, inclusivity, and variety of options serves as a vital reminder of the system's core strengths. Centering these values is particularly timely as the board moves into strategic planning, ensuring that the very qualities families love about the district remain at the heart of future conversations.

Director Carrillo noted that the nomination of Brandon Lowe is further strengthened by his extensive professional trajectory, moving from classroom teacher and assistant principal to his current role directing research and evaluation. This background, coupled with his experience in a different state's educational system, provides the board with a diverse perspective on varied instructional practices and implementation strategies. His ability to connect high-level governance and policy directly to the lived experiences of his own children offers a unique "full-circle" view of how board decisions manifest in the classroom. Additionally, his emphasis on fiscal discipline and the responsible stewardship of tax dollars aligns with the board's core fiduciary duties. Combined with his readiness to contribute to the immediate strategic planning process, these attributes make him a highly practical and insightful asset for this interim term.

Director Vallianted noted that the nomination of Brandon Lowe is further highlighted by his approach to data as a primary tool for advancing equity and building shared understanding. By recognizing that objective data can reveal where inequities are showing up, he positions himself as a candidate who can use information to drive meaningful change rather than just observation. His focus on board goals and academic rigor, paired with a proven track record of helping to increase student outcomes, demonstrates a results-oriented mindset that is essential for the board's mission. Furthermore, his appreciation for school diversity and his belief that his experience can serve as a "steady resource" suggest he would provide both the stability and the professional support necessary to maintain the board's momentum during this interim period.

Director Carrillo also noted that while Brandon Lowe's relatively recent arrival to the area might initially seem like a drawback, it actually highlights a significant strength: he is a parent who intentionally chose Saint Paul Public Schools because of the specific programming and excellence the district offers. This "choice" reflects a deep, personal commitment to sustaining and marketing the district's strengths to other families. By moving past traditional "gatekeeping" regarding residency duration, it becomes clear that his professional expertise and his perspective as a motivated newcomer provide a unique, purposeful energy that would help ensure Saint Paul remains a destination district for others.

Director Carrillo then noted that his nomination of Beth Mork is anchored in her unique ability to blend grassroots community leadership with the disciplined, collaborative approach of a healthcare professional. Unlike the typical political candidate, she demonstrates an unassuming dedication to the Humboldt community and a sincere desire to lead through listening rather than self-promotion. Her extensive experience in medical consensus building—where team-based decision-making is vital for care management—offers a highly transferable skill set for a board facing significant, upcoming decisions. By prioritizing the creation of strong bonds over divisive dynamics, she represents a stabilizing force capable of fostering unity. Ultimately, her candidacy is defined by a commitment to collective progress and an empathetic, team-oriented leadership style that ensures the board remains focused on cohesive solutions for all students.

Director Franco noted that Beth Mork is distinguished by her deep understanding of the disparate realities families face within the district, specifically regarding the heavy lifting required to provide equitable student experiences. She brings an essential focus to the "grassroots advocacy" necessary to change both the narrative and the practice of public education, acknowledging the very real struggles—such as the financial hurdles families face when trying to fund basic extracurriculars like senior send-offs. By naming these specific, often overlooked challenges, Dr. Mork demonstrates a different type of lived experience than other candidates, one that is grounded in the "other side" of how the district is experienced by its most resource-constrained communities. This perspective is vital for a board committed to true equity, as it ensures that

the voices of those who must fight for every opportunity remain central to the board's decision-making process.

The Chair called for the closure of nominations and asked for a vote of written ballot.

There was one (1) vote for Beth Mork.

There were three (3) votes for Brandon Lowe.

As there was no majority decision (4), nominations were reopened.

Director Henderson nominated Brandon Lowe.

The Board then provided final reflections. The selection process to fill the vacancy left by Director Jim Vue has served as a profound testament to the strength and dedication of the Saint Paul community. Each candidate who stepped forward brought a unique perspective from a different walk of life, highlighting a shared investment in the success of the district's students and educators. While the role of a board member is often regarded as one of the most challenging positions in governance, the willingness of these individuals to offer their time and capacity is a credit to the character of the city. This process has not only been about finding a specific successor but has also functioned as a celebration of a community that deeply cares for one another and remains committed to the vital work of public education.

The Chair called for the closure of nominations and asked for a vote of written ballot.

There were four (4) votes for Brandon Lowe.

With four votes for Brandon Lowe, he was selected to serve as interim board member, and was congratulated.

The Chair thanked the other candidates for participating and encouraged them to run in the upcoming election.

IV. RESOLUTION FILLING SCHOOL BOARD VACANCY BY APPOINTMENT

BF 34607 Resolution Filling School Board Vacancy By Appointment

WHEREAS, on January 6, 2026, the School Board of Independent School District No. 625 (the "Saint Paul School Board") passed a resolution establishing the process for filling the Board vacancy created upon the resignation of then Director Jim Vue; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul School Board has completed the vacancy process set forth by the January 6, 2026 resolution; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Independent School District No. 625, State of Minnesota, as follows: Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 123B.09, subd. 5b (2025), Brandon Lowe is hereby appointed to fill the vacancy and to serve until a successor is elected and qualified. The appointment shall be effective April 10, 2026, thirty (30) days after the adoption of this resolution, unless a valid petition to reject the appointee is filed with the school district clerk pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 123B.09, Subd. 5b(b) (2025) within that thirty (30) day time period.

MOTION: Director Valliant moved approval of the Resolution Filling School Board Vacancy By Appointment. The motion was seconded by Director Franco.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Director Valliant moved to adjourn the meeting; Director Henderson seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke

Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education