

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – JANUARY 26, 2026

The Board of Education of the Aspen Peaks School District met in a board meeting on Monday, January 26, 2026, at 6:00 PM. The board meeting took place in the boardroom at the Alpine School District office.

Board members present: President Diane Knight, Vice President Amber Bonner, Nicki Brammer, Jeanne-Marie Burrows, Jason Hart, Steve Sparti, and Jason Theler.

Also present: There were approximately 75 others in attendance.

President Diane Knight conducted the meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Paul Spencer.

REVERENCE

Reverence was given by Vice President Amber Bonner.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

There were no community comments.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Appointment of New Superintendent of Schools

Board member Sparti motioned to appoint Dr. Joel K. Perkins as Superintendent of the Aspen Peaks School District, and it was seconded by Board member Burrows.

President Knight stated that the Board sought a leader who would honor the district's strong foundation of excellence while bringing both experience and a fresh perspective. She noted Dr. Perkins' extensive experience with ASD, as well as the desire for innovation and wisdom to help the district forge its own identity. President Knight reported that during the reference-check process, every reference consistently highlighted Dr. Perkins' capacity for innovation. She shared that the deciding factor was hearing multiple stories that spoke to Dr. Perkins' character and leadership. As an example, she described an incident from Dr. Perkins' time as a principal in which a student with special needs became overwhelmed and lay down on the floor. Dr. Perkins joined the student on the floor, calmly engaging in conversation about what they could see above them. That moment of connection allowed the student to regain composure and return to class. President Knight emphasized that this story exemplifies Dr. Perkins' leadership style—listening first and leading with empathy—and concluded that Dr. Perkins is the ideal leader to guide Aspen Peaks into the future.

Board member Theler stated that he has known Dr. Perkins for many years and has worked alongside him at various times, including in a school site setting and at the District Office. He referenced the principle that in education, a lesson to be taught should never be more important than a student to be nurtured. Board Member Theler noted that the story previously shared by Diane clearly reflects where Dr. Perkins' heart lies. He emphasized that Dr. Perkins is deeply committed to student success, growth, support, and excellence, and that his focus is on achieving excellence not only for students academically, but in their lives. Board Member Theler expressed confidence that as Dr. Perkins assembles a leadership team, he will prioritize relationships over problems to be solved, recognizing that strong relationships are

what unite the organization and move it forward. He concluded by stating his enthusiasm for Dr. Perkins joining the district leadership team.

Board member Burrows stated that she spends a significant amount of time in the community and developed a personal checklist based on conversations with parents, staff, and community members. She shared that a principal advised the Board to seek the best superintendent to lead a new district at this stage, emphasizing the importance of finding a leader who aligns with the community's identity and current needs while building a new district. Board Member Burrows noted that a teacher expressed missing a superintendent who regularly visited schools and surprised students in classrooms, and that parents emphasized the importance of selecting a superintendent with classroom teaching experience and a clear understanding of educating children. She reported that the Board interviewed several exceptional candidates and that the process was inspiring. Board Member Burrows concluded that it became clear by the end of the interviews that Dr. Joel Perkins best met the criteria needed for the district at this time, and she expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work with and support him.

Vice President Bonner expressed appreciation to all applicants and interviewees for the Superintendent position, noting that over two full days the Board met many exceptional candidates, several of whom would have made outstanding superintendents. She shared that what most distinguished Dr. Perkins was his experience opening Skyridge High School and the intentional manner in which he built a strong and positive culture. Vice President Bonner commented on being impressed by Skyridge's success and noted that Dr. Perkins was involved from the construction phase through hiring, demonstrating thoughtful and effective leadership. She observed clear parallels between opening a high school and launching a new district, and expressed confidence that Dr. Perkins possesses the skills and care needed to do the same for the district. Vice President Bonner concluded by stating she was thrilled to support Dr. Perkins.

Board member Hart shared that prior to knowing Dr. Perkins or his professional background, his first interaction with him occurred when he attended a Board meeting at the District Office. He recalled that Dr. Perkins approached him, knew him by name, and took time to engage in conversation, which demonstrated his personal and thoughtful approach. Board Member Hart emphasized that it is clear how deeply Dr. Perkins cares about the community and how invested he is in the children and their future. He noted that excellence is not defined solely by academic performance, but by the kind of people students become and the strength of the community being built. Board Member Hart expressed his support for Dr. Perkins as Superintendent, stating that he will bring a personal touch and genuine care to the role.

Board member Sparti stated that the Board received a large number of applications and sought community feedback before narrowing the field to interview candidates and developing the interview questions. He acknowledged that beginning a new school district is a significant undertaking and, as someone without an extensive background in education, selecting a Superintendent carried a heavy responsibility. Board Member Sparti shared that as interviews began, he offered a silent prayer for guidance—that each candidate would interview well and that it would become clear who was best suited to lead the district. He noted that Dr. Perkins was among the final candidates interviewed and that the interview process included strong, thoughtful questions. Board Member Sparti described the interview with Dr. Perkins as an enjoyable experience, highlighting his personality and presence, and stated that he felt confident that securing Dr. Perkins as Superintendent would place the district in capable hands. He concluded by expressing excitement about the opportunity to work with Dr. Perkins in building the new school district.

Board member Brammer expressed enthusiasm in explaining how the Board reached a unanimous decision to select Dr. Perkins as Superintendent so early in the process. She noted that the caliber of applicants was exceptional and that after the first day of interviews, the Board anticipated a difficult decision. However, following the second day of interviews, the Board reached unanimous agreement.

Board Member Brammer emphasized that the district would have been well served by any of the candidates and expressed hope that those not selected would consider applying for other positions within the district. She shared that she has known Dr. Perkins for several years and is impressed with his deep knowledge of the community. Board Member Brammer highlighted Dr. Perkins' ability to focus on individuals, particularly those on the margins, and to provide meaningful support. She further noted Dr. Perkins' capacity to analyze complex educational challenges in depth, thoughtfully considering implications, obstacles, and solutions. Board Member Brammer concluded by expressing excitement about working with Dr. Perkins and gratitude that he is willing to serve the district.

The Board members who voted in favor were President Diane Knight, Vice President Amber Bonner, Nicki Brammer, Jeanne-Marie Burrows, Jason Hart, Steve Sparti, and Jason Theler.

President Knight stated that as the Aspen Peaks School District is being built, the most important responsibility of the Board is selecting the right leader, noting that nothing is more critical to the success of students, employees, families, and the community. She emphasized that the superintendent selection process was truly a team effort and that the Board listened carefully to community input. President Knight expressed gratitude to all those who assisted with the process and noted that the Board had the opportunity to interview several outstanding candidates. She stated that through strong alignment between community feedback and Board consensus, it became clear who should lead the district forward. Once that determination was made, the Board moved forward decisively. President Knight concluded by stating that the Board is thrilled to appoint Dr. Joel K. Perkins as the inaugural Superintendent of the Aspen Peaks School District and thanked Dr. Perkins for his willingness to serve the district.

2. Oath of Office

Board President Diane Knight administered the Oath of Office to Dr. Joel K. Perkins, who was appointed Superintendent for the Aspen Peaks School District, effective July 1, 2026.

Superintendent Perkins expressed gratitude for everyone present and thanked the Board for the opportunity and trust extended to him. He acknowledged the support of his wife and son, as well as the contributions of colleagues and others who have helped him reach this point. Superintendent Perkins emphasized that his achievements are the result of surrounding himself with people more capable than himself and providing support where needed. He noted that gratitude is the foundation of all he does. He stated that the district is building upon a strong foundation established by ASD, which has exemplified excellence, and that many initiatives and directions lie ahead. He concluded by thanking the Board again for their support.

President Knight invited the community to attend an Open House on Wednesday, the 28th, to meet the new Superintendent. A Q&A panel will be held, and questions may be submitted in advance to burrows4schoolboard@gmail.com. Following the panel, a small reception will take place. President Knight encouraged everyone to join and participate in the event.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Board member Theler and seconded by Board member Hart, the meeting adjourned at 6:29 PM. The Board Members who voted in favor were President Diane Knight, Vice President Amber Bonner, Nicki Brammer, Jeanne-Marie Burrows, Jason Hart, Steven Sparti, and Jason Theler.