



**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Washington County School District**  
**121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah**  
**June 8, 2026**  
**4:30 p.m.**

*Present: Board President David Stirland, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Ron Wade, Board Member Craig Hammer, Board Member Heidi Gunn, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, Executive HR Director Darin Thomas, Communications Director Steven Dunham, and Technology Director Jeremy Cox. Board Member Craig Seegmiller was on a virtual call.*

*Minutes: Administrative Secretary Camille Ames*

Reverence by Craig Hammer

**A. WORK SESSION**

1. School Board Site Visits

**Board Member David Stirland presented a motion to go into a closed session at**

**2:42 p.m. Board Member Ron Wade seconded the motion.**

**Board Member Staheli voted yes**  
**Board Member Wade voted yes**  
**Board Member Hammer voted yes**  
**Board Member Gunn voted yes**  
**Board Member Stirland voted yes**

**B. CLOSED SESSION**

1. Property and Personnel Items  
Property and legal items.

**Board Member Craig Hammer presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 4:01 p.m.**  
**Board Member Heidi Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

**C. FOLLOW UP FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING**

**D. WORK SESSION**

1. CT High Education Pathway – Ryan Rarick

Ryan from CTHS described a program where senior students in the education pathway are hired as paid paraprofessionals in local elementary schools. This provides students

with high school credit, valuable classroom experience, and networking opportunities. Successful participants are often retained after graduation, which qualifies them for the "Grow Your Own" grant, providing up to \$12,000 per year for three years towards an education degree. The goal is to elevate the quality of first-year teachers by ensuring they have 5-7 years of classroom experience before being hired. The program has received statewide recognition, with Ryan receiving several "Teacher of the Year" awards for his work in developing it. Ryan has accepted a new position as a Work-Based Learning Specialist but will continue to oversee the program.

2. BLM School Site Acquisition – Bryan Dyer

A resolution was proposed for the board to authorize an application for three properties, two for future school sites and one being an easement for the right of way, working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to receive the property.

3. Foundation Report – Steven Dunham

Steve Dunham provided an update on the Foundation's recent activities. The district had over \$86,000 in overdue lunch balances. The Foundation fundraised and paid off nearly \$16,000 for specific student groups (e.g., those who applied for but did not receive aid, graduates). The program provided 447 at-risk or homeless students with \$65,000 for new school clothes. The upcoming tournament on September 25th is a major success, with 28 of 36 team slots (at \$5,000+ each) already sold. The festival had an estimated 25,000-30,000 attendees. Dixie Power presented a \$100,000 check to the Foundation for elementary school literacy programs as a result. This funding is a key contributor to the district's high literacy scores.

4. Five County Association of Governments Report – Burke Staheli

Burke Staheli reported that the FCAoG bylaws state that school districts, along with counties and municipalities, will contribute to its funding. For the last 15-20 years, only the counties have funded it. The FCAoG is developing a 5-7 year budget and will present a proposal for the five school districts in the region to collectively provide 15% of the budget. The first year would be free. The district benefits from FCAoG services like Meals on Wheels. A presentation will be made to the board to detail the value and services received for the investment.

5. Administrator Evaluations – Superintendent Richard Holmes and Nate Esplin

Will be reported next time. Reference to Letter 5

6. HR Audit Report – Darin Thomas

Darren Thomas reported that the HR department was asked by the state legislature to participate in an audit of the Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission (UPAC). The request is viewed as a positive reflection of the district's good practices. The audit requires providing district policies and documentation on hiring, code of conduct, self-reporting requirements for arrests, and how allegations of misconduct are retained and handled. The district's current processes are already aligned with what is being requested. The district will comply with the audit request.

#### 7. Graduation Report – Superintendent Richard Holmes

Almost 3,000 students graduated, representing a preliminary 93% graduation rate. Staff will continue working with students over the summer to help them graduate by September 30th. Preliminary test scores are the "best we've had in a long time."

The 2025-2026 school year concluded successfully with State Championships and Runner-up Rankings. 4A Baseball- Snow Canyon State Champion, Runner up Desert Hills High School. 4A Girls Golf – Individual State Champion, 2A Softball State Champion Enterprise High School, 4A Softball Desert Hills High School, 4A Tennis State Champions Desert Hills High School, Runner up Crimson Cliffs High School, Individual State Champion, 4A Track & Field Girls Champion, Snow Canyon High School, Runner up Pine View High School, 4A Boys Volleyball Runner up Desert High School.

Millcreek High School would like to add the Mascot Mavericks. The Board unanimously approved of this decision.

#### 8. Technology Report – Jeremy Cox

Will be discussed later

#### 9. Review Action Items

### **E. OPEN DISCUSSION OF THE BOARD**

1. Board Committee Discussions

### **F. ITEMS FOR BOARD REVIEW**

1. Enrollment
2. Safe Schools
3. GRAMA Requests
4. Department Reports

*A regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Washington County School District was held after due, legal, and timely notice being given to all members and interested parties. Board President David Stirland called the meeting to order and welcomed all visitors. Board members present were Burke Staheli, Ron Wade, Craig Hammer, and Heidi Gunn. Staff members present were Superintendent Richard Holmes and Business Administrator Brent Bills*

### **G. OPEN MEETING – 4:30 p.m.**

1. Reverence by Burke Staheli
2. Welcome – Board President Stirland

### 3. Pledge of Allegiance by David Stirland

## **H. PUBLIC NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING**

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Washington County School District is conducting a public hearing on Monday, June 8, 2026 at 4:30 p.m. to receive input from the public with respect to the proposed 2025-2026 Final Budget and the adoption of the proposed 2026-2027 Budget.

*A copy of the 2025-2026 Final Budget and the 2026-2027 Proposed Adopted Budget are available on the District website ([www.washk12.org](http://www.washk12.org)) or may be obtained by contacting the District Business Administrator.*

Public comments given:

## **I. CONSENT AGENDA**

### 1. Minutes

#### a. May 11, 2026 Meeting of the Board of Education

The Board of Education approved the consent agenda, which included the May 11th minutes, financial reports, and other items.

### 2. Financial Report

Tax rate have been added to the budget. The final budget for the 2025-2026 school year and the proposed budget for 2026-2027 can be found on the Washington County School District Webpage. Key financial strategies include intentionally spending down the Fund 10 balance over two years to fund capital projects and aiming to be debt-free by 2030-2031. Revenue is projected at \$403.2 million with expenditures of \$410 million, intentionally spending down the fund balance to \$397 million. The fund balance will be intentionally lowered over the next two years to pay for capital projects, dropping to an estimated \$110 million, which aligns with the target of 7% of property value. This was achieved by lowering the voted levy and raising the capital levy. The fund balance will carry over at \$72 million and is expected to drop to \$62 million by the end of next year due to major projects. The district aims to be completely debt-free by 2030. Bonds that are callable will be paid off early. A small balance of around \$5 million will remain until 2031 due to non-callable bonds.

### 4. Personnel and LEA Specific License Items

Approved

### 5. Desert Canyons Elementary TSSA Plan Change

Approved

**Board Member Burke Staheli presented a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items 1-4. Board Member Heidi Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

## **J. PUBLIC COMMENT ON BOARD ACTION ITEMS**

## **K. BOARD ACTION ITEMS**

1. Approval of the proposed 2025-2026 Final Budget and the adoption of the proposed 2026-2027 Budget – Brent Bills

Brent Bills provided the property tax rates that have been updated on the Budget, which can be found on the Washington School District Office homepage. The only remaining rate to be finalized is the basic rate, which will be set by the state tax commission. The budget approval will include this pending rate. Property tax rates have been updated to actual rates, except for the basic rate, which will be set by the state tax commission and included in the approved budget.

The county's taxable assessed valuation is nearly \$45 billion, excluding primary residences (taxed at 55% of value under state law) and properties within RDA/EDA financing areas.

The district's five-year average property tax collection rate is approximately 93%.

Interest revenue is generated primarily through the Public Treasurer's Investment Fund (PTIF), a state-managed fund yielding just over 4% and invested in high-grade, highly liquid assets.

**Board Member Ron Wade presented a motion to approve the proposed 2025-2026 Final Budget and the adoption of the proposed 2026-2027 Budget. Board Member Craig Hammer seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

2. Resolution of the Board to Authorize Request for BLM Property – Brent Bills

A resolution was proposed for the board to authorize an application for three properties and an easement for the right of way, working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

**Board Member Craig Hammer presented a motion to approve the resolution of the Board to Authorize Request for BLM Property. Board Member Heidi Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

## **L. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

## **M. INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Kite Festival Report – Steven Dunham

Steve Dunham, Director of Communications and Public Relations, reported on the Dixie Power Kite Festival fundraiser. The School District holds this annual event to support literacy programs. Approximately 25,000 people attended the festival, and more than 2,600 reading charts were submitted by elementary school students.

Dixie Power presented the District with a check for \$100,000 to support elementary school literacy programs. This year marked the 27th anniversary of the festival, which has raised more than \$1.2 million for the District's literacy initiatives.

## **N. REPORTS**

1. Superintendent

Superintendent Holmes reported that the school year ended with great success, including some of the best testing results in a long time. Almost 3,000 students graduated, representing a preliminary 93% graduation rate.

2. Board  
No reports were given

3. Association  
No reports were given

4. PTA/PTO/Community Council  
Dixie High School student Jarrett Miller received a National Award of Merit in the Reflections program for his poem. His entry was in the literature category-one of 200 selected from approximately 900 entries nationwide. Principal Warren Brooks and the Dixie PTA Council President Liesel Clove expressed their pride in this significant achievement and noted what an honor it was to have a student recognized at the national level.  
Laurie Brown provided an update on the Pine View High School PTA. During Teacher Appreciation Week, the PTA organized various activities, including meals, snacks, and gifts for teachers and staff. The Pine View High School PTA also hosted a successful Grad Night event at Fiesta Fun from midnight to 5:00 a.m.  
The Utah PTA will hold a leadership training session for PTA leaders on the upcoming Monday.

#### **O. PUBLIC OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE BOARD – 3 minutes each**

Carson Bird- Expressed interest and raised questions about the statewide integration of AI into the school curriculum, seeking more information on its impact on Washington County School District.

Kiran Andrews- Suggested the district host an open lab for the community to experiment with classroom technology, citing an issue where an online test could not be reviewed by a teacher.

Lori Waters- Thank you to the District for their board, schools, and teachers for their hard work and dedication to student education.

Lindsay Riggs-A new resident with a child starting Kindergarten requested guidance on navigating the school district for the first time.

Chris Kuchar- Voiced serious concerns about the lunch environment at elementary schools particularly with time and weather outside.

**Board Member Burke Staheli presented a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m. Board Member Heidi Gunn seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

#### **P. ADJOURNMENT**