

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD SEPTEMBER 8, 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 8th day of
7 September 2025.

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9 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
10 Trustees and informed the participants and audience that the meeting was being
11 recorded per Board Policy 1420.

12
13 **ROLL CALL:** Luke Diekhans took roll call.

14
15 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson, Chairperson
16 Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson
17 Bill Bronson
18 Craig Duff
19 Amie Thompson
20 Paige Turoski

21
22 **Trustee Absent:** Marlee Sunchild, Excused

23
24 **Others Present:** Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Luke Diekhans, Director of Business
25 Operations; Jackie Mainwaring and Lance Boyd, Executive Directors for Student
26 Achievement; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; Heather Spurzem,
27 Interim Director of Human Resources; and Stephanie Becker, Director of the Great Falls
28 Public Schools Foundation.

29
30 Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association President.

31
32 The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Trustee Duff.

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34
35 **ADOPT AGENDA**

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37 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to adopt
38 the agenda as presented.

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41 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

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43 Trustee Bronson requested to extract agenda item V.A. *Minutes of August 25, 2025*
44 *Regular Meeting* from the Consent Agenda and move it to section VIII: Action: Other for
45 further discussion.

46
47 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the
48 Consent Agenda, with the exception of item V.A. that was moved to section VIII.

1
2 **A. Minutes of the August 25, 2025, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved
3 moving this item to section VIII Action: Other for further discussion regarding an
4 amendment to the motion of Action item H *Coca Cola Bottling company Three-Year*
5 *Agreement*.

6
7 **B. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.

8
9 **C. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates**

10 The Board approved the Montana OPI TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates for the
11 individuals listed in the agenda.

12
13
14 **COMMUNICATION**

15
16 **A. Introduction and Report of the Student Representatives and Foreign Exchange**

17 **Students for 2025-2026 School Year** – Executive Director Lance Boyd introduced the
18 2025-2026 Student Representatives from each high school:

19 Charles M. Russell High School – Emerson Hamma, Lydia Comstock, and Addie Crist

20 Great Falls High School – Seth Royer, Kaitlynn Fulbright, and Weston Stoll

21 Paris Gibson Education Center – Aspen Logan-Schwecke and Kaytlynn McClure

22 Each high school presented their student reports.

23
24 C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Emerson Hamma, Lydia
25 Comstock, and Addie Crist shared their backgrounds and goals. Emerson is a senior
26 serving his third year as a representative and is active in cross country and track, with
27 plans to pursue business/finance or engineering in college. Lydia, a junior, is now also
28 serving on the Montana Board of Public Education, participates in music, choir, and
29 Speech and Debate, and spent part of the summer volunteering in Nepal. Addie, a
30 sophomore, is a first-year representative, a three-sport athlete, musician, and artist, with
31 aspirations in music performance and biomedical research. This year, three foreign
32 exchange students from Brazil, Thailand, and Spain are enrolled. The student from
33 Thailand, present at the meeting, shared excitement about American traditions and
34 Homecoming. Athletics are underway with early successes in golf, soccer, cross
35 country, football, and volleyball. Lessons loved in the classroom include engaging labs
36 and debates in Honors Chemistry and English, and Advanced Placement (AP)
37 Chemistry, Government, and Statistics. Students are active in community service and
38 clubs, including campus clean-up, orchestra volunteer work, the annual high-school
39 house project, Speech and Debate, BPA, student government, drama, choir, and
40 orchestra activities. Preparations are also underway for music program performances
41 and fundraising. The school year opened with a spirited assembly showcasing student
42 groups and activities, with strong pride and enthusiasm for the year ahead.

43
44 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representatives Aspen Logan-
45 Schwecke and Kaytlynn McClure reported that PGEC welcomed 55 new students so far
46 this year and staff began the school year with team-building activities to support positive
47 relationships. The Indigenous Education Department led hands-on lodge lessons,
48 where students learned traditional lodge construction and cultural teachings. Science

1 seminars included learning about pearl formation and jewelry making, while math and
2 art came together through beading projects. The first blood drive of the year is
3 scheduled for September 24, with additional drives planned for winter and spring.
4

5 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Seth Royer, Kaitlynn Fulbright,
6 and Weston Stoll reported that the seniors began the year with a Senior Sunrise event,
7 while staff and administration enjoyed a back-to-school breakfast. Freshmen and new
8 students began the school year on a Bison Beginnings schedule, with student council
9 leaders and teachers supporting them with a day of instruction on traditions and finding
10 classes. Fall sports are underway, and this year the cheer and dance teams have
11 combined into a unified spirit squad. Homecoming week is planned with themed dress
12 days and activities. Teachers are preparing student trips abroad to Italy, France, and
13 the Galapagos. The Delphian Choir has once again been invited to perform at the All-
14 Northwest Choir in Tacoma. The Geology Club, led by science teachers, was recently
15 featured in *Rock and Gem* magazine. Physics students engaged in a creative boat
16 launch project in the school pool. Students also learned about historical facts from an
17 1898 article about Great Falls High School. The students encouraged everyone to
18 follow school social media to stay updated on events and activities.
19

20 **B. Superintendent Report** – Superintendent Hoyer reported that *Character Strong* will
21 be highlighted on the new conference room bulletin board, and activities throughout the
22 school district observing commemorative days required under HB591 (2025) will be
23 reported at future meetings. Superintendent Hoyer recognized Ty Moore, Sacajawea
24 Elementary School Principal, as the recipient of the 2025 SHAPE Montana
25 Administrator of the Year award for support of health and physical education.
26 Appreciation was expressed to numerous community donors for providing welcome gifts
27 for new teachers and specialists. Staffing needs remain with 17 teacher openings (plus
28 2 long-term substitutes), 16 special education positions, and one elementary counselor.
29 A special thank you to Becky Nelson for organizing the upcoming celebrations of the
30 inclusive new playground at Lewis & Clark Elementary School and the 48th High School
31 House groundbreaking celebration, where twenty-eight (28) students are currently
32 enrolled to begin the new construction on the home. Data for the Day summarized
33 recent bussing data highlighting routes, mileage, ridership, and required safety drills.
34 Additional Data for the Day compared current and prior year participation in fall athletics
35 and activities.
36

37 **C. Audience Communication** – None
38
39

40 **ACTION ITEMS**

41
42 **A. Initial Startup Costs for Baseball as a Great Falls Public Schools Sport** –
43 Executive Director Lance Boyd reviewed the initial startup costs for adding high school
44 baseball as a Great Falls Public Schools sport, with the first goal of \$101,000 in
45 privately raised funds met. Acceptance of these funds by the District confirms the
46 District’s intent to offer baseball beginning in the spring 2026. A second fundraising goal
47 of \$95,050 must be met by January 31, 2026. If the second goal is not met,

1 Administration will update the Board on plans to forego the start of the program. This is
2 a community-funded initiative for the first three years, with no District funds committed.
3

4 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to accept
5 \$101,000 in startup costs for high school Baseball from the Great Falls Public Schools
6 Foundation and approve Baseball as a Montana High School Association (MHSA) sport
7 for the 2025-2026 school year.
8

9 **B. Trustees as Voting Delegates to the Montana School Boards Association**
10 **(MTSBA) Delegate Assembly at the Montana Conference of Education Leadership**

11 **(MCEL)** – Chairman Johnson explained that the Montana Conference of Education
12 Leadership (MCEL) is an annual conference that brings together trustees,
13 superintendents, principals, business officials and other educational leaders for
14 professional development, training, and idea sharing. As part of the conference,
15 MTSBA holds a Delegate Assembly to conduct the business of the Association.
16 Trustees are appointed to serve as delegates to the Delegate Assembly. The Great
17 Falls School District is able to appoint three trustees to serve as voting delegates at the
18 Delegate Assembly. Chairperson Johnson recommended that himself, along with
19 Trustees Kim Skornogoski and Bill Bronson serve as voting delegates.
20

21 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to
22 approve the appointments of three (3) Trustees, Gordon Johnson, Kim Skornogoski,
23 and Bill Bronson, to the MTSBA’s Delegate Assembly.
24

25 **C. School Psychologist Compensation 2025-2027** – Director of Business Operations

26 Luke Diekhans introduced Heather Spurzem as the new Interim Director of Human
27 Resources, who will succeed him with future Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)
28 and Handbook negotiations. He explained that School Psychologists are required
29 under special education law and are necessary for the identification and assessment of
30 children with disabilities. Mr. Diekhans stated the salary schedule included in the
31 agenda for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years reflect a 4% and 3% increase
32 respectively. The cost of the 4% base increase for 2025-2026 will result in an
33 approximate increase of \$36,025 and the cost of the 3% base increase for 2026-2027
34 will result in an approximate increase of \$28,099. Mr. Diekhans reviewed further
35 negotiated items including a \$500 longevity stipend for School Psychologists after year
36 eighteen (18) of employment and language changes to the handbook to include five
37 days of paid leave per occurrence for a death in the immediate family, in addition to
38 other leave provided in the handbook, and \$750 compensation and calendar
39 readjustment hours to be provided in the event that additional building coverage is
40 needed due to staffing shortages or long-term absences within the department.
41

42 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
43 the two-year School Psychologist Handbook for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years
44 as presented.
45

46 **D. Second Reading of New and Revised Board Policies 2050 – Student**
47 **Instruction; 2100 – School Year Calendar and Day; 2335 (Delete) – Health**
48 **Enhancement; 2335 (New) – Health Enhancement; 3141 – Nonresident Student**

1 **Enrollment; 3310 – Student Discipline; 3416 – Administering Medicines to**
2 **Students; 3655 (New) – Student Safety; and 5255 – Disciplinary Action**

3 Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the policies above and stated that no comments or
4 recommendations for changes were received since the first reading of the policies at the
5 August 25, 2025 regular Board meeting, with the exception of a friendly amendment
6 proposed by Trustee Bronson to new Policy 2335, based on updated guidance from
7 MTSBA.

8
9 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, to approve new and revised Board
10 Policies 2050 – *Student Instruction*; 2100 – *School Year Calendar and Day*; 2335
11 (Delete) – *Health Enhancement*; 3141 – *Nonresident Student Enrollment*; 3310 –
12 *Student Discipline*; 3416 – *Administering Medicines to Students*; 3655 (New) – *Student*
13 *Safety*; and 5255 – *Disciplinary Action* and to amend new Policy 2335 – *Health*
14 *Enhancement*.

15
16 Chairman Johnson called for discussion. Trustee Bronson clarified the friendly
17 amendment to new Policy 2335, under the guidance of the Montana School Board
18 Association (MTSBA). The phrases "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" were
19 struck from page 42, line 14 as they are within the statutory definition of *Identity*
20 *Instruction*.

21
22 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to accept the
23 amendment to Policy 2335 as proposed by MTSBA and explained by Trustee Bronson.

24
25 Chairman Johnson called for question for approval of policies to include the amended
26 policy as proposed by Trustee Bronson.

27
28 Motion – Paige Truoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
29 Board Policies 2050 – *Student Instruction*; 2100 – *School Year Calendar and Day*; 2335
30 (Delete) – *Health Enhancement*; 3141 – *Nonresident Student Enrollment*; 3310 –
31 *Student Discipline*; 3416 – *Administering Medicines to Students*; 3655 (New) – *Student*
32 *Safety*; and 5255 – *Disciplinary Action* as presented; and 2335 (New) – *Health*
33 *Enhancement* as amended.

34
35 **ACTION: OTHER**

36
37 **A. Minutes of the August 25, 2025, Regular Board Meeting** – Chairperson Johnson
38 called for discussion. Trustee Bronson noted a correction to the Consent Agenda item
39 A: "Minutes of August 25, 2025 Regular Meeting" recorded on page 12, lines 40-42: "the
40 motion notes should reflect positive statement to reduce confusion. As such, the
41 minutes should reflect the following action: Motion to approve the three-year negotiated
42 contract with Coca-Cola Bottling Company High Country. Motion – Paige Turoski,
43 Second – Bill Bronson. Motion failed unanimously."

44
45 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the
46 amendment to the minutes of the August 25, 2025 regular Board meeting as presented

1 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

2
3 **A. Opening of School Report and Summer School Data** – Executive Director Jackie
4 Mainwaring reviewed current District in-person and online enrollment numbers, stating
5 enrollment has declined from last year by approximately one hundred students. Mrs.
6 Mainwaring presented data on extended summer learning opportunities that are directly
7 tied to the Strategic Plan. At the elementary level, schools were allowed to develop their
8 own plans that focused on re-engagement and relationship building. The Summer
9 Jumpstart program had a primary literacy focus. One hundred thirty-one (131) students
10 participated in the Jumpstart program compared to one hundred fifteen (115) in the
11 summer of 2024. At the secondary level, one hundred sixty-three (163) high school
12 students participated in credit recovery programs. There were two hundred seventy-one
13 (271) half-credits earned at the high school level, which was a decrease of twenty-two
14 (22) half credits from last summer. Twelve (12) half-credits were earned by Indigenous
15 Education students. Two hundred sixty-three (263) students enrolled in Virtual Academy
16 opportunities during the summer programs, with four hundred twenty-three (423) half
17 credits earned. The extended school year for Special Education students resulted in
18 one hundred fourteen (114) students being offered services. Seventy-six (76) of those
19 students attended ninety percent or more of the nineteen-day program in June.
20

21 **B. First Reading of New and Revised Board Policies 1015FE – *Personalized***
22 ***Learning Opportunities; 3650 – Student Online Personal Information Protection;***
23 ***and 5430F – Volunteer Agreement Form*** – Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the
24 recommended language revisions from the Montana School Boards Association
25 (MTSBA) and the Board Policy Committee to each of the revised Board policies listed.
26 Language proposed brings policies into alignment with legislative directives and/or
27 cleans up confusing language. She asked if anyone had questions or concerns
28 regarding any of the new policies or revisions to contact her prior to the next regular
29 Board meeting.
30

31 **C. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

32 Trustee Thompson thanked staff for athletic passes, noted Crosstown soccer tie games,
33 and acknowledged Principal Habel’s contribution to the history lesson in the student
34 report.

35 Trustee Duff welcomed the student board representatives and appreciated the
36 enthusiasm at the Crosstown soccer event.

37 Trustee Turoski commended Mr. Diekhans on his first Board meeting in his new position
38 as Director of Business Operations and Clerk of the Board, noted that teachers and staff
39 are extremely busy as they transition into the new school year.

40 Trustee Skornogoski highlighted the upcoming Worlds of Work (WOW) event on
41 September 23rd with over two thousand (2,000) students, twenty (20) schools, and sixty
42 (60) employers scheduled to attend. She encouraged volunteering for the event.

43 Trustee Bronson commended administrative staff for their timely responsiveness to
44 questions and concerns and stated that meetings with school insurance representatives
45 statewide were continuing.
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48 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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Chairperson Johnson highlighted future upcoming events to include the High School House Groundbreaking on September 11, 2025, future Board meetings on September 22nd and October 13th, and various athletic competition opportunities to support.

ACTION TO ADJOURN

With no further comments or items to be discussed, motion by Chairperson Johnson and seconded by Trustee Skornogoski to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 6:32 p.m.

Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

Luke Diekhans, Clerk