Hellgate Elementary Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting February 9, 2026
6:00 p.m.

OPENING

The Board of Trustees of Hellgate Elementary School District #4 met in regular session on Monday, February 9th, 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, Kallie Gatzemeier, Tom Cook, Jacquelyn Ryan, and Scott Rouse. Trustee Rich Thornock was absent. Molly Blakely and District Clerk Justine Reese were present for the meeting. District staff participating included, Brent Heist (Principal Building 1), Julie McCarthy-McLaverty (Principal Building 2), Haley Patzner (Dean of Students), Kristen Cottom (HEEA rep. and teacher), and Erin Ellis (Curriculum). The following community members participated:
Hellgate High School student: Kaden Mauraksa
Big Sky High School students: Lilly Johnson, Kyler LaRocque, April LaRocque, Pelea Sagato, Anna Belnap, Kristen Nicolaser, Cam Shipp, Averi Larson, Emma Keller, William Reese, and Trey Thomas
Loyola High School student: Cooper Ward
Parents: Megan Powell, April LacRoque, John LaRocque, Brenda Thomas, and Sam Keller
There were up to 31 total guests/participants in the meeting, in-person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

William Reese spoke on behalf of the high school students in attendance at the meeting. He requested that the Hellgate Board of Trustees allow graduating seniors from surrounding high schools who previously attended Hellgate Elementary to walk through the school's hallways in celebration of their upcoming graduation. All board members were in support of the request and will allow the graduating high school seniors to walk through Hellgate Elementary. The students will work with Superintendent Blakely regarding logistics and safety.

HEEA

Kristen Cottom represented the HEEA. She informed the Trustees the HEEA is looking forward to the formation of Bridged health insurance trust, along with reviewing the calendar options for the upcoming school year.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

There was no recognition at this meeting.

BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

Trustees reviewed the monthly newsletter from OPI. Scott Rouse asked clarifying questions related to the State AED reimbursement application along with the specifics of House Bill 343 that were mentioned in the correspondence. Superintendent Blakely informed the Trustees that the district had received reimbursement for AED purchases and provided an overview of how the district is meeting the House Bill 343 requirements.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES-REGULAR MEETING 01/12/26

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the minutes from the January 12th, 2026 regular meeting. There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Kallie Gatzemeier. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF THE WARRANTS-JANUARY 2026

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the January 2026 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, Kallie Gatzemeier, 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 January 2026.

REVIEW OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Ryan to approve the January 2026 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, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

HIRING OF CLASSIFIED STAFF CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Ryan motion to approve the hiring of Ms. Desiree Powers to be a paraprofessional, effective January 20, 2026. There was brief a clarifying question related to the number of interested candidates. The motion was seconded by Tom Cook. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

ACCEPTANCE OF STAFF RESIGNATION:

A motion was made by Beth Herron to accept the resignation of Ms. Peggy Racicot, middle school librarian, effective June 10, 2026 (letter available in official board packet). There was no discussion on the topic. The motion was seconded by Scott Rouse. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Kallie to approve the request for a leave of absence for Ms. Kari Olson for the 2026-2027 school year (letter available in official board packet). There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Tom Cook. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED STAFF RETIREMENT:

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve the retirement of Mrs. Dawn Deden, 2nd grade teacher (letter available in official board packet). 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, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

COACHING/COORDINATOR CONSIDERATION:

A motion was made by Beth Herron to approve the hiring coaches and coordinators:

- Wrestling Head Coach: Mike Plautz; Assistant Coaches: Brandon Ihde, Jason Brunner, and Virginia Newton
- Building 3 Science Fair Coordinators: Sheyla Gallagher and Ava Burmeister
- Building 1 Science Fair Coordinators: Heidi Armstrong, Julie deArrieta, and Bobbi Rodriguez

There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPEN ENROLLMENT/HOUSE BILL 203 FOR 26-27:

A motion was made by Kallie Gatzemeier to approve the dates for Open Enrollment (HB 203) beginning Tuesday, February 17, 2026 and concluding on Friday, March 13, 2026. There was no discussion on the item. The motion was seconded by Scott Rouse. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN HESD AND MISSOULA COUNTY TREASURER DEPT.:

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to approve a resolution, pursuant to MCA § 20-9-213 and MCA §20-9-235, between Hellgate Elementary School District and the Missoula County Treasurer Department allowing the District to establish and maintain independent investment and spending accounts. The agreement shall be effective July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031 (resolution and contract available in official board packet). There was brief discussion on the topic regarding where the district is at in the process. The motion was seconded by Jacquelyn Ryan. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

RENEW MEMBERSHIP WITH MTSBA:

A motion was made by Tom Cook to authorize the renewal of the Hellgate Elementary membership in the Montana School Board Association (MTSBA) for the 26-27 school year. The annual membership fee is $9,659; an increase of $129 (1.35% increase). There was brief discussion on the item regarding the effectiveness and value of the cost. The motion was seconded by Beth Herron. Voting in favor of the motion were: Tom McLaughlin, Jacquelyn Ryan, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

REQUEST TO VOID STALE WARRANTS:

A motion was made by Scott Rouse to authorize Justine Reese, Hellgate Elementary District Clerk/Business Manager, to destroy stale warrants that have not been cashed by the recipient for a period exceeding one year. 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, Kallie Gatzemeier, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, and Scott Rouse. Voting against the motion were none. The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March Board Meeting rescheduled to 3/16/26 at 6:00p.m.

School Levy Amount: There will be a Trustee election at the upcoming school election as there are three candidates for the two open seats. The Trustees agreed that the district should cancel the general fund and building reserve safety fund levy for school year 2026-2027.

Hellgate Elementary On-Site Daycare: Superintendent Blakely discussed pursuing the opportunity to house an on-site daycare for staff members. The Trustees agreed that the opportunity should be pursued.

Innovative Tax Credit: Through the Innovative Tax Credit opportunity $58,960 was donated to Hellgate Elementary.

Stronger Connections Grant: OPI allocated an additional $2,586.00 to Hellgate Elementary in remaining funds from the grant.

Angle Fund Donation: $25.00 was donated to the Hellgate Elementary angel fund by a third-grade student.

Unified Champion School donation: $1,500 and $500 were donated directly to the Building 2 playground

Review District Bully Prevention Measures: Superintendent Blakely reviewed the district bullying prevention measures that are currently in place.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no committee reports at the meeting.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Building 1: Brent Heist provided an update to the Trustees: One Book One Read is ongoing, MAPS/MAST testing just began, Olympic units are ongoing in celebration of the winter Olympics and 100 days of school was celebrated recently.

Building 2: Julie McCarthy-McLaverty shared that the winter Olympics has been a building wide celebration. She noted there has been a lot of sickness lately. She also shared that student progress is clearly happening and the teachers are seeing it.
Building 3: Haley Patzner reported for Building 3: The building is excited for One Book One Read, Robotics recently competed at State in Bozeman, and the 4th grade class went to the Missoula Symphony. She also mentioned the building recently celebrated school counselor appreciation week.
Building 4: Absent
Special Education: Absent
Curriculum: No Report

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting of the Board will be March 16th, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment at this time.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm.

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Tom McLaughlin, Board Chair Justine Reese, Business Manager/Clerk