

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD April 8, 2024**
4

5 A duly called Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Great Falls Public
6 Schools was held at the District Offices Building, 1100 4th Street South, on the 8th day of
7 April 2024.

8
9 **ROLL CALL:** Brian Patrick took roll call.

10
11 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson – Chairperson
12 Kim Skornogoski – Vice Chairperson
13 Bill Bronson
14 Mark Finnicum
15 Amie Thompson
16 Paige Turoski
17

18 **Trustee Absent:** Marlee Sunchild – Excused
19

20 **Others Present:** Tom Moore, Superintendent; Brian Patrick, Director of Business
21 Operations; Lance Boyd, Heather Hoyer, and Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Directors
22 for Student Achievement; Luke Diekhans, Director of Human Resources; Tom Hering,
23 Director of Technology; and Stephanie Becker, Great Falls Public Schools Foundation
24 Director.
25

26 Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association President.
27

28 At 5:31 p.m., Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
29 Trustees and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.
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31

32 **ADOPT AGENDA**
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34 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to adopt the
35 agenda as presented.
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38 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**
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40 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to
41 approve the Consent Agenda as presented.
42

43 **A. Minutes of the March 25, 2024, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved the
44 minutes of the March 25, 2024, Regular Board Meeting as presented.
45

46 **B. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.
47

48 **C. Good Apple Awards** – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple
49 Awards for Marcy Kilpatrick, Scheduling Technician, Charles M. Russell High School;

1 Lindsey Gustafson, Health Enhancement Teacher, Charles M. Russell High School; and
2 Destini Johnson, Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT), Lewis and
3 Clark Elementary School.

4
5 **D. Montana School Bus Drivers Certificate – OPI TR-35** – The Board approved the
6 Montana School Bus Drivers Certificate – OPI TR-35 for the individual listed in the
7 agenda.

8
9 **E. Transitional Kindergarten Student Attendance Agreements at the Early**
10 **Learning Family Center for the 2023-2024 School Year** – The Board approved the
11 students listed in the agenda to attend the Early Learning Family Center for the 2023-
12 2024 school year due to exceptional circumstances per Board Policy 3100.

13
14 **F. Incoming Student Attendance Agreement for the 2023-2024 School Year** – The
15 Board approved the incoming student attendance agreement for the 2023-2024 school
16 year for the student listed in the agenda. Tuition will be paid for by the District of
17 Residence.

18
19 **G. Incoming Student Attendance Agreements for the 2024-2025 School Year** – The
20 Board approved the incoming student attendance agreements for the 2024-2025 school
21 year for the students listed in the agenda. Tuition will be paid for by the District of
22 Residence.

23
24 **H. Great Falls High School Travel Request to DECA National Conference in**
25 **Anaheim, CA April 27-May 1, 2024** – The Board approved Great Falls High School
26 DECA students' travel request to Anaheim, CA April 27-May 1, 2024 for the DECA
27 National Conference.

28
29 **I. Great Falls High School JROTC Archery Team Travel Request to National**
30 **Archery Tournament in Salt Lake City, Utah April 24-27, 2024** – The Board
31 approved the GFHS JROTC Archery Team travel request to Utah April 24-27, 2024 for
32 the Western National Archery Tournament.

33
34 **J. Great Falls Public Schools Archery Team Travel Request to the National**
35 **Archery Tournament in Salt Lake City, Utah April 25-27, 2024** – The Board
36 approved the GFPS Archery Team travel request to Salt Lake City, Utah April 25-27,
37 2024 for the National Archery Tournament.

38
39 **K. Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) Jobs for Montana's Graduates (JMG)**
40 **Field Trip Travel Request to Helena April 23-25, 2024** – The Board approved the field
41 trip travel request for PGEC JMG students to Helena, MT April 23-25, 2024.

42
43 **L. Updated 2024 Election Count Judges** – The Board approved the new list of
44 election count judges for the May 7, 2024 mail ballot election as presented.

45
46
47 **COMMUNICATION**

48
49 **A. Student Representatives Report**

1 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Seth Royer, Brooklyn Griffin,
2 and Ryan Harrington reported students learned how to use food processors when
3 making pizza and ice cream in Mrs. Kessner's culinary class. They also learned about
4 leg muscles while enduring a strenuous leg workout in Mr. Napierala's weight training
5 class. Freshman English classes embarked on a non-traditional way of learning,
6 inspired by "The Lord of the Flies", as they had to collaborate and construct a tall
7 structure using only resources they had available in class.

8 Student Representative Ryan Harrington was congratulated by his peers for competing
9 in a national running competition in California and breaking a 1965 school record held
10 by Branch Brady. Congratulations were also extended to four students on the Health
11 Occupation Students of America (HOSA) team who placed in the top two at their State
12 Leadership Convention.

13 A remote day of learning will be held on April 9th to accommodate the ACT and Pre-ACT
14 tests being administered to all Juniors and any Sophomores who elect to take the exam.
15 Student groups from GFHS helped lead East Middle School in a spring pep assembly to
16 teach them about school traditions and Bison Pride before entering high school.

17 Several students from both Great Falls High and Charles M. Russell High School had
18 the opportunity to meet various speakers from local business, D.A Davidson, as they
19 participated in the fourth annual "Business for a Day" event. Some students received
20 internship offers, creating an invaluable experience for students wishing to further their
21 educational career.

22 Despite poor weather conditions and cancellations, several spring sport athletes have
23 already qualified for state competition. Several athletes have signed to continue their
24 athletic careers with various colleges, adding to a long list of Bison student athletes who
25 will be competing collegiately.

26 Fifteen students were selected for the Excellence in Education honor. In May, a
27 ceremony will be held where each student will be recognizing two teachers who have
28 made significant impacts on his/her educational career.

29
30 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representatives Karsynn Kidrick and
31 Mona Marceau reported on class projects in English, Social Studies, and Art. English
32 students read "Flight", the story of a boy who struggled with feelings of extreme shame
33 and alienation and had to endure one negative foster experience after another. They
34 are looking forward to the next literature they will read, "The Outsiders". Students had
35 the opportunity to earn unit credits by attending a team-taught seminar. This is a
36 seminar held once a month where students get to taste foods from a certain country,
37 learn the historical background, research famous inventions that were invented in that
38 country, and play a game of trivia. Art classes have been enjoying sneaker design,
39 glass making, jewelry making, and figurine sculpting.

40 Students highlighted April "I Am Paris" award recipients Brandon Lawrence and Grayce
41 Zent.

42 The latest installment of "Lunch with a Professional" featured Pricilla Zander, Workforce
43 Manager for the Continuing Education and Training Department at Great Falls College
44 MSU. Students were given an opportunity to visit Ms. Zander's site at the college and
45 participate in the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training simulator – which was a
46 highlight of their visit.

47 The students extended good luck wishes to seven students who will be attending the
48 Jobs for Montana's Graduates (JMG) *IGNITE!* State Conference that will be held in
49 Helena later in April.

1
2 Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Lilli Skaer and
3 Emmerson Hamma reported lessons that students recently enjoyed were Mrs. Virt's
4 Emergency Medical Training (EMT) – Basic class, where students learned the skill of
5 back boarding; Honors Anatomy and Physiology, students dissected sheep brains; and
6 Spanish, where students were given the opportunity to play *Duolingo* to practice their
7 world language skills.

8 Students invited everyone to view the student artwork on display in the Seltzer Gallery
9 at CMR and also to the Spring Drama Production of "The End of the World with Prom to
10 Follow" taking place April 25-27.

11 The students highlighted individuals who won the Skills USA State Carpentry
12 Championship, placed second in the Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics
13 (MCTM) math contest, won the interior design board challenge for the High School
14 House, and Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) members who brought
15 home eighteen gold medals, eight silver medals, and nine bronze medals from the State
16 Leadership Conference in Billings.

17 Students thanked D.A. Davidson for hosting "Business for a Day".

18 Spring athletes have been busy competing in their various events, with several track
19 athletes already qualifying for the state meet with their performances.

20 Key Club returned from their district convention and completed a service project filling
21 duffel bags with clothes and hygiene products for teens moving into foster care.

22 Seniors are excited to prepare for the end-of-the-year activities, including the Senior
23 Talent Show. Students congratulated Kaden Herold, Malmstrom Air Force Base and
24 Montana Military Youth of the Year.

25 26 **B. Superintendent's Report**

27 Superintendent Moore thanked the students for their continued board reports, stating he
28 knows they are extremely busy.

29 High School House students, along with instructor, Pete Pace, and Grizz Biz students
30 were busy this past weekend at the annual Home and Garden Show. Superintendent
31 Moore stated he was proud of the community support extended to our Career and
32 Technical Education (CTE) students. The community has a history of donating
33 materials and purchasing products made by GFPS students. The Home and Garden
34 Show serves as the biggest fundraiser for both entities. The shed, built by High School
35 House students, was raffled off and the winner was Jeff Davis of Great Falls.

36 Superintendent Moore congratulated GFPS teacher Katie Sanders and
37 Paraprofessional Jennifer Tucker for being awarded the Paraeducator/Teacher Team
38 Award at the Montana Council for Exceptional Children Conference in Missoula.

39 Superintendent Moore thanked members of the 741st Military Security Forces at
40 Malmstrom Air Force Base who have volunteered to help in literacy classes at Chief
41 Joseph Elementary School. They have completed training and will begin in the
42 classrooms after background checks have been completed. He reminded everyone to
43 wear purple on April 18th to show support for our military-connected families at GFPS
44 and invited everyone to attend the Purple Star Recognition event at CMR High School
45 at 3:00 p.m., where several GFPS employees will be honored.

46 Superintendent Moore provided a brief update on the CORE School. Parent meetings
47 were held last week to learn how to enroll. There was a hearing before a Helena judge
48 today regarding the dispute surrounding who oversees the opening of the schools – the
49 Montana Board of Public Education or the Office of Public Instruction. Superintendent

1 Moore assured everyone that the CORE school will open regardless of the outcome and
2 the District will comply with all statutory regulations. He will keep the Board and
3 community updated as more information is received. Executive Director Jackie
4 Mainwaring reported that staffing for the CORE School is complete, with the possibility
5 of hiring one more Special Education teacher this spring. She stated the lottery process
6 of student selection is not on a first-come, first-served basis. Everyone who applies
7 within the time frame has an equal opportunity of receiving a spot. Trustee Skornogoski
8 inquired about the possibility of adding an additional class at a younger grade level if
9 there were a significantly higher number of younger students applying than upper
10 grades. Mrs. Mainwaring stated she would review the question with the advisory panel
11 and report back. Trustee Finnicum stated he attended a parent session and thanked
12 Mrs. Mainwaring and her team for their continued hard work.

13 Superintendent Moore initiated a discussion regarding social media activity that was
14 brought to his attention. A question was presented on social media: "Why is GFPS
15 losing services while at the same time increasing total employment?" Superintendent
16 Moore provided data obtained from GFPS for use in comparison to the information
17 being presented on social media. He explained that on any given day, numbers of how
18 many employees GFPS has fluctuates. He encouraged everyone to review data and
19 seek answers from GFPS Administration to any questions that arise.

20 Superintendent Moore discussed another social media post regarding a GFPS
21 Executive Director serving on the board of Peace Place. He explained that Peace Place
22 provides services per Individual Education Plans (IEP) for GFPS students. GFPS
23 partners with several organizations and Superintendent Moore provided a list of
24 community boards that all Cabinet members have served on or are current members.
25 These organizations actively recruit GFPS Cabinet members and staff due to the
26 relationships and knowledge formed with the youth of Great Falls. GFPS administrators
27 have a compelling mission to serve students. All relationships with various
28 organizations are governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Code of
29 Ethics. When serving on other boards, should a conflict of interest arise, the GFPS
30 employee should recuse themselves. Superintendent Moore asked the Board of
31 Directors if they had any concerns they would like to address.

32 Chairperson Johnson stated there would be an open forum to discuss the issue.
33 Trustee Bronson said he would be shocked if Cabinet was not participating in these
34 organizations. It is a reasonable expectation. He added that memorandums state that
35 Superintendents will serve on boards because they provide insight on what is
36 happening with young people in schools. He commented that all matters are reviewed
37 by auditors and if anything unusual had come up, auditors would have brought it to the
38 Board's attention. GFPS has had clean audits for many years.

39 Trustees Thompson, Skornogoski, Finnicum, and Turoski all commended school district
40 employees for serving on various Board of Directors. District employees are true
41 servant leaders, and it is critical to have relationships between schools and the
42 organizations. A significant amount of volunteer hours is given by each Cabinet
43 member to the various organizations and that adds value to both the District and the
44 community. Trustee Turoski stated that Cabinet members bring unique perspectives to
45 boards because they communicate with all employees and students.

46 Chairperson Johnson stated the success of organizations depends on the passion of
47 the members involved. He agreed with Trustee Bronson that serving on Boards is an
48 obligation. He suggested that the Administration continue to serve.

1 Superintendent Moore concluded by stating that Executive Director Boyd is responsible
2 for reporting tens of millions of dollars through audits. He stated the public is
3 encouraged to come in and review data to obtain facts.

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5 **C. Audience Communication – None.**

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8 **ACTION ITEMS**

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10 **A. Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured Teachers –** Director of Human Resources, Luke
11 Diekhans, provided an addendum to the trustees summarizing four teachers being
12 recommended for contract non-renewal at the end of the current school year.

13
14 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
15 contract non-renewals of the four teachers listed in the addendum.

16
17 **B. Amended Contract with the Cascade County Elections Department to Conduct**
18 **School Elections –** Director of Business Operations, Brian Patrick, explained that the
19 2024-2025 contract with the Cascade County Elections Department was approved by
20 the Board on January 8, 2024. Provision number nine was amended to include “County
21 will, upon request, provide the lists of registered voters at District expense.”

22
23 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to approve
24 the amended contract with the Cascade County Elections Department to run the
25 elections for the Great Falls Public School Districts 1 and A during the 2024-2025
26 school year.

27
28 Audience member, Mrs. Mortenson, commented there has been serious scrutiny of the
29 election process and irregularities with the election’s administrator. Mr. Patrick
30 explained that GFPS has experienced no problems with the current process.

31
32 **C. Agreement with Cascade County to Continue the Establishment of School**
33 **District Investment Accounts –** Director of Business Operations, Brian Patrick,
34 provided a letter from the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and an agreement with
35 Cascade County that authorizes GFPS to continue the use of investment accounts in
36 accordance with the agreement. GFPS has operated in this manner since September
37 2001; however, an agreement that contains an automatic renewal provision must be
38 reviewed and reauthorized by both parties at least every five years.

39
40 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson and Mark Finnicum, passed
41 unanimously to approve the agreement with Cascade County to continue the
42 establishment of school district investments accounts until June 30, 2029 as presented.

43
44 **D. Second Reading of Revised Board Policies 3431, 3600P, and 3600R –**
45 Superintendent Moore stated there have been no questions or recommendations for
46 changes to policies 3431 and 3600P since the first reading of policies at the March 25,
47 2024 Board Meeting. Policy 3600R was updated with current legal references but
48 verbiage in the policy remained the same.

49

1 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
2 revised Board policies 3431 and 3600P as presented, and 3600R as amended.
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5 **ACTION: OTHER**

6 There were no items extracted from the Consent Agenda to discuss.
7

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9 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**
10

11 **A. Report to the Board of Trustees Class of 2023 Graduation and Dropout Rates –**
12 Executive Director for Student Achievement, Heather Hoyer, stated the annual report
13 usually comes in November but information was not received until March this year. Mrs.
14 Hoyer explained in detail the definitions of what a dropout is, the completion rate, fifth
15 year seniors, and GFPS graduation requirements. She presented data to the Board
16 that included types of diplomas earned, State and District graduation rates (cohort),
17 GFPS dropout rates, completion rates, rates by ethnicity, class AA comparisons,
18 interventions, and early college going rates. She stated the overall graduation rate has
19 been relatively flat. In 2023, 116 students were considered dropouts; however, sixteen
20 remained enrolled and just needed extra time to complete their diploma. There was
21 almost a twenty percent drop in the graduation rate among homeless students, which
22 was attributed to an impact of the COVID years. Mrs. Hoyer stated students have
23 several opportunities to prepare for college and career readiness including honors
24 classes, advanced placement (AP) courses, dual credit, internships, and pre-
25 apprenticeships. Seventy percent of students who take dual credit courses will attend
26 college; however, only twenty percent will attempt college if they have not taken dual
27 credit courses. Because every student doesn't graduate for a reason, Mrs. Hoyer
28 stated GFPS focuses on those students by providing more personalized programs
29 through community non-profit partnerships.
30

31 Trustee Bronson thanked Mrs. Hoyer for the work put into the data that was provided.
32 He continues to be interested as to why there are dropouts and wondered if the trends
33 in the use of controlled substances was a contributing factor.

34 Mrs. Hoyer explained that students take over raising siblings because parents are
35 addicted. We will find room for the students and educate them whenever they are
36 ready.

37 Trustee Skornogoski stated there have been significant strides in lowering the dropout
38 rates. When we experienced COVID and high school students lost a semester of
39 school, it was feared that there would be an increase of dropouts. That fear did not
40 materialize thanks to everyone in the schools working hard to keep students in
41 education and on track to graduate.
42

43 **B. First Reading of Revised Board Policies 1400, 1511, 1520, 3141P, 3410, and**
44 **5231 –** Superintendent Moore reviewed the recommended revisions to each of the
45 Board policies listed. He asked if anyone had questions or concerns about any of the
46 policies to contact him prior to the next regular Board meeting.
47

48 **C. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

1 Trustee Finnicum commented that Spring is getting busy with Graduations right around
2 the corner.
3 Trustee Skornogoski stated she loves hearing the student reports and had the
4 opportunity to work with student representatives as they planted pinwheels in
5 observance of mental health week. She appreciates that students are there for their
6 peers and are helping them learn traditions while in middle school.
7 Trustee Turoski attended a fourth-grade symphony field trip that encouraged kids to get
8 excited about playing instruments in fifth and sixth grades. She appreciates the
9 relationship between the military families and the District. She stated her youngest child
10 will be going through an assessment and she is looking forward to seeing how the
11 process works firsthand.
12 Trustee Bronson stated he attended a District insurance meeting last week and the
13 committee is in a much better position on determining statewide insurance. All AA
14 schools will meet the last week in April to determine if the plan makes sense for our
15 District. He attended the Safety Town Ribbon Cutting Ceremony with Chairperson
16 Johnson and appreciated the community effort that made Safety Town a reality.
17 Trustee Thompson attended a CORE School meeting and is pleased that one-half of
18 the employees are from the District and will now be working toward degrees.

19
20

21 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

22

23 Chairperson Johnson stated there is a Student Discipline Hearing scheduled tomorrow.
24 The next regular Board meeting will be on Monday, April 22nd and the Scholarship
25 Celebration will be held on Wednesday, May 1, 2024.

26
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28 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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30 Motion – Chairperson Johnson, Seconded – Vice Chairperson Skornogoski, passed
31 unanimously to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:46 p.m.

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Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

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Brian Patrick, Clerk