

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, EAST HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 9

Call to Order: Trustees of School District No. 9 held a meeting on October 13, 2025. Chairman Scott Walter called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

Attendance and Introduction of Board Members

Trustees Present: Chairman Scott Walter, Vice Chair Tyrel Murfitt, Tristan Ulmer (arrived @5:34), Tiffany Richardson, Stacy Baird, and Mark Diehl

Superintendent Dan Rispens, Clerk Jill Hoogerheide, Athletics Director Shaun Murgel, IT Coordinator Eric Power.

Visitors: Kate Johnson, Xavier Nunn

Review the Agenda

No comments from the Board.

Hear the Public

No comments from the public.

Reports

Student Report

Superintendent Rispens announced that Xavier Nunn will report to the Board as the new Student Representative.

Xavier introduced himself and spoke a bit about his year. He is a senior at EHHS and has been part of the school district his entire life. He is currently the senior class president, part of National Honor Society and participating in a couple clubs while also an athlete on the baseball team. He is happy to be the student representative and share the student perspective with the Board members. He spoke about the girls' flag football team, volleyball, soccer, cross country, football, and golf. In November the football team will have two more games and hopefully advance to the playoffs. He wanted to also let the Board and public know that Student Council will be doing a movie night fundraiser to raise money for Make a Wish foundation on October 28th. More information should be out soon. Lastly, he said that many people have told him that they are in favor of a 4-day school week.

Administrator Reports

Eastgate and Prickly Pear Principal Crusat wanted to point out the behavior portion of his board report. The reports show a higher level of office referrals than previous reports, but he wanted to share that the number is made up of just 3% of the student population. So even though the reports show a rise in behaviors, it is a very small percentage of the students who are receiving the referrals.

Radley Principal Somerfeld reported that the behavior referrals are nearly double what the school showed last year at the same time. Last year showed more playground behaviors, while this year's reports are coming more from inside the classrooms. The challenge for the staff is addressing and figuring out how to meet the situations head on and intervening before the behavior gets too severe. He has also noted that the 55 referrals came from 32 different students, which included some of the same students as last year's referrals.

Trustee Baird asked some questions regarding classroom size and if he felt there was a correlation.

Chairman Walter pointed out that he felt encouraged by the language in his reporting talking about ensuring the higher students were also receiving what they needed to progress.

EVMS Principal Morris reported that EVMS has started their learning lab which uses data from benchmark testing to break kids up into math and reading interventions. The students not requiring more repetitions are sent to other enrichment classes like Mr. Horne's cribbage activities, which also incorporate a lot of math. Volleyball will have its last game tomorrow and the boys' basketball tryouts will be next week. She also wanted to report that the school is seeing a rise in mental health situations. They are working with the counseling department to help find ways to meet all their needs.

EVMS Vice Principal Kemper reported that they are also seeing a rise in behaviors compared to last year. He stated that they were about double what they saw previously. EVMS is bringing back a positive incentive dance for students who have no more than one major write up, two minor writeups or zero tardies between Oct 7th – 24th.

Trustee Richardson asked about the weapon writeup in his Board report and was told it related to a stun gun. He discussed what the plan for that student will be moving forward.

EHHS Principal Condon referenced his Board report. He wanted to make sure everyone knew how much work his staff had been doing implementing some of the new ideas to keep students in the school, particularly the seniors. He gave a shout-out to Mrs. Schoenfeld for her work with student council and Mrs. Klock for all her work implementing circle-up time.

EHHS Vice Principal Klock spoke about referrals being down compared to last year. A lot of what they are seeing is tied to attendance and tardiness. Staff are putting a lot of effort into keeping the students in class and trying not to suspend students unless it is something serious. This involves either a phone call, parent meeting or student meeting to help students make better choices while helping staff make connections with the students and parents.

Athletics Director Murgel stated that after student counts are finalized, we expect to be the second largest Class A district. Growth means there will most likely be more bus routes and more traveling for the teams. He felt like we needed more buses in case a route bus broke down and required use of one intended for activity trips.

IT Coordinator Eric Power said he was focused this month on fall reporting and double checking all the numbers. He also spoke about the power being out for a time and that it took down the network for a small amount of time.

Trustee and Committee Reports of the K-12 Board

Chairman Walter solicited reports from the Trustees and Committees.

Superintendent Rispens stated that the Transportation Infrastructure Committee met recently but their considerations would be addressed later under New Business.

Chairman Walter reported about the COSSBA Federal Advocacy conference. At the conference, representatives from all four offices of the congressional delegation met (Representative Zinke sent his Chief of Staff) to discuss Montana's goals. The high point was hearing Bob Woodward as the keynote speaker.

No other reports from the Committees and Trustees.

Strategic Planning – Scan for Future Needs

Chairman Walter solicited the Board for any reports about strategic planning.

Superintendent Rispens mentioned the TA grant application written by Stahly Engineering is looking promising. Out of the three applicants, East Helena had the highest score on the rubric. The project is long-term with construction potentially starting in the summer of 2027 but most likely summer of 2028. This would create a much safer crosswalk on Main Street for students walking to school.

He also wanted to mention that Habitat for Humanity project is moving rapidly. The planning board has given initial approval to the Rose Hills Phase One application. Phase one has about 330 housing units with the full plan between 1500 and 1600.

Lastly, he spoke about Montana Legislature's Decennial Study of School Funding. The proposal aims to shift the funding formula away from ANB (student count) and more towards staffing as the main source of funding to reduce funding fluctuation in school districts. They propose moving all districts to the 100% of maximum budget cap and doing away with local mill levies. East Helena currently operates at 86% of the cap so this would be an automatic increase for us.

Trustee Baird spoke about getting wi-fi or a hotspot on athletic buses to help the students keep up with academics. She also wondered when the discussion for a 4-day school schedule will happen again.

Notifications of Retirements and Resignations

The Following Staff Resignations Have Previously Been Accepted:

- Peter Callahan Bus Driver
- April Prescott Special Education Teacher
- Angie Cejka Paraprofessional

Consent Action Items

Minutes of the Regular Meeting September 8, 2025

Approval of the former and new warrants (Claims #51351 - #51449) and (Payroll #69356 - #69768)

Personnel Actions

Recommended Employment of Staff

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Cody Maness | Paraprofessional |
| • Isabella Hansen | Paraprofessional |
| • Laura Boltz | Tiger Program Site Coordinator |
| • Kayla Combs | Tiger Program Site Coordinator |
| • Veronica Rubio-Pratt | Tiger Program Instructor |
| • Jenni Krause | Tiger Program Instructor |
| • Eric Lehman | Tiger Program Instructor |
| • Rachel Bright | Tiger Program Instructor |
| • Melinda Yeary | Tiger Program Substitute |
| • Traci Mazanec | Tiger Program Substitute |
| • Natalie Clark | Tiger Program Substitute |
| • Bethany Kalous | Tiger Program Instructor |
| • Savannah Hartman | Tiger Program Student Aide |
| • Lily Gowan | Tiger Program Student Aide |
| • Hailey Nguyen | Tiger Program Student Aide |
| • Lily Peltomaa | Tiger Program Student Aide |
| • Abby Wood | Tiger Program Student Aide/Substitute |
| • Matt Krantz | Tiger Program Instructor |
| • Ashley Carpenter | Student Mentor |
| • Keeley Bakas | Student Mentor |
| • Colton Galliher | Student Mentor |
| • Brooke Hauer | Student Mentor |
| • Nathan Botteron | Student Aide/Athletic Trainer |
| • Kerstie Umsted | Paraprofessional |
| • Christine Pierce | Assistant Speech Drama & Debate Coach |
| • Raymond Rutherford | Substitute Bus Driver |
| • Nicholas Kallem | Substitute Bus Driver |
| • Lane Erdahl | Bus Driver |
| • Tristan Fuller | Paraprofessional |
| • Jessica Clanin | Special Education Teacher |
| • McKenzie Heidinger | 8th Grade Boys Basketball Coach |

- Collette Anderson 7th Grade Boys Basketball Coach
- Justin Clement Assistant Wrestling Coach
- Rachel Cavalli Paraprofessional

East Helena School District Students Requesting Enrollment in Other School Districts for the 2025-2026 School Year

	<u>Helena</u>	<u>Jefferson High</u>	<u>MT City</u>	<u>Clancy</u>	Townsend
MM (PreK)	1				
Kindergarten	2				
1 st grade	5				
2 nd grade	4				
3 rd grade	4				
4 th grade	2				
5 th grade	1				
6 th grade	1				
7 th grade	3				
8 th grade	1				
9 th grade					
10th grade					
11 th grade	2				
12 th grade					

Total: 26

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt, seconded by Trustee Baird to approve the Consent Action Items as presented. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

Unfinished Business

MCEL Updates and Information

Superintendent Rispens shared information regarding the MCEL conference in Helena on October 15th, 16th and 17th.

Second Reading Policies 1111, 1210, 1310, 1700, 2132, 3410, 3510, and 3612

- **Policy 1111 - Election**
- **Policy 1210 – Qualifications, Terms, Duties of Board Officers**
- **Policy 1310 – District Policy and Procedures**
- **Policy 1700 – Uniform Complaint Procedure**
- **Policy 2132 – Student and Family Privacy Rights**
- **Policy 3410 – Student Health**
- **Policy 3510 – School Sponsored Activities**
- **Policy 3612 – School Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services**

Motion Trustee Baird, seconded by Vice Chair Murfitt to approve policies under second reading as presented and amended. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

New Business

Appointment of Student Representative

Superintendent Rispens presented Xavier Nunn as his recommendation for the 2025-2026 student representative for the EHPS School Board.

Motion Trustee Ulmer, seconded by Trustee Richardson to approve Xavier Nunn as the 2025-2026 student representative for the EHPS School Board. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

Chairman Walter swore Xavier in as the new student representative. He accepted the responsibility of representing students, promoting a positive relationship between the Board and students, and taking an active role in establishing Board policy and the district vision.

Consideration of Graduation Day 2026

Superintendent Rispens introduced EHHS Principal Condon who reported that there is a conflict with the State tournaments for Spring Activities and the previously set graduation date of May 29th. The calendar committee is recommending moving the graduation date to June 5, 2026.

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt, seconded by Trustee Richardson to accept the recommendation to change the graduation date from May 29, 2026, to June 5, 2026. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

Consideration of MOU – Special Education Staffing Support

Superintendent Rispens presented an MOU to help relieve the workload of the district's special education staff. The MOU allows regular education teachers who have a Special Education credential to assist with development of IEPs for selected students.

Motion by Trustee Baird, seconded by Vice Chair Murfitt to approve the MOU. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

Activity Bus Purchase Discussion and Recommendation

The Board's Transportation Committee presented information regarding the long-range planning and fleet needs of the district. We currently have three used charter buses, one of which is currently in the shop and may possibly be taken out of service. The goal is to expand our fleet to four activity buses due to high school and middle school needs. The thought is to retire the MCI bus and purchase two new-to-us buses.

Motion by Trustee Richardson, seconded by Trustee Diehl to authorize the superintendent to negotiate the purchase of two new activity buses with a cap of \$600,000. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

Resolution 242 – Obsolete and Unusable Equipment

Superintendent Rispens asked permission to properly dispose of a used 1998 Chevy Van and a 1993 John Deere Sweeper.

Motion by Trustee Murfitt, seconded by Trustee Diehl to approve Resolution 242. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

New Student Activity Account – Drama Club

The High School Drama club has requested a new account for fundraising and to formalize their activities, especially with plans for a fully fledged show next year and the addition of “drama” to the speech and debate team.

Motion by Trustee Ulmer, seconded by Trustee Richardson to approve a Student Activity account for Drama Club. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

MPO Public Meeting Notice

Superintendent Rispens spoke about the Metropolitan Planning Organization which coordinates transportation planning for Helena and surrounding areas including East Helena. They are working on a long-range transportation plan and are accepting public comment and have scheduled open houses. The times are Tuesday night at the Helena Civic Center from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. and Wednesday night in the East Helena Fireman’s recreation hall from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Future Meeting Dates and Agenda Items

The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, November 10, 2025, at 5:30 EVMS

Submitted by: _____

Board Clerk, Jill Hoogerheide

Date

Approved by: _____

Chairman, Board of Trustees

Date