

**GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD
GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 28, 2026**

The School Board of Grand Forks Public School District No. 1 held a regular meeting on Monday, September 28, 2026, at the Mark Sanford Education Center, with President JoNell Bakke presiding.

Board Members Present: Mary Adams, JoNell Bakke, Dr. Allyse Dunnigan, Amber Flynn, Brianna Hall, Jay Kleven, Lori Kraemer, Eric Lunn, and Jeff Manley.

Board Members Absent: None.

Student Board Members Present: Bella Aipperspach.

Student Board Members Absent: Elsa Parrill.

District Administration Present: Dr. Terry Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Ryan Gatzke, Interim Business Manager; Dr. Kris Arason, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education; Chris Triggs, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education.

Resource Staff Present: Dr. Elisa Diederich, Executive Director of Special Education; Brandon Vandervort, Assistant Director of Special Education; and DaLee Wilkinson, Director of Buildings and Grounds & Safety/Security.

Other Present: Brady Olson, President, Grand Forks Education Association; Laura D. Cobb, Attorney at Law; and Cindy Johnson, Senior Executive Assistant and School Board Operations Coordinator.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Reading of School Board Meeting Norms.

Kleven read aloud the meeting norms.

Approval of Agenda.

It was moved by Hall and seconded by Adams to add Designation of Additional NDSBA Convention Delegate to the Consent Agenda. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Adams, Dunnigan, Kraemer, Flynn, Manley, Lunn, Kleven, Hall, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: None.

It was moved by Kleven and seconded by Kraemer to approve the agenda as amended. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Dunnigan, Kraemer, Flynn,

Manley, Lunn, Kleven, Hall, Adams, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Public Comments.

Listed below are the names of citizens who spoke before the Board, along with the topic(s) indicated on their comment cards:

- Stephanie Britton – program room para support.
- Rosemary Pleva Flynn, special education within GFPS.
- Celeste Long-Elk, para – lack of.
- Katie Dahly – special education.
- Rachel Hafner – paraprofessional support.

Update on September 16, 2026, Meeting with Special Education Teachers.

Dr. Brenner provided an update regarding the September 16, 2026, meeting with special education staff. He addressed the 3:1 student-to-

paraprofessional ratio guide, explaining that decisions regarding individual student needs and hiring requests are reviewed on an ongoing basis using a decision-making matrix. Dr. Brenner acknowledged that the timing of initial communication could have been improved and reviewed broader context, including state/federal special education funding shortfalls, student enrollment projections, and plans to explore an alternative behavioral support space (Level D) by January 2027.

Dr. Diederich, Vandervort, and board members engaged in an extensive discussion covering paraprofessional allocations across general education and program rooms, building-level budget autonomy, safety, data collection burdens on teachers, and comparisons of IEP percentages relative to other state districts.

Finance Committee Report.

Hall reported on the September 21, 2026, Finance Committee meeting, noting a projected General Fund deficit of \$2.1 million following recent payroll runs and budget realignments. The committee reviewed \$6M–\$8M in combined HVAC needs at Wilder Elementary and Schroeder Middle School, along with safety updates at Phoenix Elementary that may adjust entrances and parking pending a city study on a proposed roundabout at Belmont & 4th. Existing bond expirations in late 2028/2029 will free up building fund capacity for these future capital projects.

Discussion of NDSBA Resolutions.

Dr. Brenner presented the North Dakota School Boards Association (NDSBA) resolutions scheduled for voting at the upcoming convention. Key resolutions regarding English Learner funding, construction loans, property tax caps, and sign-on bonuses were noted. Board members expressed concern over the absence of resolutions addressing special education funding and agreed that delegates should raise this oversight at the convention.

Consent Agenda.

It was moved by Kleven and seconded by Adams to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- September 14, 2026, school board meeting minutes;
- Annual Compliance Report;
- Cooperative Agreement between Grand Forks Special Education Unit and Thompson Public School District for 2026-2027;
- Retirement of Dr. Terry Brenner, effective June 30, 2027;
- Teacher appointments, effective September 14, 2026, as follows:
 - Mandy Von Rueden, Special Education Teacher, 170-day contract, salary schedule placement MA/MS, Step 1, \$50,929.47;
 - Student Travel Request for up to 21 students to Germany and France June 8, 2027 to July 3, 2027, subject to adequate student participation, as determined by District Administration; and
 - Designation of Lori Kraemer as an additional convention delegate to the 2026 NDSBA Annual Convention and Delegate Assembly.

Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Kraemer, Flynn, Manley, Lunn, Kleven, Hall, Adams, Dunnigan, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Consideration of FY27 District Budget and Tax Levy – Certificate of Levy.

Gatzke presented the budget and tax levy, which calls for a total levy of 128.75 mills. This levy includes 69.11 mills for the general fund, 11.88 mills for miscellaneous, 4 mills for tuition, 2.97 mills for a special reserve fund, 19.13 mills for the building fund, 1 mill for special assessments, and 20.68 mills for sinking & interest related to the public referendum passed on May 16, 2023. This mill levy total is 1.10 mills less than the prior year due to the 3% property tax cap. Gatzke reviewed updated year-end figures for FY26 and revised FY27 projections, noting an updated general fund deficit projection of \$2.2 million driven primarily

by state foundation aid adjustments following an enrollment decline of 108 students. The projected ending fund balance is \$1.48 million, or 1.1% of expenditures.

It was moved by Kleven and seconded by Flynn to approve the FY2027 budget and tax levy as presented. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Flynn, Manley, Lunn, Kleven, Hall, Adams, Dunnigan, Kraemer, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Consideration of General Fund Financial Statement.

Gatzke reported that for the period from July 1, 2026, through August 31, 2026, total general fund revenues were \$8,501,933 and total general fund expenditures were \$6,953,444.47, resulting in revenues over expenditures of \$1,548,488.53.

It was moved by Adams and seconded by Manley to approve the General Fund Financial Statement for July 1, 2026, through August 31, 2026, as outlined. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Manley, Lunn, Kleven, Hall, Adams, Dunnigan, Kraemer, Flynn, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Superintendent Evaluation Committee Report – Consideration of Evaluation Instrument for 2026-2027.

Manley reported on the September 22, 2026, Superintendent Evaluation Committee meeting. The committee voted 4-1 to retain the established 43-question evaluation instrument used during the prior year.

The Board discussed the evaluation process, including whether to incorporate broader stakeholder feedback. Board members noted that the evaluation instrument is thorough, allows extensive open-ended narrative comments, and is completed directly by the full board as its primary duty. In response to discussion around exploring alternative tools or survey methods, District legal counsel Laura Cobb clarified that board policy requires the specific evaluation instrument for the upcoming school year to be

agreed upon in September, limiting the timeline for structural revisions. Dr. Brenner confirmed that background narratives and data aligned with the strategic plan will be provided to support the board's evaluation.

It was moved by Lunn and seconded by Kleven to approve using the same superintendent evaluation instrument used in 2025-2026 for the 2026-2027 school year. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Lunn, Kleven, Hall, Adams, Dunnigan, Kraemer, Flynn, Manley, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Announcements.

A list of upcoming meetings was linked on the agenda. Board members were informed that the October 5 work session has been postponed.

Board Requests for Future Consideration.

None.

School Board Meeting Norms—How Did We Do?

Kleven concluded that the board did a good job of following its meeting norms.

Adjournment.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
(Date)

JoNell Bakke, President

Ryan Gatzke, Interim Business Manager