



MINUTES OF AN OPEN SESSION REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, KENILWORTH SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 38, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS; HELD IN THE CAFENASIUM AT THE JOSEPH SEARS SCHOOL, 542 ABBOTSFORD ROAD, KENILWORTH, ILLINOIS, AT 6:00 P.M. ON THE 23RD DAY OF MARCH 2026.

Board President Kate Tarbert called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Upon Roll Call, the following Board members answered as present: Ms. Lisa Graham, Ms. Jessica Katz, Ms. Kate Tarbert, Mr. Brian Van Klompenberg, and Ms. Mileva Zunjic.

The following members were absent: Ms. Adrienne Eynon and Mr. Eric Hayes.

Also present: Ms. Kate Donegan, Superintendent; Dr. Carrie De La Cruz, Director of Student Services; Dr. Stephanie Helfand, Principal; Mr. Nate McBride, Chief Operating Officer; and Ms. Rachel White, Board Recording Secretary.

Ms. Tarbert entertained a motion to adjourn to Closed Session for consideration of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees and semi-annual review of minutes of meetings lawfully closed [5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (1, 21)]

A motion was made by Ms. Graham, seconded by Ms. Zunjic, to go into Closed Session at 6:04 p.m. The motion carried by a roll-call vote of 5 to 0.

RECONVENE OPEN SESSION

The Board returned to open session at 7:04 p.m.

President Tarbert called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Upon Roll Call, the following Board members answered as present: Ms. Adrienne Eynon, Ms. Lisa Graham, Ms. Jessica Katz, Ms. Kate Tarbert, Mr. Brian Van Klompenberg, and Ms. Mileva Zunjic.

The following members were absent: Mr. Eric Hayes.

Administrators and staff present: Ms. Kate Donegan, Superintendent; Dr. Carrie De La Cruz, Director of Student Services; Dr. Stephanie Helfand, Principal; Mr. Nate McBride, Chief Operating Officer; and Ms. Rachel White, Board Recording Secretary.



PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Tarbert invited public comment.

Tanya Brown, Kyle and Coco Gillen, Jennifer Price, and Brittany Smith addressed the Board regarding the Comprehensive Support Classroom.

Speakers expressed concerns about staff turnover in the Comprehensive Support Classroom and shared the view that the program has not met expectations. Several noted the impact of this turnover, emphasizing the challenges that a lack of continuity presents for their students. Concerns were also raised regarding the administration's oversight and support of the program. Speakers requested a comprehensive review of the program by an independent party and the development of a stabilization plan to support the classroom through the remainder of the current school year.

Ms. Tarbert thanked those in attendance and noted that the Board would later consider an assessment of the Comprehensive Support Classroom, which will include a review of recent staffing challenges. She stated that the District does not comment publicly on personnel matters. Ms. Tarbert also provided assurance that the Comprehensive Support Classroom is currently fully staffed and will remain so through the end of the school year to support student needs.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Donegan reported that one Freedom of Information Act request had been received and responded to since the last regular meeting, and that it was included in the Board packet for review.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Superintendent Update

Ms. Donegan reported that the North Cook Intermediate Service Center, authorized by the Illinois State Board of Education, conducts compliance visits of school districts within its region every four years. The compliance audit includes a comprehensive review of facilities, records, policies, programs, staff credentials, and curriculum to determine the district's recognition status. District 38 completed its most recent review on February 24, 2026, was found to be in full compliance, and was congratulated on "doing an exemplary job."

Business Office Update

Mr. McBride provided an update on the ongoing Cook County property tax delay, noting that



first installment tax bills for 2025 were issued on schedule and are due April 1, 2026. While the District has not yet received any funds from the 2025 levy, it has collected the majority of the 2024 second installment and, based on current projections, remains in a stable financial position with sufficient cash flow to meet operational needs through the end of April. He also reported that the District had previously issued tax anticipation warrants to manage the delay, which have since been fully repaid, and will continue to monitor the situation as additional information becomes available.

Mr. McBride also shared an update on the upcoming Food Service program, highlighting a \$55,000 contribution from the Joseph Sears School Parents' Volunteer Association to support necessary equipment purchases. He noted positive feedback from recent student and staff participation in a food tasting event and stated that the next step is for the Board to determine the program's financial model. He reported that final meal pricing is expected to be presented for Board approval at the April meeting.

Building Report

Dr. Helfand shared updates on the many events and activities that have taken place since the last regular Board meeting. She highlighted the celebration of Trimester Two Panther Pride Award recipients, recognizing junior high students who exemplify the school's core values, as well as the continued implementation of the Cornerstone Captain Award to honor positive character traits among fifth-grade students.

Dr. Helfand also highlighted opportunities that supported student connection and engagement, including cultural celebrations such as Lunar New Year activities and classroom experiences that promoted awareness of diverse traditions.

Dr. Helfand also recognized staff and student accomplishments, including the contributions of the school's social workers during National School Social Worker Week and extracurricular achievements such as student musical performances and the varsity boys' volleyball conference championship.

TrueNorth Update

Ms. Donegan reminded the Board that TrueNorth recently restructured its Leadership Council into two bodies: the Governing Board and the Superintendent's Leadership Council. She reported that she attended the Superintendent's Leadership Council meeting, while Ms. Eynon attended the Governing Board meeting. The primary focus of both meetings was the reduction in staff due to the reorganization of the Cooperative.

Ms. Eynon added that the Governing Board approved the Cooperative's new organizational chart, which is now available on its website. She also noted that the interim superintendents



reviewed the Reduction In Force (RIF) process conducted as part of the reorganization, including meeting individually with affected employees and expressing appreciation for their service.

ED-Red Update

In Mr. Hayes's absence, Ms. Donegan directed the Board to the Ed-Red update included in the Board packet, which outlines the legislation the organization is currently monitoring, including bills related to cell phone use, food service contracts, and unemployment.

JSSPVA Update

Ms. Katz reported that the JSSPVA has been very active, with a strong focus on strategic planning and enhancing community engagement. The organization is currently developing its 2026 strategic plan, with an emphasis on greater impact and on identifying the most meaningful ways to support Sears students. She also shared that they are in the early stages of developing and testing a new website, which will serve as a central hub for parents and volunteers. In addition, the JSSPVA has generously pledged \$55,000 toward the refitting of the warming kitchen to support the new in-house food service program.

BOARD COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

Building and Finance Committee Report

Ms. Zunjic reported that the Building and Finance Committee met on March 12, during which the committee received updates on the Cook County tax delay, the development of the in-house food service program, and the District's five-year facilities plan. Although the plan will begin in the 2027–2028 school year, the committee was provided with an overview of the District's planning and budgeting efforts in preparation for its implementation.

Board Policy Committee

In Mr. Hayes's absence, Ms. Tarbert reported that the Policy Committee has not met since the last regular meeting, so there was nothing to report at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Intergovernmental Agreement Between District 38 and the Kenilworth Park District

Ms. Donegan recommended that the Board approve an Intergovernmental Agreement between District 38 and the Kenilworth Park District for the shared use of certain grounds and facilities. She explained that this agreement formalizes a long-standing partnership, allowing continued



shared use of school and park district spaces to support recreational and educational programming.

Ms. Tarbert entertained a motion to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement between District 38 and the Kenilworth Park District.

A motion was made by Mr. Van Klompenberg, seconded by Ms. Graham, to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement between District 38 and the Kenilworth Park District, as presented.

The motion carried by a roll-call vote of 6 to 0.

Approval of the Authorization of the Administrative Team to Conduct an Independent Third-Party Review of the Comprehensive Needs Classroom Programming

Ms. Donegan reported that she has begun exploring potential third-party consultants to conduct an independent review of the comprehensive needs classroom. This review is being considered in response to parent feedback regarding staff turnover. She noted that the scope of the review has not yet been finalized, but, pending authorization to proceed, she would gather input from relevant stakeholders to help define its focus.

Ms. Tarbert entertained a motion to authorize the administrative team to conduct an independent third-party review of the comprehensive needs classroom programming.

A motion was made by Ms. Graham, seconded by Ms. Zunjic, to authorize the administrative team to conduct an independent third-party review of the comprehensive needs classroom programming.

The motion carried by a roll-call vote of 6 to 0.

Approval of the Authorization of an Alternate TrueNorth Board Member Representative

Ms. Donegan reported that while Board Member Adrienne Eynon currently serves as the primary District 38 representative on the TrueNorth Leadership Council, it is recommended that each District designate an alternate representative in the event the primary member is unable to attend a meeting. She added that Mr. Van Klompenberg has volunteered to serve as the alternative representative, if approved by the Board.

Ms. Tarbert entertained a motion to appoint Brian Van Klompenberg as the alternate representative to the TrueNorth Leadership Council.

A motion was made by Ms. Graham, seconded by Ms. Katz, to appoint Brian Van Klompenberg as the alternate representative to the TrueNorth Leadership Council.



The motion carried by a roll-call vote of 5 to 0 (Mr. Van Klompenberg abstained).

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Tarbert asked if there were any comments or questions regarding the Consent Agenda items. Without comment, she entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

A motion was made by Ms. Zunjic, seconded by Mr. Van Klompenberg, to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by a roll-call vote of 6 to 0.

Included in the Consent Agenda are the following:

- Open Session Minutes of the Regular Meeting on February 23, 2026
- Closed Session Minutes of the Regular Meeting on February 23, 2026
- Monthly Financial Report for February 2026
- Monthly Investment Report for February 2026
- Accounts Payable from February 24, 2026, through March 23, 2026
- Personnel Report from March 2026

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Tarbert invited public comment.

Jack Brown, Kyle Gillen, Claudia Kocalis, Anne Murphy, and Ryan Price addressed the Board.

Speakers expressed concerns about the Board's statement following the first portion of public comments, expressing that parent perspectives were not acknowledged. Concerns were also raised about ensuring that any forthcoming independent review accurately reflects parent experiences and is used effectively.

Another speaker expressed support for the students and families and hope for a positive resolution. Additionally, a speaker thanked the Board for initiating the independent review process and encouraged continued dialogue and collaboration among parents, administration, and the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Ms. Tarbert entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Graham, seconded by Ms. Katz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. The motion passed by voice vote, all ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.



Attest for Distribution: _____
Mr. Eric Hayes, Secretary

Approved: _____
Ms. Kathryn Tarbert, President

ATTEST: _____
Mr. Eric Hayes, Secretary