

Hellgate Elementary Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting January 12, 2026

6:00 p.m.

OPENING

The Board of Trustees of Hellgate Elementary School District #4 met in regular session on Monday, January 12th, 2026. The meeting was held in-person. The meeting was called to order by Board Chairman, Tom McLaughlin. Trustees participating were: Tom McLaughlin, Beth Herron, Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Scott Rouse. Trustee Kallie Gatzemeier 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), Julie McCarthy-McLavery (Principal Building 2), Haley Patzner (Dean of Students), and Erin Ellis (Curriculum). The following community member participated, Megan Powell (Parent). There were up to 15 total guests/participants in the meeting, in-person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at the meeting.

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 12-08-25

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the minutes from the December 8th, 2025 regular meeting. There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Rich Thornock. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Rich Thornock, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF THE WARRANTS-DECEMBER 2025

A motion was made by Tom Cook to approve the December 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, Rich Thornock, 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 December 2025.

REVIEW OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES

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

HIRING OF CERTIFIED STAFF CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Ryan to approve the hiring of Ms. Kelly Duff, to teach Special Education at the middle school effective January 5 through June 10, 2026. There was brief a clarifying question related to the number of interested candidates. The motion was seconded by Rich Thornock. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Rich Thornock, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

HIRING OF ASSISTANT COACHES CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Rich to approve the hiring of the following assistant coaches for girls basketball: Assistant Coach: Brandon Ihde and Mikel Hoffman. There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Beth Herron. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Rich Thornock, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

SABBATICAL REQUEST CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Ryan to approve the request for a sabbatical for the 2026-2027 school year for Ms. Katie Gundlach, middle school Spanish teacher (letter available in official board packet). There was brief discussion regarding the challenge to fill a Spanish teacher position. The motion was seconded by Tom Cook. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Rich Thornock, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF SUBSTITUTE LIST FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR:

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve new substitutes for the 2025-2026 school year: Rory McLaverty, Kelsey Loveall, Kerry Lawson, Kate Ryan, Kylie Chimienti, Stephanie Graf, and Megan Lucostic. There was brief discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Beth Herron. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Rich Thornock, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

INVESTMENT AND BANKING RECOMMENDATION:

A motion was made by Rich Thornock to approve the recommendation to select Stockman Bank as the institution for Hellgate Elementary's Investment and Banking Services subject to successful negotiation of a contract. Stockman Bank meets the qualifications required by law in order to manage school district investment accounts. This approval is contingent on the approved agreement between Missoula County Treasurer Department and Hellgate Elementary (Complete proposals are available upon request—please contact the District Clerk for assistance.). There was discussion on the topic related to the matrix utilized for the selection process. The Trustees are comfortable selecting Stockman Bank as Hellgate's primary independent bank and would like to see a final agreement that specifies and commits to the discussed and reviewed fee structure moving forward. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Rich Thornock, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Recycling Works Give Back Winner: \$1,000 was awarded to Hellgate Elementary

School Superintendents Association: \$3,500 was awarded to Hellgate Elementary to support the procurement of the Building 2 Playground

Town Pump STEM: \$1,000 was awarded to Building 2 to support their STEM program

Ranch Club Ladies Coffee Group: \$1,000 was awarded to Hellgate Elementary to support Hellgate Students

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no committee reports at the meeting.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Building 1: Brent Heist gave a shout out to the Building 2 Title team for their support of second grade students during DIBELS testing and shared excitement about beginning testing again. He noted that it feels like a long stretch between now and spring break.

Building 2: Julie McCarthy-McLavery shared that testing began last week and expressed appreciation to the Title team for their hard work. She noted that getting back into a routine had some challenges after returning from the two-week holiday break.

Building 3: Tiffany Hobbs shared upcoming highlights, including the start of the Spelling Bee and an upcoming state-qualifying robotics meet which will be hosted at Hellgate Elementary. She also noted that fourth graders will be attending the Missoula Symphony performance of *How to Train Your Dragon*, and that the Wall of Fame in Building 3 has been entertaining and competitive.

Building 4: Absent

Special Education: No Report

Curriculum: Erin Ellis presented Reading, Math, and Science scores for the 24-25 school year. At a State level, Hellgate Elementary is doing well comparatively. Full presentation deck is available in the official board packet.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting of the Board will be February 9th, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment at this time.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Tom McLaughlin, Board Chair

Justine Reese, Business Manager/Clerk