

Scottsbluff Board of Education Special Meeting
Monday, January 5, 2026 6:00 PM

Scottsbluff High School Board Meeting Room
313 E 27th Street
Scottsbluff, Nebraska 69361

Mark Lang: Present
Beth Merrigan: Present
Robert Polk: Present
Scott Reisig: Present
Tory Schwartz: Present
Paul Snyder: Present

1. Opening Procedures

1.a. Call to Order

The Special Board Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Board President Scott Reisig.

1.b. Roll Call

1.c. Excuse Absent Member(s)

2. Open Meetings Law

This meeting was held in accordance to the Open Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting was published in the Star-Herald on Tuesday, December 30, 2025 and on the Scottsbluff Public Schools website on Thursday, December 18, 2025.

3. Adopt Agenda

Motion to adopt the agenda. Passed with a motion by Beth Merrigan and a second by Mark Lang.

Mark Lang: Yea, Beth Merrigan: Yea, Robert Polk: Yea, Scott Reisig: Yea, Tory Schwartz: Yea, Paul Snyder: Yea

4. Update

4.a. Lake Minatare Elementary

Executive Director of Student Services Dr. Wendy Kemling, Executive Director of Finance Marianne Carlson, and Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Mike Mason provided an update on Lake Minatare Elementary.

5. Public Comment - a total of 120 minutes will be allotted (no more than 5 minutes per speaker)

The following members of the public were present to address the Board of Education:

- Tracie Barrett, Scottsbluff
- Kathryn Preston, Scottsbluff
- Heather Neu, Minatare
- Jenna Pruitt, Gering
- Katy Fleming, Scottsbluff
- Dail Eastman, Minatare
- Sara Treffer, Scottsbluff
- Taylor Luikens, Scottsbluff
- Nikki Hoffman, Scottsbluff

- Reginald Preston, Scottsbluff
- Alexa Graves, Scottsbluff
- Brett Moser, Minatare
- Matt Fleming, Scottsbluff
- Dave Wolf, Scottsbluff
- Thad Kuntz, Minatare
- Amber Kuntz, Minatare
- Zach Zitterkopf, Scottsbluff
- Sandy Massey, Scottsbluff
- Garrett Fulk, Scottsbluff
- Megan Dockery, Scottsbluff
- Krystle Schaneman, Minatare
- Mike Enderson, Minatare
- Ryan Barrett, Scottsbluff
- Judson Hall, Scottsbluff
- Shara Schluterbusch, Student
- Justin Vance, Student
- Andrew Preston, Scottsbluff
- Justin Shaddick, Scottsbluff

6. Discuss, consider, and take all necessary action in regard to Lake Minatare Elementary. Board President Scott Reisig clarified information regarding the projected cost savings in reference to the closure of Lake Minatare Elementary. He noted the correct projection is approximately \$750,000, and emphasized the effect of the revenue cap.

Board Member Mark Lang stated that he is not ready to vote for the closure of Lake Minatare, noting that it is a great school where he has attended almost every soup supper, and that he wishes every school had such a great parent club. He noted this decision is tough. He stated he believed the administration has been transparent during this process.

Board Vice President Beth Merrigan requested that Bryan Flansburg, Senior Location Manager at First Student, provide more details regarding transportation. Bryan stated that First Student would be able to reduce two routes should Lake Minatare Elementary be closed. Currently, there are five routes running with two buses transporting middle and high school students, with the remaining three going directly to Lake Minatare Elementary. Bryan noted the buses would no longer stop at Lake Minatare, but instead run directly into town. He stated the reduction in cost is based on the price First Student charges per bus, per day.

Board Member Rob Polk stated he trusts the management and leadership of both Executive Director of Finance, Marianne Carlson, and Dr. Andrew Dick, Superintendent, after having worked with them for multiple years. He noted district families are very passionate, which he appreciates for the Lake Minatare community and the whole district. He stated he was "on the fence" during the previous decision, leaning toward dipping into financial reserves again in order to see if things would change in the future, such as the declining birth rates or state legislature for revenue. He stated that those things he hoped for did not happen, and now he was leaning toward the whole District coming together into four elementaries and welcoming Lake Minatare families into the in-town schools. He stated he was unsure, in his responsibility as a Board member, that he would support continuing to dip into cash reserves. He noted he valued the education the students receive at Lake Minatare.

Beth Merrigan acknowledged that the conversation was a difficult one, noting it must have also been difficult for those giving public comment to do so, and also noting many public commenters acknowledged the difficulty of the discussion for Board members as well. She noted this is a personal topic for families. She stated she believes every elementary in the District provides a high-quality education for students. She stated a primary responsibility of the Board is budget planning, including forecasting, and acknowledged that the budget is a moving target. She noted many of the "disconnects in our conversation over the years" have been about budget details. She stated she does not see false information within the budget, and the Board attempts to share the information as accurately and clearly as possible, but that "we've missed each other" on understanding the budget, for which she feels remorse. She noted she will continue to ask questions of the Executive Director of Finance, complete her own research, and come to decisions that are fiscally responsible for the District.

Board Member Tory Schwartz stated the staff and parents of Lake Minatare are what makes the school phenomenal, noting those things wouldn't change if students attended in-town schools. He stated he believes the students would continue to be successful, also noting that the teachers of in-town elementaries are also phenomenal. He commented that he heard the emotion and passion of the public commenters. He noted the Board had heard the word "equality" previously from parents during discussions and stated that, due to smaller class sizes, students at in-town elementaries do not comparatively receive an equal experience. He noted many teachers would love to teach at Lake Minatare. He noted he has concerns about "the deception and misrepresentation" that patrons believe to be happening, and stated the District is very lucky to have Marianne Carlson. He stated the financial information she provides are "numbers that she has poured herself into and looked at many, many times." Tory stated there is no "ulterior motive" behind the discussion of Lake Minatare. He noted the decision is tough and "comes down to the numbers." He reiterated his belief that the students will be fine, should the decision to close the school be made.

Scott Reisig noted he had made a list of budget cuts the Board has considered over the previous years, including reducing the specialized elementary science teacher positions, a significant revamp of the CHOICES program, scaling back the auditorium project significantly, making the decision not to place concrete in the Splash building, and considering the possibility of not replacing the Assistant Principal at Roosevelt Elementary. During this time, he noted that these were not easy decisions, some of which were personal to Board members and some of which the Board members did not agree on. He noted the discussion regarding Lake Minatare is one the Board has been "churning over" for years. He agreed with Rob Polk, noting that he was also previously willing to take money from cash reserves to keep the school open. He noted Lake Minatare is an amazing school where the staff does an amazing job, and commented that this is a "financial decision." Scott also agreed with Beth Merrigan, stating his regret that the Board hasn't "managed to close the gap in communication" with the public. He also reinforced that taxes have significantly fallen over the previous years, which is a direct result of the revenue cap, noting he does not believe this is negative, and the District has still been able to continue to provide all services on a tighter budget each year. Scott commented on the Board's choice to pay off the bond early, as well as completing building projects. He noted bond repayment is a separate fund that does not come out of the regular property tax assessment, and those funds may not be used for other purposes. He noted that by accelerating those payments, the Board saves the taxpayers money. Scott noted that ESSER funds were used for elementary modernization

projects. He also commented on the responsible use of funds for larger building projects, which are coming to an end.

Board Member Paul Snyder noted that on the last slide of the presentation, the District administration made a recommendation. He stated the Board members rely on those administrators, as they are the experts in their respective areas, including education and curriculum, facilities, and school finances. He stated he has no reason to distrust any district administrators and stated he trusted each of them deeply. He stated he leans toward the recommendation of the district administrators because of that trust. He noted Lake Minatare is a "model school center" and a "model community." He stated the recommendation was made due to the information provided during the presentation. He reiterated that he has seen no information which might cause him to not believe the district administration, and stated that this information has brought him to the decision to support the closure of the school. He noted the decision is not simple, and stated, "The bottom line is that a staff of professionals, whom I trust and the Board trusts, recommends that for the benefit of every student, every day, we close the school." He stated the Board has a fiduciary duty to all students and all patrons of the District.

Rob Polk noted this has been one of the most difficult decisions. He thanked the patrons for their patience and stated he hoped to have their continued support. He stated he believes he should "do what I think is right rather than what I might want to do."

Motion to close Lake Minatare Elementary, 280548 County Road K, at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year, that the building be listed for sale, and that at the January 12, 2026 Board meeting, the Board reassigns the attendance area boundaries. Passed with a motion by Paul Snyder and a second by Tory Schwartz.

Mark Lang: Nay, Beth Merrigan: Yea, Robert Polk: Yea, Scott Reisig: Yea, Tory Schwartz: Yea, Paul Snyder: Yea

7. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn Passed with a motion by Beth Merrigan and a second by Tory Schwartz.

Mark Lang: Yea, Beth Merrigan: Yea, Robert Polk: Yea, Scott Reisig: Yea, Tory Schwartz: Yea, Paul Snyder: Yea

PO Box 1709
Scottsbluff, NE 69363

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

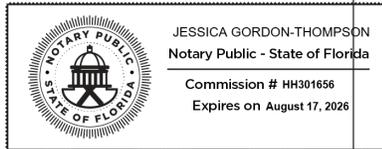
State of Florida, County of Orange, ss:

Anjana Bhadoriya, being first duly sworn, deposes and says: That (s)he is a duly authorized signatory of Column Software, PBC, duly authorized agent of Scottsbluff Star-Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation, published daily except Mondays, at Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska; that the notice hereto attached and which forms a part of this affidavit was Published in said paper, and that said notice was published in the regular and entire issues and every number of the paper on the days mentioned, the same being the corresponding day of each week during the period of time of publication and that said notice was published in the newspaper proper and not in the supplement, with insertion date(s) having been on:

Dec. 30, 2025

Anjana Bhadoriya

(Signed) _____



VERIFICATION

State of Florida
County of Orange

Subscribed in my presence and sworn to before me on this: **12/30/2025**

J. Thompson

Notary Public

Printers Fee: **\$12.00**
Customer Number: 1014315
Order Number: COL-NE-203527

Notarized remotely online using communication technology via Proof.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Special Meeting of the Board of Education for the School District of Scottsbluff, in the county of Scotts Bluff, in the State of Nebraska, will be held at 6:00 P.M. on Monday, January 5, 2026, at Scottsbluff High School, 313 East 27th Street, Scottsbluff, NE 69361 and via virtual meeting. The meeting agenda, kept continuously current, will be available for inspection on the Scottsbluff Public Schools website, www.sbps.net. Agenda items may be subject to Closed Session. Agenda items are subject to change up until 24 hours prior to the meeting. Sequence of the agenda may be adjusted; please attend the entire meeting. Published in the Star-Herald Scottsbluff, NE COL-NE-203527 December 30, 2025 ZNEZ



LAKE MINATARE
ELEMENTARY



2000'S

- 2006 - LB 126 Nebraska set to dissolve many Class I schools- parts of the bill were repealed by Measure 422 but by 2007 there were no Class I school Districts in the state of Nebraska.
- SBPS voted on June 15, 2006, and Lake Minatare was taken in by Scottsbluff Public Schools.
- 2007 - Last year K-8 school
- 2009 - Lake Alice School consolidated with Lake Minatare
- 2012-2013 - Last year K-6 school





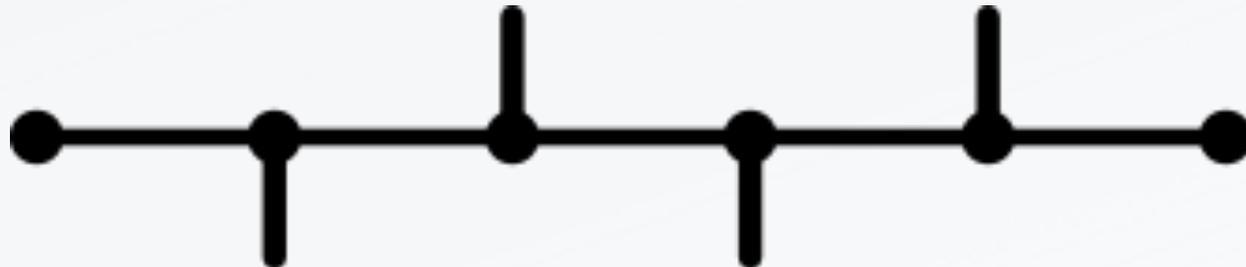
AREA CLASS I SCHOOL CONSOLIDATIONS

2007

Haig

2017

Cedar Canyon



2006

Highland

2009

Lake Alice

CURRENT DAY

2025-2026 School Year

Total Enrollment - As of October 1	65 students
Options	10 students
In-District Transfers	18 students

- Since 2014 - Average enrollment – 70 students K-5
- 2024-2025 NEP Data
 - Excellent Rating on AQuESTT
 - 42.11% Free/Reduced (District is 65.70%)
 - 66.67% NSCAS English Language Arts
 - 89.74% NSCAS Mathematics
 - 80.00% NSCAS Science



K-5 STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO

Building	Student Count As of October 1	Teachers	Ratio
Lake Minatare	65	5.2	12.50:1
Lincoln Heights	247	17.0	14.53:1
Longfellow	351	22.0	15.95:1
Westmoor	373	23.0	16.22:1
Roosevelt	260	16.0	16.25:1

*Teachers includes classroom teachers, counselors, and specialists (music, physical education, library/media, and reading intervention) but does not include special education and EL instructors.



Birth Rates

Nebraska Birth Rates per Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Year	Births
2015	26,678
2016	26,594
2017	25,833
2018	25,495
2019	24,758
2020	24,293
2021	24,602
2022	24,340
2023	24,111
2024	24,785

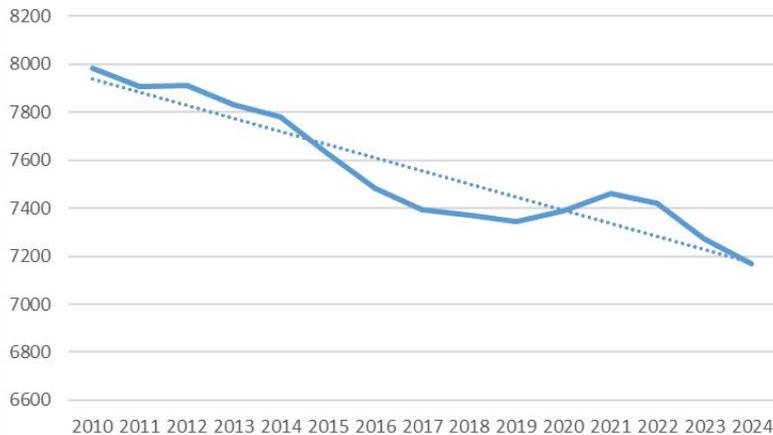


Birth Rates

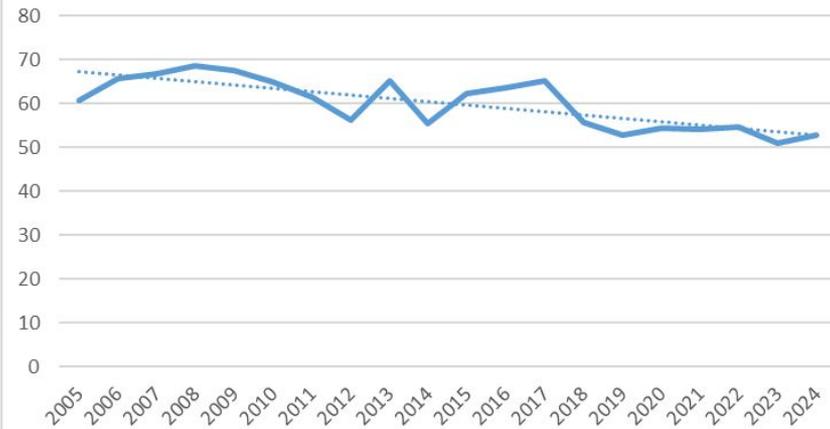
Scotts Bluff County Birth Rates per Panhandle
Public Health District



of Women and Girls (15-49)



Birth Rate per 1000 women and girls (15-49)



Regional K-12 Enrollment Trends

Data collected by ESU 13

REGIONAL K-12 ENROLLMENT TRENDS

District	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	% Change Last 10 Years	% Change Last 6 Years	% Change Last 3 Years
Alliance	1397	1321	1314	1362	1303	1301	1279	1280	1222	1181	-15.46%	-9.36%	-7.73%
Gering	1909	1831	1825	1791	1737	1756	1767	1755	1721	1715	-10.16%	-1.27%	-2.28%
Minatare	198	191	182	171	158	148	143	132	133	137	-30.81%	-13.29%	3.79%
Mitchell	618	632	671	659	594	587	569	554	606	605	-2.10%	1.85%	9.21%
Morrill	348	356	360	347	352	335	295	279	238	235	-32.47%	-33.24%	-15.77%
Scottsbluff	3289	3312	3268	3315	3236	3220	3268	3203	3179	3103	-5.66%	-4.11%	-3.12%
TOTAL CHANGE											-10.09%	-5.47%	-3.15%

How the School District Property Tax Limitation Act Works

Growth Cap

LB243 creates a ceiling where revenues in the General and Building funds cannot exceed 3%.



Valuation

9.49% increase in
2025-26



As valuation increases, income cannot exceed the cap so the levy must be reduced in order to stay within the 3% growth allowance.

What Funding Sources are included in the cap?

Non Property Tax Revenue

State Aid

Special Education Reimbursement

Local Property Tax

Revenue



If a funding source decreases, the property tax levy can increase in order to maintain revenue up to the cap.

Budgeting

With a limit to how much revenue can be brought in, school districts must cut expenses in order to maintain a balanced budget. Examples of expenses that can increase that are beyond the Districts control include:

Expenses

- Negotiated Compensation (approximately 70% of the District's budget)
- Insurance
- Utilities
- Transportation
- Supplies and Materials



School District Property Tax Limitation Act Impact to SBPS

- Established a Certified Property Tax Authority for the General and Building Fund
 - School District revenues are capped at 3% annual growth plus growth for Membership, LEP, & Poverty
 - For 2025-2026, SBPS was allowed a 3.0937% growth
- 2025-2026 Revenue Cap was \$43,736,192
 - 23-24 Other Non Property Tax Revenue - \$4.43M
 - 24-25 SPED Reimbursement - \$6.44M
 - 25-26 TEEOSA = \$18.43M
 - Remaining amount is our 25-26 Property Tax Authority - \$14.44M
- Based on 25-26's revenue cap, anticipate our revenue cap for 26-27 will be \$45M

OTHER INFORMATION

- Strategic Priority 3.4.b - Continue to make fiscally sound decisions to ensure the District's strong financial position while supporting our maintenance and expansion.
- Since the implementation of the School District Property Tax Limitation in 2023, SBPS has taken a fiscally conservative approach to keep property tax requests as low as possible, resulting in the following annual budget reductions:
 - 2023-24 School Year - The receipt of ESSER funds made reductions unnecessary.
 - 2024-25 School Year - \$1.8M
 - 2025-26 School Year - \$1.3M
- At this time, based on the available information, to maintain a balanced budget, we project a need to reduce General Fund expenditures by \$950K for the 2026-27 school year.

OTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED

- Although it is unknown exactly how many students may leave the District if Lake Minatare closes, for the purpose of financial forecasting, we assumed all students would remain attending SBPS.
- Lake Minatare boundaries would be absorbed into the Longfellow boundaries, contingent upon board approval at a future meeting.
- Our conservative projection is that we would be able to reduce our overall staffing by 9 FTE (4 certified and 5 classified). All 9 positions could be absorbed through attrition (routine retirements and resignations throughout the District).
- Based on enrollment projections, one certified position would be added to Longfellow.
- The building could be sold to save the insurance, utility, repair, and maintenance costs.



MINAT
MENTAR

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Expenditures	Lake Minatare	
	School Open	School Closed
Wages/Benefits*		
Teachers	560,500	180,500
Paras	100,000	-
Custodian	55,800	55,800
Secretary	47,900	-
Administrator (.43 FTE)	59,000	-
Student Transportation***	127,839	20,708
Insurance	3,277	-
Supplies, Field Trips, Etc.	7,331	7,331
Repairs & Purchased Services**	26,010	-
Utilities**	33,909	-
Total	1,021,565	264,339
Annual Expenditure Difference		757,226

*Figures include employer-paid benefits and are the average staff costs for the 2025-26 school year.

**Data from the 2024-25 fiscal year.

***First Student has informed the District that we can reduce two routes while still maintaining transportation for all students who currently ride the bus.



RECOMMENDATION

- In alignment with the Strategic Plan, over the course of the last 14 months, the District has thoroughly reviewed options for maintaining a balanced budget. To ensure the District is able to maintain cash reserves in accordance with Nebraska State Statute, the recommendation is to close Lake Minatare at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year.
- If Lake Minatare is closed:
 - The building would be listed for sale upon completion of the 2025-2026 school year.
 - At the January 12th Board Meeting, a recommendation for boundary changes would be presented for consideration.



Questions?

