

Minutes for March 12, 2026 Special School Board Meeting

Vice-Chair Knettel called the Special Meeting of the School Board of Independent School District #738 to order at 5:35 PM in the meeting room.

Members present: Evelyn Martini, Ben Christensen, Nicole Burg, Rob Knettel, Pat Meier, Sarah Hansen and Lori Opatz via Interactive technology.

Member absent: None

Also attending was: Director of Finance and Operations Garrity Gerber

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Christensen, second by Hansen, to approve the amended agenda, item added: Approve FY 27-29 Achievement and Integration Plan. Motion carried All In Favor. (AIF)

Agenda Items

Consultation with School Pro and the Board to define the Superintendent Search process. Eric Skanson introduced himself and SchoolPro Services. He presented the process via slideshow. Each board member introduced themselves and stated any specific expectations for the process. Knettel shared he is excited for an open process and a strong internal candidate. Christensen shared he was a part of the last process as a community member and liked how the process was conducted through Greg Vandal. Skanson provided a search blueprint. He discussed the importance of character, competency and craft in assessing a solid candidate. The goal is finding the right leader for the school.

Skanson asked the board for the district strengths. Opatz stated fiscal responsibility. Knettel reiterated that we have been very financially stable under Mr Swenson's leadership. He added that there is a high level of respect between students and staff and a high level of community support. Martini stated the community has been very involved in the school's success.

Skanson asked the board for what the next superintendent should protect, preserve, and build upon. Christensen stated we need someone to work well with the business office and with legislative priorities. Hansen stated we want to preserve our solid reputation as a school. Christensen stated we want to continue the accountability and mentorship Swenson has provided. Opatz added that Swenson is not a micro-manager. Burg added that Swenson is involved and visible. Christenson added his involvement in all activities and functions. Knettel mentioned that we strive for independence and Swenson's neutrality to political views. He has not been self serving and has not pushed a personal agenda. Hansen added that there is a focus on education, FFA, Theater, and high performing athletics.

Skanson asked which issues are important to the board. Christensen stated budget concerns. Hansen stated that there is limited new enrollment with few available properties or growth for families. She stated we are reliant on open enrollment. Gerber stated we rely on open enrollment from surrounding areas.

Skanson asked the board about community context. Christensen stated we have a small town dynamic, communication, and atmosphere. Meier stated Swenson gave Friday updates about events to inform the

board and let the board know about current and future problems. Christensen stated that Swenson was present in the church meetings. Opatz also stated the lions. Knettel also stated the “over 60” luncheons. Knettel mentioned the community is very faith driven.

Skanson stated he pulled the strategic plan. Meier stated he would like to continue to implement the strategic plan and mission statement. Hansen added building relationships with neighboring districts is important and Swenson was good at that.

Skanson provided a blueprint handout and presented a timeline.

Skanson shared there have been roughly 15 openings this year and approximately 5 have closed. Hansen stated we may have competition for applicants. Christensen asked if we will be late in having to search for a principal if there is an internal hire. Skanson stated that he felt we will have a good chance to get good candidates for the superintendent and any principal openings.

Knettel shared he felt we needed to try to expedite the process. Discussion was had in condensing the stakeholder survey down to one week. Skansons discussed how the results survey happens and how it affects the candidate profile. Hansen asked if there was anything in person inputs. Skanson stated no. stated she agreed with that and that it would slow down the process and a survey would be a good way to get input. Opatz stated that Facebook, newspaper, and word of mouth to get the survey out. Christensen added church bulletins. Gerber stated we could use school reach. Christensen stated that the city has a messaging process.

Knettel asked if we could shorten the application window to 2 weeks. Skanson stated 2 weeks would be pushing it. Knettel advised we need to push to close quicker. Skanson shared that we would like a pool of 10-15.

The search timeline was revised to reduce the input time to 1 week. Skanson suggested a sub committee in order to review applications to move quickly. He stated a pool of 6 or less for interviews is a target with a final round of half of the semifinalists. Internal candidates and external candidates are welcome to apply. Skanson’s advice is to be open to all candidates that apply and focus on character, competency and craft. Consensus was reached on the pool of candidates and the openness of the search pool.

Skanson stated the compensation window is suggested to be 132,000 to 150,000. He shared the comparable salaries currently advertised and the range fit within other districts Holdingfords size. Skanson stated we are a centrally located district and should be an attractive spot. The consensus was the range was acceptable.

Skanson went through the application submission and interview process in detail. He explained a final publication will be made based on tonight's discussion. Skanson presented the draft brochure. Opatz asked Gerber to coordinate refining the information and be the recipient of feedback from the board for the final draft. The final draft is due by Wednesday 3/18/26 to be presented at the board meeting.

Skanson reviewed the next steps. The board stated they are comfortable with the next steps and there is no further action at this time.

Gerber presented the 3 year Achievement and Integration plan. He reviewed the goals by area.

Motion by Martini, second by Burg to approve the FY 27-29 Achievement and Integration Plan. Motion carried. AIF.

Adjourn

Agenda completed at 7:55 PM with a motion to adjourn by Christensen, second by Hansen. Motion carried. AIF.

Respectfully Submitted by
Clerk Evelyn Martini