

BOE Meeting Summary – September 14, 2026

The Wellington USD 353 Board of Education began its September 14 meeting with an Education Spotlight on the high school's Aviation program.

Sarah House presented an update on the Aviation class, which is in its third year at Wellington High School. House also demonstrated the virtual reality headsets students use for hands-on training.

The class uses the Choose Aerospace curriculum, and because WHS was the first school in Kansas to adopt the program, the district has the opportunity to test the VR equipment. The headsets allow students to gain hands-on experience with lessons and equipment that are not available in the traditional classroom setting.

The board discussed the district's current policy for determining valedictorian, salutatorian and other honor students and whether any changes were needed.

One discussion centered on the current requirement that students take Advanced Placement (AP) classes to be eligible for valedictorian



or salutatorian. The board noted that the district's policy is consistent with those of most schools and elected to continue with the current policy.

The district presented preliminary enrollment numbers to the board. Official enrollment numbers will be presented at the October board meeting.

Preliminary figures indicate that enrollment continues to decline among incoming and early elementary students.

A board member requested a discussion regarding computer screen time for USD 353 students. District administrators provided information about potential policies currently being considered by the Kansas State Board of Education.

The state board is

expected to develop a plan and send it to local boards later this year. Local districts would then develop policies for implementation beginning with the 2027-28 school year.

An anonymous donor has offered to upgrade the lighting and audio system at John Gifford Stadium in Sellers Park at no cost to the district.

The project requires board approval before moving forward. The board approved the project by a 7-0 vote.

The board discussed the district's options for closing a school building, including an alternative proposal presented by RSP. State law requires the board to adopt a resolution before closing a school building.

Robert White moved to close the Washington Elementary building beginning with the 2027-28 school year and adopt Scenario Two presented by RSP. Under the proposal, students currently attending Washington Elementary would be redistricted to Lincoln Elementary.

The motion also called for

a public hearing on the proposed closure and redistricting plan on October 13 at 6 p.m. in the Wellington High School auditorium.

The motion passed 5-2, with Andrea Kreifels and Pat Zeka voting against it.

The board held several executive sessions during the meeting to discuss student placement, negotiations related to the Negotiated Agreement, and contracts and contract language for non-elected personnel.

Following the final executive session, Andrea Kreifels moved to amend the consent agenda to include approval of the administrative contracts as presented. The motion passed 7-0.

The board approved the minutes of the August 10 regular meeting, payroll totaling \$280,840.16 and bills totaling \$373,512.16.

Personnel changes approved by the board included:

New Hires

- Chloe Taylor – Para, Washington
- Brooke Gandy – District Secretary, District

- Brandon Starkey – Boys Basketball Assistant Coach, WHS
 - Sam Heasty – 7th Grade Volleyball Assistant Coach, WMS
 - Hannah Hillebrand – 8th Grade Volleyball Assistant Coach, WMS
 - Greg Willis – Custodian, WHS
 - Shawn Frost – Custodian, WMS
 - Resignations
 - Halynn Page – District Secretary, District
 - Anna Shore – Para, WMS
 - Trevor Warnock – 7th Grade Boys Basketball Assistant Coach, WMS
 - Marissa Garza – Para, Kennedy
 - Janet Brown – Fresh Start Para, WMS
 - Transfers/Position Changes
 - Molly Calloway – Substitute, District, to Psych Aide, District
- Robert White moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 6-1.

BOE Meeting Video Link: <https://youtu.be/kxLD5Z1OALY>

3D Mobile Mammography Coming to Wellington

By Laura Lombardi

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Via Christi has added an additional day for its "Hope" 3D mobile mammography unit in Wellington this October due to increased demand for the service.

The state-of-the-art breast cancer screening unit will be at Ascension Medical Group in Wellington on **October 2, 12 and 13**. Advance appointments are required. To schedule a screening or for more information, call 620-326-3301.

Early detection is one of the best defenses against breast cancer, and annual screenings are recommended for women age 40 and older. Women with a family history of breast cancer or other risk factors should talk with their physician about whether they should begin screening earlier.



Via Christi accepts Medicare, Medicaid and most private health insurance plans. Those without insurance may be eligible for no-cost screenings through a grant from the National Breast Cancer Foundation. For questions about eligibility, call 316-268-8020.

COUNCIL MEETING Continued from page 5

the Kansas-based company has approximately 50 stores and views Wellington as an important part of its expansion. Incentives would allow the company to expand more quickly and invest more in the store's remodeling. It is expected that this will generate additional sales-tax revenue through fuel, food, beverages, and other retail sales.

Council members complimented the company on improvements already visible at the property. Jump Start representatives stated renovations include rebuilding the restrooms, improving the kitchen and food-service

area, expanding cooler space, and installing new pumps and canopies. They also intend to hire locally where possible, improve staffing, and become involved with local community organizations. It is estimated that these improvements will be completed by the end of 2026. The council approved the resolution with a unanimous 6-0 vote.

An executive session consulting with an attorney for the public body or agency which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship. No binding action was taken during the executive session.

The city council meeting was adjourned.