GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD
GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 26, 2026

The School Board of Grand Forks Public School District No. 1 held a regular meeting on Monday, October 26, 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, Lori Kraemer, Eric Lunn, and Jeff Manley.
Board Members Absent: Jay Kleven.

Student Board Members Present: Bella Aipperspach and Elsa Parrill.
Student Board Members Absent: None.

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

Resource Staff Present: Dr. Elisa Diederich, Executive Director of Special Education.

Other Present: Brady Olson, President, Grand Forks Education Association; 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.
Adams read aloud the meeting norms.

Approval of Agenda.
It was moved by Adams and seconded by Flynn to approve the agenda as presented.

It was moved by Adams and seconded by Hall to amend the pending motion to amend the agenda by adding a discussion about how a child qualifies for an IEP.

Discussion continued regarding the lack of district preparation for the discussion and advance public notification of the topic, and that the requested discussion was in direct response to a social media post and intended to set the record straight.

Upon a roll call vote, the amendment carried. Aye: Hall, Manley, Flynn, Kraemer, Dunnigan, Adams, and Bakke. Nay: Lunn. Absent: Kleven.

The original motion as amended carried unanimously. Aye: Lunn, Manley, Flynn, Kraemer, Dunnigan, Adams, Hall, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: Kleven.

Public Comments.
None.

Government Affairs Committee Report.
Bakke reported on the October 15, 2026, committee meeting. Discussions included the district's funding deficit, special education funding, and the state's responsibility to fund public school districts adequately.

Discussion Regarding President Bakke's *The Gavel* Publication.
Bakke shared her rationale for publishing *The Gavel*, a monthly district communication created

to increase transparency, distributed via district staff email and Peachjar for parents. Board members raised concerns about personal opinions in official-style communications, references to 'we', inaccuracies, and Board fundraising. Bakke indicated there is no district cost associated with the publication and clarified that she would personally pay for it if needed.

Discussion of School District's 2027 Legislative Priorities.
President Bakke reviewed the five core legislative priorities provided in Dr. Brenner's memo. They are: Special Education Funding, Foundation Aid Formula, Flexibility Within the 3% Property Tax Limitation, Health Insurance Costs, and Teacher Retention Pay.

A Legislative Forum is scheduled for November 19, 2026, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., bringing together school, city, county, park board, and airport officials. It was suggested that legal counsel brief the board on legislative advocacy during the session.

Discussion About How a Child Qualifies for an IEP.
The board discussed recent public social media statements made by the Grand Forks City Council President concerning special education placement and funding. Dr. Elisa Diederich, Executive Director of Special Education, outlined the comprehensive multi-tiered evaluation process—including student profile meetings, formal/informal assessments, 60-day review windows, and multi-disciplinary Integrated Written Assessment Report (IWAR) meetings guided by state eligibility criteria. Diederich clarified that North Dakota uses a census-based special education funding model that does not increase if additional students are placed on IEPs. She and board members affirmed that disabilities are developmental and not the fault of parents, rejecting misconceptions about student placement.

Consideration of Consent Agenda.
It was moved by Dunnigan and seconded by Adams to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- October 12, 2026, school board meeting minutes;
- Head Start Monthly Program Reports for September 2026;
- Open Enrollment Application, as presented; and
- Teacher appointment of Jill Johnson, 5th grade teacher, effective October 19, 2026, 141 contract days, salary schedule placement BA/BS, Step 1, $38,607.

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

Consideration of General Fund Financial Statement.
Gatzke reported that for the period from July 1, 2026, through September 30, 2026, total general fund revenues were $17,345,645 and total general fund expenditures were $18,448,622, resulting in expenses over revenues of $1,102,977.

It was moved by Adams and seconded by Manley to approve the General Fund Financial Statement for July 1, 2026, through September 30, 2026, as outlined. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Adams, Hall, Lunn, Manley, Flynn, Kraemer, Dunnigan, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: Kleven.

Policy Review Committee Report: Consideration of Policies and Regulations.
Lunn shared with the board a statement from Human Resources Director Griffin Gillespie indicating he had no concerns with the updated job title, which reflects the dual role of senior executive assistant and school board operations coordinator in board regulation CAAA-BR.

It was moved by Lunn and seconded by Adams to complete the second reading and adoption of each of the following policies as written or amended:
1. ABBD, Commercial and Political Use of

Schools (as written)
2. ABDA, Website Accessibility for People with Disabilities (as amended)
3. BA, School Board Ethics (as amended)
4. BC, Meetings of the Board (as amended)
5. BCAC, Minutes. (as amended)
6. BCAD, Executive Session (as amended)
7. CBAA, Administrative Regulations (as amended)
8. CBAB, Administration in Policy Absence (as amended)
9. DBBA, Drug and Alcohol Testing Program for Employees (as amended)
10. DEAA, Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace (as amended)
11. FAAC, Enrollment of Suspended or Expelled Students (as amended)
12. FCBD, Student Custody (as amended)
13. FDD, Education of Pregnant and Parenting Students (as amended)
14. FDE, Education of Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities Under the IDEA (as amended)

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

Consideration of Establishment of Superintendent Search Committee and Appointments of Members.

Gatzke reported on the administrative recommendation to establish a Superintendent Search Committee consisting of up to four members of the Grand Forks School Board and up to two members of the Grand Forks Air Force Base School Board. The committee will serve in an advisory capacity to review and evaluate proposals received in response to the Request for Proposal (RFP) for qualified search firms and consultants to conduct a full and comprehensive search and develop a recommendation for the Grand Forks School Board. The committee will not have independent authority to formally select a search firm, award a contract, or make final decisions. Final approval of the search firm and any associated contractual commitments will remain with the Grand Forks School Board.

It was moved by Lunn and seconded by Hall to appoint Dunnigan, Flynn, Kraemer, and Manley to the Superintendent Search Committee and to allocate up to two Grand Forks Air Force Base School Board members to also serve on the committee. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Aye: Flynn, Kraemer, Dunnigan, Adams, Hall, Lunn, Manley, and Bakke. Nay: None. Absent: Kleven.

Announcements.

A list of upcoming meetings was linked on the agenda.

Grand Forks Central was congratulated on winning the Cushman Classic.

Board Requests for Future Consideration.

Lunn requested a discussion about school board interactions with the media.

School Board Meeting Norms—How Did We Do?

Adams concluded that the board did very well in following its meeting norms.

Adjournment.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
(Date)

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JoNell Bakke, President

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Ryan Gatzke, Interim Business Manager