

# Minutes

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

**April 13, 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 and Jennifer Elliott**  
*(Brenda Edleston, Dana Obermeyer and Kyrsten Day were absent)*

**Also Present: Kevin Suther – Superintendent, Michele Sutter - Board Clerk Austin Anders, Kate Thornton, Keven Ward, Brandon McIntosh, Afton Diehl, Mary Wright, Valerie Rock, Ashley Stearns, Laurie Rutherford, Syriana Olson, Lindsey Olson, Andrew Olson, Kara Wilkins and Stacy Smiley**

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**Favio Garcia made the motion to adopt the Agenda. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.**

**Jennifer Elliott made the motion to approve the items under the Consent Agenda as presented. Favio Garcia seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.**

### CONSENT AGENDA:

- **Approve the minutes from the Regular March 9th, 2026 meeting and also the Special meeting on March 24th, 2026**
- **Financial Reports: Treasurer, Food Service & Petty Cash**
- **Payment of Bills**
- **Public Participation**

### SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS:

#### CHS Presents to the Board:

**Principal Kate Thornton presents the "Year in Review" for CHS. She talked about the health science pathway that is taking place at CHS - Biology, Chemistry, A&P, Care of Athletes, CNA, CMA, Health Science Internship and Pharmacy Tech.**

**She said CHS has about 10-15 CNA students and 8 or 9 CMA students finish their certification each year. Science Teacher, Sara Cook, teaches the Health Care Internship where 8-10 students get the opportunity to rotate around to businesses like dentists, chiropractors, hospitals, and much more. It is a second semester senior class that provides great in-person experience to find out what they are interested in possibly in the future for a career.**

**NEW this year was the 1st ever student to participate in a Pharmacy Tech Internship at Harvey Drug in Abilene. It is a highly regulated professional role which requires her to pass a test before being allowed to do certain tasks with medicine. Syriana Olson does a variety of jobs including managing inventory and assists with filling prescriptions. This fall she will be attending KU. This can provide her the chance to step right into a pharmacy tech position while attending college. Syriana thanked the Board for supporting programs like this.**

**Next, Mrs. Thornton talked about the math curriculum recognition taking place with James Bell. On Tuesday, April 14th, a professional photographer will be at CHS to photograph Mr. Bell while teaching. There will be an announcement in the near future involving where the podcast will be released. Both James and Kate will be attending the Teacher of the Year banquet and an article will be published reflecting James and his curriculum approach with integrated math.**

**\*\*\* IT'S THE 100TH YEAR OF CLASS NIGHT THIS YEAR \*\*\***

**Mrs. Thornton shared that 52 alumni have stepped up to be involved in the production which is May 7th & 9th @ 7:30 pm. She said there are approximately 750 seats in the auditorium and she is expecting both nights to possibly sell out. Along with the 52 alumni, there are 48 seniors participating to make it quite a large show. It is the BEST of what Chapman represents, such a wonderful tradition. Come celebrate Class Night 1926 - 2026.**

**Brandon McIntosh, Athletic & Activities Coordinator, talked about some new and fun things happening at CHS.**

**The students along with food service started "Irish Fizz" which provide dirty soda mixture and coffee combinations which has been a huge hit during lunch. It is a program that FBLA started and the money will go toward a scholarship and will be given out during the senior scholarship night.**

**Irish Teaching S.O.U.L. is a new program to recognize teachers at CHS.**

- Selflessness**
- Ownership**
- Unity**
- Larger Purpose**

**A google document was sent out to all HS staff and students to nominate a teacher for outstanding service. Irish Ink creates wall hangings for the winners to hang in their rooms.**

**The High School also has a staff appreciation cart filled with goodies that different family members and community members donate a variety of snacks for the staff to enjoy as a thank you for all their hard work.**

**There is also a "Positive Principal Referral" to recognize kids doing the right thing. The families of the students are called once they receive their award and are told why they were recognized and are congratulated.**

**This year a new program was implemented where student athletes visit different**

elementary schools on game days. It provides high school students a leadership role and helps to expose all students in elementary throughout the district to all the sports offerings. This will hopefully increase the youth interest in playing a variety of sports, attending camps and lead to increased participation numbers. One of the big hits was when a high school wrestler was pinned by an elementary student which creating a lot of cheering!

**Irish Games** - There are (11) games which include volleyball, basketball, dodge ball, board games, drone flying, video games, gaga ball, among us, corn hole, impromptu drama skits and karaoke. The goal was to reward students who completed all their assignments for the quarter.

Another goal that Mrs. Thornton challenged Mr. McIntosh was to get every kid involved in something when it came to any type of sports or extracurricular activity. Out of the 380 high school students, only 4 are currently not involved in one of the offerings.

**Chappy Champs** -

Students are placed on teams with a teacher.

Points earned based on academics, attendance, behavior, athletics/ activities participation, and attending/supporting athletic/activity events (band concert, volleyball game).

Points are averaged for team scores. Mr. Weller's group is in the lead.

Individuals (Top 10) are also recognized each week to celebrate student involvement and get a field trip at the end of the year.

**These are more examples of additional new activities started:**

Sports in Kansas (Think Before You Post) school assembly

Community Tailgating event during Football Games

Senior Trading Card autograph night for all sports teams at a spring baseball and softball game

**KESA DLT Presentation:**

The District Level Team members consisting of Mr. Suther, Mrs. Stearns, Mrs. Diehl, Mrs. Thornton, Mrs. Rock, Ms. Wright, Mrs. Rutherford, Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Smiley presented their 10 minute presentation that was given at the Annual KESA accreditation day. USD 473 was approved for our implementation for the 2026-27 school year. Mr. Suther also received an email requesting that we have a representative attend the annual KSDE conference on May 29th to be part of a round table discussion because of our school being recognized for having exemplary work involving Standards Alignment. This is a huge honor for our district as a whole. The new annual goal will involve having teachers develop

higher level thinking questions to challenge students on formative assessments. Based on the students results, the teachers can make adjustments to their teaching approach more often and provide targeted help.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### **CES HVAC Controls:**

TRANE representative Keven Ward presented the proposal for replacing the Chapman Elementary HVAC controls system, test & balance, plus new pivot thermostats at the USD 473 Education Center. They just completed Phase 3 of the original proposed project which involved new controls at Chapman Middle School and this will be the completion of the final Phase 4. The last four years have involved replacing any old out dated equipment like air conditioners, furnaces, heat exchangers, providing fresh air ducts, new controls, test & balance of all rooms for every school in the district. The cost for Phase 4 is at \$434,333.

Adam Elliott made the motion to approve the Chapman Elementary HVAC controls project by TRANE through the Omnia Cooperative purchasing contract for the 2026-27 capital outlay budget year. Favio Garcia seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.

##### **Blue Ridge Historical Society Monument:**

Austin Anders, Dickinson County Historical Society Executive Director, presented on the possible approval of a historical event written onto a rock placed at the entrance of the Blue Ridge Elementary school. The stone would be placed just inside the fence at the Southwest corner by the light pole so it does not create a problem with parking. They are wanting to honor Thomas James "Bear River Tom" Smith who was a city marshal and later a U.S. marshal that helped maintain order in the cowtown of Abilene. On November 2, 1870, while serving his community as a law officer near this location, Smith was involved in a confrontation while trying to uphold the law against an outlaw. He was known for his courage and dedication to duty. Thomas James Smith is laid to rest at the Abilene City Cemetery.

Favio Garcia made the motion to approve the placement of the monument on the Blue Ridge property. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.

##### **2026-27 Non-Resident Capacity:**

Under Kansas House Bill 2567 (K.S.A. 72-3123), all public school districts are required to determine their non-resident capacity on or before May 1st of each year. This capacity determination dictates the

**number of open seats available for non-resident students for the upcoming school year. The window is January 1st and closes June 15th. The numbers will be set at 20 students for Kindergarten through 5th grade with some variation at Rural Center that has combination classrooms. The number increases for each class at CMS to 95 students and CHS to 105 students. This will be published to the USD473.net website by clicking on the Out of District button to see the details and find the Non-Resident Application to submit.**

**Approve May Graduates:**

**The request is to accept the seniors for Chapman High School for 2026. They must meet the final requirements set forth by USD 473 and the Kansas State Board of Education to receive their diploma. The total number of potential seniors to walk at graduation is 102.**

**Adam Elliott made the motion to approve all graduating seniors for 2026 if they meet the final requirements set forth by USD 473 and the State Board of Education. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.**

**Designation of Board Members to hand out Graduation and Promotion Certificates:**

**In the past, two board members sit on stage and hand out the diplomas at both the high school graduation on Sunday, May 17th at 2:30pm and the middle school farewell on Monday, May 18th at 7:00 pm.**

**After some discussion, it was decided that Dana Obermeyer and Adam Elliott would assist at the High School graduation with Dana accepting the Class. For the Middle School promotion, Jessica Murphy and Jennifer Elliott would hand out the Middle School certificates. If either Jessica or Jennifer cannot make it, Favio Garcia would stand in.**

**Donations/Grants:**

**Benson Smiley, Chapman High School junior, wrote a grant from the Community Foundation of Dickinson County "Youth in Action" Grant. He was awarded \$1,000 dollars to use in the weight room. Benson completed this grant application unprompted and without Coach Grider's knowledge. After the State Powerlifting Tournament, he saw a need and took action to meet the need. We are very proud of both Benson and Coach Grider.**

**Superintendent Suther shared with the Board the video that was**

**Benson's submission to the Foundation. He mentioned needing plates and bars specifically.**

**Favio Garcia made the motion to accept the \$1,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Dickinson County. Jennifer Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.**

**Personnel:**

**Favio Garcia made the motion to approve all personnel items presented. Adam Elliott seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.**

**Resignations:**

Lindsi Fernlund - Enterprise Elementary Secretary

Rachel Duer - Chapman High School Assistant Softball Coach

Keegan Mantle - Chapman Elementary Custodian

Brandon Cook - Vocational & Special Education Driver

**Transfers:**

James Bell - Transfer from Chapman Middle School Girls & Boys Head Basketball Coach to Chapman High School Boys Assistant Basketball Coach

Brandon McIntosh - Transfer from Chapman Middle School Assistant Boys Basketball Coach to Chapman Middle School Basketball Head Boys Coach

**New Hires:**

Chelsey Armbruster - Chapman High School Assistant Softball Coach

Rebekah Thomas - Chapman High School FACS Teacher & FCCLA Sponsor

Michael Wahlmeier - Chapman Middle School Head Girls Basketball Coach

Morgan Anderson - Chapman High School Assistant Girls Volleyball Coach

Jessica Klukas - Vocational & Special Education Driver

**Budget Basics & Future Predictions:**

***(This is a Board discussion item only. No action will be taken.)***

**The 3-year comparison that Superintendent Suther attached for the Board shows the adjusted enrollment numbers for the last few years and what the number will be for next year's budget, which comes from a three-year average. He also broke down all the different weightings and how those are determined.**

**Also attached were the different funds that are part of the budget.**

**The third attachment shows what can be spent from the capital**

**outlay fund and how that has expanded with additional items on the second page.**

**The per pupil funding over the last three years, after the CPI (Consumer Price Index Average) are:**

**2024-25 - \$5378**

**2025-26 - \$5615**

**2026-27 - \$5782**

**This is a \$70 less per FTE increase than the previous year.**

**\*Last year was a drop of 14.3 students after the three-year average, and this year is 18.5 students. This is because our numbers dropped more this year, and the larger enrollment number dropped off in the three-year average from 2022-23, which was 1126.5.**

**Our numbers are dropping and we are a military impact school. We are about 1 of 9 districts in the state to have this. If enrollment is dropping and you are an impact aide school, we can count our 3 year average. The USD 473 population of students currently is at 1,048 students.**

**When combining the prediction for new money for the General Fund and Supplemental General, together there will be about \$259,000 less to spend compared to the year before.**

**The other factor when it comes to additional cost will be an increase in assessments for the special education cooperative since the new money added next year by the state will not keep up with inflation and only 6 million was added to the state budget for special education to be distributed among every district in the state of Kansas.**

**Jennifer Elliott asked Mr. Suther about enrollment predictions for the next 4, 5, 6 years down the road. He told her that once the sophomores and seniors graduated, Chapman will stabilize their numbers more. With the birth rates lower and not having any housing expansions, the average for the kindergarten class as a district is in the 60's while the graduating classes going out average around upper 80's to 100 students. She asked how do we get more people to enroll here? He said we need to do a push before June 15th about Out-of-District enrollment. We need to get it out that our High School currently has openings. Jennifer suggested making a flyer for local businesses like realtors plus**

reaching out to the educational liaison at Fort Riley.

Adam Elliott asked Kevin what a ball park number is of what we pay a new teacher with salary and benefits. Kevin said a beginning teacher is currently on step 1 at \$45,137 + \$6,000 for insurance. He said we have a pretty solid base for competitiveness. For our area, our fringe benefit is a little low and we are trying to build that up.

Adam Elliott said for a future session, he would like the discussion to be how to market ourselves for the future and communication to the public.

Mr. Suther suggested the May discussion to be about the new legislative laws being put in place for next year and specifically about the cell phone policy.

For our June meeting, a possible discussion item could revolve around communication. How do we brand and promote the USD 473 School District?

**Adjournment:**

Jennifer Elliott made the motion to adjourn. Favio Garcia seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.

Meeting Adourned at 8:48 pm



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Jessica Murphy, Board Vice-President



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Michele Sutter, Board Clerk