

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD JANUARY 26, 2026**
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 4th Street South, on the 26th day
7 of January 2026.

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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
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 and Lance Boyd Executive Directors of Student
28 Achievement; Heather Spurzem, Director of Human Resources; Jeff Williams, Director
29 of Information Technology; and Stephanie Becker, Director of Great Falls Public
30 Schools Foundation. Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education
31 Association President.
32

33 Chairperson Johnson asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.
34
35

36 **ADOPT AGENDA**
37

38 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to adopt the
39 agenda as presented.
40

41
42 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**
43

44 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to approve
45 the Consent Agenda as presented.
46

47 **A. Minutes of the January 12, 2026, Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved
48 the minutes of the January 12, 2026, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

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

3
4 **C. Good Apple Awards** – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple
5 Awards: Genesis Hood, Nicole Gilbert, and Becky Lorio, all Para Educators at C.M.
6 Russell High School; and Tawny Cale, Instructional Indian Education Coach at Paris
7 Gibson Education Center.

8
9 **D. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-35’s School Bus Driver**
10 **Certificates** – The Board approved the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-
11 35’s School Bus Driver Certificates for the individuals listed in the agenda.

12
13 **E. TR-6 Bus Route Reimbursement Claims for 2025-26 First Semester** - The Board
14 approved the TR-6 Bus Route Reimbursement Claims for bus routes for both the high
15 school and elementary districts for the first semester of the 2025-2026 school year.

16
17 **F. Student Activity Monthly Report for November 2025** – The Board approved the
18 Student Activity Accounts for November 2025 as presented.

19
20 **G. Student Activity Monthly Report for December 2025** - The Board approved the
21 Student Activity Accounts for December 2025 as presented.

22
23 **H. Charles M. Russell High School Distributive Education Clubs of America**
24 **(DECA) State and Career Development Conference Travel Request to Missoula,**
25 **Montana** - The Board approved the Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School DECA
26 travel request to Missoula, Montana from February 1-3, 2026, for the State Career
27 Development Conference.

28
29
30 **COMMUNICATION**

31
32 **A. Character Strong – West Elementary School** – Lacey Lewis, West Elementary
33 School Principal and three (3) student representatives reported on what perseverance,
34 the *Character Strong* word of the month, means to West Elementary School and how
35 they implement *Character Strong* within their school.

36
37 **B. Superintendent Report** –
38 Director of Business Operations, Luke Diekhans, thanked the community and advocate,
39 Anders Blewett, for their continued support regarding the Innovative Tax Credit. He
40 stated that the District was able to secure \$1,008,000.00 this year. Funds are used for
41 initiatives such as technology enhancements, career/technical education, and programs
42 for students with disabilities.

43 Superintendent Hoyer reported that Innovative Summer Learning will take place this
44 summer with three (3) courses fully funded by the Innovative Tax Credit donations. The
45 courses include *American Indian Astronomy & Earth Science* on June 8 and 9, *Code*
46 *Quest: A 2-Day Adventure* on June 22 and 23, and *Exploring Rocketry 101* on August 5
47 and 6.

1 Superintendent Hoyer reported that four hundred (400) winter student-athletes each
2 spend an average of thirteen (13) hours a week in extracurricular activities.
3 Executive Director of Student Achievement, Lance Boyd, reported that the fundraising
4 goals for baseball start up and the 1st year have been met.
5 ReStart students and Mr. Reeves visited NonStop Local news to learn about mass
6 communication.
7 Junior and senior students from all three (3) high schools visited Calumet for an
8 experiential learning opportunity that involved a plant tour and time in their lab.
9 Superintendent Hoyer stated that a formalized agreement is being worked on regarding
10 the Reserve School Resource Officer Program. She thanked Trustees Turoski and Duff
11 for their feedback on the agreement.
12 Erica Harp reported on the daily nursing tasks throughout the District. She stated that,
13 on a daily average, nurses oversee a minimum of twenty-three (23) doses of insulin,
14 administer approximately two hundred twenty-seven (227) scheduled medications,
15 perform ten (10) urinary catheterization procedures, and conduct over twelve (12)
16 procedures with GI tubes. She also shared information about the *Grow with Grit*
17 research, including its focus on anxiety symptoms and a six-week nurse-led pilot at one
18 (1) elementary school.

19
20 **C. Audience Communication** – Community member Steven Midge questioned how
21 and who determines and approves the curriculum. He gave examples of current middle
22 school questions given to his stepchild.
23 Community member Amber Cambell voiced her concern regarding specific YouTube
24 videos approved as an educational resource.
25

26 27 **ACTION ITEMS**

28
29 **A. Financial Report and Check Register for November 2025** – Director of Business
30 Operations, Luke Diekhans, reviewed the financial report and check register for
31 November 2025.

32
33 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
34 November 2025 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #142049 - #142386 in
35 the amount of \$2,033,033.81 and Payroll checks #84962 - #85218 in the amount of
36 \$574,976.25 as presented.
37

38 **B. Financial Report and Check Register for December 2025** – Director of Business
39 Operations, Luke Diekhans, reviewed the financial report and check register for
40 December 2025. He explained that the “discrepancy” in the starting number in the
41 payroll checks is due to prepping stipend checks.
42

43 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve the
44 November 2025 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #142387 - #142815 in
45 the amount of \$2,705,230.34 and Payroll checks #85137 - #85360 in the amount of
46 \$296,970.20 as presented.
47

1 **C. Lowest Qualified Bidder for the East Middle School Lead-in-the-Water**

2 **Remediation Project** – Director of Business Operations, Luke Diekhans, reported that
3 during the 2023 Montana State Legislature, funds were appropriated for schools to
4 access in order to remediate lead in school facilities. In the 2025 Montana State
5 Legislature, these funds were reappropriated to continue the work, and the deadline to
6 use these funds was extended to June 30, 2027. Since the inception of this program,
7 the District has used the funds to replace specific fixtures that have tested positive for
8 lead and to install filtration systems where appropriate. Water quality is continually
9 monitored throughout District buildings. The District is required to submit testing results
10 to the state every three (3) years. Due to ongoing lead issues at East Middle School, the
11 District has requested this project. Three (3) bidders submitted bids on December 23,
12 2025, all of which were reviewed by TD&H Engineering and GPD, the Engineers of
13 Record hired to design the project to ensure that all requirements have been met. The
14 lowest qualified bidder is Action Plumbing and Construction with a base bid of
15 \$790,500.00.

16
17 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded - Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to approve
18 the lowest qualified bidder, Action Plumbing and Construction, for the East Middle
19 School Lead-in-the Water Remediation Project in the amount of \$790,500 for the base
20 bid as presented.

21
22 **D. Great Falls Public Schools Foundation Service Agreement – 2026-2031 –**

23 Director of Business Operations, Luke Diekhans, reported that the Great Falls Public
24 Schools Foundation was established in 2010 and has been an integral partner in the
25 education of the students in the District. The Foundation not only supports the students,
26 but teachers, as well, through Mini Grants, Annual Grants, and Scholarships. The
27 partnership with the GFPS Foundation continues to enable private donors to provide for
28 building enhancement, that otherwise would not be possible due to the limits of school
29 funding. To provide innovative and new opportunities to the Great Falls Public School’s
30 students, teachers, and community, the District looks forward to a continued partnership
31 with the Foundation for years to come. The included Service Agreement will take the
32 partnership through 2031 and will allow the District and Foundation to clarify language
33 as needed over time. This agreement sets forth the Executive Director of the
34 Foundation’s role within the District and the District’s portion of compensation. Luke
35 stated that the District will provide office space, equipment, and supplies that the parties
36 mutually agree are reasonably necessary. The District will reimburse the Foundation,
37 quarterly, for ten (10) percent of the mutually agreed upon salary and benefits.

38
39 Trustee Bronson noted that Great Falls Public School District is listed as a “*Montana*
40 *nonprofit corporation*” in the attached agreement and that is an incorrect statement. He
41 suggested more appropriate language such as “*a public elementary and secondary*
42 *school district formed under the laws of the State of Montana*”. Mr. Diekhans stated that
43 the wording “*Montana nonprofit corporation*” will be struck from the agreement. Trustee
44 Bronson concurred.

45
46 Motion – Amie Thompson, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, approved unanimously to
47 approve the Great Falls Public School Foundation Service Agreement – 2026 to 2031
48 with changes noted by Trustee Bronson.

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3 **E. Second Reading of Revised Board Policies 2600 – *Work Experience/Internship***
4 ***Program; 3655 – Student Safety; 5122 – Fingerprints and Criminal Background;***
5 ***and 5122P – Federal Background Checks, Fingerprints, and Information Handling***
6 ***Procedure*** - Superintendent Hoyer stated that no comments or recommendations for
7 changes were received since the first reading at the January 12, 2026 Board meeting.
8

9 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
10 revised Board Policies 2600 – *Work Experience/Internship Program; 3655 – Student*
11 *Safety; 5122 – Fingerprints and Criminal Background; 5122P – Federal Background*
12 *Checks, Fingerprints, and Information Handling Procedure* as presented.
13

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15 **ACTION: OTHER**
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17 There were no items extracted from the Consent Agenda to discuss.
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19
20 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**
21

22 **A. School Nutrition Report** - School Food Services Supervisor, Jessa Youngers,
23 reported on the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer
24 Food Service Program, and the Community Eligibility Provision. She stated that there
25 was a significant increase of meals provided during the Summer Food Service Program
26 from last year. Jessa spoke on the “Park Pals” collaboration with Get Fit Great Falls.
27 She reported on student participation and meals served from the 2020-2021 school year
28 to current. Free and reduced meals are categorically based on participation in certain
29 Federal Assistance Programs or students classified as homeless, migrant, runaway,
30 foster, or select Medicaid. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) states that all
31 students enrolled in a qualified CEP school will receive free meals due to the high level
32 of poverty among enrolled students. Seven (7) schools within the District qualify for this
33 CEP. Jessa reviewed the notification process for students with negative meal charged
34 balances, which include summer communication, targeted communication, automated
35 messaging, Wednesday envelopes, one meal rule, and interactions. She reviewed the
36 projects that have taken place in the food service kitchens throughout the District. She
37 thanked the Buildings and Grounds department for their work with these projects. She
38 also reviewed the Warehouse Freezer/Cooler project that just concluded. Great Falls
39 Public Schools catered over twelve hundred (1,200) boxed lunches in over two (2) days
40 for the Montana Music Educators Conference and the Montana High School Association
41 (MHSA) All State Music Festival. Jessa reported that due to the reorganization and
42 temporary closure of Paris Gibson Education Center as a production site, C.M. Russell
43 High School has added an additional seven hundred (700) meals per day, Great Falls
44 High School has added an additional four hundred (400) meals per day, and East
45 Middle School has added an additional eight hundred (800) meals per day. Jessa ended
46 her report by reviewing her current staff and stated that they have thirteen (13) open
47 positions.
48

1 **B. First Reading of Revised Board Policies 1111 – Election; 2131 – Student and**
2 **Family Privacy Rights; 3410 – Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations;**
3 **7122 – Intent to Increase Non-Voted Levy; and 7122F – Notice of Intent to Impose**
4 **an Increase in Levies Form** – Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the recommended
5 language revisions from the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) and the
6 Board Policy Committee to each of the revised Board policies listed. Language
7 proposed brings policies into alignment with legislative directives and/or cleans up
8 confusing language. She asked if anyone had questions or concerns regarding any of
9 the new policies or revisions to contact her prior to the next regular Board meeting.

10
11 **C. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments –**

12 Trustee Sunchild thanked her fellow Trustees for their work. She also thanked Trustee
13 Thompson for her work on the Superintendent’s evaluation and Charlene Ammons for
14 her help with the technology portion of the evaluation.

15 Trustee Duff stated that he was able to watch the *LIFT* students present at an
16 elementary school.

17 Trustee Thompson thanked her fellow Trustees for their cooperation for taking the
18 Superintendent’s evaluation digital.

19 Trustee Turoski stated that she enjoys it when elementary school students come to
20 present. She thanked the school nurses. She also thanked the community members
21 who came to speak about their curriculum concerns.

22 Trustee Bronson thanked Chairperson Johnson for sitting in for him at the Health
23 Insurance Trust meeting. He thanked Mike Bonville and his team for their work
24 regarding the Health Insurance Trust.

25 Trustee Skornogoski thanked Luke Diekhans and Anders Blewett for their work with the
26 Innovative Tax Credit. She thanked Jessa and Erica for their presentations and their
27 work in their District.

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30 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

31
32 Chairperson Johnson said the next Regular Board Meetings are scheduled for Monday,
33 February 9, 2026, and Monday, February 23, 2026.

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36 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

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38 Chairperson Johnson adjourned the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:08
39 p.m.

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Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

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45

Luke Diekhans, Clerk