

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD MARCH 24, 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 4th Street South, on the 24th day
7 of March 2025.

8
9 Director of Information Technology, Jeff Williams, stated that the technical difficulties
10 with the microphone system at the March 10, 2025 Board meeting have been resolved
11 and this meeting is being recorded.

12
13 Vice-Chairperson Skornogoski reported that, per Board Policy 1420, all Board meetings
14 are recorded and posted on the District website for one (1) year.

15
16 **ROLL CALL:** Brian Patrick took roll call.

17
18 **Trustees Present:** Kim Skornogoski – Vice-Chairperson
19 Gordon Johnson
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; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; Jackie Mainwaring and
28 Lance Boyd, Executive Directors of Student Achievement; and Stephanie Becker,
29 Director of the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation. Also present were Tom
30 Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association President and Lisa Sapp, Malmstrom Air
31 Force Base (MAFB) liaison.

32
33 At 5:30 pm, Vice-Chairperson Skornogoski called to order the Regular Meeting of the
34 Board of Trustees.

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37 **ADOPT AGENDA**

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39 Motion – Gordon Johnson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to adopt
40 the agenda as presented.

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42
43 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

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45 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve
46 the Consent Agenda as presented.
47

1 A. **Minutes of the March 10, 2025, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved the
2 minutes of the March 10, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

3
4 B. **Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.

5
6 C. **Good Apple Awards** - The Board approved the nominations of Good Apple Awards for
7 West Elementary Schools' Food Service employees Jerry Smith, Michelle Custer, and
8 Mikayla Marques, and Satellite Kitchen Lead Amanda Hust; Cindy Arnold, Custodian at
9 Mountain View Elementary School; and Eliza Kobasa, Core Teacher Aide at Longfellow
10 Elementary School.

11
12 D. **Student Activity Accounts for February 2025** – The Board approved the Student
13 Activity Accounts Monthly Report for February 2025.

14
15 E. **Donation Towards Purchase of Chromebooks and Chromebook Cart** – The
16 Board approved to accept the donation of \$9,124.80 from Riverview Elementary
17 School's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) with thanks. These funds will be used
18 towards the purchase of thirty-two (32) chromebooks and a chromebook cart.

19
20 F. **C.M. Russell High School Skills USA State Conference Participation Request** –
21 The Board approved C.M. Russell High School (CMR) Skills USA students to participate in
22 the State Skills USA Vocational Competitions from April 3-5, 2025, in Great Falls, Montana.

23
24 G. **C.M. Russell High School Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)**
25 **Career Development Conference Travel Request** – The Board approved CMR DECA
26 advisor, Conner Schulte, and students' travel request to Orlando, Florida April 26-29, 2025.

27
28
29 **COMMUNICATION**

30
31 A. **Character Strong – Riverview Elementary School** – Nicole Heintzelman,
32 Riverview Elementary School Principal, along with ten (10) student representatives
33 reported on what cooperation, the *Character Strong* word of the month, means to
34 Riverview Elementary School and how they implement *Character Strong* within their
35 school.

36
37 B. **Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB) Communication** – Malmstrom Air Force Base
38 (MAFB) liaison, Lisa Sapp, reported that *Operation Warm Heart* was a success, and the
39 C.M. Russell High School girls won their basketball game and Malmstrom team won the
40 boys basketball game in double overtime. Great Falls Public Schools will hold a Purple
41 Star Recognition Event on April 10, 2025, for the three (3) individuals and one (1)
42 school who are *Purple Star* Honorees. She also reviewed events going on throughout
43 the District in the month of April for the Month of the Military Child.

44
45 C. **Superintendent Report** –
46 Superintendent Hoyer congratulated Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) Bigfoot Archery
47 Club on becoming state champions for the third time. Dugan Coburn introduced the
48 students who participate in the club and recognized the students who placed.

1 The District, Montana School Board Association (MTSBA), School Administrators of
2 Montana (SAM), and Montana Association of School Business Officers (MASBO) are
3 continuously monitoring updates on the discussion of the United States Department of
4 Education. Superintendent Hoyer also stated that the District is closely monitoring
5 legislative bills and conversations taking place in Helena, Montana and reviewed a
6 variety of proposed bills and how they would impact the District.
7 Superintendent Hoyer recognized Chief Joseph Elementary School Librarian, Tara
8 Murillo; Morningside CORE Elementary School Counselor, Montana Johnson; and
9 GFPS Career Pathways Advisor, Mark Yeager, for becoming *Purple Star* Honorees.
10 She also stated that April is nationally acknowledged as the Month of the Military Child.
11 Great Falls Public Schools hosted its 53rd Annual Bosses' Night on March 19, 2025.
12 Seventy-eight (78) community partners were recognized for offering 110 job skills
13 opportunities to Secondary Life Skills students. She reviewed the history of awards that
14 are given at this event and acknowledged the awardees.
15 High School House and Build Montana students had the opportunity to tour the new
16 Montana State University (MSU) Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing building;
17 Build Montana is also being invited to tour Montana Army National Guard; and Business
18 students shadowed D.A. Davidson employees in the *Business In A Day* event.
19 Superintendent Hoyer thanked these community partners for providing these
20 opportunities for our students.
21 C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student, Lydia Comstock, was selected by the
22 Montana Association of Student Councils' Executive Board to serve a two-year term on
23 the Board of Public Education as a Student Representative.
24 Superintendent Hoyer stated that the District is in the third round of in-district hiring and
25 there are currently twelve (12) elementary and twenty-five (25) secondary positions
26 open.
27 She reported data on the number of high school student athletes by sport and season.
28 Lastly, Superintendent Hoyer stated that GFPS is working closely with the Board of
29 Public Health and school nurses to prepare for cases involving measles in the event of
30 community exposure.

31
32 **D. Audience Communication – None**

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35 **ACTION ITEMS**

36
37 **A. Financial Report and Check Register for February 2025** - Director of Business
38 Operations, Brian Patrick, presented the financial report and check register for February
39 2025.

40
41 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
42 February 2025 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #137955 - #138351 in the
43 amount of \$1,872,988.21 and Payroll checks #83211 - #83457 in the amount of
44 \$562,588.17 as presented.

45
46 **B. Board Budget Committee Recommendation Regarding an Elementary and/or High
47 School Levy Including the Related Ballot Proposition and Resolution** - Trustee Mark
48 Finnicum explained that the Board Budget Committee held a community meeting on
49 March 18, 2025, and deliberated after hearing administrative options and public

1 comment. With ample reserves available to address the projected budget shortfall, the
2 Board Budget Committee recommended to forego asking for additional support of
3 District programs via a levy for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Trustee Finnicum stated that
4 a sample ballot proposition and resolution calling for a levy was included as part of this
5 agenda item for informational purposes only.

6
7 Motion – Gordon Johnson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, to approve the Board Budget
8 Committee’s recommendation to not request a levy in the 2025-2026 fiscal year as
9 presented.

10
11 Trustee Bronson asked what the District would do if the current legislative session did
12 not result in a beneficial monetary outcome for the District. Director of Business
13 Operations, Brian Patrick stated that, by law, during legislative years the District has the
14 ability to request to run a levy until August 1st.

15
16 Bill Bronson provided an amendment to the motion in which the District could revisit the
17 option of running a levy election at a later date rather than the Trustee Election
18 scheduled on May 6th. This would be contingent upon the outcome of school funding
19 decisions made during the legislative session.

20
21 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Gordon Johnson, passed unanimously to approve
22 the amendment to the original motion to not request a levy election in conjunction with
23 the May 6th Trustee election for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, but to allow the District to re-
24 evaluate the financial position of the District after the legislative session. If needed, the
25 District could call for and hold a levy election prior to August 1, 2025 as per 20-20-
26 105(5), Montana Code Annotated (MCA).

27
28 Community member and GFEA President Tom Cabbage expressed his concern
29 regarding not running a levy in conjunction with the May 6th Trustee Election. He is
30 concerned with how the projected budget shortfall would impact District programs.

31
32 The Board unanimously approved the amended motion to not request a levy election in
33 the 2025-2026 fiscal year in conjunction with the May election as presented. The motion
34 includes allowing the District to re-evaluate the financial position of the District after the
35 legislative session and, if needed, request a levy prior to August 1st.

36
37 **C. Superintendent Evaluation Process** - Trustee Thompson explained that per Board
38 Policy 6110, the Superintendent is evaluated annually. She said the timeline and
39 evaluation tool are included in the agenda. She reviewed the timeline and encouraged
40 public comment by completing an electronic evaluation survey that will be posted on the
41 District’s website on March 28, 2025, or as public comment at the April 28, 2025 Board
42 meeting. She stated that the electronic evaluation survey must be completed by April
43 23, 2025. The Board’s evaluation is due to Trustee Thompson by May 1st. The Board
44 will complete the Superintendent’s evaluation at the May 12, 2025, Board meeting.

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46 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Gordon Johnson, passed unanimously to adopt
47 the Superintendent Evaluation process and instrument as presented.

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2 **ACTION: OTHER**
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4 There were no items extracted from the Consent Agenda to discuss.
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7 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**
8

9 **A. RESTART Program Update** – RESTART Program Liaison, Cory Reeves, reported
10 that Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) began the two (2) year RESTART pilot program
11 this year in collaboration with Cascade County Youth Court Services. This program
12 allows GFPS to work with at risk students who are in significant danger of dropping out
13 of school. This program allows Mr. Reeves to work on academic, social, and work force
14 training in collaboration with Alliance for Youth, Youth Court Services, Alluvion Health,
15 Great Falls Transit, Great Falls Library, McDonalds, Domino’s Pizza, Schulte’s, Career
16 and Readiness Center and Future Build to get students reengaged and on a pathway to
17 success. Mr. Reeves stated that seven (7) students have completed the program; seven
18 (7) students are currently enrolled; three (3) students dropped the program, however,
19 one (1) student is interested in restarting; and one (1) student moved to another city.
20 RESTART currently has an overall 88.12% attendance rate since the program started.
21 One (1) student reported on his experience and is thankful for the opportunity to
22 participate in the program.
23

24 Trustee Finnicum and Thompson thanked Mr. Reeves for his work with this program.
25

26 **B. Great Falls Public Schools Foundation Grants and Heisey Scholarship Update -**
27 Director of the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation, Stephanie Becker, updated the
28 Board on the restricted grant program and the progress that has been made in its
29 second year of implementation. In March, the Foundation Board of Directors voted on
30 the recommended large grants including Community Collaboration, Learning
31 Enhancement and Immersive Professional Learning grants, and these grants have just
32 been awarded. She reported on the sixty-six (66) mini grants that have currently been
33 awarded, and she also recognized the twenty (20) Heisey Teacher Scholarship award
34 recipients who will receive \$1,000 to further their academic education.
35

36 Trustee Johnson thanked Stephanie and the Foundation Board for their dedication and
37 work.
38

39 **C. First Reading of New Family and Consumer Science (FCS) and Business**
40 **Know-Understand-Dos (KUDs)** – Secondary Curriculum Program Coordinator, Beckie
41 Frisbee, stated that the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) adopted new Career and
42 Technical Educational (CTE) standards in 2021. Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS)
43 CTE courses used the former state standards and national standards to guide their
44 instruction toward career pathways to meet industry standards. She stated that the new
45 KUDs address the work ethics or soft skills students need in their desired pathway
46 careers as well as the specific skills. Business and Family and Consumer Science relied
47 on national standards to update and refresh their standards. This updates their KUDs to
48 reflect changes in industry needs and updates in technology. KUDs will be posted on

1 the District website and copies will be available in the Curriculum office for teachers and
2 community members to view for the next two (2) weeks, until the April 14, 2025 Board
3 meeting when action will be taken.
4

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

6 Trustees Thompson, Finnicum, Sunchild, and Bronson thanked Tom Cabbage for his
7 comments regarding the District’s decision to not request a levy election in conjunction
8 with the May 6th Trustee election.

9 Trustees Finnicum, Sunchild, and Skornogoski thanked Stephanie Becker and the
10 Foundation Board for their work and support.

11 Trustees Sunchild and Skornogoski thanked Cory Reeves for his work with the
12 RESTART program.

13 Trustee Johnson stated how much he enjoys hearing from the elementary students on
14 the *Character Strong* program. He also thanked Superintendent Hoyer for her report on
15 high school athletics participation. He, Trustee Finnicum, and Trustee Bronson thanked
16 Budget Committee members and thanked Brian Patrick for their work.

17 Trustee Turoski is excited to see how the RESTART program progresses and thanked
18 the community partners for their involvement.

19 Trustee Bronson acknowledged the three (3) legislators who participated in the
20 Community Town Hall meeting on Monday, March 6, 2025, and thanked them for their
21 contributions during this legislative session. He also spoke on the Districts’ decision to
22 not run a levy with the May 6th Trustee election and how the legislative session will have
23 an impact on the possibility of running a levy at a later time.

24 Trustee Skornogoski reported that she and Trustee Turoski have been in conversations
25 with vendors regarding the upcoming math curriculum changes.
26
27

28 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

29
30 Vice-Chairperson Skornogoski said the next Regular Board Meetings are scheduled for
31 Monday, April 14, 2025, and Monday, April 28, 2025.
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34 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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36 Vice Chairperson Skornogoski adjourned the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
37 at 7:17 p.m.
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Kim Skornogoski, Vice-Chairperson

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Brian Patrick, Clerk