

1 **/MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**  
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
3 **HELD NOVEMBER 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 4<sup>th</sup> Street South, on the 24<sup>th</sup> day  
7 of November 2025.

8  
9 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of  
10 Trustees.

11  
12 Chairperson Johnson reported that, per Board Policy 1420, all Board meetings are  
13 recorded and posted on the District website for one (1) year.  
14

15  
16 **ROLL CALL:** Luke Diekhans took roll call.  
17

18 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson - Chairperson  
19 Kim Skornogoski – Vice-Chairperson  
20 Bill Bronson – via zoom conferencing  
21 Craig Duff  
22 Marlee Sunchild  
23 Amie Thompson  
24 Paige Turoski  
25

26 **Others Present:** Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Luke Diekhans, Director of Business  
27 Operations; Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Director of Student Achievement; Heather  
28 Spurzem, Interim Director of Human Resources; Jeff Williams, Director of Information  
29 Technology; and Stephanie Becker, Director of Great Falls Public Schools Foundation.  
30 Also present was Tom Cabbage, Great Falls Education Association President.  
31

32 Chairperson Johnson asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.  
33

34  
35 **ADOPT AGENDA**  
36

37 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to adopt  
38 the agenda as presented.  
39

40  
41 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**  
42

43 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to approve the  
44 Consent Agenda as presented.  
45

46 **A. Minutes of the November 6, 2025, Special Open Board Meeting** – The Board  
47 approved the minutes of the November 6, 2025, Special Open Board Meeting as  
48 presented.

1  
2 **B. Minutes of the November 6, 2025, Special Closed Board Meeting** – The Board  
3 approved the minutes of the November 6, 2025, Special Closed Board Meeting as  
4 presented.

5  
6 **C. Minutes of the November 10, 2025, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board  
7 approved the minutes of the November 10, 2025, Regular Board Meeting as presented.  
8

9 **D. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.  
10

11 **E. Good Apple Awards** – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple  
12 Awards: Kathy Ramey, Student Systems Analyst at the District Offices Data Center;  
13 Carol Miller, Volunteer at Chief Joseph Elementary School; Kathryn Elsing, Resource 1  
14 Teacher at Longfellow Elementary School; and Sandy Harshaw-Irvin, Sub-Clerk at the  
15 District Offices Human Resources Department.  
16

17 **F. Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35's** – The Board approved the  
18 Montana School Bus Driver Certificates – OPI TR-35's for the individuals listed in the  
19 agenda.  
20

## 21 **COMMUNICATION**

22  
23

24 **A. Character Strong – CORE Morningside Elementary School** – Jennifer Martyn,  
25 Morningside CORE Elementary School Principal; Lainie Warneke, Extended Curriculum  
26 Specialist (ECS) Teacher; and four (4) student representatives presented a poem on  
27 gratitude. They also presented the Board members with a special gift.  
28

29 **B. Superintendent Report** – Superintendent Hoyer reported that many schools within  
30 the District showed their military appreciation on Veterans' Day by holding assemblies,  
31 breakfasts, luncheons etc. Longfellow Elementary School fifth grade students made  
32 thank you cards and handed them out to Veterans at Applebee's.  
33 Mountain View Elementary School hosted a *Family Game Night* on November 13<sup>th</sup> that  
34 focused on literacy and numeracy.  
35 Superintendent Hoyer invited everyone to the annual Great Falls Public Schools  
36 Christmas Stroll Pop-Up Shop. This event showcases items made that are available for  
37 purchase by our local students.  
38 National School Psychologist and Substitute Appreciation week was November 17-21,  
39 2025. Superintendent Hoyer recognized the nine (9) school psychologists and two  
40 hundred thirty-one (231) substitutes in our District for their hard work.  
41 Morningside CORE Elementary School fourth grade students decorated coffee sleeves  
42 with kind/affirming words and pictures for World Kindness Day on November  
43 13<sup>th</sup>. Starbucks handed them out with morning coffee orders. One customer, who also is  
44 a Veteran, was so touched by the gesture that he gave back to the District by donating  
45 classroom supplies back to the teacher.  
46 Superintendent Hoyer hoped that everyone was able to attend one or both of the high  
47 school drama fall productions. She also showed the tentative holiday concert schedule.

1 She reported that there is a total of one hundred twenty-one (121) concerts put on  
2 throughout the District in the month of December.

3  
4 **C. Audience Communication – None**

5  
6  
7 **ACTION ITEMS**

8  
9 **A. Cascade County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) and Great Falls Police Department**  
10 **(GFPD) Reserve School Resource Officer (SRO) Pilot** – Superintendent Hoyer  
11 reported that at the October 29, 2025 Board of Trustee Work Session focused on  
12 Healthy, Safe, and Secure School, CCSO Sheriff Jesse Slaughter, GFPD Sargent Katie  
13 Cunningham, and Captain Brian Black introduced a proposed reserve SRO Pilot  
14 program. The Reserve SRO Pilot Program aims to enhance campus safety and  
15 strengthen partnerships between the District, GFPD, and the CCSO, maintaining a  
16 supportive educational environment. Quarterly updates will allow the Board to monitor  
17 progress, assess effectiveness, and make data-informed decisions regarding the  
18 program's continuation or modification.

19  
20 Trustee Duff stated that he supports the program but wants to see the Interlocal  
21 Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) when fully completed.

22 Trustee Thompson asked Sargent Cunningham about her comfortability with the  
23 program and the implementation between different agencies.

24 Sargent Cunningham stated that having the responsibility and duties clearly listed in the  
25 Interlocal Agreement and MOU lessens any concerns or issues.

26 Trustee Skornogoski asked what limitations would be in place with the reserve SRO that  
27 wouldn't be with current SROs.

28 Sarent Cunningham reported that she doesn't have concerns about scheduling yet. She  
29 stated that there have been detailed conversations about integration, duties, rules, and  
30 regulations.

31 Trustee Skornogoski stated that the first year of the program is being funded by a  
32 donation from Calumet and then asked where the funding comes from in the future.

33 Sheriff Slaughter stated that he has reallocated his budget to include this program.

34  
35 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the  
36 concept of integrating a CCSO reserve school resource officer into the current SRO  
37 program, on a pilot basis, and further, the Board directed that staff adhere to the  
38 following requirements and guidelines for development of that concept: The approval of  
39 the pilot program is subject to preparation and approval at a minimum of interlocal  
40 agreements between the City of Great Falls and Cascade County, and where  
41 necessary, the Cascade County Sheriff's Office, as well as a written Memorandum of  
42 Understanding (MOU) with Great Falls Public Schools. For purposes of direction to  
43 Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) staff, as well as the other parties, final Board  
44 approval requires adherence to the following: (1) The program will recognize, honor,  
45 and reflect the culture of the existing GFPS/GFPD SRO program; (2) Any individual  
46 recruited, screened and hired with GFPD and GFPS must be consistent with current  
47 SRO hiring practices, and the individual hired must be completely sworn, and be under  
48 the direct supervision and direction of GFPD SRO staff, to include school/activity

1 assignment, training and evaluation; (3) Any individual recruited, screened and hired  
2 must be able to meet all the requirements of active GFPD police officers, including  
3 screenings and background checks; (4) An unambiguous statement addressing the  
4 handling of any liabilities associated with operation of the program, including, where  
5 appropriate, indemnification and hold harmless provisions; (5) Assuming approval of all  
6 appropriate agreements, the pilot program must incorporate quarterly evaluations and  
7 updates to monitor progress, assess effectiveness, and make evidence-informed  
8 decisions regarding the program's continuation, modification, or elimination.

9  
10 Trustee Turoski thanked Cunningham, Slaughter, and Black for coming together and  
11 presenting this pilot program.

12 Community member Terry Bjork expressed his concern that political indoctrination will  
13 be part of this pilot program and guardrails need to be put on the program so this does  
14 not happen.

15  
16 **B. School Election Calendar 2026 and Trustee Filing Timeline** – Director of  
17 Business Operations, Luke Diekhans, reviewed the dates for filing, date to call for the  
18 election, when ballots are available, and the election date.

19  
20 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve  
21 the 2026 School Election Calendar and Trustee Filing Timeline as presented.

22  
23 **C. Trustee Resolution Calling for an Election on May 5, 2026** - Director of Business  
24 Operations, Luke Diekhans, explained the laws surrounding the annual school election  
25 process and noted that Trustees are required to pass a resolution stating the date, purpose,  
26 whether the election will be by mail or poll, voting locations, and times polls will be open.  
27 No levy amount needs to be set at this time; however, the request for a levy must be set by  
28 March 26, 2026, to be certified on the ballot.

29  
30 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to approve the  
31 resolution calling for an election on May 5, 2026, per the documents presented that set forth  
32 the date, purpose, ballot deposit sites, and the times the ballot deposit sites will be open as  
33 presented.

34  
35 **D. Conduct the 2026 School Election by Mail Ballot** - Director of Business Operations,  
36 Luke Diekhans, explained that a request must be sent from the Trustees to the Election  
37 Department of Cascade County, requesting the school election be held by mail ballot.

38  
39 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to approve the  
40 request to the Election Department of Cascade County that the 2026 school election be  
41 conducted by mail ballot as presented.

42  
43 **E. Resolution to Act on Behalf of Great Falls Public Schools in the Matter of Trust**  
44 **II Dawn Marie Scheaffer** – Superintendent Hoyer explained the Trust II Dawn Marie  
45 Scheaffer is a trust that has been in place since the 1990s. As a part of the original legal  
46 agreement, the funds in the trust after her death will be transferred to the Great Falls  
47 School District 1 & A. The trust has been managed by Wells Fargo Wealth  
48 Management. As part of the transfer of the funds to the District, there must be an

1 individual identified to act on behalf of the District. As the Director of Business  
2 Operations, Luke Diekhans, would be the individual to work on the transfer funds.

3  
4 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to appoint  
5 Luke Diekhans, Director of Business Operations for Great Falls Public Schools, to act  
6 on the District’s behalf in the matter of Trust II Dawn Marie Schaeffer as presented.

7  
8 **F. Beverage Agreement for Great Falls Public Schools** – Director of Business  
9 Operations, Luke Diekhans, reported that a proposed contract with Coke was not  
10 approved by the Board earlier this fiscal year. The District reopened bidding for both  
11 companies, looking for an exclusive contract for longer periods of time. The District set  
12 parameters required to obtain the contract on September 11, 2025. He stated that the  
13 parameters were: a minimum ten-year commitment; upfront cash commitment; flat  
14 minimum commission; capital projects & student support participation; advertising &  
15 sponsorship packages; service agreement; and beverages are required to meet or  
16 exceed all dietary regulations required by the Healthy Hungry Free School Kids Act of  
17 2010. Both companies presented their proposals on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Luke reviewed  
18 both quotes in detail.

19  
20 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed in favor, six to one, to  
21 approve the fifteen-year negotiated contract with Admiral Beverage as presented.

22  
23 Trustee Duff stated that he is concerned with the length of the contract. He also asked  
24 what the funds would be used for.

25 Trustee Skornogoski asked for clarification regarding advertising on purchases made  
26 with funding. She also asked if there is a clause that voids the contract if Admiral  
27 Beverage does not fulfill required obligations.

28 Trustee Thompson thanked everyone involved for their continued work to get a contract  
29 established that is deemed fair.

30  
31 **G. Memorial Stadium Scoreboard Purchase** – Director of Business Operations, Luke  
32 Diekhans, reported that the scoreboard at Memorial Stadium was last refurbished in  
33 2009 and for the past seventeen (17) years, the scoreboard has served as a functional  
34 component of events held at Memorial Stadium. However, in terms of advances in  
35 technology and function, the proposed new scoreboard and video screen offers Great  
36 Falls Public Schools (GFPS) opportunities to advance the gameday experience,  
37 provides opportunities for students to create content and learn applicable technology  
38 skills, opens new revenue streams for advertising and creates new opportunities for  
39 school events that are not possible with our current technology. He stated that  
40 Daktronics is a member of the state cooperative that the District can utilize for upcoming  
41 projects without having to go through the formal bidding process. Being able to work  
42 with Daktronics ensures that the District receives exactly what it needs to make this  
43 project successful. In addition, all other major scoreboards in the District are Daktronics.  
44 This helps with training of new individuals as needed. The new scoreboard will be fully  
45 interactive to include advertising and video. The system will allow for timed events  
46 during track and field competitions as well. The scoreboard package includes curriculum  
47 that will allow students to create and deliver digital content that will be used throughout  
48 the event/contest. The skills can be used further by students who are interested in

1 continuing this type of work at the collegiate level. Mr. Diekhans stated that in addition  
2 to the new scoreboard at Memorial Stadium, the District will receive two (2) play clocks  
3 and two (2) portable scoreboards. The video board can be used to enhance student  
4 activities and fundraisers for the student body.

5  
6 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed in favor, six to one, to  
7 approve the purchase of the Daktronics scoreboard package for Memorial Stadium in  
8 the amount of \$205,591 as presented.

9  
10 Trustee Duff stated that he struggles to support a luxury item when he hears about  
11 other necessary items needed in the District.

12  
13 **ACTION: OTHER**

14  
15 There were no items extracted from the Consent Agenda to discuss.

16  
17  
18 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

19  
20 **A. Year Two Review of the 2025-2028 Technology Plan** - Director of Information  
21 Technology, Jeff Williams, reported that Great Falls Public Schools has established  
22 clear guidelines for the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) to  
23 enhance teaching and learning while ensuring student safety, data privacy, and  
24 academic integrity. AI-powered tools and platforms will be carefully vetted to align with  
25 educational goals, comply with data security regulations, and support equitable access  
26 for all students. The District will provide school-friendly AI platforms that are designed  
27 for educational environments, ensuring they promote critical thinking, creativity, and  
28 personalized learning while safeguarding against misinformation and bias. Appropriate  
29 staff and students will receive training on appropriate AI use, including understanding its  
30 capabilities and limitations, fostering digital literacy, and maintaining academic honesty.  
31 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will ensure AI tools remain effective, relevant, and  
32 aligned with best practices in education.

33 Mr. Williams stated the District Strategic Plan goal for Stewardship and Accountability is  
34 to develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan to improve  
35 communication between the district, staff, parents, students, and the community.  
36 ParentSquare messaging platform was implemented in the summer of 2025 and  
37 provides mass notification, teacher-parent communication, and a mobile application to  
38 produce a cohesive and as homogenous communication platform as possible.

39 Great Falls Public Schools' (GFPS) virtual environment consists of multiple virtual  
40 servers (e.g., PowerSchool, our Student Information System) that sustain and provide  
41 electronic files and network processes for the District. These servers exist on a virtual  
42 hypervisor provided by a virtualization software called VMWare, which requires  
43 licensing. In 2024, VMWare was purchased by a company called BroadCom. This  
44 acquisition allowed BroadCom to significantly increase licensing charges, up to 300% of  
45 the original costs, for customers who were current VMWare customers. This created an  
46 untenable financial situation for GFPS to maintain and continue to use VMWare as our  
47 virtualization product. At this point, plans have been made to transition the District's  
48 virtual environment to an alternative hypervisor that is economically feasible to maintain.

1 This plan was created in three phases: 1) maintain VMWare licensing for an additional  
2 year (2026); 2) purchase parallel server infrastructure and alternative hypervisor  
3 software platform; 3) and, once a new hypervisor environment is established, implement  
4 transition of all GFPS servers to the new hypervisor environment. The technology  
5 department renewed the VMWare licensing and hardware support that was to expire in  
6 September of 2026. The hardware to support the new hypervisor environment has been  
7 ordered from a vendor that supports the Montana State Procurement contract by Dell.  
8 Due to significant discounts given on this quote the commitment for purchasing the  
9 hardware has been completed. Estimated delivery of this equipment is late December,  
10 2025. Once the hardware has been delivered the technology department will create a  
11 schedule for installation, configuration and implementation of a new hypervisor  
12 environment. This project is intended to last until the summer of 2026 so that the  
13 majority of the server transfers will minimally impact the District.

14 Jeff stated that with the ever-escalating cyber security environment, the District finds  
15 there is a real need for an encompassing Cybersecurity System Concept that will guide  
16 the Technology Department as we move forward with additional Cybersecurity  
17 protocols, processes, applications and hardware components. In the Summer of 2025,  
18 the technology department installed a new Firewall that is the cornerstone of the  
19 district's new Cybersecurity footprint. In addition to this the Technology Department also  
20 purchased SPLUNK; a device log evaluation software to centralize the evaluation of  
21 possible intrusions, and NISSUS; a software platform that allows us to do Penetration  
22 Tests (mock intrusion attacks) against our environment. These additions allow us to be  
23 more proactive to prevent threats as well as providing more visibility to any attempted  
24 attacks. The Cybersecurity System Concept project will build on what we currently have  
25 and give us direction as to what we may need in the future when we look to add  
26 additional defensive measures. More importantly it will require us to evaluate each new  
27 addition in regard to how it interacts with our current environment and mitigate any  
28 unforeseen issues while increasing our ability to protect the District.

29  
30 Community Member Judy Motenson asked how students are monitored in and out of  
31 the classroom on their equipment.

32 Jeff stated that the District uses software called Lightspeed and teachers see what the  
33 students are doing. He also stated that the District intended to repurchase chromebooks  
34 on a five (5) year cycle, however, COVID redirected our plan. We were able to purchase  
35 a stock of chromebooks with ESSER funds, but do not have the funding to refresh every  
36 five (5) years. The District now repurchases as funding allows. Last year one thousand  
37 (1,000) chromebooks were purchased to have in stock.

38

### 39 **B. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments –**

40 Trustee Sunchild thanked Superintendent Hoyer and Executive Director Mainwaring for  
41 taking time out of their schedules to answer questions.

42 Trustee Turoski reported that she attended the Veterans Day assembly at Valley View  
43 Elementary School where C.M. Russell High School band students performed. She  
44 thanked Miss Moreen, an aide at Valley View, for creating and distributing Thanksgiving  
45 boxes for Valley View families. Governor Gianforte, along with television personality  
46 Mike Rowe, visited the high school house to support the program, making it a  
47 memorable experience for the students.

1 Trustee Thompson reported that she enjoyed the Morningside CORE Elementary  
2 School's presentation on kindness/gratitude. She stated that many businesses are  
3 losing employees due to rude customers and hopes that the foundation that *Character*  
4 *Strong* is building lasts longer than anyone expects.  
5 Trustee Duff stated that he was able to attend The Addams Family and it was a great  
6 production. He also reported that he will fulfill his half day convocation obligation by  
7 covering a teacher's second grade classroom.  
8 Trustee Skornogoski said that both high school drama productions were excellent. She  
9 also reported that the *LIFT* students have visited Elementary Schools to speak about  
10 mental health. She thanked her fellow Trustees and Great Falls Public Schools staff for  
11 their work.

12  
13

14 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

15  
16  
17  
18

Chairperson Johnson said the next Regular Board Meetings are scheduled for Monday,  
December 15, 2025, and Monday, January 12, 2026.

19  
20

**ACTION TO ADJOURN**

21  
22  
23  
24

Chairperson Johnson adjourned the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:25  
p.m.

25  
26  
27  
28

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

29 \_\_\_\_\_  
Luke Diekhans, Clerk