SPRING LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING, NOVEMBER 16, 2026

The Spring Lake Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Monday, November 16, 2026, in the SLIS/MS Media Center. Jennifer Nicles chaired the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Board members present: Jennifer Nicles, Kelly VanderHoek, Curt Theune, Christopher (Chris) Beck, Paul Aldridge, Courtney Holmes and Dustin Brown. Absent: None

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATION

Sandra Smits, Holmes Elementary Principal, and Kris Dewitt, Jeffers Elementary Principal, presented information on the Nature-Based Learning initiative at SLPS detailing training, classroom spaces, vision and next steps for integrating outdoor learning:

- The nature-based education approach focuses on child-led, place-based learning using natural materials and emphasizes outdoor exploration, sustainability, teachers as co-learners and learning in, about and with nature.
- 15 staff members, including administrator, teachers, parapros and special education staff, received certification in nature-based teaching practices from the Outdoor Discovery Center following five full days of training in June of 2026.
- The program aims to foster exploration, connection, searching, growing and caring of the outdoors.
- The vision of this program is to use nature as a classroom, and curiosity as a guide, to continue explore, connect, search, grow and care.
- Next steps include grant writing, acquiring outdoor materials, expanding colleagues' knowledge of nature-based learning, and communications with families about what the students are doing and how it can be supported at home.

Board members expressed their enthusiasm and appreciation for this program with the hopes to see it grow to upper elementary classes as well. Questions from the Board were answered by the presenters and other staff on hand.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 19, 2026, and Work Session Minutes of November 5, 2026, as presented.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

ITEMS RECEIVED TOO LATE FOR PRINTED AGENDA

None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kayla Swain, 15494 132nd Ave., SL – thanked the presenters for the outdoor learning presentation and praised the Jeffers Parent Organization and volunteers for a great Color Jam fundraiser and all who supported it. She noted that she was glad to see the discussion continue on public access to Board packets and hopes that it continues to move in a positive direction. She thanked the Board for their time and all they do for the students and staff of SLPS.

Karen Obits, 740 Winter Street, SL – commented she was glad to see discussion on the public access to Board packets was on the agenda again and noted that hyperlinking the agenda to the supporting documentation is a better tool to help attendees prepare for meetings.

Joanne Koratich, 16789 Bridlepath, SL – shared her frustration and disappointment with what she considers an unhealthy learning environment for her son at the high school due to a disruptive student, and shared how it negatively impacts her son. She provided that her son has made attempts to remedy the situation but his requests have been denied by staff.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

CONSENT AGENDA

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

- Accounts Payable – Food Service, SLCFAC, General Fund, Student Activity, etc. – totaling $2,684,529.
- Payroll – totaling $2,882,844.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

ACTION ITEMS

RESIGNATION/RETIREMENT

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve, with regrets, the resignation/retirement of Ann Henke, HS Guidance Counselor, effective June 4, 2027 as presented.

Mr. Furton shared that Ms. Henke has been with the district since 1997, and she will be missed. He expressed appreciation for the advance notice of her retirement, which aids the district in preparing to hire her replacement.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

WINTER COACHING ASSIGNMENTS

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the winter coaching assignments as presented. Mr. Furton noted that two former varsity coaches are now coaching middle school basketball teams and how valuable that is for the program.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous; Kelly VanderHoek abstained

27l (2) STIPEND FOR STAFF

Kelly VanderHoek moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the 27l (2) stipend payment for staff as presented.

Mr. Furton provided that the District expects to receive $248,167 in 27l (2) funding that can only be used for increasing educator compensation. The District has 314 regularly employed staff on payroll and 275 individuals would qualify to receive educator compensation payments under the guidelines of 27l (2). The District recommends treating non-eligible employees the same, utilizing only General Fund resources. If approved, the district would distribute a gross wage of $838.30 to qualifying employees, subject to payroll taxes but not retirement, and also provide the same stipend to non-qualifying employees. This payment would be made with the December 8 regular payroll.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous; Paul Aldridge and Curt Theune Abstained

DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

POLICY FIRST READINGS

The draft policies and a summary of policy updates for #s 0100, 0154, 0164.1, 0164.2, 0164.3, 0165.1, 0165.2, 0165.3, 0165.4, 0165.5, 0165.6, 2370.02, 2623, 5330, 5460, 5830, 6605, 6700, 7230, 7540.03, 7540.04, 9211, and 9215 were provided to the Board. Mr. Furton noted that these changes have been reviewed by the Policy Committee and that any changes or concerns any Board member has should be communicated to him and the Policy Committee prior to the December regular meeting, where these policies will be brought for final approval.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO BOARD PACKETS

Mr. Furton provided last month's recommendation to make supporting documents broadly available to the public while continuing to protect information that is confidential, privileged or otherwise inappropriate for proactive public disclosure. Mr. Furton walked through the various proposed categories, how they would be treated for publication and what would not be included. He noted that it was not an exhaustive list and that nothing compels the district to do this. This change would be implemented as an administrative practice, rather than a formal Board policy. He stated that the information would be published on the district's website by the Friday before the scheduled Board meeting beginning with next month's regular meeting.

Board member Dustin Brown provided clarification on his ask of Mr. Furton at the last meeting to run the recommendation by legal counsel. He noted it was not his intent to seek to hold information back intentionally but as a duty to protect information and to make sure the district is following legal guidelines on what can be provided.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Furton reported on the following:

- Legislative Update – Mr. Furton noted that it will be a different environment coming out of Lansing in January, and the Board can expected to see action to revise or replace PA152, which dictates employer contributions to health care premiums for staff. He noted that any change could have an impact on next year's budget.
- Personnel – 2 candidates to fill the long-term Chemistry teaching position (through the end of the school year) will teach a lesson to staff this week as a final interview. A decision will be made soon after. The vacant position will then be posted in the spring for the 2027-28 school year.
- Calendar/Events:
  - November 25-27 – Thanksgiving Break
  - December 14 – BOE Meeting, 2nd Tuesday of the Month, 6:00 p.m.
  - December 17 – District Happy Hour, 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
  - December 21-January 1 – Christmas Vacation
  - January 4, 2027 – School Resumes

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Regular Board Meeting – December 14, 2026, 6:00 p.m., IS/MS Media Center

CLOSED SESSION – PROPERTY PURCHASE

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to move to closed session to discuss a potential property purchase.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

The Board moved to closed session at 6:54 p.m.

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to return to open session.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

The Board returned to open session at 7:45 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

PROPERTY PURCHASE RESOLUTION

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to adopt the property purchase resolution and approve the purchase of said property commonly known as 16022 148th Avenue, Spring Lake Township, for the agreed upon price of $375,000.00 as presented.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

ADJOURNMENT

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

Jennifer Nicles adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

APPROVED: _____ _____

Date Board Secretary