

**Public Hearing and Regular Monthly Meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education**

**Kearney Public Schools Board of Education**

**Monday, April 13, 2026 at 5:30 PM**

**2nd Floor Staff Development Room, Administration Building**

**320 W 24th Street**

**Kearney, NE 68845**

**1. Public Hearing & Review of American Civics Education Policy & Requirements**

**1.A. Convene Hearing**

- Hearing convened at 5:28 PM.

**1.B. Policy Review, Public Input & Discussion**

- Dr. Kent Edwards, Associate Superintendent, presented the Civics Education Policy Requirements, stating that LB 399 was enacted in September 2019 and requires observing historical events and following the social studies curriculum. Kearney Public Schools fully complies with the state statute, including administering a written test identical to the civics portion of the naturalization test. KPS also requires participation in public bodies and completion of projects or presentations between the eighth and twelfth grades. Dr. Edwards listed various activities KPS conducts to comply with the state statute, including Constitution Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, Veterans Day, Native American Heritage Day, MLK Day, Presidents' Day, George Washington's Birthday, Abraham Lincoln's Birthday, Black History Month, and Memorial Day. KPS has an inventory of all activities on its website under academics. Additional activities to support civic education, include understanding the U.S. flag, veterans' presentations, and a middle school veterans program.
- Dr. Edwards added that the committee for curriculum adoption includes three board members, high school, middle school, and elementary leadership, and teachers' representatives. The committee meets twice a year, with the most recent meeting in November and the next one planned for this month. The curriculum adoption process occurs every six to seven years. The last adoption at KPS was in 2021-2022. The current curriculum is focused on the Nebraska State Standards, and the next adoption is not scheduled yet.

**1.C. Close Hearing**

- Hearing was closed at 5:35 PM.

**2. Routine Business**

**2.A. Call to Order**

President Hazard called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

**2.B. Open Meetings Act Announcement**

This is an open, public meeting of the Kearney Public Schools Board of Education, and a copy of the Open Meetings Act is posted in this room.

## **2.C. Board Meeting Decorum Expectations**

### **2.D. Pledge of Allegiance**

### **2.E. Roll Call**

Attendance Taken at 5:37 PM.

Amy Barth: Present

Drew Blessing: Present

Niki Deeds: Present

Paul Hazard: Present

John Icenogle: Present

Amanda Smallcomb: Present

2.E.I. Excuse Absent Board Member

### **2.F. Approval of the Agenda**

Move to approve the agenda for the meeting, as presented. This motion, made by Amanda Smallcomb and seconded by Drew Blessing, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

## **3. Recognitions**

## **4. Presentations**

4.A. Presentation from Megan Schmidt, Principal at Bright Futures Preschool, Celebrating What Makes Bright Futures Special

- Megan Schmidt, Principal at Bright Futures Preschool, provided a presentation about Bright Futures' diverse programming, which maintains a "Step 5" quality rating, the highest available. Currently, the program serves the community through three primary channels: a center-based program with 24 students, a home visitation program supporting over 60 children (ages 0-3), and a childcare partnership grant that impacts 250+ children by coaching local providers. Central to their success is the "Pyramid Model," an evidence-based framework for social-emotional development. Supported by a dedicated coach, all staff undergo intensive training to implement this tiered support system with fidelity. Mrs. Schmidt highlighted a robust kindergarten transition process, featuring Provider Nights and the use of transition templates to share student strengths and needs with elementary principals.
- Bright Futures continues to serve as a community hub by hosting monthly family socials, quarterly advisory meetings, and providing essential resources like a diaper bank and care closet. Mrs. Schmidt spoke about staff retention, which provides a culture of continuous support through "Para Boot Camps," monthly team talks, and the efforts of the staff "Sunshine Committee" to maintain high morale and a collaborative team approach.

#### 4.B. Presentation from Jason Owens, Principal at Hanny Arram Center for Success, about the KidWind STEM Competition

- Mr. Jason Owens, Principal at Hanny Arram Center for Success, shared a recap of the recent participation in the KidWind Challenge in Colby, Kansas and introduced Talisha Sorenson, Hanny Arram Center for Success teacher.
- Ms. Sorenson and Abby, a student representative, provided a detailed breakdown of the project's technical aspects and the lessons learned from the competition. Through a special partnership with Dan Whistler of Trane, students designed and built a custom windmill. The group participated in wind tunnel testing, knowledge quizzes, and judging panels, ultimately earning the "Most Improved Group" award. Though their out-of-state status limited them from advancing to nationals, the experience provided invaluable hands-on engineering and problem-solving opportunities.
- The learning continued at the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA) conference, where students operated a "Learning Lab" booth. They surveyed educational leaders on their knowledge of the power grid and energy sources, comparing public perception against actual state and national data. After analyzing the results back in the classroom, the students discovered a significant gap in energy literacy among educators. They now plan to extend this research by polling their local community to further examine these trends.

#### 4.C. Announcement of the 2026 Celebration of Excellence

- President Paul Hazard announced that the 2026 Celebration of Excellence will be held on April 23rd at 4:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn.

#### 4.D. Construction Update

- Kent Cordes with BD Construction gave an update on the construction projects continuing throughout the district.

### 5. Legislative Update

- Mr. Blessing and Superintendent Mundorf reported on a few noteworthy bills as the Legislative Session wraps up:
  - The Education Committee's package, LB 937, successfully passed, introducing several significant mandates. Key components include LB 1243, which requires schools to allow part-time students to participate in extracurricular activities (excluding those governed by the NSAA) without requiring more than five credits. LB 1146 was also passed in a revised form, allowing parents to excuse students for medical, mental health, or housing-related reasons, maintaining a balance between parental rights and compulsory attendance laws. Furthermore, LB 596 modernized communication by allowing meeting notices to be published in digital formats in areas without a print newspaper.
  - Taxation and Budgeting (LB 803 and LB 34) — Significant changes are coming to the pink postcard property tax hearing process. Under LB 803, these hearings will move from September to early July. This shift presents a challenge, as

districts must now prepare and present budgets before receiving final property valuations in late August. Additionally, any tax request increase, even by a single dollar, now requires a two-thirds majority board vote and mandatory attendance at public hearings. While more restrictive, this bill's passage effectively blocked LB 1219, which would have imposed a much stricter 2% growth cap on tax askings.

- Option Enrollment and Special Education (LB 653) — The passage of LB 653 mandates that if one sibling is optioned in to a district, the school must accept all other siblings regardless of capacity. This raises concerns regarding the district's ability to serve additional students, particularly those with IEPs or special education needs. The board must now decide whether to maintain current capacity levels or lower them to limit enrollment, noting that the district currently does not receive state funding for these students as it does not have a positive net option enrollment.
- In a notable development for student welfare, a five-year pilot program for Hunger Free Schools was established through a private donor to cover the cost of reduced-price meals. Regarding state funding, the Governor's budget reallocated \$42 million from the Board of Educational Lands and Funds to the Educator Future Fund; this move is expected to face a constitutional legal challenge and may temporarily reduce the district's state apportionment. Finally, two high-profile measures failed to pass: the "third-grade retention bill" (LB 1050), which lacked the necessary votes despite heavy gubernatorial pressure, and LB 468, which would have stripped the district of approximately \$3 million in motor vehicle tax revenue.

## **6. Public Participation/Comment**

### **7. Board Reports**

### **8. Consent Agenda**

Move to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, as presented. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Niki Deeds, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

8.A. Approval of Minutes of the March 9, 2026, Regular Meeting and the April 1, 2026, Committee of the Whole Meeting

8.B. Approval of the April 2026 Claims

8.C. Approval of the April 2026 Financial Reports

8.D. Approval of Kearney High School Girls Wrestling Trip to the Iowa Wrestling Camp, June 8–11, 2026 in Fort Dodge, Iowa

8.E. Approval of Kearney High School Boys Wrestling Trip to the Missouri Wrestling Camp, June 20–24, 2026 in Columbia, Missouri

8.F. Approval of Kearney High School FBLA Trip to the National Leadership Conference, June 28–July 3, 2026, in San Antonio, Texas

8.G. Approval of Kearney High School FBLA Trip to the National Fall Leadership Conference, November 4–7, 2026 in Washington, DC

## 9. Regular Agenda - Personnel

### 9.A. Acceptance of Resignations and Retirements

Move to accept, with regret, the resignations and retirements as presented. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Drew Blessing, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

### 9.B. Approval of the Employment of Certificated Staff

Move to employ the certificated staff at Kearney Public Schools for the 2026-2027 school year as presented. This motion, made by Drew Blessing and seconded by Amanda Smallcomb, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

### 9.C. Approval of the Employment of Administrative Staff

Move to approve Jason Sullivan as principal at Sunrise Middle School; Patrick Moore as assistant principal at Horizon Middle School, and Christa Anderson as special education supervisor at Kearney Public Schools, starting the 2026-2027 school year. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Amy Barth, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

### 9.D. Approval of Classified, Classified Exempt and Administrative Employee Compensation for the 2026-2027 School Year

- The board concluded the final step of the current compensation cycle with a discussion on scheduled salary increases. Mr. Blessing mentioned that a 5% raise was designated for classified hourly employees, many of whom earn near minimum wage; this higher percentage is intended to keep the district competitive with local private-sector employers like Menards or McDonald's. Additionally, a 3% increase was approved for classified exempt staff and a 2.5% increase for administrators. These adjustments reflect the district's ongoing effort to retain essential personnel in a competitive local labor market.

Move to approve an average increase in total compensation of 5% for classified employees, 3% for classified-exempt employees, and an average increase in total compensation of 2.5% for administrative employees in Kearney Public Schools. This motion, made by Drew Blessing and seconded by Niki Deeds, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

9.E. Approval of the Ratified Addendum to the Negotiated Agreement between KEA and the Board of Education for the 2026–2027 School Year

- Dr. Melissa Herrmann, Director of Human Resources, reported that after an extensive review by the Negotiations Committee and discussion during Committee of the Whole meetings, the board is now considering an addendum regarding a one-time payment for certified staff. This measure is specifically designed to support employees who would have been frozen on the salary schedule next year, effectively preventing a projected loss of income. The specific payment amounts will vary based on an individual's current placement on the schedule. Having already been ratified by the KEA membership last week, the addendum is now before the board for final consideration and potential approval.
- Mr. Icenogle added that the Board of Education's primary goal over the last several years has been to restructure the income system to ensure sustainable and manageable growth. This recent addendum addresses an unintended consequence of those changes. Although the restructuring was necessary to remain within the expectations of taxpayers, it inadvertently caused some newer teachers to miss out on the progressive pay scale. To rectify this, the board collaborated closely with the KEA to develop a solution that ensures no teacher loses income. The board expressed deep appreciation for the KEA's willingness to return to the table and evaluate multiple options, ultimately landing on a collaborative agreement that balances fair teacher compensation with responsible fiscal oversight.

Move to approve the ratified addendum to the negotiated agreement between KEA and the Board of Education for the 2026-2027 school year. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Drew Blessing, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea  
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

**10. Regular Agenda - Business**

10.A. Approve a Resolution authorizing the issuance of General Obligation Refunding Bonds of Buffalo County School District 0007, in the State of Nebraska, in an aggregate principal amount of not to exceed \$16,200,000 for the purpose of refunding certain outstanding indebtedness of the district; prescribing the form of such bonds; fixing in part and providing for the fixing in part of the terms of the bonds; providing for the levy and collection of an annual tax for the purpose of paying the principal of and interest on such bonds as they become due; and authorizing certain other documents and actions in connection therewith.

- Tobin Buchanan, KPS Municipal Advisor, explained that the board is considering a "parameter resolution" prepared by bond attorney Gilmore and Bell, which outlines the potential refinancing of the remaining 2016 bonds. Focused on approximately \$6.5 million in maturities, the resolution establishes strict financial guardrails, including a minimum savings threshold of 2% of the principal. While the resolution authorizes the district to prepare for a potential sale, it does not obligate them to move forward unless market conditions ensure they are "in the money" according to these established criteria. Current bond market volatility, influenced heavily by global conflicts in Iran,

has caused fluctuations in potential savings; consequently, the district will continue to monitor daily market shifts to ensure any future action aligns with their fiscal requirements.

Move to approve a Resolution authorizing the issuance of General Obligation Refunding Bonds of Buffalo County School District 0007, in the State of Nebraska, in an aggregate principal amount of not to exceed \$16,200,000 for the purpose of refunding certain outstanding indebtedness of the district; prescribing the form of such bonds; fixing in part and providing for the fixing in part of the terms of the bonds; providing for the levy and collection of an annual tax for the purpose of paying the principal of and interest on such bonds as they become due; and authorizing certain other documents and actions in connection therewith. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Amy Barth, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

10.B. Approve a bid from Springer Roofing in the amount of \$228,301 to replace the Meadowlark Elementary roof in the summer of 2026. This project was approved under the QCPUF bond projects issuance and will be paid out of the existing QCPUF bond funds accordingly.

- Dr. Mundorf reported that the district is moving forward with the Meadowlark Elementary School roof replacement project using QCPUF bond funds that are reaching their designated three-year expenditure deadline. While initial estimates placed the project cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000, the competitive bidding process yielded much more favorable results. After reviewing eight proposals, KPS Facility Director Mr. Trent Bosard recommended the second-lowest bidder, a local company, Springer Roofing, at a cost of \$228,301. Although a non-local company, Encore Roofing, submitted a numerically lower bid, Mr. Bosard noted that it was not a true "apples-to-apples" comparison due to differing general conditions and terms. Selecting the local bid ensures the project meets all necessary specifications while remaining significantly under the original budget.

Move to approve a bid from Springer Roofing in the amount of \$228,301 to replace the Meadowlark Elementary roof in the summer of 2026. This motion, made by Amy Barth and seconded by Amanda Smallcomb, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

## **11. Regular Agenda - Miscellaneous**

11.A. Approval of the 2026-2027 Transportation Handbook

- Dr. Mundorf mentioned that Dr. Jason Sutton, KPS Transportation Director, attended the April Committee of the Whole meeting and presented the 26-27 Transportation Handbook. Dr. Sutton shared that only minimal changes were necessary due to the continued success of current processes. The update confirms that the district is well-

positioned to handle its transportation needs, particularly with the opening of Cottonwood Elementary. Approving the handbook tonight ensures families have the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding their transportation options for the next school year.

Move to approve the 2026-2027 Transportation Handbook, as presented. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Niki Deeds, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

11.B. Approve a Permanent Right-of-Way and Utility Easement with the City of Kearney at or near the intersection of 45th Street and N Avenue for the purposes of sidewalk construction and lane expansion for the new traffic light installation at the corner of 45th Street and N Avenue.

- Dr. Mundorf reported that the City of Kearney has requested a permanent right-of-way and utility easement from the district to facilitate the ongoing expansion and widening of N Avenue and 45th Street. This agreement will allow for essential infrastructure improvements, including sidewalk construction and the installation of a new traffic signal. Following board approval, the proposal will move to the City Council for final consideration.
- Board members expressed enthusiasm for the project, noting that the new traffic signal will significantly improve safety and traffic flow near Sunrise Middle School once construction is complete.

Move to approve a Permanent Right-of-Way and Utility Easement with the City of Kearney, as presented. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Drew Blessing, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

11.C. First Reading Approval of the Revised 5000 Section of Board Policies

- Dr. Mundorf explained that both the 5000 and 6000 sections of the board policy have been reviewed and are ready for approval. These policies cover student and instructional policies, respectively. This update is part of the first comprehensive policy review since 2017, a process that has required significant time and effort from board members Smallcomb and Deeds. With these sections finalized, the district plans to have legal counsel review the 7000 and 9000 sections in May. After these revisions, only the routine annual updates required by new legislative sessions will need to be addressed.

Move to approve the first reading of the Revised 5000 Section of Board Policies, as presented. This motion, made by Drew Blessing and seconded by Amanda Smallcomb, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

11.D. First Reading Approval of the Revised 6000 Section of Board Policies

Move to approve the first reading of the Revised 6000 Section of Board Policies, as presented. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Niki Deeds, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea  
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

11.E. Discuss, consider, and take all necessary action to approve the Resolution to cancel Molly Brown's teaching contract, effective March 6, 2026

- Dr. Mundorf presented the request to take action to cancel Molly Brown's teaching contract, effective, March 6, 2026. While specific details of the situation are protected under personnel law and cannot be disclosed publicly, administration noted that the conduct in question warranted the rare and serious step of contract cancellation. This action reflects the district's determination that such a measure was necessary to address the specific circumstances of the case.

Move to adopt the Resolution to cancel Molly Brown's teaching contract, effective March 6, 2026. This motion, made by Drew Blessing and seconded by Amy Barth, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea  
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

**12. Next Meeting**

**13. Adjournment**

- Meeting was adjourned at 6:48 PM.

Move to adjourn the meeting. This motion, made by John Icenogle and seconded by Niki Deeds, Passed.

Amy Barth: Yea, Drew Blessing: Yea, Niki Deeds: Yea, Paul Hazard: Yea, John Icenogle: Yea, Amanda Smallcomb: Yea  
Yea: 6, Nay: 0

**Notice of Meeting**

This meeting was publicized in the Kearney Hub on April 9, 2026; radio stations KGFW and KKPR; and KSNB and KHGI T.V.

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Niki Deeds, Secretary