

# Board of Directors Board Meeting Minutes



Feb. 10, 2026

## ELECTRONIC BOARD MEETING

Ms. Liz Brennan, board president, called the Heartland AEA Board of Directors meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

*Board Members Present:* Ms. Liz Brennan, Mr. Shawn Holloway, Mr. Kasey Huebner, Mr. Mark Lane, Ms. Tiara Mays-Sims, Ms. Mary Poulter and Ms. Heather Sievers. *Absent:* Ms. Margie Schwenk.

*Heartland AEA Administrative Staff Present:* Mr. Kevin Fangman, Chief Human Resources Officer; Ms. Valerie Hubert, Executive Assistant; Dr. Susie Meade, Chief Academic Officer; Ms. Jenny Ugolini, Executive Assistant/Board Secretary; Dr. Kristi Upah, Chief Student Services Officer; Dr. Cindy Yelick, Chief Administrator; and Mr. Brian Whalen, Director of Business Services.

## Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Ms. Poulter to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

## Approval of Minutes from Jan. 13, 2026

A MOTION was made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Lane to approve the minutes from Jan. 13, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

## Public Forum & Correspondence

No one from the public was present to address the Board.

## Discussion Items

### Legislative Update

Ms. Kate Walton, a lobbyist with Eide & Walton representing Iowa's AEAs, discussed the current legislative session and bills related to education. She provided notes from several of the bills that she is monitoring. The first funnel date of the legislative session will occur on Feb. 20.

- House File 2003 and Senate File 2181 would create a pilot program for the establishment of two attendance centers that would serve students needing special education services or with significant behavioral, emotional or social challenges.
- House Study Bill 636 would prohibit schools from partnering with public libraries.
- House File 2218 would require a video recording system in every special education classroom across school districts, charter schools and innovation zone schools.

### Amended 2025-26 Budget and Proposed 2026-27 Budget

Mr. Whalen discussed the Agency's amended FY2025-26 budget and proposed FY2026-27 budget. He noted the Agency's estimated growth rate of 2.35% for FY2026-27. While staff numbers are down approximately 21% from 2024, staff may be added if additional districts transition to Heartland AEA for their special education services.

### Service for Fee 2025-26 Summary

Dr. Meade reviewed district data that shows service for fee purchases from August 2025 through January 2026. Board members asked if the data shows more services being used now or before the implementation of House File 2612. Dr. Yelick shared that would be hard to quantify, as time is not tracked in the same way. It would also depend on which district you asked, as some smaller districts can no longer afford to purchase some services, and bigger districts have more flexibility with their dollars and can hire and embed their own staff.

# Board of Directors Board Meeting Minutes



Feb. 10, 2026

## Spirit Lake CSD and Heartland AEA Transfer of State Funding Contract

Dr. Yelick shared that the Spirit Lake CSD School Board approved transferring its special education state funding to Heartland AEA beginning on July 1, 2026. Since that vote, a new bill in the legislature has been introduced that could allow the district to become a pilot for an attendance center that serves students who need special education services or who have significant behavioral, emotional or social challenges. If the bill passes, the Agency may not receive any state special education dollars to serve the district. Dr. Yelick has met with the school district, and they are interested in moving forward and discussing how to cover the cost of the contract.

## Simbli Software Recommendation

Dr. Yelick shared the recommendation to purchase the Simbli software program. Simbli is a board management system that offers various modules to help facilitate meetings and automate and simplify monthly tasks.

## 2026-27 Agency Holiday Calendar

Dr. Yelick reviewed the Agency's holiday calendar for the 2026-27 academic year.

## Action Items

### Amended 2025-26 Budget and Proposed 2026-27 Budget

A MOTION was made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Holloway to approve the amended FY2025-26 budget and proposed FY2026-27 budget. The motion passed unanimously.

### Spirit Lake CSD and Heartland AEA Transfer of State Funding Contract - Tabled

A MOTION was made by Ms. Poulter and seconded by Mr. Lane to table the Spirit Lake CSD contract. The motion passed unanimously.

## Simbli Software Recommendation

A MOTION was made by Mr. Lane and seconded by Ms. Sievers to approve the Simbli software agreement. The motion passed unanimously.

## 2026-27 Agency Holiday Calendar

A MOTION was made by Mr. Huebner and seconded by Ms. Sievers to approve the Agency holiday calendar. The motion passed unanimously.

## Consent Agenda

Mr. Whalen noted that the Agency is trending positively with revenues and that expenditures are down. A MOTION was made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Mr. Lane to approve the consent agenda, including payment of warrant numbers 423416 through 423518 and electronic warrant numbers 56622 through 56958. The motion passed unanimously.

- Personnel Report (No addendum)
- Board Financial Reports
- DSM Public Schools and Heartland AEA Service Agreement (St. Joseph School)

## Chief Administrator Comments

- There were no chief administrator comments.

# Board of Directors Board Meeting Minutes



Feb. 10, 2026

## Board Comments

- Ms. Sievers thanked the Board for their work and service.

## Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Huebner and seconded by Mr. Holloway to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

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## EXEMPT SESSION

### Exempt Session – Negotiations - Section 20.17(3) of the Iowa Code

The Board entered into an exempt session as provided in Section 20.17(3) of the Iowa Code to discuss the 2026-27 negotiation session at 5:33 p.m.

The Board of Directors exited the exempt session at 5:50 p.m.

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Reports and documents and the full text of motions, resolutions or policies considered by the Board at this meeting are on file in the Board Secretary's office, (515) 473-6644, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

  
Ms. Liz Brennan  
Board President

  
Ms. Jenny Ugolini  
Board Secretary