

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD SEPTEMBER 9, 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 9th day of
7 September 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 Paige Turoski
15

16 **Trustees Absent:** Mark Finnicum, Marlee Sunchild, and Amie Thompson - All Excused
17

18 **Others Present:** Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Brian Patrick, Director of Business
19 Operations; Lance Boyd and Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Directors for Student
20 Achievement; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; Luke Diekhans,
21 Director of Human Resources; and Stephanie Becker, Director of the Great Falls Public
22 Schools Foundation.
23

24 Also present was Tom Cabbage, Great Falls Education Association President.
25

26 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
27 Trustees, reminded participants and audience to speak clearly into the microphones as
28 the meeting was being recorded per Board Policy 1420, and asked everyone to join in
29 the Pledge of Allegiance.
30
31

32 **ADOPT AGENDA**
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34 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, 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 – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
41 Consent Agenda as presented.
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43 **A. Minutes of the August 19, 2024, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved
44 the minutes of the August 19, 2024, Regular Board Meeting as presented.
45

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

1 **C. Montana School Bus Driver’s Certificates – OPI TR-35** – The Board approved the
2 Montana Bus Drivers’ Certificates – OPI TR-35s for the individuals listed in the agenda.
3

4 **D. Incoming Student Attendance Agreements for 2024-2025 School Year** – The
5 Board approved the incoming student attendance agreements for the 2024-2025 school
6 year for the students listed in the agenda. Tuition will be paid for by the District of
7 Residence.
8

9 **E. Student Activity Monthly Report for July 2024** – The Board approved Student
10 Activity Accounts for July 2024.
11

12 **F. Establish Student Activity Account “Health Sciences” for Great Falls High
13 School** – The Board approved Great Falls High School’s request to open “Health
14 Sciences” Student Activity account.
15

16 17 **COMMUNICATION** 18

19 **A. Introduction and Report of the Student Representatives and Foreign Exchange
20 Students for 2024-2025 School Year** – Executive Director Lance Boyd introduced the
21 2024-2025 Student Representatives from each high school:
22 Charles M. Russell High School – Lillian Skaer, Emerson Hamma, and Lydia Comstock
23 Great Falls High School – Brooklyn Griffin, Seth Royer, and Kaitlynn Fulbright
24 Paris Gibson Education Center – Mercury Baez and Conner Reisinger
25 Kaitlynn Fulbright and Conner Reisinger were not present due to other commitments.
26 Each high school presented their student reports.
27

28 Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School – Student representative Lilli Skaer, a senior at
29 CMR, shared her involvement in soccer, track, student government, and the National
30 Honor Society. She expressed her excitement for homecoming week, highlighting her
31 love for the Powderpuff game. She noted that she will be the last in her family to
32 graduate from CMR for a long time. Emerson Hamma, a junior at CMR, shared his
33 participation in cross country, indoor and outdoor track, and student government, also
34 expressing his enthusiasm for homecoming week, particularly enjoying the parade.
35 They proudly introduced four foreign exchange students who are attending CMR for the
36 2024-2025 school year: Ana from France, Lotte from Belgium, Mateo from Spain, and
37 Khaliun from Mongolia.
38

39 Great Falls High School – Student representatives Brooklyn Griffin and Seth Royer
40 provided a detailed report on activities and events that occurred during the first days of
41 school. The first day started with "Bison Beginnings," a time for freshmen to familiarize
42 themselves with their teachers, the school, and longstanding traditions. Upperclassmen
43 then joined the freshmen for a pep assembly showcasing school spirit, with
44 performances from the dance team and cheerleaders. The students introduced Spanish
45 teacher, Mr. Gaslow, who received the prestigious Fulbright Award and will participate
46 in global educational exchanges. He addressed and received congratulations from the
47 Board for this distinguished award. The Class of 2025 organized both Senior Sunrise
48 and Senior Field Day, which were well-attended and a hit among seniors. Fall sports

1 have begun, with notable victories in volleyball, football, cross country, and standout
2 performances, such as Hanna Boyd's success in golf. The report also introduced foreign
3 exchange students from Sweden, Germany, Spain, and Belgium, each excited to
4 participate in various school traditions. Additionally, students shared personal lessons
5 learned this year, with Brooklyn learning how to sew in fashion design class and Seth
6 improving his cursive handwriting, finding both experiences valuable and rewarding.

7
8 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) – Student representative Mercury Baez, a
9 senior, expressed excitement in being a student representative for PGEC and formally
10 thanked the Board. Although PGEC does not receive foreign exchange students, the
11 school remains deeply committed to community service. Mercury proudly announced
12 the upcoming blood drive, scheduled for September 25th at 9 a.m., is the first of three
13 planned drives. PGEC has a strong history of surpassing the Red Cross donation
14 minimum through contributions from both students and staff, emphasizing the school's
15 dedication to giving back to the community.

16
17 **B. Superintendent Report** – Superintendent Hoyer provided a comprehensive report
18 on the extensive preparations and celebrations for the start of the school year. She
19 highlighted key tasks such as updating shot records, sports physicals, IEP/504 reviews,
20 health screenings, technology checkouts, and ensuring the completion of various forms,
21 including free and reduced lunch, handbook sign-offs, and health plans. Superintendent
22 Hoyer also discussed Kindergarten camp, new staff training, master scheduling, safety
23 drills, and numerous other logistical efforts across all grade levels. She reviewed high
24 school Military Appreciation nights for each fall sport and expressed gratitude to the
25 community for donations, including face shields for Career Technical Education (CTE)
26 classes, water bottles for crossing guards, and contributions to the "If You Give a Child
27 a Book" telethon. She also compared Day 1 enrollment data to previous years,
28 excluding 2021 due to COVID-19, and highlighted upcoming events, such as the High
29 School House groundbreaking on September 11th, Sacajawea Elementary School
30 playground ribbon-cutting on September 12th, and Worlds of Work (WOW) on
31 September 24th.

32
33 **C. Audience Communication** – None
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36 **ACTION ITEMS**

37
38 **A. Financial Report and Check Register for July 2024** – Director of Business
39 Operations, Brian Patrick, reviewed the first financial report and check register of the
40 2024-2025 school year.

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42 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
43 July 2024 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #135001 - #135215 in the
44 amount of \$389,792.78 and Payroll checks #81943 - #82013 in the amount of
45 \$68,781.86 as presented.
46

47 **B. Increase Substitute Teacher Pay for the 2024-2025 School Year** – Human
48 Resources Director Luke Diekhans discussed a proposal to increase substitute teacher

1 pay for the 2024-2025 school year. The current pay structure offers \$100 per day for
2 unlicensed substitutes and \$110 for licensed substitutes, with increases after 40 days
3 worked. The proposed increase would raise the daily rate to \$105 per day for
4 unlicensed substitutes and \$115 per day for licensed substitutes for the first 40 days,
5 with further increases to \$115 and \$125, respectively, after 40 days. This change will
6 help the District recruit and retain qualified substitute teachers, as filling teacher
7 absences is critical. The increase would be backdated to August 28, 2024, with an
8 estimated fiscal impact of \$39,170 annually.

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10 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to approve
11 the outlined pay increase for substitute teachers as presented, with the increase in pay
12 effective August 28, 2024.

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14 **C. 2024-2025 Substitute Teacher Incentive Pay** – Human Resources Director Luke
15 Diekhans presented a proposal to continue the practice of offering incentive payments
16 to substitute teachers during the 2024-2025 school year. Due to increased teacher
17 absences and decreased availability of substitutes, the incentive program was effective
18 in the 2023-2024 school year, with 78 instances of incentive payments covering a
19 minimum of 1,950 absences. The proposed continuation offers \$400 in additional
20 compensation for substitutes who work a minimum of 25 days in each of the designated
21 two-month periods, and 18 days during May 1-June 6. The estimated fiscal impact is
22 \$33,000, which will be covered by the District’s Substitute Teacher funds.

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24 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
25 \$400 of additional compensation for all substitute teachers who work a minimum of 25
26 days during the two-month time frames presented (September 3 – October 31;
27 November 1 – December 31; January 1 – February 28; and March 1 – April 30) or
28 eighteen days during the last month of the school year (May 1 – June 6).

29
30 **D. Trustees as Voting Delegates to the Montana School Boards Association**
31 **(MTSBA) Delegate Assembly at the Montana Conference of Education Leadership**
32 **(MCEL)** – Chairman Johnson explained that the Montana Conference of Education
33 Leadership (MCEL) is an annual conference that brings together trustees,
34 superintendents, principals, business officials and other educational leaders for
35 professional development, training, and idea sharing. As part of the conference,
36 MTSBA holds a Delegate Assembly to conduct the business of the Association.
37 Trustees are appointed to serve as delegates to the Delegate Assembly. The Great
38 Falls School District is able to appoint three trustees to serve as voting delegates at the
39 Delegate Assembly. Chairperson Johnson recommended that Trustees Kim
40 Skornogoski, Bill Bronson, and Mark Finnicum serve as voting delegates and that he
41 and Trustees Marlee Sunchild, Amie Thompson, and Paige Turoski serve as alternate
42 voting delegates.

43
44 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to approve
45 the appointments of three (3) Trustees, Kim Skornogoski, Bill Bronson, and Mark
46 Finnicum, to the MTSBA’s Delegate Assembly. Trustees Gordon Johnson, Paige
47 Turoski, Amie Thompson, and Marlee Sunchild will serve as alternates.

1 **E. Proclaim Tuesday, September 17, 2024 as Constitution Day in Great Falls**
2 **Public Schools** – Superintendent Hoyer discussed the upcoming observance of
3 Constitution Day and Citizenship Day on September 17, 2024, in compliance with
4 federal law requiring educational programs on the U.S. Constitution for all schools
5 receiving federal funds. Students in Great Falls Public Schools will participate in
6 activities throughout the week of September 16-20, 2024, aimed at educating,
7 commemorating, and celebrating the U.S. Constitution. The Curriculum Office will
8 provide suggested resources and online activities for teachers to use in classroom
9 instruction.

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11 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to proclaim
12 Tuesday, September 17, 2024 as Constitution Day in Great Falls Public Schools.

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14 Superintendent Hoyer read the complete proclamation upon unanimous approval by the
15 Board of Trustees.

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18 **ACTION: OTHER**

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

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23 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

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25 **A. Innovative Tax Credit Program Update** – Director of Business Operations, Brian
26 Patrick, discussed the use of funds from the Montana Innovative Tax Credit program,
27 which allows taxpayers to direct their state tax payments to a school district of their
28 choice. Contributions to Great Falls Public Schools support innovative educational
29 programs, including specialized learning opportunities, programs for students with
30 disabilities, and career certifications. The District's plan, developed with public input,
31 includes allocating funding for specialized curriculum related grade-level field trips,
32 remodeling the former Great Falls High School shop area into a District-wide enhanced
33 learning center to be used by all schools, and a specialized Athletic Mental Health
34 program. To date, the District has received \$1,168,100 in contributions. Additional
35 statewide contributions of \$227,001 will be available on October 2, 2024. January 15,
36 2025 is the date for annual contributions. The maximum amount each district can raise
37 is \$1.2 million.

38
39 **B. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

40 Trustee Bronson reported attending the CORE school opening, noting positive
41 conversations with parents who are pleased with the district's involvement. He will be
42 out of state on September 23rd and unable to attend the Board meeting.

43 Trustee Skornogoski shared she will also be out of state for the September 23rd
44 meeting. She expressed excitement about the start of the school year, acknowledging
45 challenges but commending staff for their efforts. She mentioned it was challenging for
46 some of the students to remember locker combinations after getting as many as three
47 lockers assigned to them. She encouraged trustees and the community to volunteer at
48 the upcoming Worlds of Work (WOW) event for 8th and 10th graders.

1 Trustee Turoski also attended the CORE school opening, with her favorite moment
2 being the students cutting the ribbon. She praised Valley View Elementary School's bus
3 drills and expressed appreciation for the return of the student representatives' reports
4 and their new name plates.
5 Chairperson Johnson commended staff and Cabinet for a successful start to the school
6 year.

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9 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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Chairperson Johnson stated upcoming events included the High School House
groundbreaking, Sacajawea Elementary School playground ribbon cutting, and the next
regular Board Meeting on Monday, September 23rd.

16 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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Motion – Chairperson Johnson, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to
adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 6:30 p.m.

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Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

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Brian Patrick, Clerk