

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 December 8, 2025. Chair Scott Walter called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Attendance and Introduction of Board Members

Trustees Present: Chair Scott Walter, Vice Chair Tyrel Murfitt, Tristan Ulmer, Tiffany Richardson, Martin Balukas, Stacy Baird, Mark Diehl and Student Representative Xavier Nunn

Superintendent Dan Rispens, Athletics Director Shaun Murgel and IT Coordinator Eric Power.

Principals: Brandon Crusat, Lynsi Morris, Michael Kemper, Paul Condon, Trish Klock, Matt Krantz for Gus Somerfeld and District Secretary, Jen Cordell.

Visitors: K.D. Jones, Kate Johnson, Katherine Senecal, Jana Nygaard, Shana Dachs, Ethan Hoffman, Kelli Kerpa, Jill Hayter, Sarah Sandau, Stewart St.Clair, Stacy Murfitt, Bella Murfitt and Randall Rickman

Review the Agenda

Chairman Walter stated that item #5 on the Board Agenda/Reports was a mistake. The Legislative Status Report was a carry over item from last year.

Hear the Public

No public comments.

Reports

Xavier Nunn talked about fall activities wrapping up. The football team lost their last game to Billings Central but overall showed improvement and hope to keep that trend going. 11 players received All State or All Conference awards. Winter sports are beginning. Basketball and Wrestling are off to a great start. At the first Wrestling Meet, there were 2 champions and 11 placers. EHHS Student Council attended a conference in Great Falls and were able to network with other councils around the State and also raised money for Make a Wish Foundation. They raised enough funds to grant a wish through that organization. It was nice to have the break over Thanksgiving and the students look forward to working hard and pushing through until Christmas break.

EHHS Vice Principal Trish Klock reported first so she could attend the high school band concert. The high school hired an at risk tutor who will work with a caseload of up to 15 students initially. He will support the students during the school day as well as an after school portion.

Principal Crusat highlighted the Holiday programs and all of the hard work that the music teachers are putting in. The entire team is doing a great job putting everything together and it is no small feat. He thanked the teachers and custodians for their patience during this time. Principal Crusat also spoke about the trimester prep schedule and how it allows all students to participate in PE, Music and Library.

Chairman Walter mentioned the Somerfeld family and that our thoughts are with them. Matt Krantz reported for Principal Somerfeld. Matt spoke about the parent teacher conferences going well and a successful food drive. He gave a shout out to custodial staff and all of their hard work especially during this super busy time of the year with concerts and programs. In addition, he wanted to give a shout out to all other staff for being so flexible with all of the rehearsals and programs happening. Matt spoke about switching up the prep schedule to trimesters as well to allow for access to PE, Music and Library.

Trustee Balukas thanked Mr. Krantz for stepping up and helping out.

EVMS Principal Morris reported 8th graders painted the windows of East Helena Business for the Holiday Season. She let everyone know that at the December 19th assembly, they will have a masked singer performance. Other than that, they are back to business at EVMS.

EVMS Vice Principal Kemper reported that there has been a significant drop in referrals this last month. They are pleased with that and will focus on continuing the decline trend. Students are excited that a Family and Consumer Science Teacher has been hired. Trustee Ulmer asked if the new FCS Teacher would help relieve the class sizes. Vice Principal Kemper said that it definitely helps as they have pulled students from other classes since the trimester has already begun.

EHHS Principal Condon referred to his Board report and added that the high school hosted a Pow Wow last month. He said that everyone really enjoyed it.

Chairman Walter said that he appreciated the updates on the student internships and placements. He said it is a program that is doing phenomenal work. Principal Condon said that Jill Hayter is in the audience and she is responsible for the program as the Advanced Opportunity Facilitator.

Athletics Director Murgel spoke about transportation going well so far. The middle school students are using the white bus quite a bit and the students are excited about it.

IT Coordinator Eric Power referenced his Board report and added that our Google license is coming up for renewal. It will be more expensive than in the past as we have more students as well as staff.

Trustee and Committee Reports of the K-12 Board
There were no sub committee meetings to report on.

Strategic Planning – Scan for Future Needs

Superintendent Rispens mentioned that he is working on getting Debra Silk confirmed to meet this winter or spring. He is proposing to meet two to three consecutive Tuesdays in February or March to review and discuss EHPS current strategic plan.

The Trustees discussed new subdivisions and the water rights issue that has been in the news. There were no up-dates on the grant for improving the road.

Notifications of Retirements and Resignations

Superintendent Rispens spoke about Nick Turner and Kirk Hedrick and the transition with the Transportation Supervisor role. He also spoke about Oliver Atkinson and the IT Help Desk position and hopes to have a Board recommendation for that position in January.

The Following Staff Resignations Have Previously Been Accepted:

- Tim Roche Paraprofessional
- Kylie Layton Paraprofessional
- Juliette Jones Paraprofessional
- Oliver Atkinson Technology
- Nick Turner Transportation Supervisor

Consent Action Items

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Approval of the former and new warrants (Claims # 51543 - #) and (Payroll # 69769 - # 69970)

Personnel Actions

Recommended Employment of Staff

- Thomas Julian Kitchen Aide
- Preston Deshner Paraprofessional
- Savannah Baker Paraprofessional
- Kiya Lamping Student/Athletic Trainer
- Lacey Brewer Student/Athletic Trainer
- Austyn Fairbairn Student/Athletic Trainer
- Daniel McKinzey Substitute
- Melanie Martinez Teacher – EVMS Food and Nutrition
- Ashley Torgerson Head Golf Coach
- Teagan Wigen Substitute
- Randy Gillett At Risk Tutor
- Kirk Hedrick Transportation Supervisor
- Mariah Chambers Teacher – Intervention Specialist
- Lindsey McGill Instructional Tutor

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

Helena

8th Grade 1

Total: 1

Vice Chair Murfitt asked that the appointment of staff be pulled.

Motion by Trustee Balukas, seconded by Trustee Baird to approve the Consent Action Items with Personnel Actions pulled. Unanimous vote for the motion.

Motion carries.

A Motion was made by Trustee Balukas, seconded by Trustee Baird to approve the personnel actions with the additions of Olivia Nett-Intervention Specialist. Unanimous vote

Motion carries

Unfinished Business

Resolution 243 – Obsolete Equipment – MCI Bus Bid Opening

No bids submitted

Motion by Trustee Balukas to authorize the Superintendent to dispose of the property, in a manner that is in compliance with State Law. Seconded by Vice Chair Murfitt Unanimous vote for the motion.

The motion carries.

Calendar Committee Report – 4 Day School Week Research

Principal Condon, Ethan Hoffman and Kelli Kerpa referred to the report that was presented to the Trustees on the research for a 4 day school week. They presented the research that they had compiled so far. Mr. Condon reiterated that the report was simply more information so the Board could decide if they want the Calendar Committee to move forward with more research on the subject.

Kelli spoke about the history of the committee and how they came about researching the 4 day week.

They spoke about the potential school calendars looking at the pros and cons.

Ethan pointed out unique issues looking at local and regional districts.

They talked about the U of M Study and potential problems with the study.

The next steps, if the Board wants to move forward with the research, would be sending out another survey for both staff and the community. Holding question and answer sessions for the community, staff and students.

The Trustees asked about budgeting, class sizes and requirements for continued funding as well as how it would all work for the classified personnel.

Motion by Trustee Balukas that the Calendar Committee continue their course of investigation and prepare a report for a future Board meeting, Seconded by Trustee Ulmer Unanimous vote for the motion.

The motion carries.

Vice Chair Murfitt asked the group to get as much involvement and feedback as possible from staff, students and community. Outreach must be thorough and comprehensive.

Sarah Sandau referenced the teacher burnout bullet point asking about teachers working longer days as well as potentially some Fridays. Ethan, not every Friday the committee would look at required hours.

Kate Johnson asked if they had looked at only moving the high school to a 4 day week. Paul answered that it is an option. Trustee Baird said that there was a lot of push back from staff in the committee of the younger grades if only allowing high schoolers, our younger teachers and paras were upset about that.

Stewart Sinclair, a parent of a 4th grader at Radley spoke in support of collecting public input and gathering as much data as possible before final decisions are made and thanked the group for the presentation.

Collection of Superintendent's Evaluation

The evaluation tool was distributed to the Board members at the November regular meeting. Chair Walter collected any paper copies and reminded the Trustees that they could also submit to him by email.

New Business

MAST Score Reports and Academic Update

Dan gave the Board a quick rundown and asked the Instructional Coaches to report.

Vice Chair Murfitt excused himself from the meeting at 7: 13 p.m.

The District's Instructional Coaches shared their observations and perspective on the MAST test as well as the high school's ACT results. Pointed out that some of the schools are showing higher scores that are on a 4 day week.

Katherine Senecal reported that Radley Elementary was above State average in Math and Reading scores. EVMS had mixed results. The MAST Program helps to diagnose what areas students are needing to work on. She talked about pros and cons and how there are still issues being worked out at OPI.

As Instructional Coaches they use the data to help teachers focus on standards that may be low with some students and how to help teachers improve their practices. The information gathered can also be used for professional development as well as the data collected can be used to support curriculum.

The program is not quite as efficient as we were told it would be, the average student takes about 20 to 25 minutes while some have anxiety and need 45 minutes or more to complete.

Jana Nygaard reported that the instruction and assessment is different at the high school level

Pre ACT is what they were doing and there was some benefit with that assessment.

Requirements have changed at the college level and what they are accepting.

This assessment is given nationally

Montana Advanced Opportunity Annual Report

Superintendent Rispens gave the Board a rundown of the AOP Program including the objectives of this Grant.

Advanced Opportunity Facilitator, Jill Hayter, spoke about a few of the things she has put in place to help students explore future career options. This required annual report must be signed by the Board prior to submitting it to OPI.

Trustee Ulmer thanked Jill for including the underclassman in the opportunities.

Motion by Trustee Ulmer, seconded by Trustee Balukas to authorize Chairman Walter to sign and submit the Montana Advanced Opportunity Report to OPI. Unanimous vote for the motion.
The motion carries.

Resolution #244 Call for Election by Mail Ballot

Superintendent Rispens explained to the Board that there will be three open Trustee positions in the spring. Also, a levy may not be necessary but EHPS will have to submit the request at this time to make the deadline. Motion by Trustee Ulmer, seconded by Trustee Richardson to approve Resolution #244, Call for Election by Mail Ballot. Unanimous vote for the motion.
The motion carries.

Bridged Health Commitment Consideration

Superintendent Rispens reported on the details of the contract. The Trustees discussed the pros and cons of the agreement.

Motion by Trustee Balukas, seconded by Trustee Ulmer, for East Helena Public Schools to join the Bridged Health Alliance Trust and Multi District Agreement. Unanimous vote for the motion.
The motion carries.

Final Audit Report

Superintendent Rispens answered questions from the Board regarding the final audit report for Fiscal year 25. Motion by Trustee Baird, seconded by Trustee Diehl to accept the FY25 audit report.
Unanimous vote for the motion.
The motion carries.

Policy First Reading MTSBA Model Policies #2700 and #1230

Superintendent Rispens spoke about the policies and has asked Technology Coordinator, Eric Power, to go over the policy regarding AI.

Motion by Trustee Diehl, seconded by Trustee Baird to adopt Policy #2700 and #1230 as amended, under first reading. Unanimous vote for the motion.
The motion carries.

Request for Student Activity Account – DECA

Superintendent Rispens asked the Board to approve a new student activity account for DECA

Motion by Trustee Balukas, seconded by Trustee Richardson to approve the new student activity fund for DECA. Unanimous vote for the motion.
The motion carries.

MOU for EHEA Members to Sub for Paraprofessionals

Motion by Trustee Ulmer, seconded by Trustee Balukas to approve the MOU for EHEA members to sub for paraprofessionals. Unanimous vote for the motion. The motion carries.

MOU for EHESA Members to Work Over School Breaks

Motion by Trustee Ulmer, seconded by Trustee Diehl to approve the MOU for EHESA members to work over Christmas and Spring breaks. Unanimous vote for the motion.

The motion carries.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Future Meeting Dates and Agenda Items

The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, January 12th, at 5:30 Radley Elementary

Submitted by: J. Cordell 1-12-2026
District Secretary, Jen Cordell Date

Approved by: Scott A. Walter JAN. 12, 2026
Chair, Board of Trustees Date

