

# NSF-backed AgTech Engine aims to make ND agricultural innovation hub

(continued from page 1)

## Project Whitewater

One program developed so far does just that. Called Project Whitewater, the effort focused on developing a product using satellite images and weather data to create daily soil moisture maps to help farmers use precision irrigation techniques on their fields.

The project first conducted a field trial last year at a farm near Oakes, with the data being used to decide when the farmer should run his irrigator and how many inches of water on specific areas of the field.

That quickly expanded to five testing spots throughout the state and off of that. Aperture Earth, the startup, was able to leverage \$3 million in venture capital funding to quickly accelerate its product.

"Now he's all over the place," Mackey said of Aperture Earth founder Dr. Zachary Kabelac, an MIT-educated engineer, who has started branching out to areas in the country like Nebraska where drought and water pressure issues are severe.

What was learned from the Oakes and other trials was that using the data for precision irrigation saves growers hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in irrigation costs and really improves profitability, Mackey said.

## Workforce development

Another critical component of what the engine hopes to do is accelerate workforce development and foster the jobs that will be on the cutting edge for the next technology wave.

That included creating a workforce team that held community events across the state, and the creation of the AgTech Workforce Innovation and Industry Center (AG-WIIC), which will be a main focus of the second phase of the engine's work over the next few years.

"What's really interesting to us is how we can invest in workforce development and rural economic development, where we put our money into communities, and then the money stays in a community and has a return on investment," Mackey said.

Both direct and indirect jobs could be spurred by increased technological development in rural areas, Gelinske said, mentioning the need for field service technicians, installers, front-line support and salespeople for these future products.

## Competitive edge

One of the most exciting aspects of the rollout of the 10 NSF tech engines across the country for Mackey so far has been how collaborative the leaders have been with each other, she said. Each Friday they gather virtually to talk

about the shared challenges and shared ideas.

"The NSF didn't design it this way, we've designed it this way," Mackey said. "When we started, we immediately stepped in and say, we're collaborators, not competitors, and we're going to build this together or we're not going to build it at all."

And while not competing against each other, initiatives like this do compete with countries across the world also attempting to advance their own cutting-edge technology programs.

For example, since 2010 one of China's core development policies has been a key strategic emerging industries program that has funneled money, research and expertise into developing industries.

"North Dakota is an ag powerhouse for this nation, and our farmers and ranchers compete globally, not just competing against China, but many other countries," Hoeven said.

Mackey sees the strategic nature of what they're building here as important for national security as well as building the next generation of great American companies.

"I think a lot of (the idea for the NSF engines) was this investment in national security, through topical areas that fit into this bucket of what we need to have a secure nation," Mackey said.

# THANK YOU



**TO THE VOTING CITIZENS OF DICKEY COUNTY FOR MARKING YOUR BALLOT TO CONFIRM THE LEADER AS YOUR OFFICIAL COUNTY NEWSPAPER!**

## ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES FOR APRIL 13, MAY 5, MAY 18 & MAY 28, 2026

### APRIL 13, 2026 MINUTES

The Ellendale Public School Board met on April 13, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. with the following board members present: Michele Thorpe, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring, Val Wagner and Cresta Miller. Others present were Jeff Ringstad, Lana Norton, Cindy Rall and Allison Radermacher.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. She welcomed visitor Pam Cook. Cards of thanks were shared from Ellendale Education Association and NASP and 4H Archery Clubs.

The consent agenda included the minutes, financial reports and bills as presented. Goehring reviewed the bills and the following bills were presented for payment:

- March Payroll DD 406-410, 7545-7609 Ck#16213-16226 \$313,319.92
- 27849 Blumhardt Chevrolet 418.51 Bus Service
- 27850 Cenex Fleetcard 4,897.81 Gas/Diesel
- 27851 Central Business Systems 429.39 Managed Print Services
- 27852 Chahinkapa Zoo 170.00 Field Trip
- 27853 Cole Papers 2,313.22 Custodial Supplies
- 27854 Comfort Inn 220.00 Lodging
- 27855 LuAnn Cooper 99.40 Mileage
- 27856 DPCU 4,549.29 Office/Custodial/Tech Supp.
- 27857 Dickey County Highway Dept 40.00 Bus Wash
- 27858 Dickey County Leader 212.28 Publishing
- 27859 DRN 1,538.75 Phone/Managed Services
- 27860 Jamie Eberle 800.00 Art Supplies
- 27861 Ellendale City of 1,765.80 Utilities
- 27862 Ellendale Grocery 443.18 FACS Supplies
- 27863 Ellendale True Value 26.63 Custodial Supplies
- 27864 EPS Activity 708.00 Meal Monies
- 27865 EPS Operations 189.73 SPIRE
- 27866 EPS School Lunch 27.25 Preschool Lunch
- 27867 Farmers Union Oil 1,546.62 Fuel/Gallon/Repair
- 27868 Great Minds PBC 105.00 Eureka Math
- 27869 Hampton Inn 440.00 Lodging
- 27870 J & M Elliot 2,700.00 March Owners Rep
- 27871 Jarman's Water Systems 288.00 Softener Rent
- 27872 Alivia Knutson 25.00 PT Conf Daycare
- 27873 LEAF 448.00 Copier/Printer Lease
- 27874 Mertz Lumber 197.36 Tech Ed Supplies
- 27875 Mission Mechanical 1,179.00 Thermostat Repair
- 27876 ND Center for Distance Ed 1,832.00 Online Coursework
- 27877 NDDTSEA 150.00 Drivers Ed Coursework
- 27878 NDESC 125.00 25-26 Membership Fee
- 27879 Olson's Pest Technicians 175.00 Monthly Service Fee
- 27880 Quadient Finance 200.00 Postage
- 27881 Quadient Leasing 174.63 Postage Meter Lease
- 27882 Region VI Music 220.00 Small Group Music Reg
- 27883 Region VI Music 105.00 Large Group Music Reg
- 27884 Simple Wolf 1,908.00 Website Update/Mainten.
- 27885 Taylor Music 35.00 Tuba Repair
- 27886 Michele Thorpe 302.95 AED Pads
- 27887 Verizon Wireless 443.15 Hot Spot Billing
- 27888 Wingate 330.00 Lodging
- 20260401 MDU 15,288.15 Electricity
- 20260401 Pitney Bowes 200.00 Postage
- 20260408 Ellendale Public Schools 253.72 eFunds Fees
- 20260410 Time Management Systems 53.55 Monthly Service Fees

**Total \$47,574.37**

It was motioned by Gilbert, seconded by Wagner to approve the items on the consent agenda. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

### EPS Spotlight:

- Eveleht H was chosen to be part of the JH All State Band and performed in Mandan
- The EHS mixed choir, girls' choir, and concert band all received a double star rating
- Congratulations to Carly K, Aubrey M, Samuel R, Eli W, and DJ W for placing 3rd at the regional Acalympics competition
- Mrs. Vance for setting up a visit for her Kindergarten class by Officers Van Zee and Poolman.

- The EPS Archery team for a successful shoot at the State Competition. Paisley H, Cooper R, Eveleht H, Harper G, Aubrey M, and Carson H all placed in their events.
- Aidyn B for competing at the State Spelling Bee
- Mrs. Gibson for her efforts in fundraising and leadership in taking 10 juniors on the Close-Up trip to NYC and Washington DC
- Aidan T (800M & 3200M), Braxton H (400M), MaCoy G (800M), Emerson M (55H & 60H), and Elijah G (60H & 200M) all broke school records in Track and Field
- Katherine P and John B participated in the All State Music concert
- Aden E and Daxton C competed in the State Mathcounts Competition
- EHS Musicians had a great day at Small Group Contest! There were 17 performances. 11 of those earned STARS and will perform at state competition in May. 5 performances earned 'Excellent', and 1 performance earned 'Good'. Of 4 possible Outstanding Performance recognitions possible at today's contest, EHS received 3! Outstanding Performance: Katherine P - vocal solo, Shaya - xylophone solo, Sinnuh Man - vocal ensemble. STAR (advance to state): Firefly - vocal duet - Katherine, Mackenzie, Neopolitan Tarantella - alto sax solo - Eli, Shenandoah - vocal duet - Shaya, John, Lascia chio Pianga - vocal solo - Shaya, The Absent Minded Woman - xylophone solo - Shaya, Pieta Signore - vocal solo - John, Erl Konig - vocal solo - Samuel, Rain Come Down - vocal ensemble - John, Samuel, Hannah L, Hannah M, Shaya, Katherine, Carly, Mackenzie, Natalee, Sinnuh Man - vocal ensemble - John, Samuel, Hannah, Natalee, Hannah M, Carly, Mackenzie, Suite for Tuba - solo - John, Che fiero costume - vocal solo - Katherine. Excellent: Will the Circle Be Unbroken - vocal ensemble - Katherine, Hannah M, Natalee, Samuel, John, To the Sky - vocal solo - Savannah, Morceau Symphonique - trombone solo - John, Musseta's Waltz from La Boheme - trumpet solo - Severin, Gia li sole dale gange - vocal solo - Mackenzie. Good: Minuet - brass ensemble - Severin, Mackenzie, John

Thank you to the Ellendale Quarterback Club for their support to the EPS athletic programs and athletes

April 1st was Paraprofessional Appreciation Day, April 22nd is Administrative Professionals Day and April 28th is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day. Thanks for all you do!

Ellendale Chamber of Commerce presented EPS with the Cultivating the Future award

The Budget & Finance and Student & Curriculum Committees shared details from the last meetings.

Ringstad reported that several grants have been submitted to support playground improvements, student devices, and exercise equipment. The SPED unit fund balance is higher than needed, and a proposal to reduce member school assessments next year is under consideration. Staffing contracts for teachers are complete, with ongoing work to adjust support staff compensation. Updates were provided on transportation, health insurance with a moderate premium increase, and OpenEd open enrollment activity showing growing interest. Additional items included an engagement survey, and efforts to increase investment income through improved banking rates.

Radermacher reported on enrollment and attendance. Behavioral Health services continue to support students. Assessment activities are ongoing this spring, with some completed and others scheduled in the coming weeks. Teacher evaluations will be finalized soon, with para evaluations to follow. The district has submitted grant applications for facility improvements. Staff have participated in recent professional development, with additional planning time focused on next year's scheduling and interventions. Summer school planning is underway, with participation goals established to support funding. She shared upcoming events.

Rall reported that driver's education planning is underway with a meeting scheduled, and both the handbook and scheduling remain in committee for review next month. The technology plan has been submitted for board action, and E-Rate applications are complete. Student activities and trainings have taken place, and a grant application supporting health initiatives has been submitted with a decision pending.

Vance provided a written report which included coach openings and spring sport participation.

Norton notified an election worker change for the June 2, 2026 school board election. Miller motioned, seconded by Goehring to approve replace Lori Mattheis with Peggy Gilbert as a clerk. On a roll call vote, all voted yes, motion carried.

Rall presented the 26-27 Technology Plan prepared by the Technology Committee. It was motioned by Goehring, seconded by Gilbert to approve the plan as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Ringstad presented a proposal for quality assurance water penetration testing and air infiltration testing of the north facing glass on the addition from Sovell. It was motioned by Goehring, seconded by Miller to approve the bid as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

EPS did not receive the Best-in-Class grant to help fund an inhouse 4-year-old preschool. Miller motioned, Goehring seconded to proceed with pursuing the program. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to approve the Business Manager evaluation as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Bid and specification information was shared for a NE parking lot, playground upgrades and equipment for the new fitness center. Discussion was held.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Miller to proceed with the parking lot in the NE corner of the school. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Gilbert to move forward with the playground updates. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to proceed purchasing the fitness equipment as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Goehring moved, seconded by Miller, to approve payment of invoices from Co-op Architecture for \$17,176.00 from the building fund as well as the Olaf Anderson Construction invoice for \$220,950.00 using loan proceeds. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Next Regular School Board Meeting is Thursday, May 14, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Since there was no other business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager  
Formally Approved by the Board

(June 25, 2026)

all voted yes. Motion carried. The school is responsible for site prep.

Miller motioned, seconded by Goehring to table action on roofing bids. Ringstad will bring bid information to the Facility and Transportation Committee once it is received.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 a.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager  
Formally Approved by the Board

(June 25, 2026)

### MAY 18, 2026 MINUTES

The Ellendale Public School Board met on May 18, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. with the following board members present: Michele Thorpe, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring, Val Wagner and Cresta Miller. Others present were Jeff Ringstad, Lana Norton, Cindy Rall, Brian Vance and Allison Radermacher.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. She welcomed visitors Pam Cook and Jason Elliot. There were no communications. Old Business a. was removed from the agenda. New Business g. Surplus Items h. Approve Furniture Purchase and i. Support Staff Wages.

The consent agenda included the minutes, financial reports and bills as presented. Miller reviewed the bills and the following bills were presented for payment:

- April Payroll DD 411-14, 7610-7673 Ck#16227-16240 \$310,595.81
- 27889 American Parks Company 152.25 Belt Seat
- 27890 Blumhardt Chevrolet 1,662.68 Service/Repairs
- 27891 Cenex Fleetcard 6,494.32 Gas & Diesel
- 27892 Central Business Systems 435.83 Managed Print Services
- 27893 Chad's Electric 750.68 Repair/Install Outlet
- 27894 Cole Papers, Inc 6,114.06 Supplies
- 27895 CREA 18,175.00 NDFSCS Services
- 27896 Dickey County Leader 357.21 Publishing
- 27897 DRN 1,537.28 Phone/Hosted Services
- 27898 Jamie Eberle 1,650.00 Artist in Residence Fee
- 27899 Ellendale City of 1,790.14 Utilities
- 27900 Ellendale Grocery 446.72 FACS Grocery
- 27901 Ellendale True Value 15.45 Supplies
- 27902 EPS Operations, LLC 471.33 SPIRE Star License
- 27903 Farmers Union Oil 37.98 DEF
- 27904 Grand Theatre 200.00 Field Trip
- 27905 Elliott Construction 6,750.00 Feb & April Owners Rep
- 27906 Johnson Controls 1,587.20 Fire Alarm Inspection
- 27907 Valerie Jordan 162.00 BARR Conf Meals
- 27908 Josten's Inc 195.05 Honor Medals/Cords
- 27909 LaQuinta 220.00 Lodging
- 27910 LEAF 448.00 Copier/Printer Lease
- 27911 Mackin 576.24 Books
- 27912 Mertz Lumber 588.63 Custodial Supplies
- 27913 Colette Middlestead 1,301.99 Tuition/Books/Meals
- 27914 Rebekah Middlestead 3.58 Supply
- 27915 Ellendale Concrete 435.00 Gravel
- 27916 Olson's Pest Technicians 175.00 Monthly Service
- 27917 Performance Oil 275.00 DEF Fluid
- 27918 Quality Inn 330.00 Lodging
- 27919 Quill Corp 5.98 Headphones
- 27920 Radisson Hotel 454.00 Lodging
- 27921 Jeffery Ringstad 792.18 Supplies/Meals/Mileage
- 27922 Sanford Health 171.00 DOT Testing Fees
- 27923 Michele Thorpe 129.50 Supplies
- 27924 USPS 370.00 Marketing Mail Fee
- 27925 Verizon Wireless 443.15 Hot Spot Billing
- 20260601 MDU 13,681.42 Electricity
- 20260504 EPS 173.38 eFund Fees
- 20260508 WSI 79.09 Assessment
- 20260510 TMS 53.55 Monthly Fee

**Total \$69,691.87**

It was motioned by Miller, seconded by Goehring to approve the items on the consent agenda. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

### EPS Spotlight:

- Samuel R receiving an honorable mention at the NSU math day challenge in Advanced Algebra
- Track and Field: Drew T for setting the

school record in shot put, and then breaking his own record multiple times and qualified for state. State Qualifiers include: Aidan T - 800M, 1600M and 3200M, Walker M - 3200M. Samuel R - Javelin, Micah - 800M, Eli - 3200M, Walker M, Eli W, Micah G & Aidan T in the 4x800 as well as Drew T in discus.

• Rick Hack for his 43 years of coaching and helping with home track meets, and all of the other volunteers

• The K-6 track day was this month.

• EPS students competing in Nationals for the NASP were BrookLynn B, Aidyn B, Ceoyne H, Eveleht H, Carson H, Carter H, Paisley H, & Harper G

• Porter G being inducted into the National Technical Honor Society

• EPS SADD members leading a courage activity

• State Music Small Group earned 9 stars and two excellent awards, they included: Vocal duet - Shaya, John - STAR, Tuba solo - John - STAR and Outstanding, Xylophone solo - Shaya - STAR, Sax solo - Eli - STAR and Outstanding, Vocal solo - Katherine - STAR, Vocal solo - Shaya - excellent, Vocal duet - Katherine, Mackenzie - STAR, Vocal solo - Samuel - STAR, Vocal solo - John - excellent, Vocal Ensemble - John, Sam, Shaya, Natalee, Mackenzie, Carly, Hannah M - STAR, Vocal Ensemble - John, Sam, Katherine, Shaya, Natalee, Mackenzie, Carly, Hannah M - STAR.

• Thank you to and all of the EPS students that participated in the day of caring.

• The twenty EPS graduating seniors - they showed leadership, caring, and respectful fun. Best wishes to them in their next life steps, they will be missed.

• Recognizing the returning Class of 1976 and 1956.

• Thank you to Applied Digital for \$50,000 grant for elementary playground updates.

• Thank you to DRN for \$2,500 Rooted & Rising grant for elementary playground updates.

• Thank you to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Caring Foundation for the \$5,000 grant to help fund the athletic equipment in our new fitness center.

The EPS Foundation, Student Affairs, Budget & Finance and Thunder Co-op shared details from the last meetings.

Ringstad reported that EPS is exploring future health insurance options with ND PHIT. Enrollment continues to grow through OpenEd. Year-end STARS testing data, Region VI Fine Arts, SRCTC, and JRSEU board materials were provided in folders and discussed. EPS is also completing its third year as a BARR school, and the administration recommends operating independently next year while continuing BARR practices.

Radermacher reported on enrollment, attendance and behavioral health services. She shared that spring assessments have been completed. The FSCS had their spring meeting to establish priorities for the 2026-27 school year. She provided staffing updates. Staff professional development continues with math intervention work, Infinite Campus end-of-year training, and CHAMPS/Tough Kids summer training for paras, while plans for summer school are underway. She shared upcoming events.

Rall reported that student scheduling is nearly complete. Students attended a presentation on school violence awareness. Additional materials in folders include the student handbook and NDCDE enrollment application. Student devices have arrived, and the district is currently gathering cost estimates for camera system replacement and expansion, as well as quotes for door security and camera systems in the new facility.

Vance reported on open coaching positions. Spring sports seasons are winding down, with the track regional meet recently completed. Golf Super Regionals will be held in Jamestown on May 26. Updates were also provided on HUDL streaming services. At the Thunder Coop meeting, ticket prices were recommended to remain the same as last year. The cooperative reported a combined loss, approximately \$8,000 more than the previous year, along with purchases of new uniforms, shoulder pads, and new helmets.

Jason Elliot provided a construction update.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to enter into an agreement with NDSC for an Active Threat Exercise to be held in August of 2026. Grant funds will help fund this training. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

The board performed a first reading of

the 26-27 High School, Elementary, and Maple River Colony Handbooks.

Ringstad presented information regarding the 2026-2027 health insurance plans through NDPHIT. Goehring moved to approve renewal of the same plan structure as the previous year, seconded by Miller. On a roll call vote, all members voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller moved to approve the construction RFP for replacement of the fuel water heater with a propane water heater, seconded by Goehring. On a roll call vote, all members voted yes. Motion carried.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to proceed purchasing the fitness equipment as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to release the 2026-2027 half time preschool teaching contract to Pam Cook as presented and approve acceptance upon signed receipt before the deadline set forth in NDCC. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Wagner to take the 26-27 Tech Support Specialist off the table.

Goehring motioned, seconded by Miller to release the 2026-2027 Tech Support Specialist contract to Brennan Hack as presented and approve acceptance upon signed receipt before the deadline set forth in NDCC. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Goehring moved, seconded by Miller, to approve payment of invoices from Co-op Architecture for \$8,588.00 from the building fund as well as the Olaf Anderson Construction invoice for \$212,765.40 using loan proceeds. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Miller moved, seconded by Wagner, to declare the Lenovo student devices surplus property and offer them for sale to their current users for \$50 each. On a roll call vote, all members voted in favor. Motion carried.

Goehring motioned, seconded by Miller to purchase kindergarten and elementary computer lab furniture out of the 25-26 budget. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Goehring to table 26-27 support staff salary increases.

Wagner motioned, seconded by Goehring to proceed with Hudl streaming services. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Special School Board Meeting, Thursday May 28, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. Next Regular School Board Meeting is Monday, June 15, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Since there was no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager  
Formally Approved by the Board

(June 25, 2026)

### MAY 28, 2026 MINUTES

The Ellendale Public School Board met in special session on at 12:00 p.m. with the following board members present: Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring, Cresta Miller, Val Wagner and Michele Thorpe. Cindy Rall was also present.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance. There were no communications or visitors.

A second reading of the 26-27 Ellendale Elementary, Maple River Colony and Ellendale High School Handbooks was performed. It was motioned by Gilbert, seconded by Miller to approve the handbooks as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Goehring to accept the social studies curriculum as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

A list of elementary surplus items was reviewed. Wagner moved, and Goehring seconded, to declare the items surplus property and authorize their sale or disposal as appropriate. A roll call vote was taken, and all members voted in favor. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Goehring to approve the NE Parking Lot bid from Waldner Sons Construction in the amount of \$136,400. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager  
Formally Approved by the Board

(June 25, 2026)