

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**  
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
3 **HELD MARCH 10, 2025**  
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 4<sup>th</sup> Street South, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day  
7 of March 2025.  
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9 Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology, informed the Board and audience that  
10 technical difficulties with the microphone feeds would prevent the audio portion of the  
11 Board meeting from being recorded. Attempts to contact the parent company for  
12 guidance prior to the Board meeting were made with the hope of having the issue  
13 resolved as soon as possible. He will work with the company to resolve this issue  
14 before the next Board meeting.  
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16 **ROLL CALL:** Brian Patrick took roll call.  
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18 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson, Chairperson  
19 Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson  
20 Bill Bronson  
21 Mark Finnicum  
22 Marlee Sunchild  
23 Amie Thompson  
24 Paige Turoski  
25

26 **Others Present:** Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Brian Patrick, Director of Business  
27 Operations; Jackie Mainwaring and Lance Boyd, Executive Directors for Student  
28 Achievement; Luke Diekhans, Director of Human Resources; and Jeff Williams, Director  
29 of Information Technology.  
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31 Also present was Tom Cabbage, Great Falls Education Association President.  
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33 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of  
34 Trustees and informed the participants and audience the meeting was being recorded  
35 per Board Policy 1420. He asked student representative Seth Royer to lead the Pledge  
36 of Allegiance.  
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39 **ADOPT AGENDA**  
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41 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to adopt the  
42 agenda as presented.  
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45 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**  
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47 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve  
48 the Consent Agenda as presented.

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**A. Minutes of the February 24, 2025, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved the minutes of the February 27, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

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

**C. Good Apple Awards** – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple Awards for: Melina Lemons, Music Teacher, Sydney Eastwood, Band Teacher, and Jason Webster, Music Teacher, East Middle School; Haleigh Bjorkman and Amanda Babbert, Occupational Therapists, Paris Gibson Education Center; Carey Hamrick, Counselor, Valley View Elementary School; Lisa McCurdy, Fourth Grade Teacher, Riverview Elementary School; Holly McMullen and Ev Baker, Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT), Riverview Elementary School; Heather Alleman, Substitute Teacher, District Wide; and Nicole Moon, Resource 1 Teacher, Meadow Lark Elementary School.

**D. Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35** – The Board approved the Montana School Bus Driver Certificate – OPI TR-35 for the individual listed in the agenda.

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

**F. Student Activity Accounts for January 2025** – The Board approved the Student Activity Accounts Monthly Report for January 2025.

**G. Great Falls High School Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) State Leadership Conference Travel Request** – The Board approved the Great Falls High School HOSA Club travel to the State Leadership Conference in Billings, Montana on April 1-2, 2025.

**H. Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School Health Occupations of America (HOSA) State Leadership Conference Travel Request** – The Board approved the CMR High School HOSA Club travel to the State Leadership Conference in Billings, Montana on April 1-2, 2025.

**I. Donation of a 1998 Ford Ranger** – The Board approved the gift of a 1998 Ford Ranger from Brett Tracy to C.M. Russell High School’s Automotive/Industrial Technology Department with the understanding that funds from the future sale of the vehicle, or its parts, will be returned to the C.M. Russell High School Automotive/Industrial Technology Department.

**J. Great Falls High School (GFHS) Skills USA State Conference Participation Request** – The Board approved the GFHS Skills USA students’ participation in the State Skills USA competitions in Great Falls, Montana April 3-5, 2025.

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**COMMUNICATION**

**A. Report of the Student Representatives**

C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Emerson Hamma and Lydia Comstock reported CMR students, staff, and families supported the *Lost Enzyme Project* at the recent crosstown basketball games and have now raised over \$20,000 in the past two years for Beta-Mannosidosis research. Academic highlights included hands-on learning experiences in science classes, such as volcanic eruptions, muscle modeling, chemistry competitions, and a genetics-focused field trip. Student leaders attended the District II Student Council Conference, with a CMR student being elected the new District II secretary. Business Professionals of America (BPA) students are in Billings for competitions, and visual arts students showcased work at multiple exhibits, including the State Capitol. Performing arts students participated in regional festivals and concerts, with upcoming Music-in-our-Schools-Month (MIOSM) performances. Speech and Debate completed their season with five national qualifiers and are preparing for the Emerging Voices Debate taking place in May. A team of students participated in the Academic World Quest, placed 9<sup>th</sup>, and had opportunities to engage in several cultural learning experiences. The Peer Mentor Group continues supporting students by maintaining hygiene hangers in both the female and male restrooms at CMR. Maddy Deiter was recognized as CMR’s first female wrestling state champion and Georgia Hatzenbeller broke the state record in the 100 meter breast stroke at the state swimming competition. Congratulations were also extended to two football athletes who signed letters of intent to play college football. Students and staff are excited to host the third annual *Operation Warmheart* basketball games against Malmstrom Air force Base on March 20<sup>th</sup>. Spring sports are now underway, and Spirit Week is scheduled for March 17-21. Lastly, Excellence in Education students and teachers were honored, recognizing their dedication and impact in Great Falls Public Schools.

Great Falls High School student representatives Brooklyn Griffin and Seth Royer reported Great Falls High School (GFHS) successfully hosted the Montana Association of Student Councils (MASC) District II Conference on March 5th, featuring guest speakers Montana Supreme Court Justice Cory Swanson and University of Montana Vice President Leslie Webb, who shared insights on leadership. GFHS student council public relations (PR) members also conducted a presentation on how effective communication impacts schools. GFHS artists were honored with exhibits at the State Capitol and a school mural project. Leadership High School students explored sustainable agriculture with visits to Smoot Honey, Big Stone Colony, and Eagle Mount. Students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes showcased classroom innovations to city commissioners, emphasizing career preparation. The student council raised \$3,446 for the Salvation Army’s annual bell-ringing campaign, securing the school competition trophy for the third consecutive year. GFHS cheerleaders hosted a successful mini-camp, engaging younger students in school spirit. In academics, students engaged in hands-on learning, from Shakespearean plays to chemistry labs and welding projects. Winter sports teams produced a girls’ swimming state title, two boys state wrestling champions, and strong performances in basketball. The school will host a Parent Empowerment Series on March 11 to address online safety concerns.

1 Additionally, the GFHS Library’s “Song of the Week” contest continues to engage  
2 students with fun prizes. The student representatives encourage the public to keep up  
3 with student activities via the PR Team’s social media updates.  
4

5 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representatives Conner Reisinger and  
6 Mercury Baez reported PGEC recently held a three-day student wellness event,  
7 focusing on resilience-building topics such as mental health, addiction, and healthy  
8 relationships, with local businesses providing support. The school also successfully  
9 hosted one of its three annual blood drives, thanks to Jobs for Montana Graduates  
10 (JMG) student volunteers. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, PGEC will welcome 150 students to a Reality  
11 Fair, a financial literacy simulation sponsored by United Way and Bravera Bank.  
12 PGEC proudly celebrates alumni achievements, including Kylie Idelson-LaFountain,  
13 former Little Shell Princess, now competing for Miss Montana, and Kyle Byrne, winner  
14 of the People’s Choice Award at the *Chefs, Champagne, and Art* fundraiser. PGEC also  
15 hosted the Special Olympics Youth Leadership Summit, promoting inclusivity among  
16 secondary students. Student Jordan Laughlin was honored as the 2025 ACE Award  
17 recipient from the Exchange Club of Great Falls. She was recognized for resilience and  
18 academic excellence. Finally, PGEC’s Mother Shark recently gave birth to seven  
19 babies, offering students an educational and hands-on exploration of marine life.  
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## 21 **B. Superintendent’s Report**

22 Superintendent Hoyer recognized state athletic achievements, highlighting Coach  
23 McNamee’s ninth Swimming state championship win and a new state record set by  
24 Georgia Hatzenbeller, earning her All-American honors. Coach Carranza celebrated  
25 two-time state wrestling champions Kale Baumann and Cael Floerchinger, with GFH  
26 placing third overall. CMR’s Madalyn Deiter made history as the first female state  
27 wrestling champion to be honored on the school’s Wall of Fame. Superintendent Hoyer  
28 expressed gratitude to parents for their support of student-athletes. Lisa Sapp, School  
29 Liaison Special, and Master Sergeant Jennifer Porter of Malmstrom Air Force Base  
30 invited the public to the *Operation Warmheart* basketball showcase, a charity event  
31 supporting airmen and families in need. Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) is  
32 celebrating two key employee groups in March: warehouse staff (March 3) and skilled  
33 trades workers (March 7). She also recognized Angi Schei, a 6th-grade teacher at  
34 Mountain View Elementary School, for her dedication to students, and Jordann Lankford  
35 Forster for being appointed to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Montana Advisory  
36 Committee. In honor of Youth Art Month, student artwork is on display at various  
37 venues, with teachers ensuring safe and proper exhibitions. Superintendent Hoyer  
38 reminded the public of three open trustee positions, with four candidates currently filed.  
39 She recognized the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC) program for earning  
40 a perfect 95.5 score on its Formal Unit Assessment. Students Lydia Comstock and Vail  
41 Van Voast will facilitate the legislative transmittal open house meeting coming up on  
42 Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>. Superintendent Hoyer acknowledged Human Resources (HR)  
43 staff for their efforts in managing the continual year-round cycle of retirements and  
44 resignations. Since January 1, 2025, the HR department has been made aware of fifty-  
45 two retirements/resignations, which is consistent with historic data for this time of year.  
46 Thirty-one positions are currently open.  
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## 48 **C. Audience Communication – none.**

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3 **ACTION ITEMS**  
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5 **A. Financial Report and Check Register for January 2025** – Director of Business  
6 Operations, Brian Patrick, summarized the report and check register for January 2025,  
7 explaining the report included budgeted funds in Food Service, which is on target for  
8 this time period.  
9

10 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve  
11 the January 2025 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #137503 - #137954 in  
12 the amount of \$1,723,153.23 and Payroll checks #83004 – #83210 in the amount of  
13 \$707,708.49.  
14

15 **B. Wide Area Network (WAN) E-Rate Bid Award** – Director of Information  
16 Technology, Jeff Williams, reported on three bids received for the Category I WAN fiber  
17 network connection between all District locations. The low bidder was WANRack, our  
18 current provider. The bid included the option to renew for 3 years to provide budget  
19 stability. E-Rate will provide funding for 80% (\$5,004.80) of the contract, and Great  
20 Falls Public Schools will provide the remaining 20% (\$1,251.20).  
21

22 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the  
23 award for contract services, contingent upon E-Rate funding, for the Wide Area Network  
24 (WAN) to WANRack where E-Rate funding will provide 80% of the cost at \$5,004.80 per  
25 month and the District will fund the remaining 20% of the cost at \$1,251.20 per month.  
26

27 **C. Network Firewall E-Rate Bid Award** – Director of Information Technology, Jeff  
28 Williams, explained the District firewall, the primary point of cybersecurity for the entire  
29 District, is at end-of-life. The District requested bids through the established E-Rate  
30 process and received seven submissions. The bids were evaluated, and Pine Cove  
31 was awarded the lowest qualified bidder. Four options with different devices were  
32 evaluated and Option 3 was chosen, with E-Rate providing 80% (\$32,340.75) of the  
33 cost and Great Falls Public Schools providing the remaining 20% (\$8,085.19).  
34

35 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to  
36 approve the purchase of the selected firewall, contingent upon E-Rate funding, where  
37 E-Rate funding will provide 80% of the cost (\$32,340.75) and the District 20% of the  
38 cost (\$8,085.19).  
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40 **D. 2026-2027 School Year Calendar** – Director of Human Resources, Luke Diekhans,  
41 discussed the annual process of adopting an official school year calendar, reminding  
42 the audience that the District always works a year in advance. The Calendar  
43 Committee met three times and narrowed down the choices to the top three calendar  
44 options submitted. The three options were made available for public and staff comment  
45 for a period of two weeks. The results were reviewed by the Committee and calendar  
46 Option A is being submitted for approval.  
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1 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, made a motion to approve  
2 calendar Option A for the 2026-2027 school year as presented.

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4 Trustees Finnicum, Sunchild, and Thompson, asked clarifying questions including who  
5 served on the committee, if the District has ever used an emergency make-up day, and  
6 if the 815 responses received were a good average from past years. Trustee  
7 Skornogoski, who served on the Committee, and Mr. Diekhans provided explanations.

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9 Motion passed unanimously.

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12 **ACTION: OTHER**

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

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16 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

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18 **A. 2024-2025 Indigenous People Report** – Dugan Coburn, Great Falls Public Schools  
19 (GFPS) Director of Indian Education, leads Title VI and Indian Education for All (IEFA)  
20 efforts, supporting 1,640 Native students across 67 tribes within GFPS. The district’s  
21 Native graduation rate stands at 60%, consistent with the national average and the  
22 highest number of Native graduates to date. Upcoming events include an open Indian  
23 Parent Advisory Committee (IPAC) meeting, set up of lodges, a bison harvest, a naming  
24 ceremony, and a community powwow. All GFPS students and college graduates are  
25 invited to be a part of the Grand Entry during the powwow. The Eagle Feather  
26 Ceremony will be held for the first time on May 29 in the Great Falls High School  
27 Fieldhouse, followed by dinner in the HUB.

28 Youth Development Specialists (YDS) Serena, Sheila, and Calvin are actively engaging  
29 students through monthly cultural activities such as tribal identification, traditional  
30 games, and Indigenous literature appreciation. December saw 645 student  
31 engagements, with 507 in January. Cultural initiatives at CMR and GFH include tribal  
32 flag presentations, ribbon skirt-making, and banner displays. Instructional coaches have  
33 offered ten courses, completed eight, with 125 participants, integrating Indigenous  
34 culture into academics, such as beading lessons tied to math instruction. Two additional  
35 PIR sessions will be offered.

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37 **B. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments –**

38 Trustees expressed appreciation for various district efforts and accomplishments.

39 Trustee Thompson commended Coach McNamee’s leadership, recognized Angi Shei’s  
40 contributions, and acknowledged HR’s dedication.

41 Trustee Bronson praised the district for highlighting student achievements and looked  
42 forward to the upcoming legislative meeting.

43 Trustee Skornogoski shared insights from a Little Russell tour, observed Jordann  
44 Lankford-Forster’s classroom impact, and discussed legislative implications related to  
45 Senate Bill 599.

46 Chairperson Johnson emphasized the Board’s shared commitment to student success  
47 despite diverse ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives.

48 Trustee Turoski noted strong engagement at the recent Town Hall budget meeting.

1 Trustee Finnicum highlighted Montana’s Indigenous representation and legislative  
2 progress.  
3 Trustee Sunchild praised the positive impact of the Indigenous program and the  
4 district’s strong reputation in legislative discussions.  
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7 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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9 Chairperson Johnson reviewed upcoming events, including the Legislative Transmittal  
10 Open House Wednesday, March 12, a Board Work Session on Student Achievement  
11 March 17, Board Budget Committee meeting March 18, and the next Regular Board  
12 Meeting on Monday, March 24.  
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15 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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17 With no further comments or items to be discussed, Chairperson Johnson adjourned the  
18 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:10 p.m.  
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Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

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Brian Patrick, Clerk  
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