

# Mendocino Unified School District



## MINUTES

### Regular Board Meeting

**DECEMBER 18, 2025**

**MENDOCINO HIGH SCHOOL  
10700 FORD STREET  
MENDOCINO, CA 95460**

**4:00 P.M. CLOSED SESSION – VIA TELECONFERENCE**

(Closed Session Public Hearing – link on page 2)

**5:00 P.M. OPEN SESSION – IN PERSON at MENDOCINO HIGH SCHOOL  
& VIA TELECONFERENCE**

**Please click the link below to join the webinar:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84192470148?pwd=qYkb2bbJKaYzWgO7vxEH6bpPatRaP7.1>

**Passcode: 558339**

*Please "mute" your device during the meeting.  
MUSD is not available for technical support for remote meetings.*

### **Board Priorities**

- *Develop and expand community partnerships and communication*
- *Increase learning and achievement for all students, families, and staff*
- *Plan wisely for the future while maintaining fiscal integrity*
- *Maintain and improve the physical plant*

Any writings distributed either as part of the Board packet, or within 72 hours of a meeting, can be viewed at the MUSD website at <https://www.mendocinoused.org/District/3118-2025-26-Agendas.html>. In compliance with Government Code section 54954.2(a) Mendocino Unified School District will, on request, make agendas available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with a disability, as required by Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 12132), and the federal rules and regulations adopted in implementation thereof. Individuals who need this agenda in an alternative format or who need a disability related modification or accommodation in order to participate in the meeting should contact, Erin Placido Exec. Assistant to the Superintendent, in writing at P.O. Box 1154, Mendocino, CA 95460 or via email at [doerin@mcn.org](mailto:doerin@mcn.org).

**MENDOCINO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IS PROUD TO BE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

**1. 4:00 P.M., CLOSED SESSION CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

- 1.1. Call to order and roll call

*The meeting was called to order at 4:00 P.M. Present were Trustees Bloyd, Griffen, Schaeffer, Morton and Aum.*

- 1.2. The President will verbally identify the agenda items to be discussed during closed session as listed below.

*The President verbally identified the agenda items to be discussed.*

**2. PUBLIC HEARING FOR CLOSED SESSION**

Members of the public may take this opportunity to comment on closed session agenda items per Board Policy 9322. Under the requirements of the Brown Act open meeting law, members of the community wishing to address an item on the closed session agenda may do so at this time. Items not on the agenda cannot be addressed at this time. A three-minute limit is set for each speaker on all items. The total time for public input on each item is limited to 20 minutes. (Government Code 54954.3).

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88555046144?pwd=XXm1NRyaQcGGfKvGonIKCvGGc4x6Rj.1>

Meeting ID: 885 5504 6144 Passcode: 173815

**3. CLOSED SESSION**

The Board will adjourn to closed session pursuant to Government Code 54950 - 54962.

- 3.1. Conference with labor negotiators (Govt. Code 54957.6) Agency Representative:  
Superintendent Jason Morse  
Employee organizations: CEMUS and MTA bargaining units
- 3.2. Employment/Personnel Changes
- 3.3. Conference with labor negotiator (Govt. Code 54957.6)  
Unrepresented employee: Superintendent

**4. 5:00 P.M. OPEN SESSION**

- 4.1. Call to order and roll call

*The meeting was called to order at 5:00 P.M. Present were Trustees Bloyd, Griffen, Schaeffer, Morton and Aum.*

- 4.2. Closed session disclosure

Any reportable action taken during closed session will be disclosed at this time.

*Nothing was disclosed.*

- 4.3. Approval of agenda

Items to be removed from the agenda or changes to the agenda should be done at this time.

*MSA Morton/Griffen (5/0) to approve the agenda.*

**5. PUBLIC HEARING – RESOLUTION REGARDING THE ACCOUNTING OF DEVELOPER FEES FOR THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR**

At this time, the Board will accept public comments regarding the accounting of developer fees for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

*The Public Hearing was opened at 5:00 P.M.*

*No comments were made*

*The Public Hearing was closed at 5:01 P.M.*

**6. CONSENT AGENDA**

Items on the consent agenda are passed in one motion without discussion. Any item may be pulled from the consent agenda by any member of the Board and moved to action when approving the agenda.

- 6.1. Approval of Warrants

- 6.1.1. 11/5/25, 11/12/25, 11/19/25, 11/26/25
- 6.2. Approval of Minutes
  - 6.2.1. Board Meeting Minutes: 11/20/25
- 6.3. Approval of Employment/Personnel Changes
  - 6.3.1. Hire, Temporary Categorical Employee, 0.1 FTE, effective 12/1/25 thru 6/30/26
  - 6.3.2. Increase FTE, Certificated Employee, currently working .40 FTE to .50 FTE, effective 12/1/25
- 6.4. Approval of the Current Budget Change Report
- 6.5. Approval of Student Body Reports – November 2025
- 6.6. Approval of the MUSD Quarterly Investment Report
- 6.7. Approval of the Mendocino High School Site Safety Plan
- 6.8. Approval of the K8 School Site Safety Plan
- 6.9. Approval of the Mendocino High School Single Plan for Student Achievement
- 6.10. Approval of the K8 School Single Plan for Student Achievement  
*MSA Griffen/Bloyd (5/0) to approve the consent agenda.*

## **7. REPORTS**

- 7.1. Student Trustee – Max Oatney  
*Student Trustee Oatney reported that finals week went smoothly for most. Also reported that the new tennis courts are getting a lot of use.*
- 7.2. Administrative
  - 7.2.1. Principal – Tobin Hahn  
*High School Principal, Tobin Hahn, gave the attached presentation.*
  - 7.2.2. Superintendent – Jason Morse  
*Superintendent, Jason Morse, reported that absenteeism within the district is at 22%. There are currently 416 students enrolled in the district. MTA negotiations have started and there is a shared interest in topics to discuss. The recent CTE Faire was amazing and well attended. The solar project has mobilized and a start date is January 5<sup>th</sup>.*
- 7.3. Bargaining Units
  - 7.3.1. Mendocino Unified Teachers Association (MUTA)  
*There was no MTA report.*
  - 7.3.2. Classified Employees of Mendocino Unified Schools (CEMUS)  
*There was no CEMUS report.*
- 7.4. Board Trustee Reports  
*Trustee Griffen reported that the middle school girls basketball team(s) recently traveled to Crescent City for a tournament which was a tough competition.*  
*Trustee Morton reported that he will be resigning from the Board effective June 30<sup>th</sup>.*  
*Trustee Aum thanked Trustee Morton for his commitment to the district.*

**8. TIMED ITEM 5:30 P.M. - PARENT/COMMUNITY COMMENT**

Items not on the agenda, but within the jurisdiction of this body, may be addressed at this time or be submitted to the Superintendent in writing for Board consideration as an agenda item. A three-minute limit is set for each speaker on all items. The total time for public input on each item is limited to 20 minutes (Government Code 54952). The Brown Act does not permit the Board to take action on any item that is not on the agenda. In addition, in order to protect the rights of all involved, complaints about employees should be addressed through the District complaint process. Speaking about a personnel issue at a Board meeting may prevent the Board from being able to act on it. Please see an administrator to initiate the complaint process.

The Board may briefly respond to public comments by asking questions to clarify the speaker's comments and refer the speaker to the Superintendent for further clarification. We thank you for your comments and participation at this meeting.

*Community members David King of ORCA spoke regarding soil testing. See attached.*

**9. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS****9.1. Board Organizational Meeting**

The Board is required to hold an annual organizational meeting (BB9100 attached) whereby it appoints Board representatives to various assignments and designated committees. The actions are required by law.

9.1.1. Board elections for President, Clerk, and official appointment of the Superintendent as Secretary to the Board.

9.1.2. Selection of Board Trustee appointments to committees

Previous committees which Board members have participated on have been: Board Facilities Committee (two Trustees), Board Finance Committee (two Trustees plus an alternate).

*MSA Griffen/Aum (5/0) to approve Trustee Schaeffer as President, Trustee Bloyd as Clerk, Superintendent Morse as Secretary of the Board. Facilities Committee will be made up of Trustees Aum and Bloyd. Finance Committee will be made up of Trustees Morton and Griffen with Trustees Schaeffer as alternate.*

**9.2. Mendocino High School Phase III**

The Board will discuss the small construction projects included in Phase III of the High School Modernization Project.

*The drilling for the Solar Project has been delayed due to weather. The windows and doors of the woodshop building are set to be replaced. The custodial closet, band room windows and gazebo are all scheduled to be completed.*

**9.3. MUSD First Interim Budget Report**

Business Manager, Meg Kailikole, will present the MUSD 2025-26 First Interim Budget Report to the Board for review and approval.

*MSA Morton/Aum (5/0) to approve the MUSD First Interim Budget Report.*

**9.4. Friendship Park Discussion**

The Board will discuss the future management of Friendship Park.

*Community members, Paul Katzeff, Cally Dym, Jake Barefoot and Blaze Burge all spoke regarding Friendship Park. Please see attached for details. The Board continues to honor the contract agreement already in place between MUSD and the Community Center of Mendocino.*

**9.5. K8 Playground**

The Board will discuss new playground options at the K8 School.

*MSA Griffen/Morton (4/1) to accept the playground proposal and proceed with the Burke equipment at the K8 instructing Superintendent Morse to get a couple of bids for the two demolition items and the excavation site work item and the EWF chips.*

- 9.6. Approval of Resolution 2025-16 regarding accounting of Developer Fees for Fiscal year 2024-25.

*MSA Griffen/Aum (5/0) to approve Resolution 2025-16.*

- 9.7. Board Policies, Bylaws and Administrative Regulations (first reading)

- 9.7.1. AR 2131.2: Business Manager (administration)

*MSA Schaeffer/Aum (5/0) to approve AR 2131.2 as a first reading.*

- 9.8. Board Policies, Bylaws and Administrative Regulations (information only)

- 9.8.1. BP 9270: Conflict of Interest (bylaws of the board)

## **10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Audit Report, Cafeteria Financial Report, Williams Settlement, Winter Consolidated App

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **January 15, 2026 at the Mendocino High School.**

*The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 P.M.*



# Mendocino High Schools

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Board Meeting 12/18/25

## AE Week Rollout





## CTE Winter Showcase + Fundraiser



## Basketball



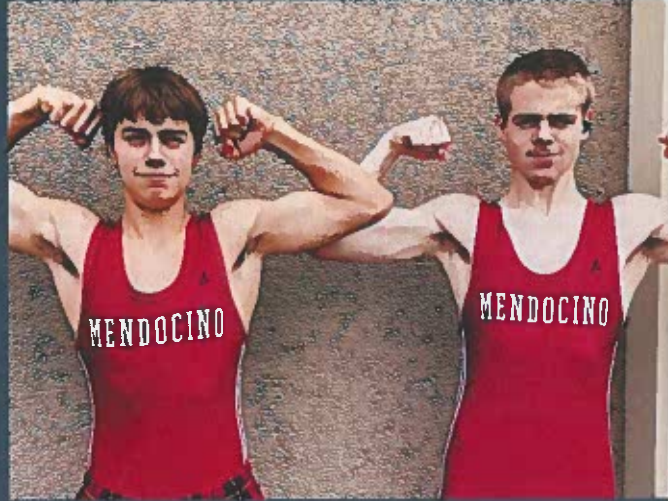
### North Central III League

Full Standings

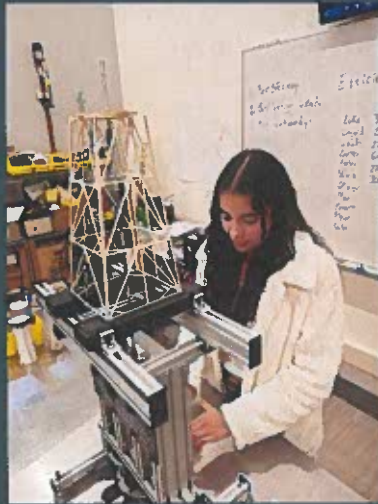
#	Team	W-L	Pct	W-L	Pct
1	Mendocino	3-0	1.000	9-3	0.750
2	Point Arena	2-0	1.000	9-4	0.429
3	Anderson Valley	2-1	0.667	5-7	0.417
#	Team	W-L	Pct	W-L	Pct
5	Grace Christian Academy	1-1	0.500	6-3	0.667
6	Mendocino	1-2	0.333	6-4	0.600
7	Tyrolles	1-3	0.250	3-4	0.556



## Wrestling - Thank You FBHS!!



## E-Lab Class



# AI Readiness and Fluency Framework Pilot

1. Select staff trained through MCOE
2. Brought back to whole staff for training
3. Pilot student-facing lessons in spring

*"AI should make you smarter, not stupider."*



## AI Readiness Framework

What Students,  
Educators and District  
Leaders need to know

## Key Domains of AI Readiness

### Domain 1: Know Your Basics

- Recognize AI Systems
- Understand the Mechanics of AI

### Domain 2: Be a Critical Thinker

- Identify and address biases
- Examine AI use and outputs
- Be continuously curious about AI's influence

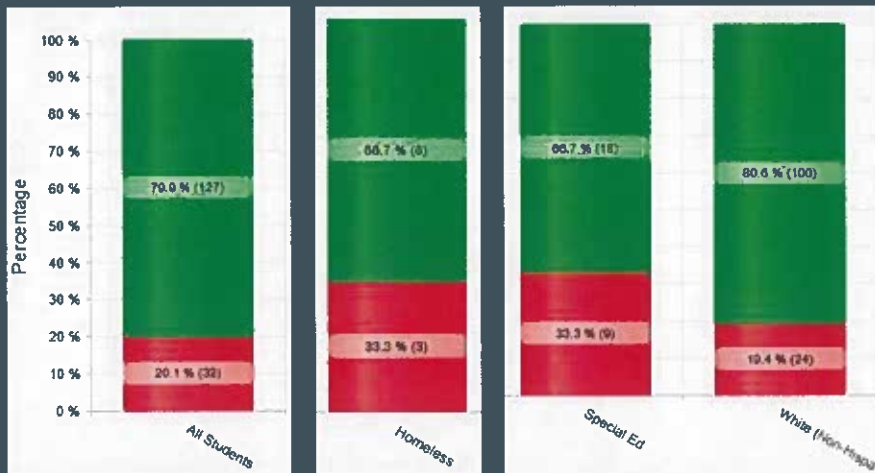
### Domain 3: Know the Human Advantage

- Be innovative and persistent in pursuit of solutions
- Synthesize interdisciplinary and AI knowledge to approach problems historically
- Leverage collaboration and self-advocacy in navigating career pathways

AI  
Literacy

AI  
Readiness

## By the Numbers - Chronic Absenteeism (state <20%)







## Cover Letter for Board Meeting Hand-Delivery

**TO:** Mendocino Unified School District Board of Trustees

**FROM:** David King, Executive Director, ORCA

**DATE:** December 18, 2025

**RE:** Hand-Delivery of Farm-to-School Safety Compliance Notice

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Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

I am hand-delivering the attached document to tonight's board meeting because previous communications regarding child safety concerns at your farm-to-school program have received no response from your administration.

### Previous Outreach Attempts

I have made multiple attempts to address these serious safety concerns with your district:

1. **Direct communication with farm program instructors** - I discussed the compliance violations I identified during my pre-apprenticeship feasibility assessment directly with the staff responsible for the programs
2. **Email communications to school administration** - I sent formal written communications outlining the safety concerns and offering assistance
3. **Email communications to the board** - I attempted to notify board members of these concerns through official channels

Despite these multiple outreach attempts, **I have received no response from anyone at Mendocino Unified School District.**

### Why I'm Hand-Delivering This Tonight

As a qualified agricultural consultant with nearly 30 years of experience in soil safety and regulatory compliance, I have legal and ethical obligations that I cannot ignore:

- **When children remain at risk and I do not act, I become personally liable for their safety**
- **California law requires professionals with knowledge of child endangerment to report to appropriate agencies**
- **My professional insurance and certifications require me to document and report violations I have witnessed**

**Your district's silence has left me with no way to know if child safety is being addressed.** I can no longer rely on the hope that my previous communications were received and are being taken seriously.





By hand-delivering this document to the board tonight, **I am creating a documented record that you have been formally notified** of these serious compliance violations and the immediate timeline for response.

## What This Document Contains

The attached letter provides detailed information about:

- The specific safety violations I identified at your High School Farm Program and grammar school site
- The legal and professional obligations that require me to act
- Three pathways you can choose for addressing these concerns
- A clear timeline with a response deadline of Friday, January 10, 2026
- The formal process that will begin (CPRA requests and agency notification) if I do not receive a response

## My Goal Remains Partnership

Despite the seriousness of these violations and the multiple attempts to engage that have been ignored, **I remain committed to helping your district achieve compliance rather than simply reporting violations to regulatory agencies.**

I believe strongly in the educational value of farm-to-school programs. I want to see your program succeed—safely and in full regulatory compliance.

However, I can no longer wait indefinitely for a response while children may be at risk. The deadline in the attached letter is firm, and the consequences of continued silence are clearly outlined.

## Immediate Next Steps

Please ensure that:

1. **Superintendent Jason Morse receives a copy of the attached letter immediately**
2. **All board members review the attached letter before your next meeting**
3. **Someone from the district contacts me by Friday, January 10, 2026** with acknowledgment and commitment to one of the three pathways outlined

## My Contact Information

I am available 7 days a week, including throughout the holiday period, to discuss these concerns and begin developing solutions:

### David King

Executive Director, ORCA (Organic Regenerative Certified Apprenticeship)

Email: [your email]

Phone: [your phone]

Website: [orca-ca.com](http://orca-ca.com) (see Farm-to-School tab for resources)

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I am placing this cover letter and the attached detailed compliance letter into the public record at tonight's board meeting. This creates documented evidence of notification and establishes the timeline for required response.

**The safety of the children in your program requires immediate attention. I am offering partnership and expertise. The choice of how to respond is yours, but response is no longer optional.**

Respectfully,

**David King**

Executive Director, ORCA

Surprise Valley Agroecology LLC

Fort Bragg, California

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**ATTACHMENT:** Detailed Letter Regarding Farm-to-School Program Compliance and Child Safety - Final Notice (7 pages)



# Letter to School Districts Regarding Farm-to-School Compliance

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**TO:**

**CC:** Mendocino Unified School District Board of Trustees

**FROM:** David King, Executive Director, ORCA (Organic Regenerative Certified Apprenticeship)

**RE:** Farm-to-School Program Compliance and Child Safety - Final Notice

**DATE:** December 18, 2025

**Mendocino Unified School District**

PO Box 1154

Mendocino, CA 95460

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Dear Superintendent Morse and Members of the Board of Trustees,  
I am hand-delivering this letter to tonight's board meeting after multiple failed attempts to engage with your district regarding serious compliance violations at the Mendocino High School Farm Program and grammar school site. Despite previous communications with program instructors, school administration, and board members offering assistance, I have received no response from your district.

## The Current Situation

**This is not my first attempt to engage with your district.** I have reached out multiple times regarding serious safety violations I identified during my pre-apprenticeship program feasibility assessment of your farm-to-school operations. Despite these previous attempts, I have received no response from your administration.

I am now providing formal notice to both Superintendent Morse and the Board of Trustees because the continued silence creates legal and ethical obligations I can no longer delay. I need to be completely transparent about my professional obligations and the immediate timeline we are now facing.

**You are not the only school district that has ignored my outreach about child safety.** During my feasibility assessments, I have identified serious violations at multiple California school farm programs. Your repeated silence, combined with the pattern I'm seeing across districts, has made it clear that I can no longer delay taking formal action to protect children.

## My Professional Responsibility

As a qualified agricultural consultant with nearly 30 years of experience in soil safety and regulatory compliance, I have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure child safety. When I identify conditions that put children at risk, I cannot simply document the problem and walk away—doing so would expose me to significant civil and criminal liability.





### **Your violations have placed me in this position:**

- When children remain at risk and I do not act, I become liable for their safety
- My professional experience and insurance obligations require me to report violations I have witnessed
- California law requires professionals with knowledge of child endangerment to report to appropriate agencies

**This is not a threat—this is the legal reality your violations have created for me as a qualified professional.**

## **What I've Identified**

The violations I documented include:

1. **Untested soil amendments** - Use of municipal/industrial waste compost without any laboratory verification of heavy metals, pathogens, or PFAS contamination
2. **No baseline testing** - Complete absence of soil and water quality testing for sites where children harvest and consume food
3. **Worker safety gaps** - OSHA compliance issues for staff and volunteers handling untested compost materials
4. **Missing documentation** - Absence of protocols across 24+ regulatory agencies with oversight of school farm-to-cafeteria programs

These are not minor paperwork issues—these are fundamental safety gaps that could expose children to heavy metals (lead, cadmium, arsenic), persistent chemicals (PFAS), and biological contamination.

## **My Commitment to Partnership**

Despite these serious concerns, **I remain committed to helping your district achieve compliance** rather than simply reporting violations. I believe strongly in the educational value of farm-to-school programs, and I want to see your program succeed—safely and in full regulatory compliance.

**However, if you do not engage, I will need to document everything formally through California Public Records Act (CPRA) requests.** CPRA is the state law that allows any person to request copies of public records from government agencies. This process will require you to provide all documents related to your farm-to-school program, which I will then use to prepare comprehensive reports for regulatory agencies. This is not a preference—this is the legally defensible documentation I need before notifying multiple state and federal agencies.

### **ORCA is offering, at no cost:**

- Guidance on which agencies need to be notified and in what order
- Templates and protocols to document your compliance pathway
- Technical assistance on soil testing, remediation options, and safety protocols
- Support in communicating with regulatory agencies constructively
- Ongoing consultation as you build robust safety systems



This represents significant donated professional time because I believe in supporting educational agriculture—but only when children's safety is the foundation.

## The Timeline

I understand that school district offices will be closed for winter break. However, this situation involves child safety and cannot wait indefinitely.

**Because child safety is at stake, I am available 7 days a week, including throughout the holiday period, to discuss these concerns and begin developing solutions.**

**I need a response from your district by Friday, January 10, 2026** (the end of your first full week back from winter break).

If I do not receive a response by this date, I will initiate formal California Public Records Act (CPRA) requests during the week of January 13, 2026 to properly document all violations before notifying regulatory agencies.

Your response should include:

1. **Acknowledgment** that you have received and reviewed this communication
2. **Commitment** to one of the following pathways:
  - **Partnership Pathway:** Work with ORCA to develop and implement a compliance plan
  - **Independent Pathway:** Engage your own qualified consultants and provide documentation of compliance progress
  - **Refusal Pathway:** Decline assistance and acknowledge that records requests and agency notification will proceed

I am not asking for complete compliance by January 10—I am asking for **immediate engagement and a clear commitment to protecting children when you return from winter break**. Building full compliance will take months of work, but that work must begin with your response during your first week back.

**However, early response is welcomed and encouraged.** You may use the holiday period to consult with counsel and prepare your response, or you may contact me immediately to begin addressing these urgent safety concerns. I am available throughout this period because child safety does not pause for holidays.

## What Happens Next

**If you engage with me by Friday, January 10, 2026 (Partnership or Independent Pathways):**

- I will work collaboratively with your team
- We will develop a realistic compliance timeline together
- I will support rather than report—giving you time to fix the problems
- Your district can address violations proactively with agency support rather than enforcement
- Children will be protected through interim safety protocols while full compliance is achieved



### **If you do not respond by Friday, January 10, 2026:**

- **Week of January 13, 2026:** I will file comprehensive California Public Records Act (CPRA) requests to document all violations
- CPRA requests are formal legal demands for all documents related to your farm-to-school program
- This includes: soil/water test results (if any), compost source documentation, safety protocols, parent communications, agency correspondence, training records, and all related materials
- Your district is legally required to respond within 10 days and provide records within 10-30 days
- **After records received (February):** I will prepare detailed reports for all relevant agencies
- **Agency notification (February/March):** California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Department of Public Health, County Environmental Health, EPA Region 9, Cal/OSHA, and others as appropriate
- Your district will face regulatory scrutiny without the benefit of a proactive compliance partner
- The liability you currently share with me will become yours alone

### **Why This Matters - Funding at Risk**

I have discovered that the compliance gaps at your district are **alarmingly common** across California school farm programs. **You are not the only school that has ignored repeated attempts to discuss these violations.** During my feasibility assessments, I identified serious safety concerns at multiple districts—which tells me this is a systemic problem that requires accountability.

But here's what makes this even more urgent:

#### **California's 2030 Climate-Smart Agriculture Mandates**

California's 2030 regulatory framework has been developed through extensive committee work and will bring substantially higher regulatory pressure to all farm-to-school programs. Districts that cannot demonstrate regenerative practices and full regulatory compliance may lose access to state funding and face increased enforcement.

#### **Federal Regenerative Agriculture Accountability**

The federal government has released its regenerative agriculture plan, and the language is clear: **there will be accountability requirements for proving farms are truly regenerative in order to access federal funds.**

This is not just about California anymore—this is about federal funding eligibility. Schools that cannot document baseline soil health, track inputs, demonstrate compliance with food safety regulations, and prove regenerative outcomes will be excluded from federal farm-to-school funding programs.

#### **The Compliance Gap is Widespread**





The violations I'm documenting aren't unique to your district—they're endemic to school farm programs across California. Many programs have relied on assumptions rather than testing, "free" compost rather than verified inputs, and tradition rather than documentation.

**That era is ending.** Both state and federal agencies are moving toward requiring proof, not promises.

**ORCA exists precisely to solve this problem.** We are training apprentices specifically to help farms and schools navigate these evolving requirements. Your program could be an early success story rather than facing enforcement while watching funding opportunities disappear.

For comprehensive resources on farm-to-school compliance, please visit: **orca-ca.com** and review our Farm-to-School tab, which provides guidance on regulatory requirements and pathways to compliance.

## A Direct Assessment

I have been in agriculture for three decades, and I know how easy it is to inherit systems that "have always been done this way" without realizing the risks involved. Municipal and industrial waste compost has been widely used in California for years, often with minimal oversight. Many people assume "organic" or "free from the county" means "safe"—but the laboratory testing tells a very different story.

**You did not create this problem**—it's endemic to school farm programs across California. I am contacting multiple districts about similar violations because this is a systemic failure, not an individual one.

However, **you do have the choice of how to respond to it.**

The districts that engage now will be positioned for the funding and support coming through California's 2030 mandates and federal regenerative agriculture programs. The districts that delay will face enforcement while watching their competitors access resources they cannot.

I am offering you expertise that my professional farming clients pay thousands of dollars to access. I am offering it for free because children are involved and because I believe effective farm-to-school programs are essential to California's agricultural future—but only if they're safe and compliant.

**This is your opportunity to lead rather than react.** But that opportunity requires action this week, not more silence.

## How to Respond

**I am hand-delivering this letter to tonight's board meeting to create a documented record of notification.** Your district's previous silence left me with no other option to ensure this critical child safety information reaches decision-makers. Please reply to this communication via email **by Friday, January 10, 2026** with:

1. Confirmation that you have received this letter



2. Identification of who in your district will be my point of contact
3. Your chosen pathway forward (Partnership, Independent, or Refusal)
4. Proposed timeline for our initial meeting or your compliance plan submission

**You do not need to wait until January to respond.** Because this involves child safety, I am available to discuss these concerns 7 days a week, including throughout the holiday break. Early engagement will allow us to begin developing solutions immediately.

**Contact Information:**

**David King, Executive Director ORCA**

Email: [your email]

Phone: [your phone]

Website: [orca-ca.com](http://orca-ca.com) (see Farm-to-School tab for resources)

**Mendocino Unified School District:**

Jason Morse, Superintendent: [jmorse@mcn.org](mailto:jmorse@mcn.org) | (707) 937-5868

If you have questions about the specific violations I documented, the agencies that will need to be notified, or the compliance pathway options, I am available to discuss by phone or video conference at your convenience.

## Closing Thoughts

Partnership is still available—but the window is closing. I would rather spend the coming months helping you build an exemplary farm-to-school program than documenting violations for regulatory agencies and CPRA responses.

I am providing you time through the holiday break to consult with legal counsel, review the violations I've documented, and make an informed decision. However, your violations and your silence prior to this letter have placed me in a position where my professional obligations can no longer be delayed beyond the first week of January.

**By hand-delivering this letter to tonight's board meeting, I am creating a documented public record that you have been formally notified of these serious child safety concerns.** If I do not hear from you by Friday, January 10, 2026, I will have no choice but to proceed with formal documentation and agency notification.

**You are not the only district facing this choice after ignoring safety concerns.** Other districts received similar notifications. Some engaged immediately and chose partnership. Others, like yours, ignored outreach and will now face enforcement and public records requests. The path forward is your choice, but the deadline is real.

**The children in your program deserve to be safe.** The funding opportunities coming in 2030 and beyond deserve programs that can prove their practices. Your district deserves better than reactive crisis management when proactive solutions are available. The next step is yours—but it must happen during your first week back from winter break.

Respectfully,

**David King**

Executive Director, ORCA



Surprise Valley Agroecology LLC  
Fort Bragg, California

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**Resources:**

- Website: **orca-ca.com** (Farm-to-School compliance tab)
- Summary of Violations Identified (available upon request)
- List of Relevant Regulatory Agencies (available upon request)
- ORCA Farm-to-School Support Services Overview (available upon request)





**Jake Barefoot**

42291 Little Lake Rd Mendocino, CA.  
(808) 870-0075

Good evening, Trustees.

The last time I spoke here, I said a few things that ruffled some feathers about how I thought Friendship Park could be used safely. It became clear in hindsight that I shared personal opinions about what could be done there without causing damage. To be clear, I'm not a professional in athletic field safety analysis or turf management, and it was inappropriate for me to make statements that could be misinterpreted. That was not my intent. I've been told that some people connected to the circus were very offended by what I said, which is understandable, and I want to say clearly: if I could go back and explain the answer to that question differently, I would. So I wanted to formally apologize for that.

Now that we are past that, I want to focus on the future.

The same underlying concerns about the park still exist—and it's why I'm back tonight.

The fundamental questions that were brought up last spring still haven't been clearly answered: as parents and community members, we need to know what the district's plan is to ensure this field is safe for youth athletics?

We actually want to see the park repaired so much that we lead the charge on the initial repairs and even tried to take it to the next step.

During the offseason, our group wanted to see progress so urgently that we went through great lengths to build a plan to be able to self fund it to do it ourselves—which, in hindsight, may not have been the right approach.

Going through the recommended channels and negotiating with CCM to pursue a sublease so we could take on a more formal stewardship role have reached a dead end and burned up months of time.

The field's conditions still are still essentially in the same place as when this all started.

We're still wanting to volunteer to help but we cannot be the ones to lead the charge so we're requesting assistance from the district.

Through conversations with CCM, it has become clear that there may not be a consistently used, district-approved check-in/check-out process for this facility to ensure conditions are maintained to a safe standard—they have been asking me about what they should do for a process, and that's concerning.



If those procedures exist, myself and other in the community would appreciate clarity on what they are. If they don't, it seems like something that should be developed by a field safety professional, and then reviewed and approved by the district.

I want to be on the record about this: safety has to be prioritized at this facility. There has been a lot of uncertainty and speculation in the community about the condition of the field and what "safe" means. The definition of a "safe field" shouldn't be a matter of opinion. The cleanest way to remove opinions and speculation from the conversation is to bring in an independent, non-biased third-party field and turf specialist to assess current conditions, establish clear safety standards, and recommend best practices moving forward.

That assessment should also address how events—like the circus—can operate at the park without compromising turf safety, creating hazards for kids, or causing damage that leads to repairs significant enough to take the field out of service for its original purpose.

The circus is a valued community event. I personally think it's great, I've attended it multiple times in the past and I'd love to see it come to town more than once a year.

The question isn't whether it belongs here—the question is what the safe operating requirements are, who is responsible for enforcing them, and how we ensure the field remains safe for kids.

If professional guidance shows that Friendship Park isn't the right place for the circus because of safety reasons or conflicts with repair schedules, then I would like to see the school board and the community work together to identify an alternative location in the village so the circus can continue to operate without their schedule being interrupted.

During conversations it sounds like the school district has other property that could work for their use so I hope that the board can realize their powers with that and the narrative that somehow a restoration of Friendship Park would drive the circus away will be stopped.

Whatever the board decides to do I hope these points are considered when making that decision.

Before I'm done I have one more thing to note.

I want to put an additional issue on the record that I was recently made aware of.

The spread of the yellow flowers across the field is concerning. I'm not a botanist, but it has been brought to my attention that the presence and extent of this daisy infestation could be associated with dangerous underlying turf and soil problems that may affect safe athletic use.

If that is the case, and a professional recommends that they need to be removed and the underlying issues need to be addressed, at the scale we're seeing, that appears to be beyond what a volunteer group like ours can responsibly tackle.



It's the kind of work that requires a high level of quality to ensure the problem does not return and should be guided by a turf professional so it can be fixed correctly and returned to service quickly, at a truly safe standard.

I'm really hoping that the district can coordinate an independent third-party field and turf safety evaluation, share the results publicly, and use those findings to guide the operating procedures and maintenance schedule going forward.

I really don't think this kind of safety issue is anything we should be guessing about.

Thank you.



**From:** blaze birge blazebirge@flynncreekcircus.com

**Subject:** Re: Lease use of Friendship Park

**Date:** December 15, 2025 at 11:56 AM

**To:** Jason Morse jmorse@mcn.org, waum@mendocinoused.org, mark@mcn.org, mbloyd@mendocinoused.org, egriffen@mendocinoused.org, michael@mcn.org



Hello again board members,  
I apologize for a small typo in section 3. Here is the letter without the grammar issue.

## **Why the Circus Should Retain Its annual event at Friendship Park**

Friendship Park is not merely a field; it is a living civic space shaped by memory, care, and shared responsibility. The question before the community is not whether baseball matters or whether restoration is needed—both are true. The real question is whether preserving Friendship Park's future requires excluding a long-standing cultural institution that has demonstrably served Mendocino's community, youth, and economy for over a decade. The evidence suggests it does not.

### **1. Friendship Park's Core Value Is Community, Not Exclusivity**

The Legacy Foundation's deeply personal interest reminds us why Friendship Park exists at all: it is a place where relationships are formed, support networks grow, and people show up for one another in moments of joy and hardship. That same principle underpins the Circus's presence.

For more than ten years, the Circus has contributed a shared experience that has a year round, positive impact for residents at large. Flynn Creek Circus is home grown in Mendocino County, exporting Mendocino culture and arts to communities through multiple states.

The Circus does not replace baseball; it activates the park in a way that reflects the same values the Legacy Foundation describes: connection, care, and continuity across generations.

To remove the Circus would be to narrow Friendship Park's mission at the very moment the community is asking it to do more and marginalize the growing sector of performing arts excellence in Mendocino.

### **2. Claims of Damage operate under a false narrative of blame and Do Not Justify Termination**

It is undisputed that the irrigation system at Friendship Park has been compromised. What *is* disputed is the cause and circumstance. The Legacy Foundation claims that the Community Center failed to prioritize baseball. However, there is more than a 13 years of





drift from baseball that was neither caused by or perpetuated by CCM. Drought, funding and staffing shortfalls, community interest and changing demographics are factors at play.

- The irrigation system ceased being actively used years ago due to drought.
- Irrigation lines stopped being flagged, removing the Circus's ability to avoid them.
- When a line was struck in the past, the Circus paid for repairs promptly.
- The Circus contract explicitly requires flagged irrigation lines to assign liability—a standard, reasonable provision.

In fifteen years of touring multiple ballparks, the Circus has struck irrigation lines only twice, both times unmarked. This is not a pattern of negligence. It is evidence of systemic shift in priorities and allocation of resources due to real changes in circumstance.

Re-establishing clear check-in/check-out procedures, documentation, and marking systems would remedy this going forward. The Legacy Foundation wants to bring baseball back into focus. This can be done without sacrificing the current events at the park.

### **3. The Circus Provides Measurable, Proven Community Benefit**

The Legacy Foundation has repeatedly asked why the circus can't just move to another park. Unlike proposed future uses, the Circus brings documented impact:

- **1,800–3,200 attendees** over two weeks
- **62–76% visitors from out of town**, directly supporting local businesses
- **30–70 local youth served** through workshops, with **30% receiving scholarships**
- **Over 20 years of professional event management and promotion experience**
  - **leveraged to bring success to the event**
- **Partnerships with multiple, local nonprofit organizations**

These are not aspirations; they are metrics.

The first time Flynn Creek Circus performed in Friendship Park over this holiday was circa 2004 (without a tent). The Circus has become a July 4th tradition that many families plan their visits around. Removing it risks immediate economic and cultural loss in exchange for speculative future gains.

### **4. Restoration and the Circus Are Not Mutually Exclusive**

Both parties repeatedly state a shared goal: restoration, accountability, and respect for Friendship Park.

The Circus has explicitly agreed to:

- Avoid marked irrigation



- Pay for any verified damage it causes
- Reduce vehicle impact
- Collaborate on protective measures such as weight distribution, ground protection, or fixed stake solutions
- Participate in solution-oriented dialogue

This is cooperation.

## **5. Removing the Circus Risks Replacing Collaboration With Division**

The Circus has publicly engaged in civil discourse with the Legacy Foundation's leader, Jake Barefoot.. It has repeatedly asked for direct communication and collaborative planning.

Terminating the Circus's annual event over the July 4th holiday would signal that long-standing community partners can be displaced without exhausting cooperative solutions—an outcome at odds with the very spirit of Friendship Park and will be met with strong opposition.

## **Conclusion**

Friendship Park can—and should—support baseball, arts, youth programs, and cultural traditions. Retaining the Circus does not prevent restoration; it strengthens the case for responsible, transparent management that benefits *all* users.

The choice is not between baseball and the Circus.

Keeping the Circus at Friendship Park honors the park's history, serves its present community, and models the cooperative future Mendocino deserves.



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