

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD JULY 21, 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 21st day
7 of July 2025.

8
9 Chairperson Johnson reported that, per Board Policy 1420, all Board meetings are
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 Craig Duff - Excused
18 Marlee Sunchild
19 Amie Thompson - Excused
20 Paige Turoski
21

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

27
28 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
29 Trustees and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.
30
31

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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37

38 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

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40 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve
41 the Consent Agenda as presented with special thanks to Malmstrom Air Force Base for
42 their donation.
43

44 **A. Minutes of the June 23, 2025, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved the
45 minutes of the June 23, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as presented.
46

47 **B. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.
48

1 **C. Good Apple Awards** - The Board approved the nominations of Good Apple Awards for
2 Justin Ziessler, Administrative Assistant at the District Offices and Sanna Beerman,
3 Occupational Therapist at Paris Gibson Education Center.
4

5 **D. Montana School Bus Driver's Certificates – OPI TR-35's** – The Board approved
6 the Montana Bus Drivers' Certificates – OPI TR-35's for the individuals listed in the
7 agenda.
8

9 **E. Centerville Public Schools Bus Stop Request Within the Great Falls Public
10 School Boundaries** – The Board approved the request for Centerville Public Schools
11 to enter the District with two bus routes, allowing one to stop within the Great Falls
12 Public School District boundaries for the 2025-2026 school year.
13

14 **F. Belt Public School District Bus Stop Request Within Great Falls Public School
15 District Boundaries** – The Board approved the request to allow Belt Public Schools to
16 enter the District with a route to pick up students at the Foothills Ranch subdivision
17 within Great Falls Public School District boundaries for the 2025-2026 school year.
18

19 **G. Sun River Valley District Bus Stop Request Within the Great Falls Public
20 School District Boundaries** – The Board approved the request to allow Sun River
21 School District a bus stop within the Great Falls Public School District boundaries for the
22 2025-2026 school year.
23

24 **H. Vaughn School District Bus Stop Request Within the Great Falls Public School
25 District Boundaries** – The Board approved the request to allow Vaughn School District
26 bus stops within the Great Falls Public School District boundaries for the 2025-2026
27 school year.
28

29 **I. Donation of Flat Screen Monitors and Keyboards from Malmstrom Air Force
30 Base (MAFB)** - The Board approved the donation of sixty (60) flat screen monitors and
31 twenty-five (25) keyboards from Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB) with thanks.
32

33 **COMMUNICATION**

34

35 **A. Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) Foundation Report** –
36 Great Falls Public Schools Foundation Director, Stephanie Becker, introduced the
37 Foundation's Executive Committee members, Foundation Board member transitions,
38 organizational restructure, and highlighted the pillars of the foundation: Student and
39 Teacher Recognition, Building Enhancements, Scholarships, Grants, and Food
40 Pantries. The Truck Raffle, which raised significant funds last year, continues to be the
41 major fundraiser, with active student participation.
42 Immediate Past Chairperson, Joanie Agamenoni, recognized Amber Lloyd, Science
43 teacher at Great Falls High School and Jessica Douglas, Librarian at Morningside
44 CORE Elementary School as the recipients of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
45 Teachers of the Year Award. She stated that the *Gold Star Award* Program donations
46 more than doubled over the previous year thanks to the increased promotion and
47 coordination with schools. Joanie spoke about facilitating donor contributions through
48 scholarships. The Foundation manages over one hundred fifty scholarships (150) and
49 organizes a combined Scholarship Celebration Night for all three high schools, bringing

1 donors, students and parents together. The Foundation awarded over \$370,000 to
2 eighty-nine (89) graduating seniors. She stated that nine (9) new scholarships were
3 added this year including new trades and nursing offerings. Twenty (20) \$1,000 Heisey
4 Scholarships were awarded to teachers for continuing education.
5 Stephanie Becker stated that twenty-eight (28) annual grants were awarded during the
6 2024-2025 school year. These included twenty (20) Learning Enhancement, six (6)
7 Community Collaboration, and two (2) Immersive Professional Learning grants. She
8 also stated that seventy-five (75) mini grants were awarded during the 2024-2025
9 school year, which included twelve (12) Field Trip/ Expert Led grants, Nine (9)
10 Professional Enhancement grants, and fifty-four (54) Classroom Enrichment grants.
11 Emily Morrison, Treasurer, reported on a clean annual audit. She stated that they hold
12 annual meetings with investment advisors and that she reviews financial statements
13 and check registers monthly. Their Board can review the 990 before it is filed.
14 Jamie Marshall, Board Chairperson, discussed third-party fundraising partnerships and
15 building enhancement projects that have been completed and those which are still in
16 process, including playgrounds, libraries, and the C.M. Russell High School Auditorium.
17 She also reviewed their Strategic Plan for 2025-2028 to enhance organizational
18 development and capacity, strengthen core relationships and community partnerships,
19 and deepen their impact.

20
21 Chairperson Johnson thanked Stephanie and the Foundation Board members for their
22 hard work and dedication to helping teachers and students achieve their goals and
23 follow their dreams.

24 25 **B. Superintendent Report –**

26 Superintendent Hoyer updated the Board on summer projects which are underway
27 throughout the District. These projects include a kitchen remodel at Lincoln Elementary
28 School; a Coffee Shop Remodel at C.M. Russell High School; and recarpeting at Chief
29 Joseph Elementary School.

30 The first evaluation of the Morningside CORE Elementary School was completed by the
31 Board of Public Education and all ratings were “Meets Standards” or higher.

32 Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the evaluation and congratulated Executive Director
33 Jackie Mainwaring, Curriculum Director Rachel Cutler, and the University of Montana
34 Western Leadership team for their work.

35 Superintendent Hoyer invited everyone to join in the annual *Stuff the Bus* campaign
36 event scheduled for August 7, 2025, from 8:30 A.M. – 6:00 P.M. at both Walmart
37 locations and Target.

38 Superintendent Hoyer stated that the District has identified three (3) main goals within
39 the District Strategic Plan. One under Student Achievement, one under Healthy, Safe,
40 and Secure Schools and one under Stewardship and Accountability. She reviewed each
41 goal and the applicable action steps on how the District plans to successfully achieve
42 them.

43 Superintendent Hoyer presented correlation data on students with F’s and greater than
44 twenty (20) absences in Elementary and Middle Schools and greater than ten (10)
45 absences in High Schools. She stated that the District will need to brainstorm recovery
46 options and ways to address this issue.

47 Superintendent Hoyer presented initial Summer School data. Elementary Jumpstart was
48 funded by the State and 130 students attended the four-week program. Grades 4-8

1 were a weak area where funding, transportation and conflicting schedules are barriers
2 for student attendance. One hundred sixty-three (163) high school students earned two
3 hundred seventy-one (271) half credits through credit recovery.

4
5 **C. Audience Communication – None**

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8 **ACTION ITEMS**

9
10 **A. Transfer of Budgeted Funds – Elementary General Fund Budget (101) to the**
11 **Elementary Compensated Absences Fund Budget (121) and High School General**
12 **Fund Budget (201) to the High School Compensated Absence Fund Budget (221)**

13 – Director of Business Operations, Brian Patrick, explained this is an annual transfer for
14 the purpose of financing the accumulated sick leave and vacation pay that a non-
15 teaching or administrative school district employee is entitled to upon termination of
16 employment. The transfer is limited to 30% of the sick and vacation leave payout for
17 non-teaching and administrative employees.

18
19 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the
20 transfer of \$172,250.00 from the Elementary General Fund (101) to the Elementary
21 Compensated Absences Fund Budget (121) and \$121,000.00 from the High School
22 General Fund Budget (201) to the High School Compensated Absences Fund (221) as
23 presented.

24
25 **B. 2025-2026 Student Handbook** – Executive Director of Student Achievement, Lance
26 Boyd reviewed the changes to the student handbook, which were driven by recent
27 policy changes. He highlighted key areas of changes as well as a typographical error
28 that is being rectified.

29
30 Trustee Skornogoski thanked Lance Boyd and his team for their work.

31
32 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve
33 the 2025-2026 Student Handbook as presented.

34
35 **C. Professional Development Plan for 2025-2026** - Curriculum Coordinators, Beckie
36 Frisbee and Rachel Cutler, explained that each year teachers are required to complete
37 eighteen (18) hours of Pupil Instruction Related (PIR) Professional Development (PD).
38 Teachers may complete their hours on the designated days throughout the school year
39 or outside of their regularly scheduled workday in the summer and/or in the evenings.
40 The PIR Steering Committee met frequently during the 2024-2025 school year and
41 adjustments were made to ensure that PIR proposals/courses included elements of
42 adult learning theory, collaboration, reflection, and direction application to both the
43 Great Falls Public Schools Strategic Plan and Profile of a Learner. She reviewed the
44 PIR offerings and explained that there are ninety (90) PIR options for teachers. Mrs.
45 Frisbee reported that the PIR budget is supported through Student Services, Indian
46 Education, and the majority of budget comes from the Curriculum Department. The total
47 budget for the 2025-2026 year is \$25,137.

1 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
2 Professional Development Plan for the 2025-2026 school year as presented.

3
4 **D. Request to Access Protested Taxes** –Chairperson Johnson stated that it has been
5 requested that this item been postponed until a future Board meeting.

6
7 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to postpone the
8 request to Access Protested Taxes until a future Board meeting as requested.

9
10 **E. Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between Board of Trustees of School**
11 **District No. 1 and A and Great Falls Education Association (GFEA)** – Director of
12 Human Resources, Luke Diekhans, reported that the CBA for this union group of
13 teachers expired on June 30, 2025. Negotiations began in January and utilized
14 traditional bargaining. The District and the Union have come to a tentative agreement
15 pending Board approval. He reviewed, in detail, the proposed language changes, salary
16 changes, and recommendations. Luke stated that it is felt that the changes and
17 additions support the District’s efforts to provide high quality working conditions for its
18 employees and meets the qualifications of the Student and Teacher Advancement for
19 Results and Success (STARS) Act. He also stated that the estimates are based on
20 current Full Time Equivalency (FTE) and do not include related payroll costs such as
21 Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), Worker’s Compensation Insurance,
22 Unemployment Insurance, and Teacher’s Retirement.

23
24 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
25 two-year 2025-2027 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Great Falls Education
26 Association as presented.

27
28 **F. Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between Great Falls Technology**
29 **Association, Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE), and Great Falls**
30 **Public School (GFPS), with Retroactive Pay to July 1, 2025** - Director of Human
31 Resources, Luke Diekhans, stated that the Collective Bargaining Agreement for this
32 group was reopened on April 25, 2025, with mutual agreement of the District and the
33 Union. The District and the Union have come to a tentative agreement pending Board
34 approval. Luke stated that technology is a vital component to running the District and
35 the need to attract and retain quality employees is paramount. He reviewed the
36 language changes in the contract and stated that the proposed \$1.03 per hour increase
37 for all Technology Supported Technicians and Technology Core Technicians will result
38 in a base salary budget for this group of \$570,460 for the 2025-2026 school year, which
39 is an increase of \$23,566. This is within the 2025-26 budget allotted for salaries. The
40 proposed \$1.00 increase for the 2026-2027 school year is estimated to cost
41 approximately \$22,880.

42
43 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to ratify the two-
44 year (2025-26 and 2026-27) Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Great Falls
45 Technology Association, Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE), and Great
46 Falls Public Schools as presented.

1 **G. Collective Bargaining Agreement Between Local Union 400 of the International**
2 **Union of Operating Engineers, AFL-CIO, and Great Falls Public Schools** – Director
3 of Human Resources, Luke Diekhans, stated that the Collective Bargaining Agreement
4 for this group expired on June 30, 2025. The District bargained with the group
5 throughout the spring and completed negotiations in July. He reviewed the proposed
6 language changes, salary changes, and recommendations of the CBA included in the
7 agenda. He reported that a 4% salary increase for the 2025-2026 school year is an
8 approximate salary budget of \$4,125,980, an increase of \$158,692 over the previous
9 year and the 3% increase for the 2026-2027 school year is an approximate salary
10 budget of \$4,249,759, an increase of \$123,780.

11
12 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to
13 approve the two-year Collective Bargaining Agreement with Local Union 400 of the
14 International Union of Operating Engineers, AFL-CIO and Great Falls Public School for
15 the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school year as presented.

16
17 **H. 2025-2026 Great Falls Public Schools Teacher Retirement System (TRS) /**
18 **Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) Administrators and Supervisors**
19 **Compensation** - Director of Human Resources, Luke Diekhans, stated that the 2025-
20 2026 Administrator and Supervisor Compensation Budget unit is comprised of 47
21 employees who are critical to the mission of the District. They set the climate,
22 implement the Board’s goals, provide instructional leadership, and maintain the safety
23 and discipline that allow Great Falls Public Schools to continually perform at high levels.
24 A 4% increase in base salaries will result in an approximate salary budget for this group
25 of \$5,379,310 for 2025-2026. The District will be adding a flat \$500 payment to the
26 Administrators’ 1% 403b contribution, at the additional cost of \$23,500 per year. He also
27 stated that all additional discretionary days from ESSER have been removed from all
28 administrators’ benefits as these were only available because of the additional funding.

29
30 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
31 Great Falls Public Schools Administrators and Supervisors Compensation for 2025-
32 2026 as presented.

33
34 **I. Electronic Vote on Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) Business** –
35 Chairperson Johnson explained that the MTSBA annual meeting is typically held in
36 June where the membership votes on the items that require a vote of the membership.
37 This year’s annual meeting was cancelled due to lack of meeting quorum requirements
38 to conduct business of the association.

39
40 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the
41 items discussed in the agenda: MTSBA’s Principles & Guidelines, Foundational
42 Elements of MTSBA’s Organizations DNA, Fiscal Year 2027 Dues Revenue Estimate,
43 Nominations of Rick Cummings as MTSBA President-Elect and Jennifer Hoffman as
44 MTSBA Vice-President. The results will be sent to the MTSBA.

45
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47 **ACTION: OTHER**
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1 There were no items extracted from the Consent Agenda to discuss.

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3
4 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

5
6 **A. First Reading of Revised Board Policies 2158 – *Family Engagement*; 3122 –**
7 ***Attendance Policy*; and 3600 – *Student Records*** - Superintendent Hoyer reviewed
8 the recommended changes for Board Policies 2158, 3122, and 3600. She stated that if
9 anyone has questions or concerns about these policies to contact her before the next
10 scheduled Board meeting.

11
12 **B. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments –**

13 Trustees Turoski, Sunchild, Skornogoski, and Bronson thanked everyone that
14 participated in negotiations. They also thanked the Great Falls Public School
15 Foundation for their presentation.

16 Trustee Turoski congratulated Morningside CORE Elementary School on their
17 successful evaluation.

18 Trustee Skornogoski invited everyone to sign up for the *Stuff the Bus or Unstuff the Bus*
19 event.

20 Trustee Bronson stated that he has seen and heard a lot of negative comments
21 regarding the MAST student evaluation process. He said that the District needs to keep
22 an eye on this and possibly determine a different evaluation process.

23 Chairperson Johnson stated that he was able to attend a *Fiddler on the Roof*
24 performance and could not help thinking that the performers were former Great Falls
25 Public Schools students that took part in our fine arts programs.

26
27
28 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

29
30 Chairperson Johnson said the next Regular Board Meetings are scheduled for Monday,
31 August 11, 2025, and Monday, August 25, 2025.

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34 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

35
36 Chairperson Johnson adjourned the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:08
37 p.m.

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40
41
42 _____
Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

43 _____
44 Brian Patrick, Clerk
45