

Minutes

Regular Board of Education Meeting Unified School District No. 473, Chapman, KS

February 9, 2026

Jessica Murphy, School Board Vice-President, called the Regular Meeting of the USD 473 Board of Education to order at 6:30 pm at the Education Center located at 822 N. Marshall, Chapman, KS.

Other Board Members Present: Adam Elliott, Favio Garcia, Dana Obermeyer, Kyrsten Day and Jennifer Elliott (*Brenda Edleston was absent*)

Also Present: Kevin Suther – Superintendent, Michele Sutter - Board Clerk Jennifer Tiller, Katie Armstrong, Trent Armstrong, Allie Chestnut, Patience Hudson, Becki Gaston, Arin Jones, Kate Thornton, Shannon Woods, Ashley Stearns, Afton Diehl, Brandon McIntosh, Darrel Kohlman (DCS Services), Lance Tilton, Braxton Burgett, Laurie Rutherford, Angeline McGuffin, Lori Abeldt and Mary Wright

Dana Obermeyer made the motion to adopt the Agenda. Kyrsten Day seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

Jennifer Elliott made the motion to approve the items under the Consent Agenda as presented. Kyrsten Day seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- Approve the minutes from the Regular January 12th, 2026 BOE Meeting
- Financial Reports: Treasurer, Food Service & Petty Cash
- Payment of Bills
- Public Participation

NEW BUSINESS:

Administrator's Contracts:

Superintendent Suther presented to the Board the list of Administrators for contract renewal. The recommendation was to extend all administrator contracts one additional year on their current contract.

**Kate Thornton- Chapman High School Principal
Clint Merritt - Chapman High School Assistant Principal/Athletic Director
Mary Wright - Chapman Middle School Principal
Ashley Stearns - Chapman Elementary Principal
Afton Diehl - Blue Ridge Elementary Principal**

Kara Wilkins - Rural Center Elementary Principal
Laurie Rutherford - Enterprise Elementary Principal

Adam Elliott made the motion to extend all Administrator contracts one additional year on their current contract. Dana Obermeyer seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

Transportation Director Update:

Trent Armstrong shared information with the Board about the transportation department. He said most things are going well and the fleet drives approximately 2,200 miles a day. There is a bus driver shortage currently and the employees in the shop are driving about every day to fill a route. Trent himself has driven 10-12 times this year.

Adam Elliott asked why are we losing CDL drivers? Trent answered that in today's economy, some people are now relying on this as a main job, not a part-time income. We used to rely on longtime drivers who were wives and farmers driving to supplement incomes. The district will look into possibly developing contracts for up to a year if the district pays for the CDL training and always consider what the best package is financially.

Trent shared that Wednesday, Superintendent Suther, along with himself and others from the shop, are traveling to a plant in Hutchinson to see how Collins buses are made to see if that brand is an option for the future. After purchasing a Collins bus from Purple Wave this year, they realized that they were easy to work on and seemed well built with a more quiet ride.

Jennifer Elliott asked about the lifetime of a bus. Trent told her that a bus can have unlimited miles on it, but once it hits 25 years old, it must be removed from the fleet.

Trent was asked about flat tires on so many dirt roads. The shop is changing tires a lot throughout the year and have a stock pile built up so there is no delay in service for the drivers. He invited the Board to stop in the shop and look around any time. It has been commented by the Kansas Department of Education employees and other companies who visit our shop, that it is one of the top shops in the state, very clean, organized, and air conditioned. They are appreciative of the district for purchasing all the needed tools and diagnostics to be able to do almost everything in house without shipping the bus to an outside source.

Adam Elliott asked if you could use vans for routes because Trent was talking about how much the two new ones purchased were being sent out, saving a driver. Trent explained the state has many guidelines on this matter and no, the white vans cannot be used as route buses. They can only be used to haul students to activities because a bus must have the proper safety features along with being yellow.

Trent shared that only 40% of our buses have cameras and the goal is to be 100%. Every year around 4-5 are added and now the Transportation Department can install the cameras themselves as they were properly trained by the company. This

saves thousands of dollars just in the installation alone. The cameras protect both the students and the drivers and hopefully soon, we will meet our goal and need to have all buses equipped. The cameras are approximately \$2,500 a piece.

Trent would like to be able to combine more routes but with the size of our district, it makes it quite hard. Using the route finder along with changes in drivers has allowed for reducing a few overlapping routes this year. The software has also saved hours upon hours for him with creating routes and finding out when new students are being enrolled that need busing, which is now automatically downloaded in the system from the student information system, Powerschool.

Adam Elliott asked Trent how many buses we need for the upcoming year? He said he would like to get back into a rotation to be purchasing at least one to two every year starting with 29 to 30 passenger buses.

Facilities Assessment Presentation:

DCS Representative, Darrel Kohlman, presented a proposal to perform a Facilities Assessment for USD 473 involving 8 components to help make the best decisions moving forward with the District's 5 to 10 year Capital Outlay plan. This would include the following areas:

1. Site Components
2. Envelope Components
3. Interior Components
4. Plumbing Components
5. HVAC Components
6. Electrical Components
7. Communications Components
8. Fire Alarm Components

Phase I would be to bring in an architect and an engineer to each building to properly analyze the eight categories. This would include images and descriptions that then rate the need for replacement or repair. The system used is color coordinated with a red (highest priority), orange (address within 5 to 10 years), yellow (address within 2 to 5 years), and green (nothing needed at this time).

Phase II is a follow up after 3 to 4 months with written reports and cost estimates.

Phase III will be to determine the top 5 priorities and assessing what can be accomplished within the budget constraints each year.

This was an Informational only item and will be revisited at the next Board Meeting on March 9th as a possible Action item.

Updated Wellness Policy:

Brandon McIntosh (Athletic & Activities Development Coordinator) and Jennifer Tiller (Food Service Director) presented the new updated Wellness

Policy that involved staff & community input meetings, exercise activities for staff and students, food nutrition requirements and much more.

One of the new initiatives is getting staff involved with recording their workouts for team competition and individual goals in order to increase fitness & wellness. Mr. McIntosh has the option now for everyone to sign up on the Strava app to record the time spent on individual workouts. This will set up future rewards, recognitions and much more to recognize their accomplishments in making their health a priority. The Wellness Committee and Physical Education professional learning community (PLC) group will continue to discuss this during the spring on new ideas of how to keep staff, community members and students active. Currently 32 members have signed up and 18 have been active over the last 2 weeks.

The Wellness Committee will be having their next meeting on April 20th.

They provided the board with the updated policy ahead of time for approval. Kyrsten Day made the motion to approve the updated USD 473 Wellness Policy as presented. Dana Obermeyer seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

Scheduling Report as stated in Article XI Scheduling of the Negotiated Agreement:

Superintendent Suther shared with the Board the overall numbers which are currently at 1034 students Kindergarten to 12th grade. According to the past Senate Bill 73, since we are an Impact Aid school, we should be able to use the average of the preceding year, second preceding year and third preceding year enrollment to determine state aid. The adjusted enrollment this year we used was 1107.5 which is PreK through 12th grade and the 2026-27 budget number should be 1079.3. This will be a decrease of approximately 28 students. This could decrease the per pupil money for the budget by over \$157,000.

The per pupil base for 2025-26 was \$5618 and the predicted 2026-27 per pupil base based off the consumer price index is predicted to be \$5782. The LOB is based off the General Fund with a 3% raise which would be approximately per pupil \$5863. It will be important to look at employee openings when they become available and class sizes since a large portion is staffing and other resources in the budget to be as efficient as we can as a district.

School Board Visitation Days:

Superintendent Suther gave the Board a suggestion of February 26th, which is the Chapman High School FFA Community Breakfast. They could begin at the High School for breakfast, and then visit the Chapman Middle School and Chapman Elementary to be done at approximately 10:30 am.

Then on March 24th, they could visit the outlying schools of Rural Center,

Enterprise and end at Blue Ridge for their special St. Patrick's Day lunch.

The Board thought for the majority of the members they could attend these dates. Superintendent Suther will provide them more information as the dates get closer.

Board of Education Service Awards:

It has become a tradition now to award the Outstanding Service to the District and Outstanding Service to Students awards in the spring. Nominees will be submitted by district employees in any position for a fellow district employee. It is someone who embodies the sentiments of each award. The procedure is to collect all the nominations to be evaluated by the Board of Education and finalize a well deserving candidate at the March Board Meeting. A plaque for each is given out at the Employee Recognition dinner in April.

Michele Sutter, Board Clerk, will send out a Google form to all staff for nominations. The winners will be recognized at the April 8th Employee Recognition Dinner at Chapman High School, beginning at 6:30 pm.

Past Winners are:

Outstanding Service to Students:

**Year 1 - James Bell
Year 2 - Jake Rutledge
Year 3 - Cheri Simpson
Year 4 - Dawn Sholtz**

Outstanding Service to the District:

**Year 1 - Tara Tiernan & Tony Frieze
Year 2 - Randy Heller
Year 3 - Stacy Smiley & Bob Diehl
Year 4 - Jodi Dearmond**

This was an informational item.

Personnel:

Jennifer Elliott made a motion to approve all personnel items presented. Favio Garcia seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

Retirements:

Rick Hall - District Maintenance Director (October 1, 2026)

Kathy Hoffman - USD 473 Bus Driver

Resignations:

Annabelle Eaton - Enterprise Elementary Aide

Transfers:

Deann Hunt - Transfer from 3rd Grade Enterprise Teacher to Title Teacher at Enterprise Elementary

Suzan Jahns - Transfer from Blue Ridge Title Aide to Blue Ridge Elementary 3rd Grade Teacher

Rachel Duer - Transfer from Enterprise/Blue Ridge Physical Education Teacher to Rural Center/Blue Ridge Physical Education Teacher

New Hires:

Alaina Krynicki - Enterprise and Blue Ridge Elementary Music Teacher

Doug Grider - Enterprise Physical Education Teacher/Interventionist
Chapman High School Assistant Football Coach and Chapman Middle School Assistant Track Coach

Adam Elliott made a motion for the Board to take a 5 minute break at 8:00 pm before starting the 5 Year Capital Outlay agenda item. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

The Board returned to open session at 8:05 pm.

5 Year Capital Outlay Plan Discussion:

Superintendent Suther started the discussion involving the positive steps in progress. This included an explanation about the past 5 year plan being completed this upcoming summer for HVAC with Trane. The final step is to replace all the HVAC control system at Chapman Elementary.

The other large project focus was replacing the Blue Ridge Elementary roof in the summer of 2024 and the Enterprise Elementary roof in summer of 2025. The three newer schools in Chapman plus the Education Center will have their warranty for roofs come to an end in approximately five years. There are just a few Rural Center Elementary areas that may need replacing in the near future and a plan put in place for a rotation with CHS, CMS and CES.

The district has upgraded all the sound systems in the gyms and in the outlying schools for their programs and morning meetings.

During the 2024-25 school year, the rotation of replacing two full class sizes of chromebooks began. The plan is to continue this each year along with moving to replacing I-pads for the elementary schools to stay up to date on technology.

The new track along with most of the throwing and jumping areas have been replaced or added which resulted in hosting Regional Track. Currently, the football and track facility will look different for next year with new visitor bleachers and a full LED Lighting system.

The football field has been a discussion the last several years involving the

idea of going to a turf field so athletes and physical education classes could utilize it every day. The ONLY other school in the NCKL League that does not have turf is Rock Creek. The practice field does get reduced to dirt by the end of the season which can create some safety concerns. It does need to be taken into account the turf replacement must be done after 10 to 13 years.

There has been an effort to keep up on concrete work for curbs, sidewalks and steps each year. The Board felt the assessment can really help to organize the priorities after knowing the concerns that may arise after looking at the mechanical, electrical and building structures. One of the big areas with this is the need with all the parking lots.

Jennifer Elliott brought up about looking at creative ways to use property nearby in cooperation with farmers or the city to help create a running area for cross country.

In the area of fine arts, there was a purchase made for a new projector for the Chapman High School auditorium which made a huge impact on all the plays and concerts.

Another area brought up was looking at the playgrounds for updating or adding equipment along with the best surface for safety like at the higher structures at Chapman Elementary.

Dana Obermeyer stated we could take a look at a multipurpose building for wrestling to practice with having growing numbers in both boys and girls programs at the middle and high school level. Could this also become storage for track equipment and mats along with other future conversations on the needs it could be utilized for? There is some open space next to the maintenance building on the practice field to research.

Jennifer Elliott asked if there are plans to do something with the football field/track restrooms. Mr. Suther said yes, they need lighting, flooring and fixtures. The district hopes to accomplish some or all by next Fall along with making sure the plumbing is keeping up with the large crowds.

Mr. Suther asked the Board a final question to wrap up the discussion to find out what extended research would help to further the conversation and feedback. The Board would like for the District level team and Site Councils to develop a NEED and WANT list in order to get some initial feedback. Instead of making a laundry list of possibilities, the groups could narrow down to a top 5? The follow up in the future could be after Phase I of the Facilities Assessment if approved which could be completed by the Fall of 2026.

The Board suggested the next month's discussion item could revolve around what it means to be a USD 473 Board Member and the purpose of the position to best help the district and staff. The two new Board members will take the Working Genius Survey to help show how all our members can work together the best by using their

strengths along with relying on others to help support with their own unique skills.

Jessica Murphy asked if all Board Members knew they had access to KASB+, which includes many training videos. Superintendent Suther said he would make sure all Board Members before next month have access which has webinars for Board training like boardmanship, negotiations, KOMA, and so much more.

ADJOURNMENT:

Kyrsten Day made the motion to adjourn. Favio Garcia seconded the motion; motion carried 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm



Jessica Murphy, Board Vice-President



Michele Sutter, Board Clerk