

FINANCE COMMITTEE
GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD
GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
MEETING MINUTES
September 21, 2026

The Grand Forks School Board Finance Committee met on Monday, September 21, 2026, at the Mark Sanford Education Center, with Board Member Brianna Hall presiding.

Committee Members Present: JoNell Bakke, Brianna Hall, Eric Lunn, Michelle Shepperd, Dr. Terry Brenner, Ryan Gatzke, Dr. Kris Arason, and Chris Triggs.

Committee Members Absent: Amber Flynn.

Resource Staff Present: DaLee Wilkinson, Building and Grounds Director, and Dave Nowatzki, Schroeder Middle School Principal.

Other Staff Present: Cindy Johnson, Senior Executive Assistant and School Board Operations Coordinator.

Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m.

Consideration of Meeting Minutes.

It was moved by Lunn and seconded by Bakke to approve the April 20, 2026, and May 18, 2026, minutes as presented. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously. Absent: Flynn.

Discussion of Overall Budget Outlook after running Payroll.

Gatzke presented an updated financial outlook following recent payroll runs and budget realignment efforts. A deficit of approximately \$2.1 million for the current fiscal year is projected. One contributing factor is that not all budget realignment concepts are being realized. While more work remains, identifiable factors include lower-than-projected savings from Multilingual (ML) para reductions, pending staffing updates in Human Resources, a projected drop of roughly 100 enrolled students, which equates to a \$1.2 to \$1.4 million decline in revenue, and the para allocation. Additionally, special education expenditures face a \$2.3 million shortfall relative to revenue, requiring careful management to maintain required spending thresholds under IDEA-B rules to prevent the loss of this funding source. Another

budget realignment concept was reducing overtime hours, which the administration is monitoring. More information will be presented at the October 5 budget work session.

Recommendation/Planning/Discussion regarding Air Conditioning.

- **Funding for Wilder Elementary School.**

The committee discussed long-term HVAC needs and Building Fund balances, noting approximately \$1.1 million remaining in unallocated 2023 referendum funds (out of \$18 million originally authorized). Discussion included whether to return excess funds to taxpayers, estimated at \$21 annually on a \$300,000 home, or use the balance to install full central air conditioning at Wilder.

- **2028 Timeline for Schroeder Middle School.**

The committee discussed challenges at Schroeder Middle School, where over half the facility—including the sixth-grade wing, music suite, and gymnasiums—lacks central air conditioning and fresh ventilation. The electrical capacity cannot support window splitters (estimated at \$6 million to \$8 million for a complete upgrade). It was suggested that in 2028, when existing Building Fund debt obligations (from Discovery, South

Central, and other facilities) expire, approximately \$2.5 million annually in cash flow would be freed up and could be bonded over 10 to 15 years to fund major HVAC and electrical overhauls.

- **Options for Final Safety & Security Upgrade at Phoenix Elementary School.**

Phoenix is the final campus designated for safety and security entry upgrades, estimated at \$1.83 million. The committee reviewed potential conflicts with the city's traffic study at 4th Street and Belmont Road, which may include a mini-roundabout that would impact the property boundary. To avoid premature construction that could be disrupted by municipal roadwork, the committee recommended delaying major Phoenix renovation decisions until 2028 to align with the expired debt bonding capacity and finalized city plans.

Next Meeting Date.

The next meeting date was scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

APPROVED _____
(Date)

Brianna Hall, Meeting Chairperson

Ryan Gatzke, Interim Business Manager