



***** 2020 Annual Member Meeting *****

4:45 pm Tuesday, Nov. 17

Online via GoToMeeting

AGENDA

Call to Order & Welcome – President Lance Bagstad

Approval of Agenda – President Bagstad (ACTION)

Approval of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes – President Bagstad (ACTION)

2020 Review & Highlights – Executive Director Bob Indihar (INFORMATION)

2021 Board Elections Update– President-Elect Karen Jacobson (INFORMATION)

Action on Recommended 2021 Legislative Platform – President Bagstad (ACTION)

Board Recognition – President Bagstad (INFORMATION)

Adjournment – President Bagstad (ACTION)



MAIL

PO Box 187
St. Cloud, MN 56302-0187

VISIT

2233 Roosevelt Rd, Suite 7
St. Cloud, MN 56301

CALL

(320) 762-6574
Toll-Free (833)-MNVOICE

LEARN

MREAVoice.org



***** 2019 Annual Meeting *****
10:30 am, Tuesday, November 19, 2019
Cragun's Resort, Brainerd, MN

MINUTES

ITEM 1. Call to Order & Welcome

President Lee Carlson called the meeting to order at 10:40 am.

ITEM 2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Kevin Enerson, Pipestone; second by Maydra Maas, Westbrook-Walnut Grove. Motion carried.

ITEM 3. Approval of 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes by Todd Holthaus, Hills-Beaver Creek; second by Susan Knutson, West Central Area. Motion carried.

ITEM 4. Approval of Recommended 2020 Legislative Platform

Platform topics in 2020 will include Cooperative Facilities, Teacher Shortages, Funding Student Needs, and Healthy & Safe Schools & Youth.

Motion to approve the 2020 Legislative Platform by Charles Funk, Sebeka; second by Kathryn Kelly, Southwest-West Central Service Cooperative. Motion carried.

ITEM 5. Election Update for 2020 Board of Directors

President Carlson reviewed the nomination and election process. Ballots for the Board of Directors elections will be mailed late November and must be return postmarked by December 31 to be valid. Each full member receives three ballots for one administrator, one school board, and one teacher vote for each vacancy in their zone. Associate members receive one ballot.

President-Elect Lance Bagstad reviewed MREA By-Laws pertaining to director elections and then announced candidates for the 2020 Board of Directors and asked them to stand if present. Eighteen candidates applied for six board positions.



MAIL

PO Box 187
St. Cloud, MN 56302-0187

VISIT

2233 Roosevelt Rd, Suite 7
St. Cloud, MN 56301

CALL

(320) 762-6574
Toll-Free (833)-MNVOICE

LEARN

MREAVoice.org

ITEM 6. Recognition of Outgoing Board Member

President Carlson presented a recognition plaque to outgoing director Mike Vasek, Fisher, who served as a School Board Representative for eight years from 2012 through 2019.

President-Elect Bagstad presented a service appreciation plaque to Lee Carlson for serving as Board President during 2019.

ITEM 7. 2019 Review & Highlights

MREA Executive Director Fred Nolan reviewed 2019 organizational highlights including a statewide tour to meet 2019 Educators of Excellence and create videos of their work; the enactment of Ag2School increases; kicking off MREA's 35th Anniversary celebration, and new partnerships with Battelle for Kids and Coteacher.

Dr. Nolan also announced his retirement effective June 30, 2020, after providing services to MREA since 2011 and growing school district membership nearly 75%.

ITEM 8. 2020 Preview

President-Elect Bagstad provided information on the search process for a new executive director with a focus on membership retention and growth, advocacy building, and program and service expansion.

ITEM 9. Approval of 2020 Annual Membership Meeting

Motion to set the 2020 Annual Membership Meeting for Tuesday, November 17, 2020 by Dennis Laumeyer, Benson; second by Matt Schultz, Lanesboro. Motion carried.

ITEM 10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Gregg Parks, Nevis; second by Jim Jensen, Triton. Motion carried. President Carlson adjourned the meeting at 11:03 am.



MAIL

PO Box 187
St. Cloud, MN 56302-0187

VISIT

2233 Roosevelt Rd, Suite 7
St. Cloud, MN 56301

CALL

(320) 762-6574
Toll-Free (833)-MNVOICE

LEARN

MREAVoice.org

2021 RECOMMENDED LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

(As Recommended to Members by the MREA Board of Directors)

MREA advocates on behalf of about 230 school districts across Greater Minnesota, 30 education districts and our associate members for providing educational opportunities and closing achievement gaps in Minnesota. We take our mission of putting “learners first” seriously and ask the state to support learners and the rural public schools that serve them through the following strategies:

COVID-19 RELIEF FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

- Hold harmless student counts for school district from previous school year to current year
- Address loss of compensatory funding as students and families have stopped filling out Free & Reduced Eligible (FRE) applications due to free school meals this school year

BASIC FUNDING

Since FY 2000, Minnesotan’s investment in E-12 education has fallen from 4.4% of personal income to 4.0% of personal income and is projected to fall to 3.9% in 2023. As a result, under current law, state, and local funding for E-12 education in FY 2023 is projected to be \$1.959 billion lower than it would have been had the 4.4% rate continued with no change.

- In 2001, the state’s “Big Plan” promised to fund schools with the basic formula, but the basic formula allowance has not kept up with inflation. It is now underfunded nearly \$658 per pupil.
- This has led school districts to rely more heavily on local taxpayer support through the operating referendum and the Local Optional Revenue (LOR) board authorized levy, which has led to growing disparities between districts.
- The disparity in general education revenue (5th to 95th ratio) has been on a roller coaster; increasing from 18.6% in FY 2003 to 31% in FY 2013, falling to 18.2% in FY 2016 after the addition of board approved Local Optional Revenue, and is now trending upwards again to 23.9% in FY 2021.
- Schools lack the necessary, predictable funding to invest in long-term teacher work-force development and student supports needed for our economy to thrive.

SOLUTION TO FUND K-12 STUDENT NEEDS

The 80-20-10 Plan – As recommended by the 2020 MDE School Finance Work Group:

Beginning in 2023, redefine “basic revenue” to include both the formula allowance, to continue to be fully state funded, and “Local Education Revenue,” (LER), to replace Local Optional Revenue. LER would be funded with a local property tax on Referendum Market Value (RMV), equalized at 150 percent of the state average RMV per Resident Pupil Unit (RPU), eliminating the separate calculations for Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the current LOR.

- 80 percent of the new basic revenue would be in the formula allowance, and 20 percent would be LER. To reach the 80-20 funding mix, \$917 per pupil unit of referendum revenue would be rolled into LER, making the total LER allowance \$1,641.
- The new combined basic revenue allowance would then be increased by forecasted inflation at 2% per year over the new base.

JUMP START TO SCHOOL READINESS

Minnesota's multiple categorical, competitive funding streams have resulted in inequitable opportunities for children and impede the ability of rural school districts to deliver high quality preschool education to all young children. Rural communities lack affordable, high quality childcare programs. Key actions needed:

- Streamline early learning revenues and ensure local coordination of early learning programs by consolidating Pathway II funds supporting school-based programs, Voluntary Pre-K and School Readiness Plus into the School Readiness account with consensus requirements
- Ensure every district receives sufficient School Readiness funding to provide all low income 4-year-olds a minimum of 350 hours of service from 3- and 4- star rated providers
- Ensure a viable mixed delivery system of providers by requiring districts to reserve 40% for non-district 3- and 4-star rated providers willing to provide a minimum of 350 hours of service for low-income four-year-olds
- School districts verify and reimburse non-district 3- and 4-star rated providers for eligible four-year-olds
- Release unused reserved funds to school districts June 30 for early learning programming

TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Schools across Greater Minnesota face a critical shortage of teachers, especially teachers of colors, in nearly all subjects. Each year, about 1,400 teachers retire with not enough new teachers gaining licenses to replace them. Minnesota teacher graduates declined 20 percent from 2012-2016. Key actions needed:

- Secure adequate, ongoing funding for grants, student teaching stipends, and loan forgiveness to attract and retain new teachers in rural Minnesota.
- Expand Grow Your Own Teachers pilot programs for rural school districts and education cooperatives.
- Support the "Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers" legislative initiatives.

STUDENT SAFETY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Schools across Minnesota face heightened needs to improve student safety and provide a robust array of services to meet rising mental health support for students. Currently, high needs students attending metro school districts have access to well designed, newer, more appropriate learning spaces than those in Greater Minnesota. Key actions needed:

- Double the Safe Schools Levy program to \$72 per pupil with equalization for school districts. Establish a \$30,000 minimum for small districts. Allow member districts of cooperatives directly serving students to levy up to \$15 per pupil for safety.
- Improve funding for school-linked mental health grants so provider continuity and stability of services is achieved.
- Restore funding for ongoing school-county collaboratives to provide mental health and related services.

RURAL FACILITY FUNDING

Protect the Agricultural School Bond tax credit: “Ag2School”

The scheduled phase-in of the Ag2School bond credit must be protected. This program has been an absolute game-changer for the success rate of rural school bond referendums.

Improve the Long Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) Program

The state needs to close the funding gap between the LTFM districts and the Alternative Facility districts over the next 3 years by increasing the maximum per pupil allowance for LTFM districts from \$380 to \$470 in FY 2023 to \$560 in FY 2024 and to \$650 in FY 2025. To prevent the LTFM/Alternative Facilities gap from re-appearing future years, do one of the following:

- All school districts eligible for LTFM based on district’s 10-year facilities plan approved by the commissioner without a statutory limit on the amount that can be raised without voter approval, consistent with current practice for the 26 districts now eligible for Alternative Facilities revenue; or
- For FY 2026 and later, adjust the non-alternative facility districts aid and levy formula allowance for inflation (link to CPI or general ed formula). Specify that non-alt facility districts shall receive not less than 80% of average for alt facility districts.

Cooperative Facilities

Allow rural educational cooperatives to access the same lease levy authority as the metro area Intermediate districts (\$65 / member district student).

Enhanced Debt Service Equalization

Provide additional equalization to assist school districts consolidating after 2021.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

School districts are responsible for providing Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students qualifying for special education services. The failure of the Federal Government to pay 40% of the excess costs of serving education services has fallen to the state and more so, local communities. The local ‘cross subsidy’ has grown to 12% of the general formula over the past decade and is projected to grow to consume 15% of the formula within the next 10 years. Key actions needed:

- Advocate that Congress increase federal support for special education.
- Increase special education funding to hold the cross subsidy per student constant in FY 2022 and eliminate the state portion of the cross subsidy in FY 2023 and later.

Career & College Readiness Flexibility

Minnesota faces a well-documented skilled-worker shortage and Minnesota Academic Standards currently hold high schools back from providing the education and training needed to effectively prepare students for their future jobs. Today’s system operates on a one-size fits all approach for students no matter their plans after graduation. Key actions needed:

- Oppose legislation requiring the third science credit to be obtained through an Earth Science
- Re-examine the high school course and standards requirements to align with state workforce needs and provide flexibility and more options for students in their required Personal Learning Plans.
- Reinvest in vocational and technical education programs and skills (i.e. welding, manufacturing processes, robotics, accounting) by:
 - Continuing state funding for the rural Career & Technical Education consortium grants.
 - Expanding ADM funding up to 0.25 pupil unit reimbursement for programming outside the traditional student day to supporting districts’ CTE programming and collaboration with local employers is another strategy to redevelop CTE courses.



MAIL

PO Box 187
St. Cloud, MN 56302-0187

VISIT

2233 Roosevelt Rd, Suite 7
St. Cloud, MN 56301

CALL

(320) 762-6574
Toll-Free (833)-MNVOICE

LEARN

MREAvoice.org