



## Minutes

### Board of Directors Meeting

December 10, 2025 | 7:30 – 9:00 am

## AGENDA

7:30-7:40

- Welcome and introductions
- Approval of meeting agenda
- Approval of September 17, 2025 minutes

7:40-7:55

- President's report

7:55-8:10

- Finance report
- Membership report
  - 2025/26 membership roster, new members, non-renewals
- Development report
- Program report
  - School Leadership Conference attendee survey
  - Education Awards – Sunday, April 26, 2026

8:10-8:45

- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary proposal/timeline

8:45-9:00

- Recognition of Michele Skare
- Updates and announcements

9:00-9:30

- Tour of Xcel Energy Marshall Operations Center



## **MINUTES**

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Those present: Tim Benz, Tim Berner, Mike Brennan, Dean Broadhead, Pat Callan, Jennifer Cassidy, Pete Deavan, Shana Duininck, Heidi Gallus, Jim Hansen, Michael Lamb, Anna Lima, Brian Lynch, Teri McCloughan, Blake Nelson, Kelly Regan, Josh Schultz, Kate Wollan

Staff present: Jennifer Renstrom, Michele Skare, Lisa Vosbeek

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 AM.

Michael called for a motion to accept the meeting agenda. Motion made by Teri, seconded by Heidi. Motion passed

Michael called for a motion to accept the minutes as written. Motion made by Pat, seconded by Tim Berner. Motion passed.

### **President's report**

Tim began by expressing how pleased he is with Jennifer's hire and how smoothly the transition has begun.

The fall months were busy across the state, with Tim attending conferences, administrator gatherings, and presenting on advocacy work. He highlighted several key updates, including the stalled special session following the Annunciation tragedy—not due to lack of interest, but because legislative seats requiring special elections left no clear majority. He reiterated MINNDEPENDENT's consistent position that any school-safety legislation must include all sectors, “wherever students put their feet.”

Tim also discussed the rapidly approaching Minnesota Paid Leave Act. MINNDEPENDENT co-hosted an exceptionally well-attended webinar—likely the largest in the organization's history—featuring Sam Nelson. MINNDEPENDENT is likewise updating its own employee manual with support from Blake's Nelson team at Helmuth & Johnson.

On the federal level, Tim described developments around the Educational Choice for Children Act, a tax-credit scholarship program that several states have already opted into. Minnesota, like many others, is waiting on forthcoming Treasury Department regulations before making a determination. MINNDEPENDENT continues pushing back against incorrect characterizations of the program as a “private school voucher,” noting its potential benefits for public schools as well.

Tim also reported on his recent meeting with Michelle Carey, the new MDE contact overseeing nonpublic pupil aids, replacing longtime partner Greg Sogaard. They discussed common pain points around textbook, counseling, and nursing aid processes, and MINNDEPENDENT offered to partner on possible statewide training to reduce confusion.



Finally, Tim announced that MINNDEPENDENT has signed a new four-year office lease beginning in January—with a welcome financial benefit: four free months of rent, starting in January.

### **Finance Report**

Brian summarized the financials, emphasizing the organization's continued strong position. The balance sheet remains healthy, with substantial cash reserves and no debt, and year-to-date performance is slightly ahead of last year. Some grant income is delayed due to timing, including one large grant that was temporarily misrouted to MINNDEPENDENT's old address, but has since landed in the account. Conference revenue was lower due to reduced attendance, but corresponding expenses were also lower. No questions were raised.

### **Membership Report**

Tim shared that MINNDEPENDENT is on track for 96%+ retention, with nine new schools joining this year. Total membership should land around 184–185, slightly above last year's 181. Although a handful of schools are not returning due to interim leadership transitions or budget pressures, nothing suggests organizational instability. MINNDEPENDENT continues to represent 41% of independent schools statewide, serving 58% of their students. The board briefly discussed De La Salle's pending renewal, noting that internal follow-up is ongoing.

Associate members, including strategic partners, have all renewed. Two schools that appeared delinquent have confirmed intent to renew once internal processes are completed.

### **Development Report**

Tim and Lisa reported a strong start to the annual fund, with many board gifts already received. Sponsorship revenue continues to be robust; several sponsors have already renewed for the coming year. The team is meeting with Thrivent soon and is in ongoing conversation with multiple foundations. The 3M grant, delayed only by a mailing mishap, has been received.

Lisa encouraged board members to share foundation connections or potential sponsor leads, noting MINNDEPENDENT's ongoing strategy to diversify support.

### **Programs Report**

Tim reviewed the School Leadership Conference, held in September. Although attendance was lower than usual—partly due to the early-year tragedy at Annunciation and partly because many schools are conserving professional development funds ahead of the NCEA national conference in April—the feedback remained extremely strong. The overall value score was nearly identical to last year's (around 4.7). The longstanding partnership with Rutgers continues to deliver excellent service and atmosphere, and MINNDEPENDENT has secured a three-year contract with them, offering cost stability.

The board revisited a previous discussion about potentially restructuring the Education Awards event. After thoughtful consideration, MINNDEPENDENT will keep the event in its traditional spring format at Mendakota, particularly important in the organization's 50th anniversary year. Anniversary



elements will be incorporated, including a special Legacy Award presented periodically to honor significant historical contributors.

Board members briefly explored the idea of businesses sponsoring school memberships—a suggestion that will continue to be explored.

#### **50th Anniversary Planning**

Tim walked the board through the refined proposal for MINNDEPENDENT's 50th Anniversary, which emphasizes four themes: Reflect, Celebrate, Invite, and Advance. The celebration will span the year and will include branding elements (such as an anniversary logo and tagline, with design support from Dean), an anniversary video featuring historical footage and testimonials, and ongoing spotlight stories in newsletters.

The Education Awards in April will serve as the anniversary kickoff, and the School Leadership Conference will serve as the capstone, with added recognition for long-standing member schools. Additional ideas include regional gatherings—important for outstate engagement—casual social events, lunch-and-learns, and re-establishing the President's Cabinet as an ambassador group of former board members, donors, and community allies. Several board members expressed enthusiasm, especially around donor storytelling, earned media opportunities, and engaging both new and legacy stakeholders.

Tim estimated a budget of \$10,000–\$15,000 for new anniversary-specific activities, noting MINNDEPENDENT's reserve fund (around \$119K plus roughly \$260K in CDs) provides ample capacity, and donor support will likely offset part of the cost.

The board expressed overwhelming support, with no need for formal action.

#### **Recognition of Michele Skare**

The business of the meeting paused to honor Michele, noting her organizational skills, institutional knowledge, and behind-the-scenes work that has kept MINNDEPENDENT/MINNDEPENDENT functioning smoothly over the last 15 years (and 112 board meetings). Board members shared reflections on Michele's professionalism, humor, and impact on the organization's culture and operations. A formal motion of appreciation for her 15 years of service was unanimously approved

#### **Other Business and Adjournment**

Michael Lamb announced that the June board meeting will be held at the Xcel Energy Marshall Operations Center.

With no further business being brought forth, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:53 AM.

December 10, 2025

/s/ Dean Broadhead  
Secretary