

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD DECEMBER 16, 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 4th Street South, on the 16th day of December 2024.

ROLL CALL: Brian Patrick took roll call.

Trustees Present: Gordon Johnson, Chairperson
Bill Bronson
Mark Finnicum
Marlee Sunchild
Amie Thompson
Paige Turoski

Trustees Absent: Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson - Excused

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

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

At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees and informed the participants and audience the meeting was being recorded per Board Policy 1420. Trustee Thompson was asked to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon completion, the Board and community sang "Happy Birthday" to honor her upcoming birthday.

ADOPT AGENDA

Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

A. Minutes of the November 25, 2024, Regular Board Meeting – The Board approved the minutes of the November 25, 2024, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

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

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2 **C. Good Apple Awards** – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple
3 Awards for: Adam Jerome, Resource I Teacher, C M Russell High School; Kathy
4 Wanner, Vocational Resource Teacher, Great Falls High School; Brittney Lampert,
5 Intervention Teacher, West Elementary School; Bobby Stillwell, 1st Engineer, Valley
6 View Elementary School; and Dana Freshly, Counselor, West Elementary School.
7

8 **D. Montana School Bus Driver Certificate – OPI TR-35** – The Board approved the
9 Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35s for the individuals listed in the
10 agenda.
11

12 **E. Incoming Student Attendance Agreements for 2024-2025 School Year** – The
13 Board approved the incoming student attendance agreements for the 2024-2025 school
14 year for the students listed in the agenda. Tuition will be paid for by the District of
15 Residence.
16
17

18 **COMMUNICATION**

19

20 **A. Report of the Student Representatives**

21 C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Lilli Skaer, Emerson Hamma,
22 and Lydia Comstock encouraged everyone to celebrate the holidays by bringing a new
23 toy to donate to *Toys for Tots* at the home basketball game December 17th. The
24 students highlighted popular lessons in AP English, Finance and Career, Spanish,
25 Biology, and Ceramics classes. Members of the Air Force also spent time in business
26 classes sharing a variety of business-related career opportunities in the military.
27 The students shared community service projects, including working in their food pantry,
28 raising funds for Special Olympics by participating in the Polar Plunge, and construction
29 continuing on the high school house.

30 The students recapped the start of all winter sports' competitions. They recognized All-
31 Conference and All-State selections for the fall as well as several students signing their
32 letters of intent to continue their athletic careers at college.

33 Student organizations were also active: BPA raised funds for the Great Falls Lions
34 Special Olympic team, Speech and Debate continues to improve at each meet, and
35 Student Government has been planning MORP. The "Pirates of Penzance" drama
36 performances and remaining Christmas concerts conclude this week.
37 Rustler Pride" highlighted teachers enjoying some Rustler fun.
38

39 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representative Conner Reisinger
40 reported on activities students have been participating in including both drum and
41 ornament making. Many students took their projects to sell at the annual Christmas
42 Stroll.

43 The students enjoyed the annual Bison Harvest and are excited to learn that more
44 schools are hoping to offer this cultural event to their students. Students also embraced
45 the opportunity to learn CPR techniques and participate in many activities during
46 Wellness Days.

47 Students and staff are looking forward to their holiday spirit week, especially the Secret
48 Santa Scavenger Hunt.

49 Conner concluded by reciting one of his original poems.

Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Brooklyn Griffin, Seth Royer, and Kaitlynn Fulbright shared recent lessons they enjoyed in Culinary, AP Biology, Finance, AP History, Money Management, and Biology classes. The students reported on the success of the winter prom. Community involvement projects included the National Honor Society Book and Toy Drive, Student Council members ringing bells for the Salvation Army, and the Montana State Bobcats vs the Montana Grizzlies Canned Food Drive. Student organizations were active: Student Council leaders attended a conference in Billings with other schools and raised over eleven thousand dollars for the Make-a-Wish Foundation; through Bison Buddies, a young Sunnyside Elementary School student received much-needed support; and Leadership High School and Student Council members learned about services available in Great Falls for community members who need help. Winter sports teams had successful starts to their season competitions. The Speech and Debate team also competed well at their first home tournament. Several Great Falls High All-American cheerleaders earned a trip to Orlando Florida to participate in the Disney Christmas Day parade. Students encouraged the community to attend the upcoming student art exhibition in the Dahl Gallery on December 19th and also to purchase alumni bricks as a Christmas gift. Chairperson Johnson thanked the students for their reports and excused them due to other holiday commitments.

B. Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB) Communication

MAFB School Liaison Lisa Sapp reported that three Montana schools were awarded Purple Star recognition: Riverview Elementary School and Holy Spirit Catholic School in Great Falls and Joliet Public Schools. Three Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) employees were recognized as Purple Star Champions: Mark Yaeger, GFPS Career Technical Education Pathways Advisor; Tara Murillo, Chief Joseph Elementary School Librarian; and Montana Johnson, Morningside CORE School Counselor.

C. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Hoyer presented a "Rules and Regulations" policy book (a gift from Linda Hatch from the estate of her late husband Jerry Hatch) adopted in 1929 and revised in 1935 that contained only 15 pages. Currently, 369 policies govern our District. Jessa Youngers, Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) Food Supervisor, will participate in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National School Foods Study, designed to better educate the government on the school food environment. Community partners Flying S Title and Escrow and Kellergeist and the Schalper family were recognized for the substantial food contributions to our food pantries and for donating the space for the Pop-up Shop during the Christmas Stroll. Superintendent Hoyer discussed student involvement in winter activities and special nights designated for Military Appreciation. She also presented data on concert and drama production attendance. Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the schools visited by our local legislators and trustees and informed the Board that a Legislative Transmittal Community Meeting was being planned.

1 **D. Audience Communication** – None.

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4 **ACTION ITEMS**

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6 **A. 2023-2024 Financial Statements and Audit Report** – Director of Business
7 Operations Brian Patrick reported that prior to the Board meeting, a Board Work
8 Session was held to review the Audit Report. He introduced Brian Stavenger of Eide
9 Bailly, LLP who explained that he reviewed, in detail, the 2023-2024 Financial
10 Statements and Audit Report with the Board during a work session that took place prior
11 to the Board meeting. He reviewed the highlights of the Audit Report stating that Great
12 Falls Public Schools received a clean opinion Audit report for the fiscal year ending in
13 2024. He explained important components of the Audit that included a review of the
14 projected budget compared to actual figures and recommendations from the
15 Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for Unrestricted and Committed fund
16 balances. Mr. Stavenger thanked the Business Office staff for their help during the
17 Audit.

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19 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
20 General-Purpose Financial Statements with Auditors Report for Fiscal Year ending June
21 30, 2024, as presented.

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23 **B. Unemployment Insurance Coverage – Multi-District Participation Agreement**

24 Director of Business Operations Brian Patrick explained that the Montana Schools
25 Unemployment Insurance Program (MSUIP) is a three-year agreement that provides
26 unemployment insurance to all schools who participate. The District benefits from the
27 program's capped liability. Quarterly contribution costs provide financial predictability
28 and stability for the District.

29
30 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve
31 the Montana Schools Unemployment Insurance Program Multi-District Participation
32 Agreement as presented.

33
34 **C. Location of Great Falls Education Association (GFEA) Collective Bargaining**

35 **Site** – Director of Human Resources Luke Diekhans explained that GFEA has
36 requested that upcoming bargaining meetings take place at the GFEA office building
37 rather than the GFPS District Offices.

38
39 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve
40 the use of the GFEA's building located at 511 13th Ave S, Great Falls, MT for the
41 purpose of meeting to bargain a successor agreement with the Great Falls Education
42 Association.

43
44 **D. Non-Renew Temporary, Non-Tenured Teachers with Positions Expiring June 6,**

45 **2025** – Director of Human Resources Luke Diekhans presented information regarding
46 non-renewal of temporary and non-tenured teachers whose positions will expire on
47 June 6, 2025. These employees were hired on a temporary basis and may apply for
48 positions in which they qualify through the in-district transfer process.

1 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to non-
2 renew the teachers listed as they are in temporary positions that expire June 6, 2025.
3

4 **E. Accept Low Bid for Sixteen-Foot Lawnmower** – Director of Business Operations
5 Brian Patrick stated there were two qualified bids received for a new sixteen-foot
6 lawnmower: Midland Implement and RMT Equipment. RMT Equipment submitted the
7 lowest bid of \$115,595.00.
8

9 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve
10 the acceptance of the low bid from RMT Equipment for the purchase of a sixteen-foot
11 lawnmower.
12

13 **F. Second Reading of Deleted, New and Revised Board Policies 1610 – Goals and**
14 **Objectives; 2162P (New) – Procedure for Education of Students with Disabilities Under**
15 **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 2162R (Delete) – Section 504 of the**
16 **Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”); 2320 – Field Trips, Excursions and Outdoor**
17 **Education; 3630 – Cell Phones and Other Electronic Equipment; 5430 – Volunteers;**
18 **5430F – Volunteer Agreement Form; and 8132 – Activity Trips** – Superintendent Hoyer
19 stated the policies above were reviewed on first reading at the November 25, 2024
20 Board meeting. She stated that she has not received any questions or concerns
21 regarding the changes to the policies.
22

23 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve new,
24 deleted, and revised Board Policies – **1610 – Goals and Objectives; 2162P (New) –**
25 **Procedure for Education of Students with Disabilities Under Section 504 of the**
26 **Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 2162R (Delete) – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of**
27 **1973 (“Section 504”); 2320 – Field Trips, Excursions and Outdoor Education; 3630 –**
28 **Cell Phones and Other Electronic Equipment; 5430 – Volunteers; 5430F – Volunteer**
29 **Agreement Form; and 8132 – Activity Trips.**
30
31

32 **ACTION: OTHER**

33 There were no items pulled from the Consent Agenda to discuss.
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35

36 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

37

38 **A. Astronomy Pilot Proposal for Fall 2025** – Secondary Schools Curriculum Director
39 Beckie Frisbee discussed the addition of Astronomy as a full year, upper-level
40 science elective for students. The class has not been offered in the past and it
41 would provide a new and unique elective for a third-year science credit. C.M. Russell
42 High School staff have been identified to teach the class. The course would go into
43 effect at the start of the 2025-2026 school year and be reviewed in the spring of
44 2026.
45

46 **B. 2023-2024 Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit Report** – Secondary
47 Schools Curriculum Director Beckie Frisbee reviewed enrollment numbers for both
48 AP and Dual Credit courses. She discussed the enrollment trends during the past

1 five years and explained the differences between AP courses and Dual Credit
2 courses. Both courses offer different advantages for students.

- 3
4 **C. Minimum Wage Increase to \$10.55 per hour Effective January 1, 2025** – Director
5 of Human Resources Luke Diekhans reported per federal law, the Minimum Wage
6 will increase to \$10.55 per hour on January 1, 2025. Approximately 90 employee
7 positions will be affected. The increased wages will result in approximately \$2,600
8 of additional fiscal responsibility to the District.

- 9
10 **D. First Reading of New and Revised Board Policies 1111 – *Elections*; 2410P**
11 **(New) – *Profile of a Learner*; 2410P2 (New) – *Profile of a Learner-Commitments***
12 ***and Intentions*; and 2510 – *School Wellness*** – Superintendent Hoyer reviewed
13 the recommended changes, in detail, for Board Policies 1111, 2410P, 2410P2, and
14 2510. She stated that one correction on Policy 1111, line nineteen (19) was missing
15 a number and had been corrected. She asked if anyone had any questions or
16 concerns about these policies to contact her before the next scheduled Board
17 meeting.

18
19 **E. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

20 Trustee Finnicum expressed appreciation for the annual audit process, emphasizing
21 its role in maintaining transparency and alignment within the district. He also
22 commended Riverview Elementary School and three employees on being
23 recognized as a Purple Star School and Purple Star Champions. He shared his
24 enthusiasm for student representative reports.

25 Trustee Turoski highlighted positive feedback from a legislative walkthrough at
26 Morningside CORE School. She praised Dusty Molyneaux for exceptional
27 Christmas programs and remarked on the touching poem by Conner from PGEC.
28 Trustee Bronson discussed the District's community outreach efforts, including
29 student engagement in activities like selling art and dog biscuits. He noted Mr.
30 Olson's impactful community concert involving CMR students. He applauded the
31 great performances of classic musicals by both high schools and recounted
32 successful legislative visits to Paris Gibson Education Center and Great Falls High
33 School. He stated Conner represented student perspectives well during the
34 legislative visit to Paris Gibson Education Center.

35 Trustee Sunchild shared her appreciation for Superintendent Hoyer and Executive
36 Director Boyd for their active participation as popcorn and hot dog vendors at the
37 50's-themed basketball game at Great Falls High School.

38 Trustee Thompson thanked her fellow trustees for organizing the legislative tours,
39 reflected on the emotional impact of Conner's poem, and praised the tangible data
40 demonstrating student involvement in extracurricular activities.

41 Chairperson Johnson wished everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New
42 Year.

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45 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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47 Chairperson Johnson stated the next Regular Board Meetings are scheduled for
48 Monday, January 13, 2025 and Monday, January 27, 2025.

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2 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**
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4 With no further comments or items to be discussed, Chairperson Johnson adjourned the
5 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:06 p.m.
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10 _____
11 Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

12 _____
13 Brian Patrick, Clerk