

Hellgate Elementary Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting February 10th, 2025

6:00 p.m.

OPENING

The Board of Trustees of Hellgate Elementary School District #4 met in regular session on Monday, February 10, 2025. The meeting was held in-person. The meeting was called to order by Vice Board Chairman, Rich Thornock. Trustees participating were: Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier. Board Chairman, Tom McLaughlin participated and voted on agenda items via zoom. Superintendent Molly Blakely and District Clerk Justine Reese were present for the meeting. District staff participating included Erin Ellis (Curriculum Coordinator), Brent Heist (Bldg. 3 Assistant Principal), Tiffany Hobbs (Bldg. 3 Principal), Brendan Brown (Spec.Ed. Director), Jamie Courville (Bldg. 4 Principal), Chris Clevenger (Bldg. 1 Principal), and Julia McCarthy-McLavery (Bldg 2. Principal), Kelsey Salmela (Payroll Clerk), Certified Staff: Jackie Lippert, Lindsay Depuydt, Nick Weller, Sara Bermingham, Amanda McDanold, Christy Wasem, Dawn Deden, Heidi Armstrong, Teige Kolis, Devon Honzel. Community members in attendance included: Megan Powell (parent). There were up to 27 total guests/participants in the meeting, in-person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at the meeting.

HEEA

Sara Bermingham represented the HEEA acknowledged a large teacher participation at the meeting related to an agenda item.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

There was no recognition at this meeting.

BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

Trustees reviewed the monthly newsletter from OPI.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES-REGULAR MEETING 1-13-2025

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2025 regular meeting. There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Tom Cook. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF THE WARRANTS-JANUARY 2025

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to approve the January 2025 claims. There were clarifying questions from the Trustees. The motion was seconded by Lori Christensen. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF BUDGET REPORTS

Trustees reviewed the budget reports for January 2025.

REVIEW OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve the January 2025 Student Activities Report. There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Rod Sharkey. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

SCHOOL LEVY AND TRUSTEE ELECTION CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to adopt a resolution to set the trustee and levy election date for Tuesday, May 6, 2025. The election, if needed, will be a mail-in ballot conducted by the Missoula County Elections Office (available in official board packet). There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by

Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

MTSBA MEMBERSHIP FY26:

A motion was made by Tom Cook to authorize the renewal of the Hellgate Elementary membership in the Montana School Board Association (MTSBA) for the 2025-2026 school year. The annual membership fee is \$9530.00 which is a decrease of \$352.00 (a 3.6% decrease). There were no questions regarding the item. The motion was seconded by Rod Sharkey. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CLASSIFIED STAFF HIRING CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to approve the hiring of the following:

- Kristen Matson, school nurse, effective January 21, 2025
- Chelsea Howlett, Paraprofessional, effective January, 21, 2025
- Porter Martin-Weston, Custodian, effective January 15, 2025

There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

SUBSTITUTE HIRING CONSIDERATIONS:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve the hiring of the following substitute teachers:

- Grace Niswanger, Chloe Grandeen, Faith Hardee, and Shelby Johnson

There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

COACHING CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve the hiring of the following to coach wrestling:

- Mike Plautz: Head Coach
- Jason Brunner, Eric Forde, Brandon Ihde: Assistant Coaches

There clarifying questions from the Trustees. The motion was seconded by Rod Sharkey. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously

SPELLING BEE COORDINATOR CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to approve the hiring of the following be Spelling Bee Coordinators:

- Peggy Racicot and Margaret Finlay

There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Rod Sharkey. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

SCIENCE FAIR COORDINATOR CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve the hiring of the following be Science Fair Coordinators for grades 2-6:

- Heide Armstrong, Julie deArrieta, Bobbi Rodriguez, Sheyla Gallagher, Ava Burmeister, and Molly Jungwirth

There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Tom Cook. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED STAFF SABBATICAL CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Tom Cook to approve a sabbatical for Ms. Lindsay DePuydt, Kindergarten teacher, for the 2025-2026 school year (letter available in official board packet). Clarifying questions were asked by the Trustees. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED STAFF SABBATICAL CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to approve a sabbatical for Mr. RJ Wimett, 8th grade teacher, for the 2025- 2026 school year (letter available in official board packet). There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Lori Christensen. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CLASSIFIED STAFF RETIREMENT:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve the retirement of Ms. Shirley Edwards, Title I paraprofessional, effective June 12, 2025 (letter available in official board packet). There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Rod Sharkey. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CLASSIFIED STAFF TERMINATION:

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Ryan to approve the termination of Kurt Wambaugh, paraprofessional, effective February 4, 2025. There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Lori Christensen. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REQUEST TO VOID STALE WARRANTS:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to authorize Ms. Justine Reese, Hellgate Elementary District Clerk/Business Manager, to destroy stale warrants that have not been cashed by the recipient for over one year. There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE RETIREMENT INCENTIVE:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve a one-time retirement incentive to members of the administrative staff, consistent with the administration retirement agreements the school district has approved for other administrators who have retired from the school district (contract available in official board packet). There was significant discussion regarding this agenda item. Certified teachers expressed concerns and impacts of offering the incentive only to administrators and requested certified teachers be considered as well if the incentive is offered. The Trustees listened to the participants then further discussed the benefits and conflicts as well as the history of the retirement incentive (not specific to administrators). The Trustees came to a unanimous decision that a one-time administrative retirement incentive would not be offered during this school year. The motion was seconded by Tom McLaughlin. Voting in favor of the motion were none. Voting against the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. The motion failed by a unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE RETIREMENT:

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to approve the retirement of Mr. Chris Clevenger, principal of building #1 effective June 20, 2025 (letter available in official board packet). There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPEN ENROLLMENT/HB 2023 DATE FOR 2025-2026:

A motion was made by Tom Cook to approve the dates for Open Enrollment (HB 203) beginning Friday February 14, 2025 and concluding on Friday, March 14, 2025. There was clarifying questions related to extending the deadline. The motion was seconded by Lori Christensen. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CLASS SIZE LIMITATIONS FOR GRADES K-8 AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Lori Christensen to approve class size limitations and reserved spaces for grades K-8 in order to ensure in-district students are guaranteed entrance to Hellgate Elementary after the passage of HB 203. Class sizes shall adhere to the state regulations of:

- K -2nd - no more than 20 students per classroom
- 3rd-4th - no more than 28 students per classroom
- 5th - 8th - no more than 30 students per classroom

There was a question asked comparing this information to last year's, Superintendent Blakely provided clarify. The motion was seconded by Rod Sharkey. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Lori Christensen, Rod Sharkey, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Montana Principal of the Year: Superintendent Blakely congratulated Mr. Courville on his great accomplishment of being awarded Montana's Principal of the Year 2025. February 25th Rob Watson will present a plaque to Mr. Courville for his accomplishment.

2025-2026 Academic Calendar Options: Superintendent Blakely presented the different calendar options and the survey results submitted from district staff. Missoula County Public Schools has not yet adopted a calendar, Hellgate Elementary will wait to vote on a calendar until after MCPS has adopted.

\$25,000 Innovative Tax Credit Award: The district received \$25,000 from three generous donors, through the MT Department of Revenue Innovative Tax Credit program.

Transportation Grant: The fifth-grade team received a grant to offset transportation costs to attend a field trip to the Missoula Art Museum.

5 Valleys Honor Band Grant: Hellgate Elementary received \$2,500 to participate in the 5 Valleys Honor Band.

Garden Donation: The Hellgate school garden received \$700 from SeedMoney Group for supplies.

Special Olympics donation: Special Education teacher, Haley Patzner, applied for the Ed Rose Memorial Scholarship and was awarded \$300 for the district's Life Skills program.

Legislative Update: House Bills

- 252: STARS Act is gaining momentum and will likely pass through the House and the Senate
- 168: ANB funding for Special Education Pre-K aged student
- 320: Income Tax Credit Bill is gaining traction at this point

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no committee reports at the meeting.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Building 1: Chris Clevenger reported the DIBELS data was looking good in grades 2-3. Overall, everything is going well and he appreciate the teamwork in his building.

Building 2: Julia McCarthy-McLavery reported preparing and registering the Early Literacy Program students for the upcoming school year, currently 33 students are signed up for testing and 60 students are signed up for Kindergarten registration. The Principal's attended the Montana Principals Conference in Helena and celebrated Mr. Courville on his accomplishment.

Building 3: Tiffany Hobbs reported on the 100th day of school activities. She thanked the counselors for their work in the building. She recognized the drama production and all the work that it takes, and thanked the maintenance department for their support. The Hellgate students competing in State Robotics were unable to participate due to weather related road closures.

Building 4: Jamie Courville reported building 4 completed MAST testing, wrestling had just started and the girls' basketball season was in progress. He acknowledged his of MT Principal of the Year award.

SPED: Brendan Brown provided an update of the life skills program and thanked Representative Jonathan Karlen for representing HB 168 in the legislative session.

Curriculum: Erin Ellis reported grades K-2 testing data was great and will provide the Trustees with a full update at the March board meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting of the Board will be March 10, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.