

Minutes for March 4, 2026

School Board Work Session

Holdingsford Public School

Chair Opatz called the Work Session of the School Board of Independent School District #738 to order at 6:01 PM in the High School meeting room.

Members present: Evelyn Martini, Ben Christensen, Nicole Burg, Lori Opatz, Rob Knettel, Sarah Hansen, Pat Meier and Student Board Member Afton Scegura. Absent: None

Also attending was Superintendent Chris Swenson, Business Manager Garrity Gerber and Administrative Assistant Linda Zapzalka.

Fire Code Violations:

Gerber opened discussion on the results of the 2026 Fire Code Inspection in which the following violations were found that require repairs/replacements within 180 days from the date of the inspection. Exit light replacements, five sets of fire doors replaced, strobe light installed in the courtyard and a fire cabinet replaced. He explained these items have to be addressed and the challenge is how to pay for them with an estimated total cost of \$109,541.52. The consensus of the Board is to use LTFM dollars which will push back other scheduled repairs. Doing this doesn't put extra dollars on the levy and prevents a tax increase at this time. The District LTFM Plan will have to be revised.

Football/Track Scoreboard:

Gerber shared updated information on the Football/Track Scoreboard project. Discussion took place on the location of the sponsorships being sold to pay for the project. At 6:40 PM the meeting was recessed for the Board to take a look at the commons area where the sponsors will be displayed. At 6:50 PM the meeting reconvened with the Board agreeing the placement of the sponsorships to be above the concessions stand. Gerber shared a diagram showing the location of the new scoreboard and reconfirmed that a written agreement with the Booster Club is being crafted with the language included as previously discussed.

Policies:

Swenson summarized the MSBA recommended revisions to Policy 410 Family & Medical Leave. He also reviewed the recommended revisions to Policy 503 Student Attendance.

Board Committee Reports:

Opatz stated the MSBA trainings she attended were beneficial and she attended the Continuing Ed. meeting where they track teachers recertification credits.

Martini attended the Technology meeting with the main focus on the transition to the new Technology Director. She also attended the Com. Ed. Advisory meeting where they reviewed strong participation numbers and the Open Fitness Center program was introduced. Martini also announced Norbert Kollodge's retirement as chair and member of the Advisory Counsel and commended Amanda McDonough and Becca VanHeel for their efforts pursuing new programming.

Meier attended the Staff Development meeting which included planning for the April Inservice. Swenson added that work is being done to help with transitioning students from 6th to 7th grade.

Budget Discussion:

Swenson updated the Board on staffing cuts. First grade and sixth grade may be reduced to 3 sections in the Elementary. Different staffing scenarios are still being considered. These decisions have to be made for Board approval at the March regular meeting.

Gerber presented the preliminary 2026-2027 budget which is close to where it needs to be with the proposed cuts incorporated into the budget. He informed the Board that the District was awarded VPK points which affect the preschool dollars in regards to how the funds flow between Com. Ed. and the general fund which lead to discussion on Kindergarten Round-up.

Chromebook Purchase:

Gerber explained a price increase is taking place and we would like to lock in the order at the current price for FY27. The Board understood and recommended moving forward with the purchase with official approval taking place at the regular meeting.

Achievement and Integration Plan:

Swenson explained the program's purpose is to partner racially isolated districts with adjoining districts on student integration issues. \$60,000 is received for this program and every 3 years the goals have to be reviewed, revised and approved and then sent into the state for final approval. The strategies are monitored so that the goals can be met to continue participation. Swenson will make the revisions discussed and submit the plan.

Superintendent Search Process:

Gerber presented different options on executive search options. He asked for guidance on how the Board wants to proceed with hiring our next leader.

Opatz explained she consulted with MSBA for direction on how to get the process started, internal versus an open search and a recommended timeline. After a lengthy discussion the consensus of the Board is to conduct an open search using the consulting firm School Pro and getting the process started ASAP.

The agenda was completed at 8:22 PM with a motion to adjourn by Christensen and a second by Martini. Motion carried. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by
Evelyn Martini, Clerk