



Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative

1326 E Ripley St, Litchfield, MN 55355

Joint Powers Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 - 5:30 pm

Meeting Minutes - *Official*

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

I. Call to Order/ Board Roll Call

The Regular meeting was called to order at 5:39 pm.

A roll call was conducted:

Sarah Baker: Present

Gena Jacobson: Present

Jessica Johnson: Present

Cindy Miller: Present

Tim Oster: Present

Kelsey Puncochar: Absent

Jen Rasset: Absent

A quorum of five 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. Consent Agenda

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Sarah Baker and seconded by Gena Jacobson. 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
 - Termination: Amanda Skiles, Paraprofessional, STEP, Effective 5/7/26
- Contract Items
 - Other Contracts
 - Ukeru Training Agreement
 - Resource Training and Solutions Environmental/Occupational Health and Safety Contract FY27-29
 - IT Technical Services Contract 2026-27
 - Central Office Lease Agreement 2026-27
 - Journeys Program Lease Agreement 2026-27



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- STEP Program Lease Agreement 2026-27
 - Trek Program Lease Agreement 2026-27

V. Acknowledgements

A. Staff Contributions and Continuous Year of Service to MAWSECO

The board acknowledged the following staff for their contributions and continuous years of service to MAWSECO:

25 Years

Wendy Hennessey, Special Education Teacher

10 Years

Natalie Dunning, School Psychologist

Marie Erickson, Behavior Analyst

Michelle Heizelman, Special Education Teacher

JoLee Marquette, Brailist

Jenna Wright, Paraprofessional

Lisa Perovich, Administrative Assistant

5 Years

Melissa Hanson, Executive Director

Brittney Hjelmeland, School Psychologist

Karey Lambert, Administrative Assistant

Willie Nelson, Paraprofessional

Susan Sickler, School Psychologist

Anna Spencer, Paraprofessional

Miranda Trebesch, Paraprofessional

Retirements

Lucy Ekholm, Floating Special Education Teacher

Wendy Hennessey, Special Education Teacher

VI. Informational Items

A. Executive Director Report

MSEA negotiations are set to begin this week, with the first meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 21st. The CEU committee representatives recommend continuing the current partnership with the Dassel-Cokato district rather than forming a separate MAWSECO committee. For the READ Act, about 4–5 teachers are expected to participate in OL-LA training in the 2026–2027 school year. The cooperative is also exploring ways to reduce costs by evaluating alternatives to employee communication devices, particularly to decrease the number of district-issued cell phones. The second year of the New Special Education Teacher Cohort has been successful, with strong attendance and engagement. Additionally, on May 11th, representatives from SpEd Forms visited MAWSECO to gather feedback from the special education leadership team and to share updates on current and upcoming system features.



B. Director of Finance Report

Purchased service final billing estimates were shared with districts, showing that the original 90% prebilling was actually closer to 82%, with a final settle-up estimated at approximately \$445,500. The SFY 2027 Statement of Assurances has been submitted to and received by MDE, with federal fund approval letters expected in August. SEDRA lines were successfully retained for all districts. A short-term \$500,000 line of credit is being set up as a precaution in case additional funds are needed for the June 30th payroll. The FY2027 preliminary budget will also be presented for its first review.

C. Wings Alternative Program Program Administrator Report & Tour of Program

Enrollment Data

This school year so far, total enrollment has been 73 students, with a concurrent capacity of 10 boys and 10 girls. The average length of stay for all students was 60 days, with a breakdown showing 12 students staying fewer than 10 days, 10 students staying 10–29 days, 20 students staying 30–60 days, and 31 students staying more than 60 days. Among those in the 60+ day group, the average length of stay was 104.6 days. Additionally, 24 students had an active IEP during their enrollment.

Staffing, Instruction, and Learning Update

The teaching and support staff continue to be a strong, consistent asset to the program, with teachers collaborating to deliver structured, responsive instruction and maintain a positive, well-managed learning environment. The Wings paraprofessional supports daily instruction by assisting students, reinforcing learning, and helping maintain consistent classroom routines. Additionally, a fall grant from Resource Training & Solutions in Sartell, MN, was used to purchase stand-up desks, expanding sensory and regulation options available in the classroom.

Use of Dining Room Space for Instructional Programming

A single instructional space was initially limiting the ability to fully utilize both full-time teachers and provide consistent student support, so the dining room—identified by Wings as an underutilized area—was added for use during portions of the school day. This additional space has improved instructional flexibility and service delivery by supporting direct instruction, independent work time, testing accommodations, and behavioral regulation supports when it is not in use for meals. Continued use of this shared space will require ongoing collaboration with Wings to adjust and maintain sustainable programming.

Overall Program Summary

The program continues to provide a structured, supportive environment focused on student growth, supported by consistent staffing and strong collaboration that help maintain stability and positive relationships with students. Ongoing



adjustments to the learning environment further support student engagement, regulation, and access to instruction across settings.

D. FY27 Preliminary Budget [First Reading]

Kim Geurts, Director of Finance brought the Fiscal Year (FY) 27 Preliminary Budget to the board for a first reading. No action was taken.

VII. Action Items

A. New Business

1. Resolution Accepting Donation

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

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye

Gena Jacobson - aye

Jessica Johnson - aye

Cindy Miller - aye

Tim Oster - aye

Motion carried with five votes in favor.

2. 2026 Summer Services

A motion to approve the 2026 Summer Services listing to authorize any additional Part C evaluations and services that would be required in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEAS) was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Jessica Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Discussion Items

A. Philanthropy Opportunities for the Board

The board discussed ways they could voluntarily and philanthropically provide ongoing support to the MAWSECO districts and programs. Board Chair, Jessica Johnson, and Vice Chair, Gena Jacobson, volunteered to lead the planning efforts and asked Executive Director Melissa Hanson to consider potential opportunities for the board to assist the cooperative.

IX. Future Board Meetings



Meeting Date
Tuesday, May 19, 2026

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- A. May 21, 2026, 5:30 pm, MSEA Negotiations Committee Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
 - B. June 23, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
 - C. July 28, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
 - D. August 25, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake

X. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Cindy Miller. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 pm.

**A tour of the Wings Alternative Program by Chad Johnson was taken after the meeting adjourned.*

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