Hellgate Elementary Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting December 8, 2025
6:00 p.m.

OPENING

The Board of Trustees of Hellgate Elementary School District #4 met in regular session on Monday, December 8th, 2025. The meeting was held in-person. The meeting was called to order by Board Chairman, Tom McLaughlin. Trustees participating were: Tom McLaughlin, Beth Herron, Kallie Gatzemeier, Tom Cook, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Scott Rouse. Trustee Rich Thornock was absent. Molly Blakely and District Clerk Justine Reese were present for the meeting. District staff participating included, Brendan Brown (Special Services Director), Tiffany Hobbs (Principal Building 3), and Brent Heist (Principal Building 1).The following community members were in participation: Nicole Girten (Missoulian), Barb Droessler (parent), Jeremy Westhoff (parent), Jill Stepman (parent), BJ Ihde (parent and teacher), Michaela King (parent), Keegan Droessler, Noah Westhoff, Maddox Westhoff, Keegan Goodian, Henry Ihde, Ansel Ihde, Lincoln King (students), Jonathan Karlen (State Rep. HD 98). There were up to 25 total guests/participants in the meeting, in-person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A group of Hellgate Elementary students (names listed above) sold hot chocolate and other baked goods to raise money for Hellgate families in need of holiday assistance. The boys raised approximately $3,000 in a single afternoon. This tradition has taken place each year for the past three years, and the 8th graders who participated this year are teaching the younger students how to carry on the tradition. The Trustees expressed their appreciation for the students' selfless work and generosity.

HEEA

There was no report at this meeting.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

There was no recognition at this meeting.

BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

Trustees reviewed the monthly newsletter from OPI.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES-REGULAR MEETING 11-10-2025

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the minutes from the November 10th, 2025 regular meeting. There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF THE WARRANTS-NOVEMBER 2025

A motion was made by Beth Herron to approve the November 2025 claims. There were clarifying questions from the Trustees. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF BUDGET REPORTS

Trustees reviewed the budget reports for November 2025.

REVIEW OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A motion was made by Tom Cook to approve the November 2025 Student Activities Report. There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

BRIDGED HEALTH ALLIANCE APPROVAL CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Ryan to approve the transition to Bridged Health Alliance for the district's health insurance coverage, effective July 1, 2026. With approval, the Superintendent will be authorized to execute the agreement and implement the change in accordance with the negotiated agreement. There was brief a clarifying question related to commitment deadline. The motion was seconded by Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

TRUSTEE ELECTION AND SCHOOL LEVY CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Kallie Gatzemeier to adopt the attached resolution to set the trustee and levy election date for Tuesday, May 5, 2026. The election, if needed, will be a mail-in ballot conducted by the Missoula County Elections Office (resolution included in official board packet). There was brief clarification on the timeline of election events due to 2025 legislative changes. The motion was seconded by Beth Herron. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

HIRING OF CLASSIFIED STAFF CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the hiring of the following: Bethany Sorenson, paraprofessional, effective November 17, 2025; Joseph Michels, custodian, effective November 21,2025; Colleen Dwyer, paraprofessional, effective December 3, 2025. There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

HIRING OF COACHING STAFF CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Tom Cook to approve the hiring of the following:

Girls Basketball: Head Coaches: Taylor Nordby and Shane Byers; Assistant Coaches: TBD

Spelling Bee Advisors: Peggy Racicot and Margaret Finlay

Drama Production: Drama Co-Directors: Randi Ruhkamp and Ashlyn Schatz-Eason; Assistant Directors: Rhiannon Roos and Chris Bosshardt

There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Jacqelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED STAFF RESIGNATION CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the resignation of Mr. Eric Forde, Special Education Teacher, effective December 19, 2025 (letter included in official board packet). There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF SUBSTITUTE LIST FOR THE 25-26 SCHOOL YEAR:

A motion was made by Kallie Gatzemeier to approve a new substitute for the 2025-2026 school year: Ashley Finnerty. There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Scott Rouse. Voting in favor of the

motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Update on County Banking: The request for proposal has been sent out and bank interviews will be scheduled for the first week in January 2026.

Fingerprint training: Anne Maloney, Justine Reese, and Kelsey Salmela attended a fingerprinting training through the DOJ in Helen earlier in the month and are now able to complete fingerprint background checks for new and existing employees.

OPI Visit: OPI along with State Senators and other school district personnel toured Hellgate Elementary's campus to observe safety protocols and procedures currently in place.

Fire Arm safety locks: Beginning in February, Hellgate Elementary families will be able to request firearm locks. The program will be available for three weeks.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no committee reports at the meeting.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Building 1: Brent Heist invited the Trustees to the holiday programs held in Building 3. The SRO will be participating in the Shop with a Cop program with a few Hellgate students. Ms. Cottom's band students are playing holiday music around campus through musical telegrams. 'It Starts with Me' is coming up; annual wellness blood draw for eligible employees. Shout out to Ms. Ford for her work with building one families and staff members.

Building 2: Absent

Building 3: Tiffany Hobbs noted the holiday concerts are in full swing for building three. There are a variety of activities scheduled to keep students engaged leading up to the holiday break. Robotics is scrimmaging in Kalispell this month. Missoula Electric Co-Op awarded $2,000 to building three to offset the cost of damaged classroom novels.

Building 4: Absent

Special Education: Received $4,000 from the United Champion Schools, to offset the transportation cost of the life skills program field trips.

Curriculum: No update.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting of the Board will be January 12th, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment at this time.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

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Tom McLaughlin, Board Chair Justine Reese, Business Manager/Clerk