

**STATE BOARD OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 27, 2025**

State Board of Public School Education members met in the CTE Conference Room, 15th Floor at the State Capitol and via Teams on Monday, January 27, 2025.

State Board Members in Attendance:

Chair Sonia Meehl
Vice Chairman Mike McHugh
Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom

State Board Member Present Virtually:

Board Member Jason Rohr
Board Member Levi Bachmeier
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler
Board Member Eric Nelson

Others in Attendance: Hope Hogan (Administrative Law Judge), Allyson Hicks (Asst. Atty General), Mark Openshaw (Asst. Atty General), Shauna Marchus (NDDPI Admin), Matt Norby (Nedrose Superintendent), David Gerding (Surrey Superintendent), Jodi Johnson (Ward County Superintendent of Schools)

Others Present Virtually: Travis Zablotney, Brianna Aamot, Twila Gantzer (Surrey Business Manager), Bob LaFavor (NDDPI IT)

Chair Meehl called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Chair Meehl stated she wanted to add a fourth item to the agenda regarding legislative bills related to the State Board of Public Education. Mike McHugh moved to approve the agenda as amended with the additional item. Lyndsi Engstrom seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lyndsi Engstrom moved to approve the minutes from the November 25, 2024, regular meeting. Mike McHugh seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Hold a hearing, discuss, and take action on the annexation of property from the Surrey Public School District No. 41 of Ward County to the Nedrose Public School District No. 4 of Ward County (Aamot Petition)

The Aamot annexation hearing was held beginning at 1:03 pm and was conducted by Administrative Law Judge Hope Hogan from the Office of Administrative Hearings, pursuant to North Dakota Century Code (N.D.C.C) Chapters 15.1-12 and 28-32. This was an evidentiary hearing for the Board to hear testimony and consider other evidence as presented on issues as outlined in the Aamot Annexation packet from the Ward County Reorganization Committee, which was entered into evidence and marked as Exhibit 1. Judge Hogan explained the procedures of the hearing as well as the penalties for perjury. She noted that the Board wished to waive the rules of evidence per N.D.C.C § 28-32-24. She explained that at the close of testimonies, the State Board of Public School Education will make the final decision. If any party does not agree with the final decision, they may appeal under N.D.C.C ch. 28-32, the Administrative Agencies Practices Act. The

proceedings were recorded, and all persons testifying were sworn in by Judge Hogan.

The Board heard testimony from:

- Jodi Johnson (Ward County Superintendent of Schools)
- Brianna Aamot (Petitioner)
- Matt Norby (Nedrose Superintendent), Testified in Support of the Annexation
- Travis Zabloutney (Landowner), Testified in Support of the Annexation
- David Gerding (Surrey Superintendent), Testified in Opposition to the Annexation

Chair Meehl and Mark Openshaw read through the petition packet.

Board members listed relevant factors to be considered and added to the Findings of Fact. There was discussion about which of the County's findings from Sections O and I of the petition should be kept or stricken from the State Board's findings.

Lyndsi Engstrom moved to approve the Aamot petition for the following reasons:

- Transportation would remain available for the family
- The petitioner would like to vote in school elections and may consider running for the school board
- The annexation was approved by the county committee by a vote of 4-1
- The petitioner is aware that their taxes will increase
- Nedrose School accepts open enrollment on a case-by-case basis
- Surrey School Board has an inconsistent approach to approving tuition waivers

Mike McHugh seconded the motion.

NAME	VOTE (Yes/ No)
Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom	Yes
Board Member Levi Bachmeier	Yes
Vice Chair Mike McHugh	Yes
Board Member Eric Nelson	Yes
Board Member Jason Rohr	Yes
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler	Yes
Chair Sonia Meehl	Yes

Motion passed 7-0. The Aamot petition is approved and will take effect July 1, 2025.

3. Final approval of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order for the annexation of part of Williston Basin School District No. 7 of Williams County to Eight Mile School District No. 6 of Williams County in North Dakota (Copenen Petition).

Eric Nelson moved to approve the Copenen Petition Final Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order. Jason Rohr seconded the motion. No discussion.

NAME	VOTE (Yes/ No)
Board Member Jason Rohr	Yes
Vice Chair Mike McHugh	Yes
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler	Yes
Board Member Levi Bachmeier	Yes
Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom	Yes
Board Member Eric Nelson	Yes
Chair Sonia Meehl	Yes

Motion passed 7-0.

4. **Legislative Bills related to the State Board of Public School Education**

Mark Openshaw presented an overview of six legislative bills that are related to the State Board including:

- HB1288: Public school compliance with state law
- SB2158: Distribution of the unobligated cash balance of a dissolved school district
- SB2351: Providing notice to affected property owners of a petition for the annexation of property to a school district
- HB1133: Preservation of records by county superintendents of schools.
- SB2353: Regional Education Associations
- SB2180: Opportunity to provide public comment at a meeting of a public entity

The group discussed these bills and agreed to receive updates from Mark Openshaw but not take any action as a Board.

It was decided to cancel the February State Board of Public School Education meeting because there are no agenda items at this time.

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

Minutes taken and prepared by Shauna Marchus

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:

Sonia Meehl
Chairwoman

Date

Kirsten Baesler
Executive Director & Secretary

Date