

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD OCTOBER 14, 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 14th day
7 of October 2024.

8
9 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski informed the participants and audience the meeting was
10 being recorded per Board Policy 1420.

11
12 **ROLL CALL:** Brian Patrick took roll call.

13
14 **Trustees Present:** Kim Skornogoski – Vice Chairperson
15 Bill Bronson
16 Mark Finnicum
17 Marlee Sunchild
18 Amie Thompson
19 Paige Turoski
20

21 **Trustee Absent:** Gordon Johnson – Excused
22

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

28
29 Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association (GFEA) President.
30

31 At 5:30 pm, Vice Chairperson Skornogoski called to order the Regular Meeting of the
32 Board of Trustees and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.
33

34
35 **ADOPT AGENDA**
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37 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to adopt the
38 agenda as presented.
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41 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**
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43 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve
44 the Consent Agenda as presented, with special thanks to the Lincoln and Sacajawea
45 Elementary School Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) for playground and recess
46 equipment donations to their respective schools.
47

1 **A. Minutes of the September 23, 2024, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board
2 approved the minutes of the September 23, 2024, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

3
4 **B. Minutes of the October 1, 2024, Special Board Meeting – Open Session** – The
5 Board approved the minutes of the October 1, 2024, Special Board Meeting (Open
6 Session) as presented.

7
8 **C. Minutes of the October 1, 2024, Special Board Meeting – Closed Session** – The
9 Board approved the minutes of the October 1, 2024, Special Board Meeting (Closed
10 Session) as presented.

11
12 **D. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.

13
14 **E. Montana School Bus Driver Certificate – OPI TR-35** – The Board approved the
15 Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35s for the individuals listed in the
16 agenda.

17
18 **F. TR-1 Bus Route Reimbursement Claims** - The Board approved the TR-1 Bus
19 Route Reimbursement Claims for the bus routes of the high school and elementary
20 school districts.

21
22 **G. Kindergarten Early Entrance for the 2024-2025 School Year** – The Board
23 approved the student listed in the agenda for the 2024-2025 school year based upon
24 the requirements outlined in Board Policy 3110R.

25
26 **H. Establish Charles M. Russell High School “CMR Technology Fines” Student
27 Activity Account** – The Board approved Charles M. Russell High School to open *CMR
28 Technology Fines* Student Activity account.

29
30 **I. Great Falls High School Advanced Placement (AP) Art Travel Request** – The
31 Board approved Great Falls High School AP Art students’ travel request to Seattle, WA
32 for National Portfolio Day from November 1-5, 2024.

33
34 **J. Accept Lincoln and Sacajawea Elementary Schools Playground Donations** –
35 The Board approved the donations of playground and recess equipment, including
36 installation, estimated at \$280,000 for Lincoln Elementary School and playground and
37 recess equipment, including installation, estimated at \$400,000 for Sacajawea
38 Elementary School.

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40
41 **COMMUNICATION**

42
43 **A. Indigenous Honor Song**

44 Superintendent Hoyer introduced Dugan Coburn, Director of Indian Education, and
45 Calvin Gone, a partner in Education through Youth Dynamic Services. Calvin sang an
46 Indigenous honor song to celebrate *Indigenous Peoples Day*.

47
48 **B. Report of the Student Representatives**

1 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Brooklyn Griffin, Seth Royer,
2 and Kaitlynn Fulbright reported that students participated in engaging activities,
3 including a “Barbie Bungee Jump” project in AP Statistics, an M&M-based lab on
4 ecological interactions in Biology, and chemical reaction experiments with Bunsen
5 burners in Honors Chemistry. Students also learned practical skills by disassembling a
6 Honda lawnmower engine.

7 The representatives reported Great Falls High is excelling in athletics. Hanna Boyd
8 earned second place at the state golf tournament, the Cross-Country team is preparing
9 for the crosstown meet on October 16th, Soccer teams are heading to Divisionals, the
10 Volleyball team is improving, and the Football team is aiming for a home playoff game.
11 The much-anticipated crosstown football game on October 25th will include
12 announcements of the GFPS Foundation truck raffle winner and Crosstown Clash
13 winner. Cheer and dance teams are also having a strong season, energizing crowds at
14 games and assemblies.

15 Homecoming was a big success with strong participation throughout the Olympic-
16 themed week. Events included themed dress-up days, a pep assembly, parade, and a
17 football victory. The seniors claimed their fourth consecutive win in the participation
18 contest, and Andrew Pfeifferberger and Sadie Sangray were crowned Homecoming
19 King and Queen.

20 Student leaders attended two events on October 6-7: Youth Days, hosted at Great Falls
21 High, which featured workshops and service activities, and the BPA Fall Leadership
22 Conference at Fairmont Hot Springs, kicking off a promising year for the organization.
23 Student Council members shared Great Falls High updates on 560 KMON radio,
24 highlighting the Night of Champions event and Homecoming. Advanced Placement (AP)
25 Studio Art students served dinner at the Fraternal Order of Moose Lodge #532, with
26 proceeds supporting their trip to National Portfolio Day in Spokane, WA. The students
27 expressed gratitude to the lodge for its continued support.

28

29 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representative Mercury Baez reported
30 students enjoyed a trip to Butte, MT that included tours of an underground mine, the
31 Berkley Pit, and the School of Mines. While at the School of Mines, they explored rock
32 formations and compared them to smaller rock samples found at the Mineral Museum.
33 Students also visited Memorial Falls and the Little Belts, making cyanotype prints and
34 discovering fossils along the way. Geology students visited Lewis & Clark Caverns to
35 study bioclastic rocks and formations.

36 Paris Gibson Education Center will host a food drive from October 1st to December 1st,
37 with donations collected in Cat/Griz themed bins.

38 Culinary and science students collaborated on canning projects and used their
39 preserved ingredients to create gourmet ramen dishes. "Foreign Friday" lessons
40 introduced students to the culture and cuisine of the United Kingdom through trivia and
41 snacks. Students manage bee hives year-round in the hopes of enjoying a delicious
42 crop of honey in early fall. Students also harvest peppers in the fall to make the
43 school's signature “Loki's Ghost” hot pepper shake.

44 A popular student activity is beading. Students bead eagle feathers for graduation,
45 earrings for gifts or to sell, pen wraps, and strips for graduation caps. Lynx Grafix is
46 another student-run business that takes orders for any screen printing and banner
47 printing needs.

1 PGEC is celebrating American Indian Heritage Week, though lessons are integrated
2 year-round.

3 The Young Parents Education Center has a new director and is hoping to expand.
4 Mercury encouraged anyone in need of quality childcare to contact the new director.
5

6 C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Lilli Skaer, Emerson Hamma,
7 and Lydia Comstock reported culinary students completed a bread unit, mastering
8 leavening techniques. Anatomy and Physiology students practiced dissection
9 vocabulary with clay models. Ceramics students finished functional projects, preparing
10 for advanced work. AP Calculus students tackled differentiation rules, including the
11 quotient rule. Sophomore English began *Fahrenheit 451* with posters and vocabulary
12 games. Chemistry students explored the concept of the mole through conversions
13 between atoms, grams, and moles.

14 CMR cheerleaders and HOSA supported community events, including the Walk to End
15 Alzheimer's and My Best Day 5K. The 47th High School House project is underway,
16 and 10th graders explored careers in all sixteen career pathways at the World of Work
17 event. Golfers, soccer, football, cross country, and volleyball teams continue strong
18 seasons, with standout state performances by Jack Pinski and Quincy Weymouth in
19 golf. BPA held its Fall Leadership Conference, and Speech and Debate is gearing up
20 for competitions starting in November. Performing arts groups hosted concerts and
21 rehearsed for their upcoming musical, *Pirates of Penzance*. The Peer Mentor Group
22 promoted mental health awareness and helped write parts of a play that "State of Mind"
23 performed at Alliance for Youth. Forty-three musicians earned MHSAA All-State honors
24 and will perform in Billings this week.

25 Student government led a successful 60th homecoming and shared updates on KMON
26 radio. Homecoming week kicked off with a Color Run and the annual Powder Puff
27 football game, where seniors remained undefeated. Themed dress-up days showcased
28 creativity, with highlights like Battle of the Ages and class-themed hallways, won by the
29 sophomores. Coronation Day featured performances by choir and drama, with King
30 Mark Sondergaard and Queen Veronica Beam crowned. The parade was a hit, with the
31 juniors winning the float contest and the Lady Rustler Soccer team winning their fifth
32 club contest. The week ended with a memorable football game, featuring a power
33 outage and the band playing in the dark, capped off by a thrilling Rustler victory.
34

35 **C. Superintendent Report**

36 Superintendent Hoyer discussed the GFPS partnership with Touro University and the
37 MedAchieve Montana program. Touro students held a "Docs and Tots" clinic with
38 kindergarten students to help them understand the process and medical tools used
39 during a medical visit in hopes of alleviating anxiety and fear during a real visit with a
40 doctor.

41 The "Name the Snowplow" contest engages 2nd graders through Social Studies, with a
42 snowplow visiting schools today and tomorrow. The project, involving 15 plows, teaches
43 students about government services and good citizenship.

44 The Fine Arts department kicks off the season with the Great Falls Public Schools
45 Faculty art exhibit. Concerts are also in full swing. Superintendent Hoyer encouraged
46 everyone to make plans to visit the Dahl Gallery at GFHS and the OC Seltzer Gallery at
47 CMR as well as concerts remaining at both CMR and GFHS.

1 During October, several groups of employees have been or will be celebrated.
2 Facebook live events celebrated custodians on Oct 2nd. Bosses (*Boss's Day*) and
3 teachers (*Treasure your Teachers*) will be celebrated later this month.
4 Superintendent Hoyer thanked community member Candace English for her very
5 generous donation to the Community Food Bank that will benefit many of our school
6 food pantries.
7 GFPS is hosting a series of listening sessions on October 28th, 29th, and 30th to hear
8 what is important to our community as we plan for the future. Everyone is highly
9 encouraged to attend one of the six sessions.
10 Superintendent Hoyer provided data regarding new Open Enrollment Board Policies
11 3141 and 3141P. Currently there are 40 students attending GFPS who live outside of
12 the District and 58 of our GFPS students have elected to attend schooling outside of our
13 district.

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16 **D. Audience Communication** – None.
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19 **ACTION ITEMS**

20
21 **A. Request to Advertise for Former Great Falls High School Shop Renovation** –
22 Director of Business Operations Brian Patrick reported that the former Great Falls High
23 School shop area is currently being used for storage. District Administration, along with
24 consultation from community members, created a plan for the use of the Montana State
25 Innovative Tax Credit contributions that repurposes the shop area to create a
26 Districtwide Innovative Learning Center for K-12 Science, Technology, Engineering, and
27 Math (STEM) classes. GPD Consulting Engineers have reviewed the area and are
28 completing the bid specifications needed for the project to go out to bid.

29
30 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve
31 the design and advertising of the Great Falls High School shop renovation project with
32 the understanding that the lowest qualified bidder will complete the project.
33

34 **B. Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School Auditorium Upgrade – Asbestos**
35 **Removal** – Director of Business Operations Brian Patrick reported the Great Falls
36 Public Schools Foundation received an anonymous donation of one million dollars to be
37 used to improve the CMR auditorium. One bid for the project, that included both the
38 renovation and asbestos removal, was received in May of 2024. The bid was too high
39 and rejected by the Board. A stakeholder meeting in September of 2024 resulted in a
40 decision to divide the project into two phases. The first phase involves advertising for
41 bids to remove the asbestos.
42

43 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
44 advertising for bids to remove asbestos from the CMR auditorium.
45

46 **C. Purchase and Implementation of Time Clock Plus – Electronic Time Cards** –
47 Director of Human Resources Luke Diekhans discussed the District's current paper-
48 based time card system, which is used by approximately 1,100 employees—around

1 60% of the workforce. Accurate and efficient processing of time cards is essential to
2 ensure timely and correct payment. Currently, time cards pass through multiple hands
3 and require manual tasks, including alphabetizing, tallying hours, verifying totals, and
4 uploading data into the payroll system. Delays occur when time cards lack required
5 signatures or if staff are unavailable to submit them on time. These manual processes
6 create challenges for the payroll team in meeting deadlines and ensuring accuracy.
7 Transitioning to an electronic time card system will streamline the process, reduce
8 manual errors, and improve efficiency, ensuring more accurate and timely payments.
9 The implementation timeline and prorated costs and fees were reviewed.

10
11 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to approve
12 the Time Clock Plus system at a one-time implementation cost of \$32,645.75, with
13 prorated annual licensing fees for the fiscal year 2025 to cost \$4,200, for a total of
14 \$36,845.75.

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17 **ACTION: OTHER**

18 There were no items pulled from the Consent Agenda to discuss.

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21 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

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23 **A. National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) Report**

24 Director of Business Operations, Brian Patrick, reported on the National Association of
25 Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) conference. NAFIS represents over 1,100 school
26 districts, including Great Falls Public Schools, that serve students on or near non-
27 taxable federal land. The conference, held in Washington, DC, provided legislative
28 updates, advocacy training, and insights on federal education policy. Key sessions
29 covered Impact Aid usage, financing school infrastructure, and high-impact tutoring.
30 Impact Aid, which requires annual congressional appropriation, remains a critical
31 funding source with the support of congressmen. Mr. Patrick was pleased to report that
32 Montana had the biggest representation for all states, and he was proud that three
33 former GFPS graduates (Connor McAllister, Nathan Zobrack, and Alyssa LaTray) are
34 currently working for congressmen.

35
36 **B. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

37 Trustee Bronson stated that while on a trip to Virginia, he talked to folks about
38 education. They were fascinated about our Indian Education program and suggested
39 that there could be possible outreach to the GFPS curriculum department.

40 Trustee Finnicum discussed an insurance seminar he attended and the guidelines for
41 roof replacements.

42 Trustee Sunchild attended the CORE School Advisory meeting and said it was a school
43 full of go-getters, with a music teacher doing after school choir.

44 Trustee Thompson thanked Superintendent Hoyer for recognizing and celebrating the
45 various employee groups each month. She believes it is a strong moral builder.

46 Trustee Turoski loved the lessons learned in Math that were discussed by the student
47 representatives. She stated parent/teacher conferences are coming up and said her
48 children were excited to get to shop at the book fair.

1 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski attended the Board Work Session and Safety Committee
2 meetings. She is appreciative of what nurses are doing in our schools and noted that
3 there is a nurse in every school. Information was provided at the Safety meeting on
4 Workman’s Comp claims and the goal of reducing claims. She took part in listening
5 sessions with Trustee Thompson and encouraged the community to participate. The
6 District budget is overwhelming and the listening sessions will allow for collaborative
7 solutions about what lies ahead. GFPS avoided teacher and staff cuts recently due to
8 good stewardship, but budget cuts are inevitable in the coming years. There is a KEY
9 meeting Oct 24th and the public is encouraged to attend. An Alliance for Youth meeting
10 is today, highlighting projects on how high schools are working together for mental
11 health awareness.

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13

UPCOMING EVENTS

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16 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski reviewed upcoming events including a Board Budget
17 Committee Meeting October 15th at 10:30 a.m., the Montana Conference of Educations
18 Leadership (MCEL) Conference in Missoula October 16-18, and the next regular Board
19 Meeting on October 28th.

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21

ACTION TO ADJOURN

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24 Motion – Vice Chairperson Skornogoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed
25 unanimously to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 6:52 p.m.

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27

28 _____
29 Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson

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31 _____
Brian Patrick, Clerk