

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING – FEBRUARY 24, 2026

The Board of Education of the Alpine School District held a public hearing on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 6:06 PM regarding potential boundary adjustments between Dry Creek Elementary, Harbor Point Elementary, Sage Hills Elementary, Saratoga Shores Elementary, and Springside Elementary. The public hearing took place in the boardroom at the Alpine School District office.

Board members present: Board President Julie E. King, Vice Presidents Stacy M. Bateman and Emily B. Peterson, Sarah L. Beeson, Dr. Mark J. Clement, Joylin Lincoln, and Ada S. Wilson.

Also present: Interim Superintendent Robert W. Smith and members of the administrative staff. There were approximately 60 others in attendance.

Board Julie King declared the public hearing open at 6:06 PM.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Natalie Griffiths of Saratoga Springs addressed the Board, emphasizing the importance of this issue for local children. She encouraged Board members, as professionals, to consider what they would do if it were their own children attending Springside Elementary. Ms. Griffiths noted that Springside currently has the highest enrollment in the district, with at least 1,200 students, and that enrollment is projected to continue increasing over the next four years. She expressed concern that while class sizes may remain the same, the overall school population will not, creating challenges that affect other aspects of the school. She stated that concentrating all current and future growth at a single school is inequitable and questioned whether students there will receive the resources and quality of education comparable to schools with lower enrollment. She urged the Board to ensure students are set up for success by making the best use of existing resources, taking into account financial constraints, overcrowding, and potential boundary changes. Ms. Griffiths asked the Board to advocate for all children and to thoughtfully consider alternative solutions.

Dave Petersen of Saratoga Springs President of Legacy Farms HOA, addressed the Board to raise concerns regarding the current boundary proposal for Springside Elementary. He noted that Springside currently has 850 students, with enrollment projected to grow to 1,100 in a short time frame, creating real and immediate challenges. Mr. Petersen outlined several issues that could arise daily, including impacts on student safety, learning quality, and overall wellbeing. He also cited the burden on transportation and surrounding neighborhoods, highlighting that increased traffic congestion could create additional safety concerns. He emphasized that enrollment growth at Springside is not balanced with surrounding schools, which do not have comparable projections, making the plan inequitable. He urged the Board to pursue a boundary plan that more evenly distributes enrollment, prioritizes student safety, and engages families and the community to explore alternative options.

Tara Crouch of Saratoga Springs addressed the Board, emphasizing the importance of making decisions that are in the best interest of all students. She stated that the current options are not equitable and do not adequately meet the needs of the communities. Ms. Crouch shared that, as a parent of children at Springside, she is concerned about options that negatively impact students. She noted that splitting neighborhoods and bussing temporarily displaced students does not make sense. She proposed a third option, suggesting that all students could remain at their current schools except for North Shore, which could be bused along with Sage Hills—students from these areas would require bussing regardless. She highlighted that students look forward to biking to school during warmer weather, and changing boundaries would force additional bussing. Ms. Crouch noted that land in Wander has been purchased for a future school, but there is no guarantee it will be ready in time. She emphasized that her proposed third option would prevent overcrowding at Springside. Speaking as a teacher, she described how overcrowding affects educators' ability to provide quality instruction and how shifting bussing arrangements repeatedly is disruptive and harmful. She urged the Board to consider this third option for the health, safety, and well-being of the children.

Sara Collins of Saratoga Springs – thanked the Board for their time and effort on the boundary study. Representing over 95 parents of children attending Springside, she emphasized the community’s concern for the quality of education and the school’s future. Ms. Collins expressed that Springside should not be placed in a position of overcrowding, noting that the effects are quickly felt—class sizes increase, specialty classes become limited, and teachers are stretched thin. She asked the Board to consider these negative consequences and suggested redirecting some students to schools with lower enrollment. She clarified that she is not requesting special treatment, but rather thoughtful planning to maintain manageable enrollment. She emphasized that the Board’s decisions will shape the daily experiences of both students and families, and urged them to choose an option that protects Springside from overcrowding and safeguards student well-being.

Cynthia Berger of Saratoga Springs and the Springside School Site Council and PTA, expressed concern about the increasing overcrowding at Springside while surrounding schools remain unaffected. She described the resulting dynamic as one of “not my problem” and emphasized that true educational equity cannot exist when growth is concentrated in a single community. Ms. Berger highlighted the impacts of overcrowding on student safety, learning, well-being, teacher capacity, and school culture. She called for fairness—not favoritism—in how growth is managed, stressing that it should be shared across the district rather than concentrated in one school. She reinforced the principle of “one district, one community, one system,” advocating for collective responsibility and a system that ensures accountability through shared enrollment.

Chaylyn Miles of Saratoga Springs urged the Board to work collaboratively to create boundary options that make the best use of existing resources. She expressed concern about stacking Springside in anticipation of a new school, noting that 3–4 years is a significant portion of a child’s elementary experience and is not truly temporary. She emphasized that a lot of planning and preparation is required before a new school can be built, and that higher enrollment at Springside cannot guarantee a workable temporary solution. Ms. Miles suggested leveraging the resources already available—existing schools and bus routes—even if it requires a boundary adjustment again in a few years. She cautioned that simple solutions are not always the best when it comes to maintaining quality education, and noted that the options best for students are sometimes dismissed because they require more effort. She urged the Board to prioritize equitable use of current resources and ensure that the quality of education is preserved for all children in the area.

Nikki Mitchell of Saratoga Springs, a Springside parent and PTA member, emphasized the importance of prioritizing stability as enrollment continues to grow. She noted that families have established routines and a sense of belonging at their schools, and preserving this continuity should be a key consideration. Ms. Mitchell stated that growth should be accommodated in a way that maintains balance across schools without uprooting established students. She suggested preserving the Wander community and placing North Shore students in schools with available space. She stressed that decisions should promote fairness, balance, and long-term stability, rather than shifting the burden onto a single community.

Jen Anderson of Saratoga Springs, a Springside parent and PTA member, shared that she volunteers at local schools out of her love for students and appreciation for the Alpine School District culture. She noted that she moved back to the area to raise her family and lives directly across from Springside Elementary. Ms. Anderson expressed concern about traffic congestion and the impact of overcrowding on students. She urged the Board to balance enrollment across all schools to ensure a high-quality education for her child, including access to specialty classes comparable to what her older children have experienced. She acknowledged that growth is inevitable but emphasized that it should be shared equitably, rather than overloading a single school. She noted that Option 2 projects roughly 1,500 students at Springside—a size Alpine has not previously managed—and stated that students should not bear the consequences of an untested scenario. She recommended utilizing solutions that keep enrollment below 1,100 students.

Kami Daniels of Saratoga Springs, a Springside parent, shared that her children have attended the school for six years, describing it as more than a school—a true community. She noted that neighbors and school employees are part of this close-knit environment and that Wander has become integrated into the Springside community. She expressed concern that moving students now and again later does not make sense. Ms. Daniels highlighted safety

concerns, noting that she lives on School House Road where drivers frequently speed and the city has refused to install stop signs, which will exacerbate traffic issues if enrollment increases. She urged that students be more evenly distributed, emphasizing that Springside is already at capacity and there is no guarantee a new school will be available soon. She stressed the importance of maintaining community connections, preserving a sense of belonging, and providing stability for students while addressing needs across all schools.

Mandi Krause of Saratoga Springs thanked the Board for their work on the boundary study and acknowledged the complexity of the decisions and competing factors involved. She noted that Saratoga has become a highly desirable community for raising families, and rapid school growth is outpacing capacity, impacting education and undermining community trust. As both a teacher who has worked in overcrowded schools and a parent affected by these issues, Ms. Krause emphasized the importance of weighing the day-to-day impact on students and educators alongside logistical considerations. She referenced her experience at Meadow, where Dry Creek was built to alleviate overcrowding, and expressed concern that redirecting more students to Springside would recreate the same problem. She stressed that boundary decisions should consider not just physical space but educational quality, noting that while more students might physically fit on campus, this would negatively affect classroom learning, lunch periods, specialty programs, outdoor spaces, and teacher support. She warned that teachers are already under significant strain, and additional overcrowding increases burnout and staff turnover, directly affecting educational outcomes. Ms. Krause urged the Board to reconsider the proposal, explore alternative options to better balance enrollment across all schools, and preserve the partnership between families, educators, and leadership. She emphasized that excluding parents from decisions that directly impact their children weakens this partnership and called for solutions that equitably support all stakeholders.

Hailey Dean of Saratoga Springs reiterated points raised by previous speakers, sharing her perspective as both a mother and an educator. She expressed concern that overcrowding at Springside would negatively impact teachers and that other schools in the district could accommodate additional students. She emphasized that maintaining community stability and student well-being comes at a cost when boundaries are shifted. Ms. Dean shared that her daughter, who has Autism, faces challenges in making friends and has built meaningful relationships at Springside over the years. She explained that the proposed boundary change would require her daughter to change schools while her friends remain, which has already begun to affect her negatively. She stressed that many students rely on predictable environments and trusted relationships, and that moving students to manage space disrupts families, support systems, and communities. Ms. Dean urged the Board to consider the long-term impact on students and to ensure that every child receives the support and education they need.

Camille Nichols of Saratoga Springs, a parent of three children at Springside, emphasized that equity for all students should be the primary consideration in boundary decisions. She stated that available resources should be fully utilized, and students should be assigned to schools with available space and teachers. She added that school capacity should be distributed across the community rather than relying on portables, which she noted is not fiscally responsible when existing space is available. Ms. Nichols questioned whether Springside is being set up for failure, pointing out that other schools have capacity and boundaries will likely change again in the future. She stressed that equity should be evaluated each time boundaries are adjusted, noting that there is no guarantee a new school will be built in Wander. She also expressed concern about traffic congestion during drop-off and pick-up, which she believes will worsen as enrollment increases. Ms. Nichols concluded by urging the Board to consider what they would decide if this were their own child.

Angela Winkler of Saratoga Springs, a mother of five students attending Springside, Lake Mountain Middle School, and Westlake High School, shared her observations from the past six years. She highlighted ongoing struggles with parking, which require extra time and create potential safety risks for students. She stated that Springside cannot accommodate additional students, citing incidents where teachers and students were injured during drills and children were unable to get lunch due to overcrowding. Ms. Winkler also expressed concern about the impact of large class sizes on student mental health, noting that many children—including her own—experience increased anxiety and stress. She shared that her second-grade child, who had been in an oversized class, has not fully recovered from the experience. She urged the Board to consider enrollment numbers carefully and prioritize equity to support student success.

Jamie Hansen of Saratoga Springs, PTA President at Springside and parent of two children, spoke on behalf of many families concerned about enrollment growth. She emphasized the need for balanced student distribution, noting that Springside should not absorb a disproportionate number of students while other schools remain under capacity. Ms. Hansen explained that overcrowding negatively impacts the educational experience, including common areas and specialty classes, and stressed that students deserve dedicated spaces for art, physical education, and other instruction. She highlighted that other schools have available classroom space and that growth should be shared equitably across the district. She urged the Board to review options that maintain balanced enrollment and distribute growth fairly. Ms. Hansen concluded by thanking the Board for their time and service in making decisions that are in the best interest of all students.

Krystal Jeffers of Saratoga Springs representing the North Shore community and parent of a student at Dry Creek, commended Springside parents for advocating for their children. She explained that her primary concern is keeping her child connected to their community and friends. Ms. Jeffers noted that one of the proposed boundary options would split her community, leaving her second-grade child with only one or two peers from their current section and separating them from all of their friends. She expressed support for a proposal that keeps students with their entire community, close to home, while maintaining manageable enrollment at Springside. She emphasized the importance of keeping communities intact, especially since students already face transitions from Dry Creek, and urged the Board to prioritize both community cohesion and proximity to home.

Brooke Mackey of Saratoga Springs, parent at Springside and PTA member, expressed concern about the rising levels of anxiety and depression among today's students, noting that many are already overstimulated and overwhelmed. She stated that adding more students to Springside would set them up for failure. Ms. Mackey emphasized that a school is more than just desks in classrooms—meaningful educational experiences depend on space, resources, and a sense of belonging. She cautioned against relying on promises of future schools or additional boundary studies, pointing out that Springside is being asked to absorb more students based on the potential of a new school, which may not materialize. She stressed that only one new school may be possible if a bond passes, and the school should not be set up to fail based on a promise. Ms. Mackey urged the Board to pursue solutions that maintain balanced, sustainable enrollment, protect students, and preserve a positive learning environment, noting that there are no short-term fixes.

Emma Mortensen of Saratoga Springs acknowledged the complexity of the boundary decisions and expressed appreciation that the Board is taking community concerns seriously. Coming from a family of teachers, she shared concerns about class sizes and available recreational spaces, noting their impact on children's mental health. Ms. Mortensen stated that Springside classes already have 30 or more students, which poses challenges for teachers. While she trusts teachers' classroom management skills, she emphasized that adding even one more student can make it more difficult to maintain control. She explained that interruptions in the classroom make it harder for students to focus, leading to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, she highlighted the importance of having space for students to decompress and get fresh air, noting that adding trailers could negatively affect these essential opportunities.

Chelsea Withers of Saratoga Springs representing the Legacy Farms community and mother of students at Springside, thanked the Board for their work and acknowledged the difficult decisions they face. She noted that some communities will inevitably require bussing, but emphasized that there is only one elementary school east of Redwood Road, and with growth in that area, it is unreasonable to expect Springside to absorb all students. Ms. Withers highlighted the impact of overcrowding on the educational environment, including stress on classroom learning, lunch periods, recess, and specialty classes. She shared that she has two neurodivergent children for whom stability is essential, and praised the teachers for the supportive relationships they have built with students. She explained that overcrowding leads to sensory overloads and places teachers under extreme stress. She cautioned against repeatedly using boundary changes as a solution, describing it as a temporary fix to a permanent growth issue, and urged the Board to develop an alternative plan that serves all schools equitably rather than placing an impossible burden on a single campus.

Ashley Hays of Saratoga Springs parent of a child starting this fall, expressed concern over receiving inconsistent information regarding school capacity and long-term enrollment projections. She emphasized that transparency with the community would be greatly appreciated. Ms. Hays noted that Springside staff know their students personally—a practice that does not occur in all schools—which contributes to a positive learning environment. She expressed concern that growing enrollment will negatively impact students’ daily experiences, including lunch, PE, and dedicated programs like music and art. She highlighted staffing challenges, noting that teachers and administrators are already stretched thin. She also pointed out that there is no guarantee a new school will be available and asked the Board to provide a clear, sustainable long-term plan for managing growth, particularly if current trends continue.

Board President King declared the public hearing closed at 6:56 PM.

APPROVED