



**July 1, 2008** – Anita Micich begins working as Mason City's superintendent.

**April 13, 2009** – School Board approves \$2 million in general fund spending reductions for 2009-10.

**April 12, 2010** – School Board approves \$2.2 million in general fund spending reductions for 2010-11. As a result, 45 paraprofessional positions are eliminated.

**July 1, 2010** – Mason City begins sharing Micich with Clear Lake. Both districts cite budgetary concerns, and Clear Lake says it's unable to find a suitable superintendent candidate.

**April 18, 2011** – School Board approves \$1.9 million in general fund spending reductions for 2011-12. School staff plan cost-cutting measures for the majority of reductions.

**Sept. 13, 2011** – Scott Warren elected to School Board.

**May 6, 2013** – Proposed reductions of middle and high school coaching positions are rescinded. The School Board planned to reduce general fund spending by \$1.1 million for the 2013-14 school year.



**Sept. 10, 2013** – Voters pass instructional support and physical plant and equipment levies; **Janna Arndt** elected to School Board.

**April 21, 2014** – School Board approves cutting \$3.2 million in general fund spending for 2014-15, mainly through staff reductions and attrition.

**May 5, 2014** – Citing budget cuts, Superintendent Anita Micich brings recommendation to consider terminating Athletic Director Bob Kenny's contract, the first step in laying off an administrator. Students, staff and community members pack the boardroom, asking board members to reconsider. They vote 7-0 not to consider terminating Kenny's contract.

**May 10, 2014** – Citizens for the Future of MC Schools page formed on Facebook; still active as of June 2016 with 731 "likes." Says: "We deserve a better option for our schools, students and teachers."

**May 12, 2014 – Arndt** during a work session targets administrator pay, particularly Micich, then-eighth-highest compensated superintendent in the state, and then-CFO Ramona Jeffrey, who at the time was the highest-paid school business manager in the state. District administrators had accepted a salary freeze for 2014-15.



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**March 2015** – Email communication begins between Tom Pinkham, International Education Management Corp., and Micich regarding a Chinese



exchange program.

**Sept. 1, 2015** – School Board goes into 66-minute closed session for Micich's evaluation. Micich is offered a shortened, two-year contract in subsequent open session that does not automatically renew. Then-board president Mark Dodd said the decision allowed the incoming board "maximum flexibility."



**Sept. 8, 2015** – Five new members – Paul DeRoy, **Lorrie Lala** (left), Brent Seaton, Doug Campbell and **Jodi Draper** (right) – are elected to the School Board. DeRoy had been appointed earlier in the year to fill a vacancy. **Janna Arndt** elected as president; **Lala** as vice president.

**Dec. 15, 2015** – Micich and Lala sign a superintendent professional development plan, which is used in Micich's evaluation process.

**Dec. 16, 2015** – Clear Lake discontinues sharing agreement with Micich, citing the need for a full-time superintendent.

**Dec. 21, 2015** – School Board goes into 45-minute closed session for Micich's semiannual evaluation.

**March 10, 2016** – Micich in an email to Pinkham sends a signed letter of intent on district stationery. The letter says the district has an agreement with IEMC to place Chinese students at Mason City High School. It also says the company is authorized to recruit Chinese students and that the district will accept qualified individuals in August 2016. A non-binding memorandum of agreement outlines the program in depth.

**March 21, 2016** – Micich gives presentation on Chinese exchange program during School Board meeting. Board members go into closed session for 1 hour, 40 minutes for superintendent evaluation.

**March 22, 2016** – Micich speaks favorably about Prestage project during a special Mason City Council session, saying it was a "big, big boost for the community."

**March 23, 2016** – Draper sends follow-up email asking Micich why Mason City Schools' logo and photos are showing up on Pinkham's website, which also lists the district as a "partner school" for its Chinese exchange program. Draper asks who gave the company permission to do so.

**March 23, 2016** – Lala via email to Arndt requests "closed session to discuss terminating the superintendent's contract due to her continued insubordination" of board members.

**March 24, 2016** – Mason City removed as partner school from Chinese exchange program's website. Micich claims photos and the district's logo were used without permission.

**March 24, 2016** – Micich notifies Pinkham via email the district will not be moving forward with the Chinese exchange program.

**March 29, 2016** – School Board goes into closed session for 2 hours, 8 minutes for a personnel evaluation. It's unclear if the meeting was about Micich, who was told via email not to attend.

**April 14, 2016** – School Board goes into 48-minute closed session for a personnel evaluation for an unknown employee. Board members also voted 6-1 to end involvement with the Chinese exchange program.

**April 20, 2016** – Micich quoted in Globe Gazette article regarding Prestage plant and its proposal to give the district \$1.4 million over 10 years: "While I cannot speak for the board, from my perspective this is a wonderful commitment from Prestage Foods that shows their desire to be an important community partner. These funds will assist the schools in our planning and preparation for new students and any challenges that may bring."

**April 21, 2016** – Seaton via email to Mayor and City Council members says Micich's comments regarding Prestage "does not reflect the opinion of the School board and by definition, does not reflect the official opinion of the Mason City Community Public Schools."

**April 28, 2016** – Lala in email to Micich says "the board instructed you to run communication concerning this matter (Prestage) through the Board of Education prior to sending it to anyone else." Micich and business manager John Berg had been compiling financial projections related to the processing plant.

**May 4, 2016** – School Board goes into closed session for 1 hour, 36 minutes regarding imminent or ongoing litigation for an unknown issue. A May 4 letter to board members from attorney Jim Hanks says he believes terminating Micich's contract is "highly likely to result in litigation" and the board may hold a closed session to discuss said termination.

**May 6, 2016** – Lala via email to all board members directs "no comment" to local media on internal board business. "I'm concerned this will harm our chances of the buyout being successful," Lala wrote.

**May 9, 2016** – School Board meets in a closed session 1 hour, 16 minutes regarding imminent or ongoing litigation for an unknown issue.

**May 11, 2016** – School Board approves settlement package for Micich.



**June 6, 2016** – Micich placed on paid administrative leave through June 29 per settlement agreement; **Mike Pencz**, executive director for learning supports and PK-4 programs, named interim superintendent for one year.

**June 30, 2016** – Micich's last day with Clear Lake, per sharing agreement.

**ON CLOSED MEETINGS** – Iowa Code permits school boards to have closed sessions for a variety of reasons, including employee evaluations and lawsuits/imminent lawsuits. Before voting to close the meeting, the board must cite a specific section of Iowa Code. Any action must be made in open session.

**ON BUDGET CUTS** – Throughout the years, school officials have maintained low state aid, across-the-board cuts, declining enrollment and increased special education costs are contributing factors in general fund spending reductions. A district's general fund primarily pays for teacher salaries.

Source: Globe Gazette archives, Mason City School Board agendas/minutes, School Board/district employee emails obtained through open records requests, Mason City Council minutes.

– Compiled by Ashley Miller and Meredith Colias