

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
HELD AUGUST 5, 2024**

A duly called Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Great Falls Public Schools was held at the District Offices Building, 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street South, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of August 2024.

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

**Trustees Present:** Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson  
Bill Bronson  
Mark Finnicum  
Marlee Sunchild  
Amie Thompson  
Paige Turoski

**Trustees Absent:** Gordon Johnson, Excused

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

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

At 5:30 pm, Vice Chairperson Skornogoski called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees, indicated the meeting was being recorded per Board Policy 1420, and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ADOPT AGENDA**

Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented.

**APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, with special thanks for the donation of wheelchairs from the family of Kathryn Hill.

**A. Minutes of the July 15, 2024, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved the minutes of the July 15, 2024, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

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

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

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6 **D. Student Activity Monthly Report for June 2024** – The Board approved Student  
7 Activity Accounts for June 2024.

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9 **E. Charles M. Russell High School “Class of 2028” Student Activity Account** – The  
10 Board approved CMR High School’s request to open the “Class of 2028” Student  
11 Activity account.

12  
13 **F. Charles M. Russell High School “CMR Coffee Cart” Student Activity Account** –  
14 The Board approved CMR High School’s request to open the “CMR Coffee Cart”  
15 Student Activity account.

16  
17 **G. Great Falls High School Student Activity Account Closures and Name Changes**  
18 The Board approved the closure of the following four Great Falls High School Student  
19 Activity accounts as all funds have been cleared and the balances are zero: “Class of  
20 2021”, “Class of 2022”, “Class of 2023”, and “District Tournament Fund”. The Board  
21 also approved the request to change the name of Student Activity accounts “Warfair” to  
22 “Bison Academic Projects” and “Bisonettes” to “Bison Dance Team”.

23  
24 **H. Donation of a Manual Wheelchair and a Power Wheelchair** – The Board accepted  
25 the donation of a manual wheelchair and a power wheelchair to the Great Falls Public  
26 Schools Physical Therapy Department from the family of Kathryn Hill with thanks.

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29 **COMMUNICATION**

30  
31 **A. Superintendent Report** – Superintendent Hoyer discussed the upcoming job fair on  
32 August 21, with on-the-spot interviews for many open positions, and thanked the  
33 Human Resources Department and Becky Nelson for organizing the event.

34 The community is invited to the CORE school ribbon-cutting on August 27. The new  
35 school logo was designed by a CMR High School student.

36 Summer work projects continue and include the East Middle School bus loop, a new  
37 playground at Lincoln Elementary School, new carpeting at Valley View Elementary  
38 School, new bathroom partitions at Riverview Elementary School, a completed roof at  
39 Meadowlark Elementary School, and additional parking created at Morningside CORE  
40 School.

41 Community partner, United Way, is preparing for the Stuff the Bus event on August 8<sup>th</sup>.  
42 The Back-to-School Blast is August 16<sup>th</sup>. 1,500 backpacks, filled with donated supplies,  
43 will be given to area children. The event will also offer a variety of free services  
44 including haircuts and sports physicals.

45 Carol Paul, Student Services Coordinator, and her team are seeking groups to read to  
46 young readers, with the Raising Readers Award recognizing those promoting reading in  
47 the community.

Jackie Mainwaring introduced school nurses Erica Harp and Courtney George, highlighting their extensive roles in our schools. Courtney was recognized for receiving the 2023-24 Montana School Nurse of the Year.

## **B. Audience Communication – None**

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Consideration to Add Baseball as a Spring High School Sport for Boys –**

Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the consideration of adding baseball as a school sport, noting the four factors presented at the June 24<sup>th</sup> Board meeting and subsequent discussions by the Board Budget Committee. She recommended that the Board consider three options: Adoption beginning in Spring 2025, Adoption beginning in Spring 2026, or not adopting baseball. She indicated that fiscal implications had previously been discussed, and community members had previously voiced strong support for adding baseball.

Vice Chairperson Skornogoski explained the motion and voting process. Trustee Thompson inquired about the Budget Committee's thoughts. Trustee Finnicum suggested allowing the baseball community another opportunity to voice support. Athletic Director Mike Henneberg emphasized the need for Board action to proceed. Zac Griffin, representing the baseball community, proposed adoption in the spring of 2026 to ensure long-term success and alignment with timelines. He addressed concerns about upfront costs, stating that once baseball is in the budget, it should be supported by the District, just like all of the athletic programs.

Trustee Finnicum mentioned a potential endowment for future sports expansion. Trustee Sunchild raised questions about goal setting, sustainability, and the plan's feasibility, with Executive Director Lance Boyd explaining the process for forming a committee to set goals with deadlines and reporting back to the Board. If benchmarks are not met, the Board will reassess. Trustee Turoski asked about policy changes, to which Mr. Boyd confirmed that new policies would need to be adopted.

Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, to endorse a plan to commence baseball in 2026, with the following conditions:

1. Establishment of a committee to work on the specifics of the plan.
2. The committee to be guided by four specific factors from prior discussion.
3. Submission of the final plan no later than June 2025.
4. Inclusion of a specific component in the plan to ensure compliance with Title IX.

Trustee Bronson appreciated the community's comments, noting that while some factors had been addressed, the Board needed to plan 3-4 years ahead due to rising educational costs and potential funding shortfalls. He highlighted the risk to teachers' livelihoods and emphasized the importance of waiting for legislative updates on school funding in spring 2025. He also expressed concern about adopting new programs amid existing curriculum demands and Title IX implications.

Community members expressed strong support for adopting baseball. Zac Griffin stated the baseball community's willingness to collaborate. Aaron Jensen highlighted the positive impacts of athletics. Doug Mahlum thanked the Board for considering the

1 motion and expressed trust in their decisions. Carey Amato and Kali Tuckerman  
2 emphasized their readiness to fundraise and collaborate on logistical concerns. Warren  
3 Rains supported the initiative but noted the need for assurance before financial  
4 commitment. Eric Holey questioned why baseball, a popular sport, was not yet offered  
5 in schools.

6 Trustee Finnicum explained his concern that cautioned starting baseball only to cancel it  
7 later would be irresponsible, stressing the need for careful consideration. Vice  
8 Chairperson Skornogoski acknowledged the goal of improving student opportunities but  
9 noted past budget constraints and proposed an amendment for the program to be self-  
10 funded for three years. The amendment was agreed upon by the two board members  
11 who made the original motion.

12  
13 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, to endorse baseball for Spring 2026  
14 with the following four elements: 1.) forming a committee to consider the four specific  
15 factors, 2.) final plan submitted by June 1, 2025, 3.) address Title IX concerns, and 4.)  
16 securing private funding for upfront costs and the program to be self-funded for the first  
17 three years.

18  
19 Director of Business Operations, Brian Patrick, conducted a roll call vote:

20 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski – yes

21 Trustee Bronson – yes

22 Trustee Finnicum – yes

23 Trustee Sunchild – yes

24 Trustee Thompson – yes

25 Trustee Turoski – yes

26 Chairperson Johnson - excused

27 The motion passed 6-0.

28  
29 **B. Financial Report and Check Register for June 2024** – Director of Business  
30 Operations, Brian Patrick, reviewed the final report to close out the 2023-2024 school  
31 year. He also shared with the Board that \$100,000 had been removed from the  
32 invested funds in the Traffic Education program. This was to ensure a positive cash  
33 balance in the fund at year end.

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35 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the  
36 June 2024 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #134359 - #135000 in the  
37 amount of \$5,977,877.29 and Payroll checks #81619 - #81942 in the amount of  
38 \$1,430,721.94 as presented.

39  
40 **C. Transfer of Budgeted Funds – Elementary General Fund Budget (101) and High**  
41 **School General Fund Budget (201) to Interlocal District Fund (182)** – Director of  
42 Business Operations, Brian Patrick, explained the existing Interlocal Fund balance  
43 came from General Fund budget transfers in the previous year and can be used for  
44 future expenditures. He recommended the transfers of \$4,453,190.54 from the  
45 Elementary (101) and \$625,490.01 from the High School (201) General Fund budgets  
46 to the Interlocal Fund (182) effective June 30, 2024.

1 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to approve the  
2 Elementary General Fund Budget (101) transfer of \$4,453,190.54 and a High School  
3 General Fund Budget (201) transfer of \$625,490.01 to the Interlocal Agreement Fund  
4 (182).  
5

6 **D. Request to Access Protested Taxes** – Director of Business Operations, Brian  
7 Patrick, explained the Montana Refining Company, also known as Calumet, protested a  
8 portion of their 2023-2024 assessed taxes. Montana law, MCA 15-1-402, allows the  
9 District to access all or a portion of the amount protested. As one example of why the  
10 request was necessary, the District is required to pay the bond payment in full. There  
11 are no reserves in the fund to cover a shortfall.  
12

13 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the  
14 request to access the full amount of the Calumet protested taxes, which will maintain  
15 District cash reserves in each fund at their current level.  
16

17 **E. 2024-2025 Secondary Student Class Fees** – Director of Student Achievement,  
18 Jackie Mainwaring, explained there are secondary classes that have lab/course fees  
19 associated with them in order to provide additional materials that will enhance  
20 instruction. Fees have remained fairly consistent; however, a recommendation to  
21 increase Industrial Technology (IT) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) class  
22 fees due to the rising costs of supplies was presented. Great Falls Public Schools has  
23 received support through the Montana Advanced Opportunities Act to help offset Career  
24 and Technical Education (CTE) associated costs. Families may inquire for assistance if  
25 needed.  
26

27 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve  
28 the secondary student class fees as presented.  
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30 **F. CORE Morningside Parking Lot Project** – Director of Business Operations, Brian  
31 Patrick, explained that TD&H Engineering developed specifications for a new parking lot  
32 at the Morningside CORE School to accommodate an anticipated increase in traffic. A  
33 formal bid process must take place for any project over \$80,000.  
34

35 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve  
36 advertising for bidders for the Morningside CORE School parking lot construction.  
37

38 **G. 2024-2025 Health Insurance, Life Insurance, and Voluntary Insurance Contracts**

39 Human Resources Director, Luke Diekhans, provided an update on new insurance  
40 contracts, beginning with an explanation of the impact of the recent breach at a third-  
41 party data claims processing company. Three main factors were examined during the  
42 review process. The District Insurance Committee collectively agreed to recommend an  
43 increase in premiums of 10%, noting that this rate is significantly lower compared to  
44 other districts. The impacts on premiums were discussed in detail. It was announced  
45 that LifeMap will no longer be partnering with the district, and that Standard will be the  
46 replacement company to offer employee options. Additionally, the total costs were  
47 reviewed, covering both employee and employer contributions.  
48

1 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the  
2 recommendation of the District Insurance Committee for an overall increase to the  
3 employer and employee premium contributions of 10% respectively, along with the  
4 increase of the premium buy-down of \$35.78 from the Rate Stabilization Reserve Fund.  
5 The District Board also approved the recommendation to continue the Flexible  
6 Spending program and voluntary insurances.  
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9 **ACTION: OTHER**

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11 There were no items extracted from the Consent Agenda to discuss.  
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14 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

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16 **A. Secondary Pilot Program Report for 2023-2024 School Year – High School**  
17 Coordinator of Curriculum, Beckie Frisbee, reported on the pilot programs initiated in  
18 the previous school year. The pilots, including 7th grade Industrial Technology (IT),  
19 Achieve and Actively Learn, Build MT, Chamber Orchestra/Ensemble at CMR, Drama at  
20 North Middle School, Maneuvering the Middle at East Middle School, Rustler Wellness,  
21 and Integrated Math at Great Falls High School, were implemented in various  
22 classrooms. The evaluation process considered if the building could support the Full-  
23 Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. Five programs will move forward with Know-Understand-  
24 Do (KUDs). The Achieve and Actively Learn classes will be supported by a grant. The  
25 math classes will continue for one more year of piloting before a final decision is made.  
26 All adopted pilot programs will be made available at other schools if FTE support is  
27 available.  
28

29 **B. First Reading of New and Revised Board Policies 2314, 2314F, and 3611 –**  
30 Superintendent Hoyer explained that the two policies, 2314 and 2314F, were brought  
31 before the Board at a prior meeting but were sent back to the Policy Committee for  
32 further review. She discussed the recommended revisions from the Montana School  
33 Board Association (MTSBA) and the Policy Committee for each of the policies listed and  
34 asked that questions or revisions be submitted prior to the next Board meeting.  
35

36 **C. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments –**

37 Trustee Thompson thanked fellow trustees for reaching a good decision on adding a baseball  
38 program. She expressed nervousness, but happiness, in approving the motion, emphasizing  
39 that it is important for the community to know that private funding will cover the implementation  
40 costs.

41 Trustee Sunchild echoed Trustee Thompson's comments on the baseball motion and  
42 shared excitement for teachers starting the new school year.

43 Trustee Finnicum praised having a nurse in each school building and commended the  
44 District for having a Montana Nurse of the Year. He mentioned the district is still hiring  
45 employees and expressed concern about not wanting Athletic Director, Mike  
46 Henneberg, to manage the baseball implementation process alone.

47 Trustee Bronson highlighted that Great Falls Public Schools is in a better position than  
48 other AA schools due to effective use of ESSER funds. He expressed gratitude for the  
49 donation of wheelchairs, noting their high cost and usefulness.

1 Trustee Turoski expressed anticipation for baseball and community collaboration. She  
2 noted that summer is almost over, and teachers are preparing for the new school year.  
3 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski mentioned ongoing volunteer opportunities for Stuff the  
4 Bus and Back-to-School Blast events. She encouraged community participation in these  
5 events as well as recruitment for Worlds of Work coming up in September. She  
6 encouraged those in need of backpacks to attend the Back-to-School Blast.

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9 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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11 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski stated upcoming events included a Board Work Session  
12 regarding the budget on Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, a Regular Board Meeting August 19<sup>th</sup>,  
13 Convocation August 26<sup>th</sup> at CMR High School, and the CORE Morningside Ribbon  
14 Cutting Ceremony on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

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17 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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19 Motion – Vice Chairperson Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed  
20 unanimously to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:34 p.m.

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Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson

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Brian Patrick, Clerk  
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