MINNETONKA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #276
District Service Center
5621 County Road 101
Minnetonka, Minnesota

Summary of April 23, 2026 Study Session

The School Board of Minnetonka Independent School District #276 met in study session at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2026 in the Community Room at the District Service Center, 5621 County Road 101, Minnetonka, Minnesota. Board Chairperson Kemerie Foss presided. Board members present were Sally Browne, Karen Jordan, Taunya Kolbinger, Dan Olson, Meghan Selinger and Superintendent David Law, ex officio. Absent: Mike Remucal. Student School Board representatives Aneeqa Sameer, Ali Stockman, and Austen Harrison were also present. The Study Session was livestreamed on the District's YouTube channel.

CITIZEN INPUT

Chairperson Foss extended an invitation to members of the audience who wished to address the Board on any topic. She also read the guidelines for Citizen Input, for those who wished to speak.

District parents Claire Patterson and Melissa Wilsford addressed the Board regarding their concern with the overuse of technology in the schools. They asked that the district consider a rolling back of technology, that technology be used with intention, that a committee be formed to study the issue, and that opt out options be provided for families.

REVIEW OF FEES

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Paul Bourgeois provided the following information to the Board:

The District maintains a schedule of various fees for courses, activities, clubs and other miscellaneous items at each level of the school district. Any changes in the fee schedules require School Board approval. Each year, department and program managers give their recommendations on various fee levels.

At the Elementary School level, there are no fee changes recommended for Fiscal Year 2027. At the Middle School level, there is one fee change proposed by Principal Dymit and Principal Schirmacher. For the Family and Consumer Sciences Fashion Design class, the fee is proposed to be increased by $2, from $8 per class in FY26 to $10 per class to FY27 to keep up with the cost increases for materials for those classes.

At the High School Level, Activities Director Ted Schultz has recommended the following fee increases:

- Increase the Participation Fee by $7 from $83 in FY26 to $90 in FY27
- Increase the Co-Curricular Activities-Specific Activity Fee by $30 across all activities
- Cheerleading has requested an additional $50 for the activity for uniform replacement at the recommendation of the coach
- Youth in Government has requested a new $50 fee for this two-year-old program

Per Activities Director Ted Schultz: *"Even with the proposed $30 increase, Minnetonka High School remains one of the most affordable options in the Lake Conference, staying well below the average of our peer districts."* Director Schutz has compiled the following comparison:

District	Current Average Fee	Proposed Fee (+$30 MTKA)
St Michael-Albertville	$415.75	$415.75
Hopkins	$264.13	264.13
Edina	$248.96	248.96
Wayzata	243.00	$243.00
Eden Prairie	$205.21	205.21
Buffalo	$176.05	176.05
Minnetonka	**151.32**	**$181.23**

Please note the with the proposed fee increases, Minnetonka High School fees will move to approximately $5 more than Buffalo. Also please note that at this time we do not have information as to whether the other districts on the list are considering implementing fee increases from their current levels. Primary drivers are the rising cost of transportation for activities, for which rates have cumulatively increased 37% for FY24, FY25, FY26 and FY27, as well as the cost for paying officials and referees for the various activities.

Tonka Dome fees are recommended to increase by $10 for full field reservations and $5 across the board for all other reservations. It is important to note that Tonka Dome fees have been increased steadily every year to pay for the annual steadily rising costs of electricity, natural gas and Dome management. As a result, Tonka Dome fees have kept pace with inflation and the Dome continues to operate at a break-even level with revenues covering all operational costs as well as bonded debt costs. The Tonka Dome also covers its cost of capital, with fees covering the operational costs as well as the annual bond payment on the bonds that were issued to pay for the Dome in 2004. There are three remaining annual bond payments averaging $151,325, with a payment scheduled for

February 1 in 2027, 2028 and 2029. The last bond payment on the Dome is scheduled for February 1, 2029.

In the discussion that followed, Board members emphasized the point that scholarships are available for students for whom the fees may be a financial hardship. No one is prevented from participating in activities, at any academic level, by an inability to pay the fee.

REPORT FROM STUDENT SCHOOL BOARD ADVISORY REPRESENTATIVES

Superintendent Law noted that last month, our Student School Board Advisory representatives met with District Administration to review the current year, discuss the benefits of this opportunity, consider how we might measure success, and make recommendations for the future. He welcomed students Aneeqa Sameer, Ali Stockman, and Austen Harrison to provide the Board with an update.

The students shared the following information with the Board:

Student Voice Matters

- Opportunity to have a seat at the table
- Direct input into real district decisions
- Strengthens connection between students and the School Board
- Meaningful and eye-opening
- Gained real understanding of board processes
- Exposure to administrative decision-making

Learning and Growth

- Training and pre-meetings built readiness
- Learned how to engage, ask questions and contribute
- Increased confidence in sharing perspectives
- Observed discussions leading to decisions
- Heard multiple perspectives from Board members
- Gained understanding of complex topics

Real Contribution

- Students provided perspectives and asked questions
- Increased awareness of district issues
- Shared learning with peers, families, and community

How Do We Know This Was Productive?

- Core goal: to include authentic student voice
- Student presence at School Board meetings demonstrates this
- Addition of student representatives at meetings is visible evidence
- Low risk, high reward opportunity
- Minimal cost and time commitment for high impact
- Students felt comfortable and not forced to participate
- Valuable even when students were primarily listening and learning

What Could Make This Better?

- Talked with peers informally about topics
- Opportunity to expand this more intentionally
- Create student surveys on key topics
- Share surveys in classes or advisory periods
- Use results to inform student representatives before meetings

Expanding Access

- Strong interest from students not selected
- Allow some current members to continue for continuity
- Allow interested students to re-apply
- Create additional ways for non-selected students to contribute
- Consider open forums or rotating participation opportunities

Why This Matters

- Efforts such as this make leadership more accessible
- It strengthens connections with students
- It ensures student voice is heard

In the discussion that followed, the students emphasized how much they have enjoyed participating in the pilot and expressed a desire to see it continue. They specifically mentioned the pre-meetings with Superintendent Law and Principal Erickson that take place the day before the board meetings/study sessions as being valuable to making sure they are prepared for the meetings. They have enjoyed getting to know more about the Board's functions and how the Board works. They would like to continue with the opportunity and discussed ways to get more students involved. Possibly utilizing the Morning Show to give updates to the entire student body, and also utilizing a student survey, were discussed as ways to increase awareness of this opportunity. A suggestion was also made to randomly select half the students now on the committee to continue next year, and then open up the remaining slots to new students.

Board members thanked the students for the great presentation and were all very enthused about continuing this opportunity for next year.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM UPDATE

Associate Superintendent Amy LaDue, MME Principal Pete Dymit and MMW Principal Freya Schirmacher updated the Board on the changes to the middle school program that have been implemented in the past year. A comprehensive review of the middle school program was initiated in the spring of 2023. This review resulted in a list of recommendations that were approved at the February 2024 School Board meeting in response to the multi-year Board goal focused on improvement of the middle school program.

These recommendations were designed to address five priorities identified collaboratively by stakeholders and include 1) creating a more flexible master schedule, 2) differentiating academic support, 3) dedicating social and emotional learning time, and 4) expanding elective options and student choice. The fifth priority centered on providing opportunities for teacher professional learning and collaboration to support implementation of the new program.

Administrators then shared the following information with the Board:

Modified Block Master Schedule

- Immersion courses untethered from advisory in 6^{th}/7^{th} grade
- Advisory time incorporated into daily instructional minutes
- Allows for increased elective and inclusion opportunities
- Structure allows for continuity for Math and LA instruction between Day A/Day B schedules
- Financially sustainable

Academic Support Options

- FLEX Time twice weekly
- Shift in intervention to prioritize foundational skills and gaps in learning
- Tier 2 intervention in social and emotional skills and executive functioning skills
- Revised reading intervention model and identification process aligned with the READ Act
- Provided flexible, data-driven support opportunities in math
- Additional academic and/or life skill support can be provided without students losing access to all electives

Advisory Changes

- Mixed grade-level configuration to foster middle school community and student belonging
- Built into the instructional day
- Academic monitoring and support
- Planning and organizing for school success
- Relationship and team building
- Building specific community and culture building activities

Crew Academy

- Dedicated time to provide Tier I instruction for all students
    - Social and emotional (SEL) development
    - Executive functioning skills
    - Study and academic skills instruction and development
    - Digital citizenship
- Focus on bridging transitions, from elementary to middle, and middle to high school
- Provide venue for consistent advanced learning opportunities
- Based on student and staff feedback, made mid-year adjustments to Crew Academy curriculum

Electives by the Numbers

- 23 new elective options
- 43 total elective options (11 – 7th grade, 32 – 8th grade)
- 7th grade highest enrollment – Forensics (690 students) and Financial Literacy (567 students)
- 8th grade highest enrollment – Drawing and Painting (345), Woods (290), and Fashion (222)

Professional Learning – Strategies/Topics

- Instructional practices and strategies for teaching in a block
- Disciplinary Literacy
- Social and emotional learning
- Culturally responsive practices

Collaboration Opportunities and Support

- Dedicated curriculum writing time for existing and new courses
- Scheduled curriculum and assessment collaboration
- Cross-district common course bi-monthly meetings

Planning for Year 2

- Met with Oversight Committee monthly
- Surveyed stakeholders – students, families and staff
- Conducted listening sessions open to all staff
- Met with Department Chairs for core content areas
- Met with Crew Academy leaders
- Balance of adjustments vs. consistency based on staff input

Adjustments for Year 2

- Adjustment to schedule to support transitions
- Include additional FLEX Time during key timeframes
- Focus for Advisory community building and collaboration
- Refine Crew Academy content specific to student needs
- Refine scheduling process
- Proactive scheduling for student support and intervention
- Provide ongoing curriculum development and professional learning

In the discussion that followed, Board members thanked members of the academic team for the incredible amount of work that had gone into both the review and the Year One implementation. Chairperson Foss asked for more information on the Digital Citizenship component of Crew Academy. Principal Dymit responded that it is focused on student understanding of the permanence of social media and their digital footprint. Middle school students are known for their impulsivity, and this class encourages them to stop and think before they post. Board member Kolbinger said that as a former middle school teacher, she knows what a bear it is to change from a multi-period day to a block schedule, and she's proud of our great leaders and teachers for implementing this change and making it work. She asked whether FLEX time is a re-teaching time for students who need it, or extra prep time for teachers. Principal Schirmacher said it is both a re-teach and enrichment time. Board member Kolbinger asked whether the Lighthouse Program at MME would continue, and Principal Dymit said they have held onto parts of it and ideally want to get it back to a full-day program for those students who need it. Board member asked Jordan asked about the loss of minutes for science instruction. Principal Schirmacher noted that quite a few science-based electives had been added, including Forensics, which has been extremely popular. They are also working on getting some more instructional minutes back for science and social studies in Year Three. Board member Selinger said she has heard great feedback from her own middle school student, and she's excited to hear teacher feedback in Years Two and Three, especially concerning having the same students in advisory over a period of years. Student Board representative Sameer asked if students are allowed to work in different spaces other than the classroom during FLEX Time. Principal Dymit responded that they are working on expanding those options for students. With the recent passage of the referendum, both MME and MMW will see additional flexible learning spaces in their facilities plans.

REVIEW OF LONG-TERM FACILITIES MAINTENANCE 10-YEAR PLAN

Paul Bourgeois presented this item to the Board. He noted that the district has 1,870,344 square feet of space and 259 acres of land that require sustained long-term maintenance to remain in a state of good repair to support the educational programs. Of the 1,870,344 square feet, 1,520,793 or 81% is 27 years old or older, and 1,043,714 - 56% - is 59 years old or older. All the district's school facilities were initially built in 1967 or earlier, except for the former TSP building, which was constructed in 2001, the former Shorewood Professional Building, which was constructed in 1997, and the new VANATAGE MOMENTUM Building which was built in 2023. Included in that square footage is 469,363 square feet that exceeds 68 years of age. Excelsior Elementary School has the three-story section dating to 1929, Minnewashta Elementary School has a section that dates to 1936, and Minnetonka Community Education Center has a large section that dates to 1938. The bulk of the remainder of District original construction was built starting with the 1947 addition to the Minnetonka Community Education Center and continuing through the ensuing 20 years with the completion of Scenic Heights Elementary School in 1967. The original construction on Minnetonka High School dates to 1952 with the first class graduating in spring 1953 – which means that as of the end of the FY26 school year it will have had 74 years of use and 74 graduating classes. The replacement value of the 1,870,344 square feet is $895,894,776 at current new school construction costs of $479 per square foot.

The age of so much square footage has resulted in the need to make significant "mid-life" component replacement in the facilities to ensure their readiness for the next 60 years of use. In effect, the district facilities are in the process of being "re-built" in place during the summers when school is not in session. Since the District qualified for the Alternative Facilities program in FY2004 (now the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Program), the District has completed over $156 million in long-term facility maintenance projects to work towards catching up on and eliminating deferred maintenance through the end of FY2026. Additional mid-life component replacement needs to be continued over the next 10 years, as with a large fleet of buildings the need for long-term maintenance is ongoing.

The update of the Ten-Year Long Term Facilities Maintenance Plan projects out remaining long term maintenance needs for the next decade starting with FY2027 through FY2036. The total projects listed in the plan for those ten years are estimated at $66,050,000, or an average of approximately $6.6 million annually. However, as major rebuilding of significant components is estimated to be complete in FY2029 in summer 2028 (as complete as ongoing maintenance can be), the average of the last eight years of the next ten years is approximately $4.7 million annually as projects trend primarily toward roofing and paving after FY29, with the replacement of the MHS cooling tower and the Pagel Ice Making System being two other larger projects schedule for the coming years.

Each of the years in the FY2027-FY2036 Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Plan will be able to be funded with bond funding while at the same time the total amount of outstanding

long-term bonds of the district declines every year as older bonds are paid off. If in a given year competitive prices result in not all the bond proceeds being spent in that year, that will allow for bonding at a lower level in the subsequent year. The overall goal continues to be keeping the facilities in a state of good repair by doing only necessary projects and completing those necessary projects for the most competitive cost.

The net result of this rebuilding of the district facilities infrastructure means that the community's original investment in its school facilities is being maximized, as these facilities will continue to be used for another 60 years or more each. This is a much more cost-effective strategy to maximize taxpayer investment, as the alternative to rebuilding would be the cost of complete replacement at a time much sooner in the future. As previously noted, at current construction costs of $479 per square foot (118 times more than the annual long-term maintenance cost per square foot of $4.07), the cost of complete replacement of district buildings would total approximately $895 million.

The use of long-term maintenance funding to ensure that our fleet of 59-year-old, 74-year-old, and older buildings continue to function effectively for the next 60 years is the most cost effective and prudent course of action for our school district and our community for the long term.

Mr. Bourgeois then went through the details of the plan, highlighting projects that are due to be completed in each of the ten years of the plan. Board members thanked him for the comprehensive information.

DISCUSSION ON ENDOWMENT FUND CONCEPT

Paul Bourgeois also presented this item to the Board. He noted that the District has a long history of solid community support in terms of donations for various activities and causes. The District annually receives approximately $1.5 million in donations designated for classroom use. The Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation pulls in hundreds of thousands of dollars for use to give annual grants for teachers, or on occasion for District initiatives such as The Writing Lab, Mobile Maker Stations, and the VANTAGE MOMENTUM Forum.

Alumni are immensely proud of being graduates of the District, talking about their experience with the District with the same fondness and enthusiasm as one typically talks about their college alma mater, which is very unique. Many are very involved with the District, want to give back to the District, and have the ability to give back to the District.

As the District looks to continue to forge ahead into the future, reaching the end of enrollment growth and having difficulty getting Operating Referendum Cap capacity increases approved by the Legislature (0 for 8 as of this writing), it is going to be imperative for the District to work on alternative revenue sources to be able to continue to support the

educational programs that make Minnetonka ISD 276 a distinct and exemplary school district.

Because of the community pride in the District, as well as the community economic conditions, Minnetonka ISD 276 is in a unique position to be able to establish a Perpetual Endowment Fund in the manner of higher education to be able to develop a funding stream for the unique aspects of Minnetonka ISD 276 that makes it special.

Proposal

Minnetonka ISD 276 has the authority to establish and operate a perpetual endowment fund within the current auspices of Minnesota Statutes.

A Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund is a trust fund. The District is entrusted to expend dollars in a manner that it pledges to the donors. The Minnesota Department of Education UFARS Accounting Manual designates identifies Fund 08 as the District's Trust Fund.

The District already has numerous trust funds of various types accounted for in UFARS Fund 08, including but not limited to various scholarship funds, that it operates annually. In each case, a donor gives a gift to the District with a stipulation that the money be used for the stipulated purpose. The District has a fiduciary duty to oversee the disbursement of those funds in the stipulated manner for the stipulated purpose.

With a Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund, the District would solicit donations periodically, in any solicitation would commit that the corpus of each donation would remain untouched for perpetuity, but a certain percentage of earning on the corpus each year would go to designated usage. In that way, a donor knows that their gift is true legacy giving and will be generating benefits to students in perpetuity.

In fact, legacy giving would be the primary focus of the Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund, as the intention is not to compete with nor supplant the current giving levels for immediate use that the majority of the current donations to the District currently are. The emphasis is on the long term, building up the perpetual endowment fund over years and decades.

Investing Donations

All school districts in Minnesota have the authority to invest any of their cash not needed for operations in a list of investment vehicles designated in Minnesota Statutes 118A.04 and 118A.05. The District's Policy 705 lists a subset of these investment vehicles as allowable investments for the District. Within those investment vehicles there is the ability to earn 3.00%-4.50% annually under normal interest rate conditions. All the investment vehicles are extremely safe vehicles, with preservation of the capital invested of primary importance. Initially these investments may be able to be managed in-house, but as the

corpus grows eventually the District may want to contract with a professional manager as the District has done with the OPEB Trust.

In the long run, it would be prudent for the District to lobby the Legislature to include Perpetual Endowment Trust Funds under the same investment guidelines used for OPEB Trusts across the State.

Soliciting Donations for the Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund

The process of soliciting donations need not be a major time-consuming process. Use of space on existing District publications could be utilized with a simple tagline such as:

Interested in Legacy Giving? Ask us about the Minnetonka Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund at 952-401-5000.

Annual solicitations with an inexpensive postcard-style mailing to all alumni might be another method to communicate with people who may be interested in a perpetual donation. There are a variety of other options, but the main point is that given the long-term nature of the donation process, steady reminders to alumni will help the Minnetonka Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund grow steadily and compounding on earnings will work its magic to accelerate growth more and more as the Trust corpus continues to grow.

Establishing The Perpetual Endowment

All that is needed for the establishment of a Permanent Endowment Trust Fund is an action by the School Board to authorize its establishment. Included in the establishment of the Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund should be a statement of the mission of the Trust and the establishment of a Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund Advisory Committee that would meet quarterly in the manner that the OPEB Trust Advisory Committee has been meeting for 16 years and counting. The Board Action would be to approve a Trust document that we would utilize the Trust attorneys at Dorsey & Whitney to put together for us, as well as a statement of the mission (to be used for x, y, and z) and establishment of the Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund Advisory Committee.

Long-Term Endeavor for Future Students

It will take some time for the Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund to build assets. It may require development of strategy to only start taking distributions once the corpus has reached a certain amount, such as $5 million, and then have the percentage of earnings distributed at 50% of annual earnings once the corpus has reached $5 million, 57% of annual earnings once the corpus has reached $10 million, and 65% of the annual earnings once the corpus has reached $15 million.

But just because it will take some time does not mean it should not be started. The mightiest redwood trees start with a seed so small that a dozen cones can fit in the palm of a hand. In the long run, the Perpetual Endowment Trust Fund will be an indispensable funding resource for the District.

In the discussion that followed, Chairperson Foss asked whether other Minnetonka School Boards have ever considered this option. Mr. Bourgeois responded no. Board member Selinger asked whether the Finance Advisory Committee was aware of this option, and Mr. Bourgeois responded yes, and they are supportive of it. She also asked if there were legal limitations as to how the money could be spent. Mr. Bourgeois responded that it would be completely up to the School Board how to use the funds, and it would be important for the Board to determine what things are most important to people. Board Treasurer Browne asked whether we could consider having an independent assessment done as to whether this would work, and Mr. Bourgeois responded that yes, we could hire a CPA firm or an actuary to carry that out. Superintendent Law mentioned the possibility of utilizing Morris-Leatherman for research to determine whether a district having an endowment fund would affect support for possible future referendums. The Board also discussed how donors would be recognized and what that would look like.

Superintendent Law noted that this proposal would be brought back to a future study session for further review and discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the study session at 8:45 p.m.