

## **Minutes for January 21, 2026 Organizational School Board Meeting**

Acting Chair Opatz called the Organizational meeting of the School Board of Independent School District #738 to order at 6:02 PM in the meeting room.

Members present: Evelyn Martini, Ben Christensen, Nikki Burg, Lori Opatz, Rob Knettel, Sarah Hansen, Pat Meier and Student Representative Afton Scegura. Members absent: None

Also attending was: Superintendent Chris Swenson, Elementary Principal Jim Stang, Secondary Principal Tom Cooper, Adm. Assistant Linda Zapzalka and Herman Lensing from the Star Post.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Christensen, second by Martini, to approve the amended agenda which included: Removing item 4.9. Accept Donations from the Consent Agenda; Adding 7.3. Adopt the Resolution Accepting Donations; and Authorization to hire Natalia Degler. Motion carried. All In Favor (AIF).

Acting Chair Opatz called for nominations for Chairperson, Christensen nominated Lori Opatz, no other nominations were received. Acting Chair Opatz moved nominations to be closed. Opatz was the only candidate nominated for the office of chair, she was declared elected by acclamation, the acting clerk was directed to so record in the minutes. Lori Opatz was named Chairperson.

Chair Opatz called for nominations for Vice-Chairperson, Martini nominated Rob Knettel, no other nominations were received. Chair Opatz moved nominations to be closed. Knettel was the only candidate nominated for the office of Vice-Chair, he was declared elected by acclamation, the acting clerk was directed to so record in the minutes. Rob Knettel was named Vice-Chairperson.

Chair Opatz called for nominations for Clerk, Christensen nominated Evelyn Martini, no other nominations were received, Chair Opatz moved nominations to be closed, Martini was the only candidate nominated for the office of Clerk she was declared elected by acclamation, the acting clerk was directed to so record in the minutes. Evelyn Martini was named Clerk.

Chair Opatz called for nominations for Treasurer, Martini nominated Ben Christensen no other nominations were received, Chair Opatz moved nominations be closed, he was the only candidate nominated for the office of Treasurer, he was declared elected by acclamation, the clerk was directed to so record in the minutes. Ben Christensen was named Treasurer.

The 2026 school board meeting calendar was reviewed. Motion by Christensen, second by Knettel, to approve the Board Meeting Calendar. Time and location are as follows: Meetings will begin at 6:00 PM, unless otherwise noted or publicized. Meetings will be held in the Meeting Room. Meet and Confer meetings are at 3:15 PM, in the District Conference Room and Work Sessions are at 6:00 PM in the Meeting Room. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Knettel to set the board salary as follows: \$60 for regular, special and committee meetings; \$85 for out of district meetings, and \$85 for meetings that exceed 6 hours in length; Chair \$300/year, Clerk \$100/year, Treasurer \$100/year, second by Burg. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Martini, second by Christensen, to set the mileage rate at the established Federal IRS reimbursement rate while using your own vehicle on school business. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Knettel, second by Meier, to set the meal reimbursement rates to follow the State of MN Commissioners' Plan while on school business. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Martini, second by Christensen, to retain the Star Post as the official newspaper. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Martini, second by Christensen, to retain Versa USA Bank Holdingford, MN Trust, and Minnesota School District Liquid Assets Fund (MSDLAF), and that the Superintendent/Business Manager are authorized to make deposits in official depositories. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Hansen, to allow the use of facsimile board signatures affixed by computer on payroll and disbursement checks. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Hansen, second by Meier, to name district administrative assistant as clerk's designee for routine school duties and handling election duties. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Burg, second by Knettel, to authorize the superintendent to sign/renew contracts and service agreements in amounts up to \$20,000. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Evelyn, to authorize the business manager as treasurer's designee for routine duties including investments and electronic transfers. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Hansen, second by Knettel, to authorize providing meals, coffee, and light refreshments to visitors. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Meier, second by Burg, to authorize the board chair and superintendent to be exclusive contacts with district counsel and to use one firm. Jovanovich, Dege, Athmann, PA of St. Cloud with Susan Dege as our Legal Counsel. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Knettel, second by Christensen, to participate in Title Programs I, II, and IV. The superintendent is the LEA representative for the programs. The elementary principal is authorized as the contact person. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Knettel, to approve Board Committee Assignments. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Knettel, to approve the consent agenda. Items in consent agenda included: approval of the minutes from Dec. 3rd Work Session, Dec. 10th School Board Mtg and the Jan. 7th Special Board Mtg; approval of the schedule of bills in the amount of \$334,996.15; Computer checks approved #58961 through #59103 and #31475 through #31476 in the amount of \$65.44; approval of the electronic transfers for Dec. 2025, \$517,454.31; acknowledgement of the Treasurer's Report balance per books \$5,978,781.72; approval of the following lane changes to be effective at the start of FY26 Qtr. 3; Amanda McDonough from BS20 to BS30; Abby Myers from BS10 to BS20; Nathan Anderson from MS to MS10; Grace Gerads from BS to BS10. On Roll Call voting in favor: Martini, Christensen, Burg, Opatz, Knettel, Hansen and Meier. Voting against: None. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Opatz welcomed fellow board members, administration and guests..

Citizen Participation: None

Superintendent Swenson reviewed the new website quote to meet ADA requirements and to upgrade the site. He also informed the Board that budget discussions are continuing with administration and the tentative plans will be brought to the Board for review and approval.

Student Representative Afton Scegura reported quarter two finals are completed, grades will be out shortly, the semi formal dance is Saturday and sponsored by the Student Council. She added that the Culinary Club is up and running and Quarter 3 is off to a good start.

Elementary Principal Stang reported the holiday festivities were fun and rewarding, that it is great to be back for the new year and things are going well. He recognized the Paraprofessionals and thanked them for their hard work supporting students' needs. Mr. Stang informed the Board that a new sixth grade field trip to ski at Powder Ridge is coming up thanks to PTA for funding the trip. He thanked Ms. Herringlake for showing off the students' artwork in the halls, Custodians for all the messy clean-up winter brings, and the Bus Drivers for keeping our kids safe! Mr. Stang also talked about winter bench-marking using Fastbridge testing. He thanked staff for getting kids caught up, Jen Meemken for her efforts facilitating holiday family gifts for those in need.

Secondary Principal Cooper recognized the Paraprofessionals and summarized the appreciation events to honor them for the amazing job they do! He continued reporting the school year is half way done, spring MCA's are coming up and the staff is working on student incentives to encourage them to do their best. Mr. Cooper is hopeful that the scores will improve and show a real picture of the capabilities of the secondary students. He informed the Board of one early graduate and the six new class offerings in Gen Ed classes: Meat Cutting, Veterinary Science, TLC, Human Geography, Global Foods, and Textile Design.

The BSED meeting report given by Meier included standard business items, resolution to accept donations, and completion of negotiations with a signed contract for the certified staff.

Business Manager Gerber updated the Board on HVAC Needs Grant that was received to cover the costs of an air quality review which is part of the future HVAC project. He reported the three year Fire Inspection is complete with very few findings, the Paid Family Leave requests are at ten and his office is working through the requirements and learning the system. Mr. Gerber informed the Board that he has received the preliminary notice that the District will get the Farm to Table program grant thanks to John Roberts and Jan Notch for helping write it and he is finalizing budget revisions which is leading into forecasting for next year's budget.

**Business Items:**

Motion by Meier, second by Christensen, to approve the District Certified Staff Seniority list for 2025-2026 as presented. Motion carried. AIF.

Mr. Gerber informed the Board that the building re-cabling project has been on the Tech department radar for years, erate dollars are available to reimburse the District for 60% of the project and it is time to update the backbone of the entire building. Motion by Knettel, second by Hansen, to approve the contract with Systematic Technologies for the building re-cabling project to take place during the summer of 2026, at a cost not-to-exceed \$133,354.00. The District will be reimbursed 60% of this cost by erate. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Knettel, to adopt the Resolution Accepting Donations. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the School Board of Holdingford Public Schools, ISD 738, gratefully accepts the following donations as identified below:

<u>Donor</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Designated Purpose (if any)</u>
Bowlus Fire Department	\$5,000	Community Ed
Kylee Fussy Family	\$100	to the Elementary Social Worker
Karen Kostreba	\$50	to the Elementary Social Worker
Sam Scepaniak	\$100	to the Elementary Social Worker,
Two Rivers	\$1000	Trap
Two Rivers	\$4000	Band,
E Martini	\$500	Elementary Social Worker
St. Wendel Sportsmans Club	\$300	Wrestling.

The vote on adoption of the Resolution was as follows: In favor: Martini, Christensen, Burg, Opatz, Knettel, Hansen and Meier. Against: None. Absent: None. Whereupon, said Resolution was declared duly adopted. Board Chair Opatz read the list of donations aloud and thanked the donors for their generosity.

**Personnel:**

Motion by Christensen with many thanks, second by Burg, to accept the Retirement Resignation from Roseanne Feia, Food Service Cook effective 1/4/2026. Motion carried. AIF. Board Chair Opatz also expressed many many thanks to Roseanne for her 45+ years of service and wished her much enjoyment in Retirement!

Motion by Knettel, second by Hansen, to accept the Retirement Resignation from Mary Wallenstein Custodian effective 1/2/2026. Motion carried. AIF. Board Chair Opatz expressed many many thanks to Mary for her 13 years of service and wished her much enjoyment in Retirement!

Motion by Meier, second by Christensen, to hire Carson Bettcher for the District Technology Director position with a start date of 1/1/2026. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Martini, to hire Makenna Stanoch for a Kids' Zone Assistant position with a start date of 1/9/2026. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Meier, second by Martini, to hire Chad Panek for a full-time Evening Custodial position with a start date of 12/17/2025. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Burg, to hire Lindsay Kehl for a Long Term Substitute School Counselor position from approximately 3/9/2026 to 5/19/2026. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Knettel, to approve the Work Agreement with Jason Bruns, Activities Director/Dean of Students for FY26 and FY27. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Meier, second by Martini, to hire Brody Anderson for the Head Football Coach position. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Christensen, second by Hansen, to approve a Child Care Leave Request from Marian Lyndgaard, Secondary Art Teacher for the spring semester of the 2026–27 school year. Motion carried. AIF.

Motion by Burg, second by Knettel, to hire Natalia Degler for a full-time Evening Custodial position with a start date of 1/12/2026. Motion carried. AIF.

A review of the upcoming meeting dates took place.

Work Session February 4, 2026 @ 6:00 PM in the Meeting Room.

Meet & Confer Meeting February 18, 2026 @ 3:15 PM in the District Conference Room

School Board Meeting February 18, 2026 @ 6:00 PM in the Meeting Room.

**Adjourn**

Agenda completed at 6:53 PM with a motion to adjourn by Christensen and a second by Burg. Motion carried.  
AIF.

Respectfully Submitted by  
Clerk Evelyn Feia