

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD OCTOBER 28, 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 28th day
7 of October 2024.

8
9 Chairperson Johnson reported that, per Board Policy 1420, all Board meetings are now
10 recorded and posted on the District website for one (1) year.

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

13
14 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson - Chairperson
15 Kim Skornogoski – Vice Chairperson
16 Bill Bronson
17 Mark Finnicum
18 Marlee Sunchild
19 Amie Thompson
20 Paige Turoski
21

22 **Others Present:** Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Brian Patrick, Director of Business
23 Operations; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; Lance Boyd and Jackie
24 Mainwaring, Executive Directors of Student Achievement; and Stephanie Becker,
25 Director of the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation. Also present was Tom Cubbage,
26 Great Falls Education Association President.

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28 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
29 Trustees.

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32 **ADOPT AGENDA**

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34 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to adopt
35 the agenda as presented.
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38 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

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40 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to
41 approve the Consent Agenda as presented.
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43 **A. Minutes of the October 14, 2024, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved
44 the minutes of the October 14, 2024, Regular Board Meeting as presented.
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46 **B. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.
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1 **C. Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35’s** – The Board approved the
2 Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35’s for the individuals listed in the
3 agenda.
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5 **D. Student Activity Accounts for September 2024** - The Board approved the Student
6 Activity Accounts for September 2024.
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8 **E. Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School Student Government Travel to Billings,
9 MT** – The Board approved the CMR Student Government students to travel to Billings,
10 MT November 17-19, 2024, for the Montana Association of Student Councils
11 Conference.
12

13 **F. Establish New Student Activity Account for Chief Joseph Elementary School –**
14 The Board approved Chief Joseph Elementary School to open *CJ Activity*
15 *Miscellaneous* Student Activity Account.
16

17 **G. Donation of Three (3) First Edition Terry Mimnaugh Bronze Statues** – The Board
18 approved the donation of three (3) first edition Terry Mimnaugh Bronze Statues from
19 Linda Hatch to Great Falls Public Schools with special thanks.
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21

22 **COMMUNICATION**

23

24 **A. Character Strong – Mountain View Elementary School** – Lacey George, Librarian,
25 along with three (3) student representatives reported on *Character Strong* and what
26 perseverance and kindness means to Meadow Lark Elementary School.
27

28 **B. Superintendent Report –**

29 Andrea Thares, Chief Joseph Elementary School Principal, spoke on the application
30 process of being recognized as a National Blue-Ribbon school. She reviewed criteria
31 and data that qualified Chief Joseph Elementary School.

32 Superintendent Hoyer reported that from October 28 – 30, 2024, *Listening Sessions* are
33 taking place at the District Office Building. These sessions highlight the importance of
34 student enrollment regarding budget. It also serves to inform attendees about what is
35 happening within the District.

36 Fall concerts have concluded for high school students. Band, Choir and Orchestra
37 students performed songs such as "Ghost Busters" and "Nightmare Before Christmas".
38 She stated that October 16, 2024, was National Boss's/Supervisor's Day and October
39 21-25, 2024, was Treasure our Teachers' week where students and staff throughout the
40 District celebrated and showed appreciation.

41 First Interstate Bank held a food drive from October 15th through October 25th where
42 people could drop off non-perishable food and toiletry items at any of their three (3)
43 Great Falls locations. This food drive benefited Great Falls Public Schools' food
44 pantries.

45 Superintendent Hoyer reviewed data received from the "Profile of a Learner" survey
46 conducted last spring by Great Falls Public Schools. She stated that 475 responses
47 were received and the top rated five (5) skills, traits and characteristics that were most
48 important, according to the survey results, for learners to develop are Strong

1 Communication Skills, Critical Thinking, Work Ethic, Problem Solving and Integrity.
2 These five skills, traits, and characteristics will be integrated into our Strategic Plan,
3 character education programs and curriculum processes.
4 Fifth (5th) grade students throughout the District attended a matinee on October 25,
5 2024, to experience the Great Falls Symphony.
6 Superintendent Hoyer stated that District staff will participate in an Armed Intruder
7 Training on November 1, 2024. She thanked everyone involved in ensuring that safety
8 is the top priority for our students.

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10 **C. Audience Communication – None**

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13 **ACTION ITEMS**

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15 **A. Financial Report and Check Register for September 2024** – Director of Business
16 Operations, Brian Patrick, presented the financial report and check register for
17 September 2024.

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19 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to
20 approve the September 2024 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #135600 -
21 #136168 in the amount of \$1,803,252.26 and Payroll checks #82098 - #82288 in the
22 amount of \$368,965.30 as presented.

23
24 **B. 2025-2026 Budget Development Process Schedule** – Director of Business
25 Operations Brian Patrick stated that District funding largely depends on student
26 enrollment. When enrollment is declining, current law allows for a three-year average for
27 enrollment as well as the ability to ask voters for additional funding up to the State
28 Maximum Budget (100%) to maintain the previous year’s budget. Brian said that after
29 only one enrollment count, along with it being a legislative year, it is difficult to have an
30 accurate revenue forecast for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. He presented a Board Budget
31 Committee recommended timeline for the 2025-2026 budget meetings with the main
32 Board Budget Committee meetings scheduled for March of 2025.

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34 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to adopt the
35 2025-2026 Budget Development Process as presented.

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37 **C. Taxable Re-Evaluation – Montana Automated Education Finance and**
38 **Information Reporting System (MAEFAIRS) Budgeted Funds Re-Submittal** –
39 Director of Business Operations Brian Patrick explained that on Friday, October 25,
40 2024, he received notice from the Department of Revenue that the taxable valuation for
41 the District had changed and needed to be adjusted due to a ruling related to
42 Calumet. This is after the budgets were adopted on August 19, 2024. The taxable
43 valuation was reduced by \$4,130,446 in the elementary district and \$4,129,255 in the
44 high school district. The new taxable valuation amount for the elementary district is
45 \$178,473,349 and the new taxable valuation for the high school is \$181,200,378. He
46 worked with County Officials and the Office of Public Instruction to take the necessary
47 steps to un-submit the existing budget, make changes to the taxable valuation, and
48 ready the information for Board approval so the budgets could be resubmitted. The

1 dollar amounts of the budgets did not change. The taxable valuation for Calumet was
2 reduced which caused the mills to increase for all other taxpayers. Total mills for all
3 funds levied were adjusted to 125.39 in the elementary district and 71.74 in the high
4 school district. The total mill amounts remained lower than the total mills levied for the
5 2023-24 school year.

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7 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to approve the
8 resubmittal of the MAEFAIRS budget with the change in Taxable Valuation in both the
9 Elementary and High School districts.

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11 Trustee Skornogoski stated that the community is asking what would happen if Calumet
12 was awarded Nonprofit status and if they were awarded the pending grant funding.

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14 Brian stated the complexity of Calumet appeal process is still ongoing and different
15 variables will determine the outcome.

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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. Review of Buildings & Grounds 2024 Summer Projects** – Facilities Director Brent
26 Cutler reviewed work responsibilities for the Custodians, Plumbers, Painters,
27 Carpenters, and Electricians. He also reported that the summer project work plan is
28 driven by building walkthroughs. Brent stated that most Great Falls Public School
29 buildings have been converted to LED lighting, boiler controls upgrades, window
30 upgrades, and water conservation is being implemented throughout the District to help
31 with energy conservation. In January of 2020 the Department of Health and Human
32 Services, in partnership with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, passed
33 a ruling stating that all accredited Montana schools must test for lead in the drinking
34 water every three (3) years. He stated that all schools are being retested this fall.
35 Facilities Assistant Jack Norris reported on the summer projects completed including,
36 but not limited to Memorial Stadium upgrades, drainage, library remodels, asphalt, and
37 playground projects.

38 Director of Business Operations Brian Patrick reviewed the building walkthrough
39 process and explained why it is important. He reported that comments and concerns
40 from all the schools are discussed and prioritized for the summer work schedule.

41
42 **B. Opening of School Year Report and Summer School Data** – Executive Directors
43 Jackie Mainwaring, and Lance Boyd reviewed staffing data and open positions. They
44 then presented data on extended summer learning opportunities that are directly tied to
45 the Strategic Plan. At the elementary level, schools were allowed to develop their own
46 plans that focused on re-engagement and relationship building. The Summer Jumpstart
47 program had a primary literacy focus. One hundred fifteen (115) students participated at
48 Giant Springs and/or Longfellow Elementary Schools in July and August. Mr. Boyd

1 stated Great Falls Public Schools was awarded additional ESSER funds to offset the
2 cost of the program. At the secondary level, one hundred seventy-nine (179) high
3 school students and thirty-eight (38) middle school students participated in credit
4 recovery programs. There were two hundred ninety-three (293) half-credits earned at
5 the high school level, which was a decrease of seventy-three (73) half credits from last
6 summer. Thirty-nine (39) half-credits were earned by Indigenous Education students.
7 The extended school year for Special Education students resulted in one hundred
8 seventy-nine (179) students being offered services. There were one hundred nine (109)
9 students who attended ninety percent or more of the twenty-day program.

10
11 **C. Morningside CORE School Report** – Executive Director Jackie Mainwaring
12 reported that 300 students are currently enrolled at the Morningside CORE School.
13 Ninety-two percent of these students are returning students from the 2023-2024 school
14 year. There are also thirteen (13) teacher assistants. The demographic data is
15 consistent with historic Morningside and District data subgroups. She stated that “goals”
16 are due by October 30, 2024, and student engagement was determined to be the main
17 goal of the charter school. The Financial Report is due November 14, 2024, from Great
18 Falls Public Schools to remain in compliance with State law.

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20 **D. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments –**

21 Trustee Turoski thanked Brent Cutler, Jack Norris and their team for their work. She and
22 Trustee Thompson stated that they attended and enjoyed today’s Listening Session and
23 received a lot of information.

24 Trustee Finnicum thanked school PTA members for their involvement in raising funds
25 for facility needs and upgrades.

26 Trustee Skornogoski stated that she attended the Montana Conference for Educational
27 Leaders (MCEL) and especially enjoyed a speaker’s presentation on Native American
28 students, their challenges, and statistics. She also reported that she is excited to attend
29 the Armed Intruder Training scheduled for Friday as well as Listening Sessions for
30 budgeting issues.

31 Trustee Bronson thanked Linda Hatch for the generous donation of the three (3) bronze
32 statues. He also stated that CMR students were out in the community asking for support
33 for their food pantry. Mr. Bronson stated that he also attended the MCEL conference
34 and is optimistic about the legislative session with public schools. He is also looking
35 forward to attending tomorrow’s Listening Session. He stated that there are still
36 discussions with all AA schools and the Health Insurance Trust. He believes the
37 insurance offered by Great Falls Public Schools is adequate.

38 Trustee Sunchild reported she has previously attended Armed Intruder Training, and
39 she feels that it is one of the best trainings available, however, for a teacher it will be a
40 high anxiety event. She attended the Crosstown football game, and the upgrades to
41 Memorial Stadium are amazing.

42 Chairperson Johnson stated that he attended an educational summit at the beginning of
43 October and is excited to share the information with fellow Trustees and Cabinet
44 members. He also reported that the annual Superintendent Evaluation process timeline
45 will start in March 2025.

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48 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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2 Chairperson Johnson said the next Regular Board Meetings are scheduled for Monday,
3 November 11, 2024, and Monday, November 25, 2024.

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6 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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8 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to
9 adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:29 p.m.

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Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

Brian Patrick, Clerk