

AGENDA

Board of Trustees
Special Meeting
December 29, 2025



Great Falls Public Schools

1100 Fourth Street South, Great Falls, Montana



Welcome to the Great Falls Public Schools Board of Trustees meeting!

Is this your first meeting?

If this is your first time attending a meeting, let us extend our special welcome! These meetings are designed to give everyone the opportunity to participate in seeing how the Great Falls Public Schools Trustees facilitate school business.

What is the purpose of these meetings?

The meetings of the Great Falls Public Schools Board of Trustees are open to the public, are recorded, and may be accessed on our website for up to one year. These meetings are held to officially conduct the business of the school district, as governed by Montana law. Trustees are responsible for key decisions, some of which include hiring employees, reviewing negotiated agreements, approving new curriculum or changes to existing curricula, facility usage requests, and paying of monthly expenses.

How can I address the Trustees?

If you would like to address the Board of Trustees on any matter, please fill out a "Request to Speak" card available from the Clerk of the Board at each meeting. Return this card to the Clerk of the Board or the Board Chairperson. This will allow the Chairperson to recognize you at the appropriate time in the meeting and to guarantee you the opportunity to address the Board. There are federal and state laws that must be followed when addressing the Board to protect the privacy of individuals and to conduct business in an orderly manner. Details can be found on the "Request to Speak" card.

**Again – thank you for participating in this democratic process – we
appreciate your presence!**

– The Great Falls Public Schools Trustees

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Great Falls, MT



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Gordon Johnson	Chairperson
Kim Skornogoski	Vice Chairperson
Bill Bronson	Trustee
Craig Duff	Trustee
Marlee Sunchild	Trustee
Amie Thompson	Trustee
Paige Turoski	Trustee

SUPERINTENDENT'S CABINET

Heather Hoyer	Superintendent of Schools
Luke Diekhans	Director of Business Operations
Lance Boyd	Executive Director for Student Achievement
Jackie Mainwaring	Executive Director for Student Achievement
Heather Spurzem	Director of Human Resources
Jeff Williams	Director of Information Technology
Stephanie Becker	Director of the GFPS Foundation



Great Falls Public Schools
Board of Trustees
Special Meeting

AGENDA

December 29, 2025

4:00 p.m.

Aspen Meeting Room – District Office Building
1100 4th Street South, Great Falls, Montana

We Successfully Educate Students to Navigate the Future

			Page
I.	CALL TO ORDER	Chairperson Johnson	
II.	ROLL CALL	Luke Diekhans	
III.	PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Chairperson Johnson	
IV.	ADOPT AGENDA	Chairperson Johnson	
V.	APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA	Chairperson Johnson	
<i>The Consent Agenda consists of routine business items related to the operation of the District. Any trustee may remove an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion. Items so removed will be discussed and acted upon separately under ACTION: OTHER</i>			
	A. Minutes of December 15, 2025 Regular Meeting	Luke Diekhans	<u>6</u>
VI.	COMMUNICATION		
	A. Audience Communication		
VII.	ACTION ITEMS		
	A. Electric Power Contract – Blend and Extend	Luke Diekhans	<u>14</u>
VIII.	ACTION: OTHER	Chairperson Johnson	

IX. REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES

A. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments

Chairperson
Johnson


UPCOMING EVENTS

Chairperson
Johnson

Thursday, January 8, 2026	5:30 p.m.	Board Budget Committee Meeting	District Offices Building
Monday, January 12, 2026	5:30 p.m.	Regular Meeting	District Offices Building
Monday, January 26, 2026	5:30 p.m.	Regular Meeting	District Offices Building
Monday, February 9, 2026	5:30 p.m.	Regular Meeting	District Offices Building
Tuesday, February 17, 2026	1:30 p.m.	Board Budget Committee Meeting	District Offices Building

ACTION TO ADJOURN

Chairperson
Johnson

 Great Falls Public Schools Great Falls, MT	Turoski	Thompson	Sunchild	Skornogowski	Johnson	Duff	Bronson
Motion							
Second							
Ayes							
Nays							
Abstain							

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MEETING DATE: December 29, 2025

CATEGORY: Consent

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: V. A.

CABINET MEMBER: Luke Diekhans

TOPIC

Minutes of the December 15, 2025 Regular Board Meeting

STRATEGIC PLAN

Stewardship and Accountability

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The Board is required to approve the minutes of each Board meeting. The minutes of the December 15, 2025 Regular Board Meeting are presented for approval.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

None

RECOMMENDATION

The District Board is requested to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2025 Regular Board Meeting as presented.

For more information about this item, please contact Superintendent Heather Hoyer at (406) 268-6001 or Director of Business Operations Luke Diekhans (406) 268-6050.

[Return to Agenda](#)

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD DECEMBER 15, 2025**

A duly called Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Great Falls Public Schools was held at the District Offices Building, 1100 4th Street South, on the 15th Day of December 2025.

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

ROLL CALL: Luke Diekhans took roll call.

Trustees Present: Gordon Johnson
Kim Skornogoski
Bill Bronson
Craig Duff
Marlee Sunchild
Amie Thompson
Paige Turoski

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

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ADOPT AGENDA

Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

A. Minutes of the November 24, 2025 Regular Board Meeting – The Board approved the minutes of the November 24, 2025 Regular Board Meeting as presented.

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

2
3 **C. Good Apple Awards** - The Board approved the nominations of Good Apple Awards
4 for Amanda Brumwell, Amber Litzinger, Taylor Willmarth, Mike Mazurkiewicz, Allison
5 Price, Ellen Coogan, Bethany Blessing, Elizabeth Chargois, Jessica Clinesmith, and
6 Memory McCracken, all substitute teachers district-wide.

7
8 **D. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates**
9 The Board approved the Montana OPI TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates for the
10 individuals listed in the agenda.

11
12 **E. Student Activity Monthly Report for September 2025** – The Board approved the
13 Student Activity Accounts for September 2025 as presented.

14
15 **F. Student Activity Monthly Report for October 2025** – The Board approved the
16 Student Activity Accounts for October 2025 as presented.

17 18 19 **COMMUNICATION**

20 21 **A. Report of the Student Representatives**

22 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Kaitlynn Fulbright and Weston
23 Stoll shared highlights of recent Great Falls High activities, including the winter formal
24 prom, winter concerts featuring choir, band, and orchestra, and the theater department's
25 production of *Steel Magnolias*. They noted community service efforts by the Advanced
26 Chamber Orchestra and Student Council, as well as Student Council participation in the
27 MASC conference and schoolwide initiatives promoting gratitude and positive school
28 culture. Additional updates included engaging classroom projects, recognition of
29 Teachers and Staff of the Month, progress in winter athletics, the Video Production
30 class's continued partnership with the Great Falls Public Library Foundation on the
31 annual Book-a-thon PSA, and a discussion on the history and significance of the
32 Woehner Scholarship Award.

33
34 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representatives Aspen Logan-
35 Schwecke and Kaytlynn McClure highlighted a wide range of interdisciplinary learning,
36 cultural activities, and student engagement opportunities, including collaborative art and
37 English projects, literature-inspired artwork, Indigenous arts education, and hands-on
38 science and cultural enrichment activities supported by Great Falls Public Schools
39 Foundation grants. They reported on career exploration experiences, creative arts
40 programs, historical learning tied to the SS *Edmund Fitzgerald*, and student celebrations
41 such as the annual powwow and cross-school social outings. The presentation also
42 noted seasonal activities promoting creativity, community building, and positive school
43 culture, concluding with holiday well-wishes.

44
45 Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Emerson Hamma, Lydia
46 Comstock, and Addie Crist highlighted community service efforts such as the Lunch
47 Buddy program, in which high school students visit elementary schools to support
48 attendance and serve as positive role models, as well as holiday family adoptions and

charitable donations by athletic teams. They shared examples of engaging classroom learning across English, science, social studies, world languages, and physics, along with updates on career and technical education programs recognized through visits from state and national leaders and continued community partnerships. Additional updates included winter athletics, club and performing arts achievements, student government participation at the MASC state convention, recent cultural and social events, and recognition of Rustler Pride, including the CMR volleyball team receiving the MHSA Stockman Bank Team Sportsmanship Award.

B. Superintendent Report

Superintendent Hoyer highlighted recent district activities, including a staff holiday “Candyland” celebration that featured the Charles M. Russell High School Russell Ayres choir musicians. This yearly event brings employees together for fellowship and collaboration. Several student-led service initiatives supporting the community, including drama students helping serve dinner at the Rescue Mission and the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corp (JROTC) Wreaths Across America project, took place. Updates were shared on literacy efforts emphasizing access to books, elementary literacy programming, and ongoing holiday concerts across schools, with observations on instructional practices that encourage student movement and engagement. Additional reports included student achievement data through Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) growth results and winter sports participation trends. Superintendent Hoyer recognized Kathy Ramey, Student Systems Analyst for Great Falls Public Schools, and her continued collaboration with the State of Montana on a PowerSchool pilot project featuring analytics to improve data use. The goal of the pilot program is to help Montana school administrators and teachers streamline cumbersome data sharing and improve communication. The report also included recognition of alumni (Mr. Jeff Gray) and Governor of Montana, Greg Gianforte, for donations supporting educational projects. *Data for the Day* highlights included mental health screening data and staff training efforts. Superintendent Hoyer concluded with holiday well-wishes from the Cabinet team.

C. Audience Communication

Community member, Judith Mortensen, addressed the Board regarding a bill currently before the Montana Senate that would create a joint resolution to study the lack of enforcement of existing marijuana laws. She encouraged the Board to review available research on the physical and academic impacts of marijuana use on students, noting concerns that current practices place youth at increased risk. The Board was urged to monitor the progress of the bill, review the bill provided, and support passage of the resolution to better understand enforcement issues related to marijuana legalization.

ACTION ITEMS

A. 2024-2025 Financial Statements and Audit Report – Director of Business

Operations Luke Diekhans reported that prior to the Board meeting, a Board Work Session was held to review the Audit Report. He introduced Brian Stavenger of Eide Bailly, LLP who confirmed that he reviewed, in detail, the 2024-2025 Financial Statements and Audit Report with the Board during a work session that took place prior

1 to the Board meeting. Mr. Stavenger stated the District audit was currently in draft form
2 due to a compliance supplement for audits of Montana local government entities that
3 was still in draft form up until approximately one hour prior to the Board meeting. With
4 the compliance supplement now finalized, Eide Bailly, LLP will finalize their audit report
5 and make the final version of the audit available to the Board at a regular Board meeting
6 in January 2026. Mr. Stavenger reviewed the highlights of the Audit Report stating that
7 Great Falls Public Schools received a clean opinion audit report for the fiscal year
8 ending in 2025. He explained important components of the audit that included a review
9 of the projected budget compared to actual figures and recommendations from the
10 Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for Unrestricted and Committed fund
11 balances. Mr. Stavenger highlighted one compliance issue with extracurricular funds
12 that showed a lack of student signatures on money spent from random student activity
13 fund accounts; but stated that even with the turnover and training of new employees
14 and leadership in the Business Office, the overall fiscal responsibility of the District
15 remained very impressive. He thanked the Business Office staff for their help during the
16 audit.

17
18 Motion – Bill Bronson, to postpone consideration of the Audit Report until the final
19 version is submitted at a future Board meeting. Kim Skornogoski seconded the motion.
20 Motion passed unanimously.

21
22 **B. Financial Report and Check Register for September 2025**– Director of Business
23 Operations Luke Diekhans explained that on page 42 of the agenda, Accounts Payable
24 Check number 140976 was not on the report because it was a check that was issued to
25 a student for a scholarship to Whitworth College; however, the student un-enrolled from
26 that college, so the check was voided.

27
28 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
29 September 2025 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #140977 - #141536 in
30 the amount of \$1,773,938.64 and Payroll checks #84547 - #84724 in the amount of
31 \$307,876.74 as presented.

32
33 **C. Financial Report and Check Register for October 2025** – Director of Business
34 Operations Luke Diekhans stated the Business Department is progressing in getting the
35 financial statements updated through the November cycles, as they are transitioning
36 through new employees in the department. Protested taxes were taken out and the
37 District is working with Cascade County to finalize amounts. Updates for November and
38 December will be made current at a Board meeting in January 2026.

39
40 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to approve the
41 October 2025 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #141537 - #142048 in the
42 amount of \$2,140,263.30 and Payroll checks #84725 - #84961 in the amount of
43 \$786,280.52 as presented.

44
45 **D. Non-Renew Temporary, Non-Tenured Teachers with Positions Expiring June 5,**
46 **2026** – Director of Human Resources Heather Spurzem presented information
47 regarding non-renewal of temporary and non-tenured teachers whose positions will
48 expire on June 6, 2025. She reviewed the reasons for temporary hire and stated the

1 non-renewed employees may apply for positions in which they qualify through the in-
2 district transfer process.

3
4 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to non-renew
5 the teachers listed in the agenda as they are in temporary positions that expire June 5,
6 2026.

7
8 **E. Acceptance of Donor-Funded Building Enhancement Project Through Great
9 Falls Public Schools Foundation – Sunnyside Elementary School Library –**

10 Stephanie Becker, Director of the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation reported that
11 two library renovations were completed in June using funds from the Nancy A. Cameron
12 estate donation. A third library renovation at Sunnyside Elementary School was partially
13 funded with the remaining estate contribution and supplemented by a donation from the
14 Gray family, bringing the total donated amount to \$90,000. Mr. Gray, a former School
15 Board member, was recognized for his contribution, and photos of the completed
16 project were presented.

17
18 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to accept the
19 funding for improvements to the Sunnyside Elementary School library with special
20 thanks to the Nancy A. Cameron estate and Gray family for their donations.

21
22
23 **ACTION: OTHER**

24
25 There were no items removed from the Consent Agenda to discuss.

26
27
28 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

29
30 **A. State of Montana Minimum Wage Increase Effective January 1, 2026 –** Director
31 of Human Resources Heather Spurzem reported per state law, the Minimum Wage will
32 increase to \$10.85 per hour on January 1, 2026. Approximately 90 employee positions
33 will be affected. The increased wages will result in approximately \$3,120 of additional
34 fiscal responsibility to the District.

35
36 **B. Bridged Health Alliance Proposal –** Director of Human Resources Heather
37 Spurzem reported that Bridged Health Alliance is exploring the creation of a self-insured
38 healthcare model exclusively for Montana public school employees, which would require
39 participation from at least 12,000 employees across 150 districts to qualify for a one-
40 time \$40 million legislative incentive. Participating districts would commit to a five-year
41 term, with an option to exit after year three if renewal costs exceed statutory limits.
42 Representatives have met multiple times with the Great Falls Public Schools Insurance
43 Committee, which has raised questions regarding plan effectiveness, cost savings, and
44 differences from current coverage. At this time, the Committee has recommended
45 delaying a decision pending receipt of additional, specific data.

46
47 Trustee Bronson stated that while he does not vote, he considers committee
48 recommendations. Based on recent communications with consultants, the

1 recommendation is not to proceed at this time until outstanding questions are answered.
2 He also reported a productive conversation with another district regarding GFPS's
3 hesitation, emphasizing that the Board is not obligated to participate and must prioritize
4 its own community. Questions will be compiled, shared with Bridged, and used to make
5 a future decision.
6

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

8 Trustee Turoski spent a half-day as a Physical Education teacher at the CORE School
9 at Morningside with multiple grade levels, noting the energy, educational content, and
10 collaboration between college students and teachers. Math curriculum ideas were
11 discussed and she wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

12 Trustee Thompson is looking forward to her half-day substitute assignment and being in
13 the classroom. She attended the Pop-Up Shop and purchased several student items.
14 She missed recent concerts but plans to attend this week.

15 Trustee Duff extended holiday greetings and thanked staff for their hard work. He also
16 fulfilled his half-day duty assignment with a 2nd-grade class and has "almost recovered"
17 from the experience.

18 Trustee Skornogoski congratulated Heather Spurzem on her new Human Resources
19 Director position. Observed analysis of the math curriculum pilot and foreign language
20 KUDs, noting the challenges of adopting new curriculum and books simultaneously. She
21 visited two elementary schools and observed LIFT (Listen, Inspire, Foster, Trust)
22 students, emphasizing the importance of screening for student anxiety. She wished
23 everyone happy holidays.

24 Trustee Bronson thanked the Board for Zoom access at the last Board meeting and a
25 community member for discussing the important legislative bill. He highlighted the value
26 of online research and acknowledged Superintendent Hoyer's comments on former
27 Trustee Mr. Gray's family history.

28 Trustee Sunchild emphasized the significance of Christmas concerts for community
29 connection. Shared a personal reflection on her daughter subbing in a first-grade
30 classroom, gaining appreciation for teaching challenges.
31
32

33 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

34
35 Chairperson Johnson highlighted upcoming events, including a Board Policy Committee
36 meeting on December 22nd that will put a conclusion to 2025. The next regular Board
37 meeting will be held on January 12, 2026.
38
39

40 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**


41
42 With no further comments or items to be discussed, motion by Kim Skornogoski and
43 seconded by Chairperson Johnson to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of
44 Trustees at 7:00 p.m.
45
46
47
48

1
2
3
4

Luke Diekhans, Clerk

Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

DRAFT

 Great Falls Public Schools Great Falls, MT	Turoski	Thompson	Sunchild	Skornowski	Johnson	Duff	Bronson
Motion							
Second							
Ayes							
Nays							
Abstain							

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MEETING DATE: December 29, 2025

CATEGORY: Action

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: VII. A.

CABINET MEMBER: Luke Diekhans

TOPIC

Electric Power Contract – Blend and Extend

STRATEGIC PLAN

Stewardship and Accountability

BACKGROUND

Since June of 2011, the District entered agreements to purchase 1 Megawatt (MW) for each of the twenty-four hours in a day. Purchasing in bulk allowed the District to secure a lower rate and minimized exposure to month-to-month price fluctuations. Northwestern Energy continued to provide the distribution and transmission service from the point of power to the specific sites (schools and other District facilities) that require power.

DISCUSSION

In 2023, the District entered a five-year contract with Energy Keepers for electric power. At that time, the market was less favorable for energy purchases. The school district's rate per Megawatt Hour (MWH) hour was \$70.50. Market conditions have shifted considerably since then, including projected significant decreases due to factors in the market. Early projections could result in a price as low as \$60 per MWH for this new contract. The District will be receiving a price quote on December 29, 2025. The bids are required to be returned by noon on December 30, 2025. The amount will be evaluated and a recommendation for approval or rejection will be brought to the special Board meeting. Because electricity represents a significant portion of the budget, it is important to secure the lowest possible rate while also locking in that rate for the longest feasible period.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

This agreement will lock in a rate for our electrical power for the next four years, until December 31, 2029. This agreement is the maximum amount of time the contract can be increased. It will help the budgeting process as we will not have to (over) estimate the budget amount needed for electricity.

RECOMMENDATION

The District Board is requested to approve the rate presented at the special Board meeting to meet the twenty-four-hour expiration deadline.

For more information about this item, please contact Superintendent Heather Hoyer (406) 268-6001 or Director of Business Operations Luke Diekhans at (406) 268-6050.

[Return to Agenda](#)