Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the USD 297 Board of Education

November 12, 2026

President Troy Hilt called the regular meeting of the USD 297 Board of Education to order at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 12, 2026, in the SFCHS Administration Office. In attendance alongside President Hilt were board members Chris Hingst, Blake Krien, Brooke Lohr, Traci Neitzel, and ShayLinn Zweygardt, while board member Shawna Blanka was absent. District administration was represented by Superintendent Mark Penka and Clerk Jackie Butler; Principals Susan Dinkel and Delbert Schmidt were noted as absent. Additionally, guests Jessica Matthies and Sheree Downs were present for the proceedings.

Approval of Agenda

Chris Hingst moved to approve the agenda as amended, moving Audiences to the first order of business to allow Jessica Matthies to present on behalf of the Cheyenne County Kansas Community Foundation (CCKCF) and adding a review of a CTE Student Club Charter application under New Business. Blake Krien seconded the motion. The motion carried (6–0).

Audiences

Jessica Matthies addressed the Board regarding the Cheyenne County Kansas Community Foundation and the St. Francis Educational Fund. No action was taken.

Consent Calendar

Chris Hingst moved to approve the Consent Calendar, which included the following items:

1. The minutes of the regular Board meeting held on October 8, 2026.
2. The payment of bills via direct deposit slips numbered 1019001–1019077 and First National Bank checks numbered 19719–19783, totaling $324,024.44.
3. The Cash Summary Report (including a transfer of $48,312.00 from the General Fund to the Special Education Fund), the Grade School Activity Fund Report, and the High School Activity Fund Report as of October 31, 2026, along with distributed financial reports.
4. A report that no gift offers were received.

Blake Krien seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6–0).

Committee Reports

No committee reports were presented.

Needs Assessment

After discussion, Traci Neitzel moved to add $2,000.00 to the certified teachers' base salary schedule, effective with the November 2026 payroll. Blake Krien seconded the motion. The motion carried (6–0).

New Business

Chris Hingst moved to approve $2,000.00 from the Cheyenne County Kansas Community Foundation, as requested by High School Agriculture CTE, to convert an underused hallway work area into a hydroponic growing space. ShayLinn Zweygardt seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6–0).

Superintendent Penka reported that the Adams Brown Audit Review is currently in internal review and is expected to be completed by the end of December 2026.

The Board conducted its annual review of the USD 297 Emergency Management Plan. Action on the plan was tabled until the next regular meeting to give members more time to examine the document.

Personnel

Superintendent Penka presented three resignations: Scott Carmichael, Head High School Football Coach; Katie Myers, Head High School Volleyball Coach; and Ashley Buffington, Grade School Secretary. He also presented

a contract amendment for Jaydenn Porubsky. Chris Hingst moved to accept the resignations and approve the contract amendment as presented. Traci Neitzel seconded the motion. The motion carried (6–0).

Traci Neitzel moved that the Board enter executive session for five minutes to discuss non-elected personnel matters under the non-elected personnel exception in KOMA (K.S.A. 75-4319), with the open meeting to resume at 8:53 a.m. ShayLinn Zweygardt seconded the motion. Blake Krien recused himself due to a conflict of interest. Motion carried, 5–0. The Board entered executive session at 8:48 a.m. and returned to open session at 8:53 a.m., when Blake Krien rejoined the meeting.

Chris Hingst moved to approve the hiring of Cassondra Krien as Grade School Secretary. ShayLinn Zweygardt seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (5–0), with Blake Krien abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

Traci Neitzel moved to approve a waiver for Bruce Swihart to drive a school bus. Blake Krien seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6–0).

Student Club Charter

An application for a Student Club Charter, sponsored by Ben Lacy, was presented to the Board of Education for consideration. Chris Hingst moved to approve the charter application as presented. Blake Krien seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6–0).

Miscellaneous

Superintendent Penka presented administrative updates.

At 9:22 a.m., ShayLinn Zweygardt moved that the Board recess into executive session for ten minutes to discuss personnel matters of non-elected personnel pursuant to the non-elected personnel exception under the Kansas Open Meetings Act (K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(1)), with the open meeting to resume at 9:32 a.m. Blake Krien seconded the motion. Motion carried (6–0).

At 9:32 a.m., ShayLinn Zweygardt moved to extend the executive session for five minutes pursuant to the same statutory exception, with the open meeting to resume at 9:37 a.m. Blake Krien seconded the motion. Motion carried (6–0).

The executive session concluded at 9:37 a.m., and the open meeting resumed at 9:38 a.m. No action was taken.

Review of the School-Improvement Process

The Board noted that the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) update will be presented at the December 2026 meeting. No action was taken.

Board member Chris Hingst left the meeting at 9:57 a.m.

Adjournment

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 10, 2026, at 7:00 a.m. ShayLinn Zweygardt moved to adjourn the meeting. Blake Krien seconded the motion. The motion carried, 5–0, and the meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Jackie Butler, Clerk	Date	Troy Hilt, Board President