

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 February 9, 2026. Chairman Walter called the meeting to order at 5:33pm

In Attendance: Chairman Scott Walter, Vice Chair Tyrel Murfitt. Trustees; Stacy Baird, Tiffany Richardson, Tristan Ulmer, Mark Diehl (5:34pm) and Martin Balukas (6:29 pm) Superintendent Dan Rispens and Student Representative, Xavier Nunn. Principals; Brandon Crusat, Lynsi Morris and Paul Condon. Vice Principals; Michael Kemper, and Trish Klock. Athletic Director Shaun Murgel, Technology Coordinator Eric Power, Business Manager/ Clerk Jane Knudsen, District Secretary, Jen Cordell, Kate Johnson, Kim Metzger, KD Jones, Rosie Kraft, Duncan Kraft and Taylor Cohenour.

Review the Agenda

Hear the Public

No comments from the Public

Reports:

Xavier Nunn spoke about the athletic teams continuing to work hard and being successful. He mentioned the basketball games that supported the Somerfeld Family where everyone wore orange, including the opposing teams. He gave a shout out to Rori Schoenfeld who committed to Dickenson State for volleyball as well as track and field and Cooper Dighans for his 100th career win in Wrestling. The Swim Team is heading into State meets in Great Falls this weekend. Speech & Debate wrapped up their season with Class A Eastern Divisional Championship for the second year in a row, securing a spot in the State Tournament. They didn't place but the team did well. The Winter Pep Assembly and the Winter Dance were also held. There will be more playoff games for our teams next month as well as spring sports will be starting at the beginning of March.

Principal Crusat had a couple of additional items to add to his report. He referred to the reading and math data and the time and work the teachers put into dissecting the information for these assessments. They use the information to identify specific needs for individual students. He spoke about the Kindergarten and LilLante's registrations for enrollment so far at this point in the process for next school year and reported the numbers are similar to enrollment patterns in years past, he will continue to monitor.

Principal Sommerfeld is in Denver for a Title 1 Conference.

Chairman Walter asked the Admin Team if anyone could clarify a part of Principal Somerfeld's Board report where he refers to an increase in frequency and intensity of high needs behaviors at Radley Elementary. Principal Morris said that she was in the building today and what that looked like was kids running away from staff, screaming in the hallway and throwing items, more impulsive behaviors. Brandon added that the frequency and intensity is up but it is pretty much the same students with escalating behavior. The team is working on interventions for those students.

Principal Morris reported on the 227 data from MAST. She explained the charts as well as the progress and growth. Superintendent Rispens explained the MAST Assessment and spoke about the recent Board of Public Education meeting and the frustration with some, questioning the validity of the assessment system with so many other factors not considered.

Vice Principal Kemper reported that EVMS has been doing a lot of reteaching behaviors and expectations since Christmas break. Not an uptick in severe behaviors, they still have lower referral numbers as far as OSS. What they are seeing is mostly in class disruptions, tardies and inappropriate language. Deputy Locky is back in the building and the kids love seeing him.

Principal Condon reported that the Calendar Committee will be ready next month with recommendations for the 2026-2027 School Year. Last Friday's games packed the house.

Vice Principal Klock reported that the Pep Assembly on Friday was so much fun and they went right into the game after. The students have a lot of spirit and energy. She gave a shout out to Christa Schenfeld and Bret Charlton for helping put it all together. Having so many students recognized is important. It is not just our school sports that are recognized but outside sports and activities as well, including as many students as possible. She gave another shout out to Deputy Stoltz as this month was a little more challenging. She elaborated on an incident earlier in the month and how responsive he was. Having him in the building to make connections with the kids and know the building is safe is gratifying not only as a staff member but as a parent as well.

Athletic Director Murgel spoke about the glow in the dark event that the Wrestling Team put together. It was a phenomenal night and the growth of the program is amazing. All of the athletic teams that played this week qualified for State. There are a ton of kids that are doing great things in our school.

Technology Coordinator Power reported that the calendars are built and set up for registrations. It should save a lot of time. The NCC conference is at the end of the month.

Trustee and Committee Reports of the K – 12 Board

Superintendent Rispens spoke about the MTSBA survey and the March 13, 2026 deadline to respond. Chairman Walter elaborated that MTSBA would like more Trustee input in the survey and encouraged all to participate. He also spoke about the Board of Directors winter meeting and an item of note is that they are anticipating a \$250 million estimated shortfall in the Montana State Legislature's budget, next year. Chairman Walter announced that due to personal reasons and commitments he will suspend his bid for House District 84 Montana Legislature and withdraw at this time.

Strategic Planning- Scan for Future Needs

Superintendent Rispens pointed out the hard copy of the Strategic Plan for the Trustees and the link on the website to the document. Meeting dates for Strategic Planning are set at: February 24, March 3 and March 10 if needed. They will be held at the EVMS Library from 5:30-7:00. Debra Silk suggested Trustees make notes and send them to the Superintendent.

Notifications of Retirements and Resignations

The Following Staff Resignations Have Previously Been Accepted:

Nick Kallem	-Bus Driver
Tegan Atkinson	-Bus Driver
Alex Johnson	-Assistant Football Coach
Miriam Horner	-Kitchen Aid

Consent Action Items

Minutes of Regular Meeting January 12, 2026

Approval of Former & New Warrants (Claims# 51631-51711 #) Personnel Actions

Surrounding School District Student Enrollment Approval

Recommended Employment of Staff:

- Megan Owens -Paraprofessional
- Caybree Petty -Student Mentor
- Addelyn Mix -Student Mentor
- Keira Klock -Student Mentor
- Zachary Harris -Substitute
- Sage Strong -Substitute
- Nancy Nickerson -Substitute
- Crystal Curry -Substitute
- Hayleigh Johnson -Substitute
- Darrin Holloway -Substitute
- Teresa Johnson -Substitute Bus Driver
- Timothy Fuhrman -Bus Driver
- Byron Staten -Substitute Bus Driver
- Matthew Heinze -Girls Varsity Soccer Head Coach
- Kadi Finicum -Assistant Softball Coach

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

Helena Missoula

5th	1	
11th	4	1
12th	1	

Total: 7

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt, seconded by Trustee Umer to approve the Consent Action Items as presented with the Claims and Minutes debated separately.

Unanimous vote for the motion

Motion Carries

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt, seconded by Trustee Ulmer to approve the Minutes of a regularly scheduled meeting on January 12, 2026, as amended.

Unanimous vote for the motion

Motion Carries

The Board discussed an item on the Claims report

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt, seconded by Trustee Diehl to approve the former and current warrants.

Unanimous vote for the motion

Motion Carries

Unfinished Business

Principal Crusat presented an update to the Board on the 4 Day School week impacts to Pk-5 grade levels and what they have found in similar school districts. He went over the objectives and reiterated that their report is not to advocate for or against, just information representative of the different grade levels.

He presented pros and cons and stated that if we moved forward, we would have to plan for the District's own specific needs. The Board discussed the topic at length in including snow plows and laws regarding

sending buses before the morning plows. They discussed meals for students on Fridays as well as grants and the Tiger Program as potential solutions, IEP's and service minutes. They discussed reasons why districts switched to a 4 day school week.

Xavier Nunn left 6:30

Rosie Kraft reported on the 6th -8th grade perspective on a 4 day week. She did a quick staff poll at EVMS and presented the information she had pulled together to this point. Staff concerns about feeling overwhelmed and a 4 day week could potentially help with preparation and positivity. She also spoke about some of the staff preferring the 7 period day. Food insecurity and length of the day for students were the biggest concerns listed by staff. In her research she found each District had their own challenges to address.

She gave examples of how different Districts were set up on Fridays for tutoring/catch up days.

Chairman Walter thanked Rosie for her presentation.

Trustee Diehl had questions about the staff survey sent out.

Kate Johnson spoke about waiting until they had a potential schedule of what a typical day would look like in a 4 day school week before sending an official poll to all of the staff.

Trustee Balukas thanked Rosie and appreciated her jumping in to help out.

Second Reading MTSBA Model Policies: #1401, #2161, #2335, #3110, #3150, #3600, #5015 and #5321

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt to approve Policies #1401, #2161, #2335, #3110, #3150, #3600, #5015 and #5321 on Second Reading, Seconded by Trustee Richardson Unanimous vote

Motion Carries

Policy Revision First Reading Policies: #2600, #3665, #4550 and #5122

Chairman Walter suggested that the Board consider the policies individually.

Motion by Trustee Richardson to approve the revisions of Policy #2600 on 1st Reading, Seconded by Trustee Baird Unanimous vote

Motion Carries

Policy #3665, Vice Chair Murfitt suggested amending the policy- line- 29-31 "parents and or guardians of students are exempt from this requirement if no other students are in contact"

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt to approve Policy #3665 as amended on First Reading, Seconded by Trustee Ulmer Unanimous vote

Motion Carries

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt to edit and approve on First Reading, Policy #4550 by changing registered sex offender to high risk registered sex offender and the distance from 1,000 ft to 300 ft. as to align with state law. Seconded by Trustee Ulmer Unanimous vote

Motion Carries

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt to approve changes to Policy #5122 on First Reading

Seconded by Trustee Diehl Unanimous vote

Motion Carries

Charter School Contract Revision Review and Approval

Superintendent Rispens explained that the Board of Public Education has made revisions to the Charter School Contracts intended to clean up language, clarify and ease reporting requirements, and enshrine the variance to standards for the duration of the contract.

Motion by Vice Chair Murfitt to approve the Charter School Contract Revisions, Seconded by Trustee Richardson Unanimous vote
Motion Carries

Budget Update - FY '27 Projections

Superintendent Rispens reported that with the Fall and Spring Student Counts complete, we can take a look forward to 2026-27. He shared projections with the Board regarding the funding outlook for next year. The Board discussed the Rose Hills Bonds and potentially moving to a 7 period class schedule vs a block schedule.

Chairman Walter called a Recess at 8:22pm

Chairman Walter called the meeting back to order at 8:28pm

Update Regarding Bridged Health Alliance

Superintendent Rispens reported on the status of the Alliance and that they have reached the threshold to validate the Trust. The District has committed to Joining Bridged Health, but that hinges on their negotiation of satisfactory network agreement contracts with local healthcare providers.

Indian Education Report

Kim Metzger, Indian Impact Teacher, thanked the Board for their support. She said that there are three goals; closing the achievement gap, building relationships with families and being an advocate for Native American Families. She reported on the District's EFA efforts in the Indian Education Program as well as OPI courses available. The librarians have invited Native American Authors to visit and the Music Department is working with the Montana Historical Society to put together a traveling trunk with information and artifacts to be shared with other Districts as well. Kim gave a shout out to Principal Morris for her help with grant applications and all that entails. She handed out pictures of what the students have been doing over the past year.

Harmony Education Services Contract Consideration

Superintendent Rispens reported on the service contract to provide remote learning classes to students. We primarily use this service with our 227 Academy students, and the BPE requires Board review and approval of these agreements. The Board discussed a few issues found within the contract and therefore tabled the item.

227 Academy Report

Principal Morris has the lead role in managing the 227 Academy and related reporting.

She reported on the enrollment numbers and assessments. Trustee Richardson spoke on a personal note about the 227 Academy and how with Principal Morris and Klock's assistance, her son has been successful. The Board discussed the renewal application to the Board of Public Education for the 227 Program.

EVMS Chiller Replacement

Superintendent Rispens reported about the EVMS Chiller. It is a piece of HVAC Equipment essential to the EVMS cooling system. It has outlived its service life and has been running up excessive maintenance bills. The Superintendent presented a plan to replace the chiller.

Motion by Trustee Balukas to approve the purchase of the Carrier Chiller and the installation contract with CORE, Seconded by Trustee Trustee Diel Unanimous vote
Motion Carries

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:19pm

The next regular meeting will be held on March 9, 2026 EVMS Library

Submitted by: J. Cordell Date: 3-10-2026
District Secretary, Jen Cordell

Approved by: Scott A. Walter Date: MARCH 18, 2026
Chairman, EHPS Board of Trustees