

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD MARCH 9, 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 9th Day
7 of March 2026.

8
9 At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
10 Trustees and informed the participants and audience that the meeting was being
11 recorded per Board Policy 1420.

12
13 **ROLL CALL:** Luke Diekhans took roll call.

14
15 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson
16 Kim Skornogoski
17 Bill Bronson
18 Craig Duff
19 Paige Henning
20 Marlee Sunchild
21 Amie Thompson
22

23 **Others Present:** Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Luke Diekhans, Director of Business
24 Operations; Lance Boyd and Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Directors of Student
25 Achievement; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; Heather Spurzem,
26 Director of Human Resources; and Stephanie Becker, Director of the Great Falls Public
27 Schools Foundation.

28
29 Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association President.

30
31 The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Lance Boyd.
32

33
34 **ADOPT AGENDA**

35
36 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Henning, passed unanimously to adopt
37 the agenda as presented.
38

39
40 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

41
42 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
43 the Consent Agenda as presented, with special thanks to generous community partners
44 ADF International for the donation of welding supplies to Great Falls High School and
45 Les Marsh for the donation of beef to Great Falls Public Schools food pantries.
46

47 **A. Minutes of the February 23, 2026 Regular Board Meeting** – The Board approved
48 the minutes of the February 23, 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 of Good Apple Awards
5 for Genny Ekness, Administrative Assistant, Riverview Elementary School; Karen
6 Wilcox, English Teacher, Great Falls High School; Kelcie Eisenbarth, Whitney Graczyk,
7 Jordan Kadaja, and Amber Sapp, Resource Team, Riverview Elementary School; and
8 Megan Kambic, Administrative Assistant, Giant Springs Elementary School.

9
10 **D. Incoming Student Attendance Agreement for the 2025-2026 School Year** – The
11 Board approved the incoming student attendance agreement for the 2025-2026 school
12 year for the student listed in the agenda. Tuition will be paid for by the District of
13 Residence.

14
15 **E. Donation of Welding Supplies to the Great Falls High School Welding Club**
16 The Board approved the donation of welding supplies from ADF International to the
17 Great Falls High School Welding Club, with thanks.

18
19 **F. Beef Donation** – The Board approved the donation of beef from Les Marsh to Great
20 Falls Public Schools food pantries, with thanks.

21
22 **G. Great Falls High School HOSA Travel Request to Billings, Montana for the**
23 **State Leadership Conference** – The Board approved Great Falls High School HOSA
24 students to travel to Billings, Montana March 31 – April 1, 2026 for the HOSA State
25 Leadership Conference.

26
27 **H. Charles M. Russell High School HOSA Travel Request to Billings, Montana for**
28 **the State Leadership Conference** – The Board approved Charles M. Russell High
29 School HOSA students to travel to Billings, Montana March 31 – April 1, 2026 for the
30 HOSA State Leadership Conference.

31
32 **I. Approval of Charles M. Russell High School Track Athletes to Arcadia,**
33 **California** – The Board approved the travel request of Charles M. Russell High School
34 track athletes to the Arcadia Invitational Track Meet in Arcadia, California April 10 – 11,
35 2026.

36
37 **COMMUNICATION**

38
39 **A. Report of the Student Representatives**

40 Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Emerson Hamma and
41 Lydia Comstock reported on a variety of student activities and accomplishments.
42 Students participated in community service by collecting baby books for Neonatal Infant
43 Care Unit (NICU) families at Benefis Hospital and restocking the counseling center
44 snack supply. Classroom lessons loved by the students included Spanish students
45 studying Latin American authors, AP Government students researching key Supreme
46 Court cases, and AP Biology students touring research labs at the Weissman Hood
47 Institute. Winter athletics are concluding, with notable success at the state wrestling
48 tournament with two individual state champions and the boys' basketball team

1 scheduled to play in the state basketball tournament this coming weekend. Students
2 also shared updates on BPA competitions, participation in Academic World Quest, and
3 visual and performing arts achievements, including national and regional music events
4 and awards at the Montana Thespian Festival. Additionally, students highlighted
5 leadership opportunities through Montana Association of Student Councils (MASC),
6 recognized two National Merit Finalists, Kye Wise and Caimbre Brost, and celebrated
7 the selection of fifteen (15) seniors as Excellence in Education Scholars.

8
9 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representative Kaytlynn McClure
10 shared that students participated in a variety of hands-on learning activities including
11 science enrichment projects such as candle making, crystal growing, and multiple
12 dissections to explore biological concepts. Additional STEAM activities included building
13 and racing small, motorized vehicles, while art students worked with oil pastels to create
14 themed artwork. Students and staff supported community efforts through an American
15 Red Cross blood drive, and milestones were recognized through a meaningful bell-
16 ringing ceremony celebrating four students' progress to graduation. Students also
17 engaged in cultural and community experiences including attending the Healthy Native
18 Hearts event, participating in a bison harvest, and preparing Indigenous graduation
19 caps with traditional beading. PGEC students placed second at the state archery
20 tournament in Helena and welcomed Chris La Tray, Montana's 11th Poet Laureate, who
21 spoke with students about writing and storytelling. The presentation also highlighted
22 PGEC's student orientation process, which helps prepare new students for success as
23 they work toward graduation.

24 25 **B. Superintendent Report**

26 Superintendent Hoyer expressed many thanks to a community that consistently takes
27 care of Great Falls Public Schools, including supporting the recent High Voltage
28 weekend and the current emergency situation at Lincoln Elementary School. She
29 introduced VFW Post 1087 Commander, Ms. Helen Morin, who introduced four other
30 representatives (MT Dept Jr. Vice Commander, Mr. Bill McCord; MT Dept Chaplain, Mr.
31 Bill Miles; VFW Post 1087 Sr. Vice Commander, Mr. Jose Garrigo; and VFW Post 1087
32 Photographer, Mr. Roy Diggstein) who attended the meeting to present "Voice of
33 Democracy" essay awards to Charles M. Russell students Calista Brody and Brenden
34 Corry. Senior Vice Commander Garrigo encouraged more student participation in the
35 essay contest as this was the first time Great Falls has been represented.

36 Superintendent Hoyer shared appreciation for staff recognized during recent employee
37 appreciation days, including Buildings and Grounds on March 6 and the Warehouse
38 team on March 3, noting the crews are valued year-round for their hard work. She also
39 highlighted a visit to Chief Joseph Elementary's annual Wax Museum, where students
40 presented on Greek gods and goddesses. Strategic Plan highlights, concerns, and
41 barriers were summarized for Whittier, Loy, North Middle School, and Great Falls High
42 School. Whittier Elementary School highlighted strong staff leadership while noting a
43 significant challenge with a 33% student turnover rate. Loy Elementary School
44 recognizes the transition needs of military-connected students and the importance of
45 adapting to students' changing needs as they move between schools. Superintendent
46 Hoyer shared North Middle School's efforts to separate academic mastery from
47 behavior and compliance, including reporting character habits in PowerSchool using a
48 1-4 scale to communicate students' development of soft skills with families. Great Falls

1 High School highlights included a 20% decrease in behavior incidents and In-School
2 Suspension (ISS) now being called “In-School Solutions”, an approach using a
3 “Hammer and Heart” model to support students. Superintendent Hoyer shared a “Data
4 for the Day” photo presentation recognizing the many staff and community partners who
5 assisted the District following the recent emergency, including M&D Construction, and
6 expressed gratitude to all who helped keep operations moving.
7

8 Trustee Henning congratulated Lydia Comstock (CMR) on her All-American
9 achievement in Speech and Debate. Trustee Henning noted that only 1% of
10 competitors nationwide receive this honor.
11

12 **C. Audience Communication**

13 Community member Tori Lynn Doe, representing YWCA of Great Falls, an organization
14 that supports and empowers women, announced that Board Vice-Chairperson Kim
15 Skornogoski was being recognized as a “Salute to Women” honoree for her work in the
16 community and beyond. A gala honoring the recipients will be held April 17, 2026.
17 Superintendent Hoyer offered celebratory congratulations to trustee Skornogoski for the
18 honor.
19

20 Community member Amber L. Campbell stated she had attended a previous Board
21 meeting in January of 2026 and feels her concern regarding “violent and inappropriate”
22 videos shown in some classes has not been rectified. She stated she was unable to
23 view the video at home that her son was shown in class. She is requesting
24 accountability in the supplemental material approval process. Chairman Johnson
25 reassured her that her continued concern would be addressed and she would be
26 contacted.
27

28 Community member Steve Midge stated he has a daughter attending North Middle
29 School and he, too, is concerned with video content that is being shown in class. He
30 questioned the operating procedures for showing a video from YouTube and suggested
31 there was a breakdown in communication between administration and principals
32 regarding standard approval procedures of videos. Chairman Johnson thanked Mr.
33 Midge for his concerns and reassured him that an administrator would be in contact with
34 him.
35

36 **ACTION ITEMS**

37
38
39 **A. Bridged Health Alliance Proposal** – Director of Human Resources Heather
40 Spurzem explained that Bridged Health Alliance, established by the 2023 Montana
41 Legislature, is trying to create a self-insured healthcare model exclusively for Montana
42 public schools. Bridged Health Alliance has failed to adequately address questions
43 presented by the Great Falls Public Schools Health Insurance Committee and therefore,
44 the Committee has recommended that GFPS forgo participation in the Bridged Health
45 Alliance Insurance Trust at this time. The Committee will re-evaluate participation upon
46 the successful completion of the first year with other Montana school districts.
47

1 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Henning, to accept the recommendation of the
2 Great Falls Public Schools Insurance Committee to forgo participation in the Bridged
3 Health Alliance Insurance Trust at this time.
4

5 Discussion ensued. Tom Cubbage, a member of the GFPS Health Insurance
6 Committee, stated the Committee has extensively reviewed the proposal and agrees
7 that it is wise of the District to wait before joining the Trust. Trustee Bronson, also a
8 member of the GFPS Health Insurance Committee, reported that the Committee
9 includes an excellent and well-informed group of community members and consultants
10 who provided thorough analysis. While the proposed plan has potential benefits and
11 compares favorably to plans in other districts, several uncertainties remain, including
12 agreements with local medical providers and projected prescription drug savings. Due
13 to these unknowns and the lack of sufficient certainty that the plan would work
14 effectively for Great Falls Public Schools, the decision was made not to participate at
15 this time, prioritizing a careful and informed approach despite the possibility of receiving
16 some negative feedback.
17

18 Chairperson Johnson reviewed the previous motion. Motion passed unanimously.
19

20 **B. Establish 2027-2028 School Year Calendar** – Director of Human Resources
21 Heather Spurzem discussed the annual process of adopting an official school year
22 calendar, reminding the audience that the District always works a year in advance. The
23 GFPS Calendar Committee met three times and narrowed down the choices to the top
24 three calendar options submitted. The three options were made available for public and
25 staff comment for a period of two weeks. The results were reviewed by the Committee
26 and calendar Option A is being submitted for approval.
27

28 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, to approve Calendar Option A
29 for the 2027-2028 school year as presented.
30

31 Trustee Skornogoski stated she is a member of the Calendar Committee and they work
32 very hard to get public input on the calendar options selected. The committee takes into
33 consideration past and current comments regarding the calendar options and feels the
34 Calendar Committee does a great job in selecting the option that best supports the
35 majority choice from staff and the public.
36

37 Chairperson Johnson reviewed the previous motion. Motion passed unanimously.
38

39 **C. Non-Renew Temporary, Non-Tenured Teachers with Positions Expiring June 5,
40 2026** – Director of Human Resources Heather Spurzem explained the non-renewal of
41 the non-tenured teacher listed in the agenda is required because the teacher was
42 recently hired for a temporary position with a contract that expires on June 6, 2026.
43 She explained that the teacher has the opportunity to apply for jobs, for which she is
44 qualified to teach, for the next school year through the in-district transfer/hiring process.
45

46 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Henning, passed unanimously to
47 approve the non-renewal of the teacher listed in the agenda as her position is temporary
48 and will expire June 5, 2026.

1
2 **D. Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured Teachers** – Director of Human Resources Heather
3 Spurzem stated a lot of time and consideration go into making sure the Great Falls
4 Public Schools has the best educators for our students. She provided an addendum to
5 the Board of Trustees with the names of three non-tenured teachers recommended for
6 contract non-renewal.

7
8 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to approve the
9 non-renewal of the three non-tenured teachers listed on the addendum.

10
11 **E. Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School Auditorium Improvements** – Great Falls
12 Public Schools Foundation Director Stephanie Becker provided the Board with an
13 update regarding the CMR Auditorium renovation project that began with a \$1 million
14 donation that was approved in April 2023. Due to insufficient funding for the originally
15 planned acoustics remediation, the full renovation is no longer feasible. As a result, the
16 Great Falls Public Schools Foundation will redirect \$500,000 that was additionally
17 raised in 2025 toward scaled-back improvements to the auditorium, including upgrades
18 to the audio system, stage lighting, and sound booth based on staff feedback. The initial
19 \$1 million donation will instead establish a permanent fund to support GFPS performing
20 and visual arts programming for students.

21
22 Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Bill Bronson, to accept the \$500,000 for
23 improvements in the CMR High School auditorium, with special thanks to the generous
24 donors.

25
26 Trustee Bronson asked to expand on the improvements being made with the funds
27 should additional money be raised or become available for the entire renovation
28 planned. Stephanie assured the trustees that the proposed improvements would still be
29 beneficial even if the full renovation is feasible and done in the future.

30
31 Chairperson Johnson reviewed the previous motion. Motion passed unanimously.

32
33 **F. E-Rate Category 1 Bid for District Network Routers** – Director of Information
34 Technology Jeff Williams stated that four (4) competitive bids were received to provide
35 routers for the Great Falls Public Schools District. After careful evaluation of each
36 submission, Pine Cove was selected as the winning bid. The total breakdown of the bid
37 was reviewed, with the cost to the District being \$18,101.66.

38
39 Motion Paige Henning, Seconded Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to approve
40 the lowest qualified bidder, Pine Cove, in the total amount of \$90,508.28 with the District
41 portion of 20% being \$18,101.66, for purchasing District network routers.

42
43
44 **ACTION: OTHER**

45
46 There were no items removed from the Consent Agenda to discuss.
47
48

1 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

2
3 **A. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pilot Proposals** – Secondary Curriculum
4 Director Beckie Frisbee stated that career technology fields continue to be among the
5 top growing careers in the country. Great Falls Public Schools continue to teach a
6 variety of CTE courses to provide knowledge to students about possible career options.
7 Ms. Frisbee reviewed one (1) new pilot course, *Introduction to Career and College*
8 *Readiness*, that began at the start of the 2nd semester, January 2026, at Great Falls
9 High School and four (4) additional pilot courses – *Advanced Career and College*
10 *Readiness*, *Introduction to Cosmetology*, *Advanced Cosmetology*, and *CTSO (Career*
11 *Technical Student Organization) Leadership* – that will be offered in the fall semester of
12 the 2026-2027 school year at the high school level.

13
14 **B. First Reading of Mathematics 7-12 Resources** – Secondary Curriculum Director
15 Beckie Frisbee District reported that the review of a new math curriculum has been
16 underway for some time, during which five different resources were evaluated. The
17 review committee ultimately selected the Savvas program for preview and
18 recommendation, with a vote of nineteen (19) in favor and four (4) opposed. The
19 materials are intended for grades 7–10, including regular and honors courses at the
20 middle schools and replacement of certain courses at the high school level. Beckie
21 noted that while some concerns were raised regarding the high level rigor of the
22 program, many participants supported the expectations of the materials and
23 emphasized that students benefit from being challenged. Beckie reviewed the projected
24 costs and explained that renewal timelines—five years for middle school and six years
25 for high school—would be staggered to avoid simultaneous renewals and help manage
26 long-term expenses.

27
28 Trustees asked when the proposal would be brought to the Board for approval and
29 where the resources would be available for review. Beckie stated messages would be
30 sent to staff and community via the District website, Facebook, and ParentSquare and
31 resources would be available for review from March 10-20, 2026 in the Evergreen
32 conference room as well as the curriculum offices.

33
34 **C. Newly Established Permanent Fund for Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) Arts**
35 **through GFPS Foundation Donations** – Stephanie Becker, Director of the GFPS
36 Foundation, discussed this report as a follow up to the Charles M. Russell High School
37 auditorium renovation. With donor approval, the donation of \$1 million will be used to
38 establish a permanent fund for GFPS Arts to support student programming for
39 performing and visual arts. The permanent fund will provide \$40,000 - \$50,000
40 disbursements annually, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, to the District to offer
41 GFPS Arts students unique, impactful, and innovative learning opportunities.

42
43 **D. Great Falls Public Schools Foundation Leadership Transition** – Chairperson of
44 the GFPS Foundation, Jamie Marshall, publicly thanked everyone for supporting the
45 efforts at Lincoln Elementary School as she has students who attend the school. She
46 thanked Stephanie Becker for the past five (5) years as the Director of the GFPS
47 Foundation and for the many accomplishments that have been made during
48 Stephanie’s tenure. Jamie welcomed new Foundation Director, Katelyn Marsik, to the

1 podium and stated she is excited to see what the future holds for the Foundation under
2 the new leadership. Ms. Marsik shared brief background information, stating that as an
3 alumni of GFPS, she is excited for the opportunity to work with passionate teachers and
4 administrators in the school system.

5
6 **E. Girls' Flag Football Discussion as a Possible Club Activity for 2026-2027 –**

7 Athletics Director Mike Henneberg presented a proposal to introduce girls flag football in
8 Great Falls Public Schools as a club activity while the sport continues moving toward
9 official sanctioning. The proposal reflects a growing national movement, with 16 states
10 currently sanctioning the sport and 22 piloting programs, and participation increasing in
11 Montana, where 35 high schools competed in 2025 with potential for a 16-team AA
12 conference. Survey results from middle and high school students and parents indicated
13 strong interest, with 503 responses received. Grant funding opportunities were
14 identified, including up to \$15,000 annually from the Arthur Blank Family Foundation
15 and an additional \$30,000 from Under Armour. The proposed short fall season (August–
16 October) would operate with a coaching stipend similar to golf. Questions regarding
17 scheduling, facilities, and Title IX impacts were addressed, and the program would
18 operate as a club for approximately two years until potential state sanctioning. Trustees
19 discussed potential impacts on other sports, including girls' soccer and volleyball
20 participation, while noting strong student interest. Trustees also expressed appreciation
21 for the thorough presentation and preparation addressing frequently asked questions.

22
23 **F. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

24 Trustee Thompson thanked staff and partners who worked over the weekend to
25 address the situation at Lincoln Elementary.

26 Trustee Bronson reported that the Policy Committee is reviewing access to instructional
27 materials such as YouTube and will bring recommended policy revisions back to the
28 Board, noting the Board's awareness of community concerns and encouraging
29 community members to remain for trustee comment periods.

30 Trustee Sunchild expressed concern about criticism directed at teachers, emphasizing
31 the importance of supporting educators as professionals and acknowledging the
32 challenges they face in the classroom.

33 Trustee Skornogoski thanked staff and the community for the response to the Lincoln
34 Elementary situation and recognized the positive feedback from parents. She thanked
35 Stephanie for her work growing the Foundation and welcomed Katelyn to the role.

36 Trustee Duff congratulated Lydia on her national award and fellow trustee Skornogoski
37 for receiving the Salute to Women honor. He thanked community members for sharing
38 concerns about classroom video content, and shared appreciation for local skilled
39 trades professionals. He also wished Stephanie well and welcomed Katelyn and noted
40 he really enjoyed the wax museum event at Chief Joseph Elementary School.

41 Trustee Henning thanked the community members for attending and engaging in
42 discussion about classroom instruction. She shared comments from a family's positive
43 transition to Great Falls High School from a private school and noted the daily recitation
44 of the Pledge of Allegiance at Valley View Elementary contains added Bobcat behaviors
45 and she often starts to add on the language as the Pledge of Allegiance is presented at
46 Board meetings.

1 Trustee Johnson reported that Trustee Bronson distributed a Montana School Board
2 Association (MTSBA) membership survey due Friday and will share it with trustees for
3 participation.
4

5

6 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

7

8 Upcoming events include a Board Policy Committee meeting on March 17, 2026 and
9 the next regular Board meeting on March 23, 2026.
10

11

12

13 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

14

15 With no further comments or items to be discussed, motion by Chairperson Johnson
16 and seconded by Trustee Skornogoski to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of
17 Trustees at 7:44 p.m.
18

19

20

21

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23

24

25

Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

Luke Diekhans, Clerk