

1 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**
2 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
3 **HELD APRIL 13, 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 13th Day
7 of April 2026.

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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; Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Director of Student Achievement; Jeff
25 Williams, Director of Information Technology; Heather Spurzem, Director of Human
26 Resources; and Katelyn Marsik, Director of the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation.

27
28 Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association President.

29
30 The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Student Representative Seth Royer.

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32
33 **ADOPT AGENDA**

34
35 Motion made by Bill Bronson to adopt the agenda with the exception of moving Action
36 Item VII. B. - *Cascade County Sheriff's Office and Great Falls Police Department*
37 *Reserve School Resource Officer Agreement* to section IX – Reports. The Board will
38 take action at a future Board Meeting. Motion seconded by Kim Skornogoski. Motion
39 passed unanimously.

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42 **APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

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

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47 **A. Minutes of the March 31, 2026 Special Board Meeting** – The Board approved the
48 minutes of the March 31, 2026 Special Board Meeting as presented.

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2 **B. Personnel Actions** – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.
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4 **C. Good Apple Awards** - The Board approved the nominations of Good Apple Awards
5 for Randa Curtiss, Para Educator; Erin Helms, Core Teacher Aide; Karin Horton, Core
6 Teacher Aide; Abbey Niles, Administrative Assistant; and Kristin Gapol, School
7 Psychologist – all from West Elementary School; Dale Fulgum, Resource 3 Teacher;
8 Beth Wiles, Science Teacher; and Amber Lloyd, Science Teacher – all from Great Falls
9 High School; and Tawny Cale, Indian Education for All (IEFA) Instructional Coach and
10 Dugan Coburn, Director of Indigenous Education – both from Paris Gibson Education
11 Center.
12

13 **D. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates**
14 The Board approved the Montana OPI TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificate for the
15 individual listed in the agenda.
16

17 **E. Approval of North Middle School (NMS) Archery Team Travel Request to the**
18 **National Archery Tournament in Sandy, Utah April 23-25, 2026** – The Board
19 approved the North Middle School Archery Team travel to Sandy, Utah April 23-25,
20 2026 for the National Archery Tournament.
21

22 **F. Approval of Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School Business Professionals of**
23 **America (BPA) Travel Request to the National Leadership Conference in**
24 **Nashville, Tennessee** – The Board approved the Charles M. Russell High School BPA
25 travel to Nashville, Tennessee on May 5-10, 2026 for the BPA National Leadership
26 Conference.
27

28 **G. Approval of North Middle School (NMS) Travel Request to the National Science**
29 **Bowl in Washington, D.C.** – The Board approved the travel of five North Middle School
30 students and coach to Washington, D.C. April 30-May 4, 2026 for the National Science
31 Bowl competition.
32

33 34 **COMMUNICATION** 35

36 **A. Report of the Student Representatives**

37 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Seth Royer, Kaitlynn Fulbright,
38 and Weston Stoll reported on a successful conclusion to winter sports, highlighted by
39 strong state finishes in swimming and wrestling, including individual state champions
40 and record-setting performances, followed by the start of spring sports seasons.
41 Academic highlights that students loved included engaging, hands-on learning
42 experiences across courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus, Geology,
43 Physics, and Theater. Students also contributed to the community through events like
44 Lincoln Elementary’s STEAM Night and JROTC’s construction of an obstacle course at
45 Paris Gibson Education Center. Additional updates included the upcoming student vs.
46 staff basketball fundraiser for Make-A-Wish, recognition of distinguished educators, and
47 continued success in activities such as HOSA, BPA, and music program travel. School
48 culture events such as junior prom and East Middle School’s pep assembly were well

1 attended and received. Several teachers were recognized for their positive impact on
2 the entire student body. The report also acknowledged recent Leadership High School
3 graduates and concluded with a school history trivia segment celebrating the founding
4 of Great Falls High School in 1890 and a photo of Josephine Trigg, one of four girls in
5 the first graduating class of 1893.

6
7 Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Emerson Hamma, Lydia
8 Comstock, and Addie Crist reported on a wide range of student activities and
9 achievements. In community service, Key Club donated over 900 cans of food through
10 the “Cantastic” project at the annual Home and Garden Show. Classroom highlights
11 included engaging, hands-on learning experiences across subjects, such as chemistry
12 experiments, creative English projects, Spanish media creations, and a field experience
13 for Advanced Placement (AP) Biology students. Spring athletics are off to a strong start,
14 and student organizations, including BPA and SkillsUSA, celebrated multiple state
15 champions and qualifiers advancing to national competitions. Leadership High School
16 students completed their program with community-focused projects, while performing
17 arts students participated in concerts, festivals, and tours. Additional highlights included
18 the upcoming spring drama production, recognition of outstanding juniors, teacher
19 classroom grants awarded by the Foundation, strong performances by HOSA students
20 at state, and continued recognition of students demonstrating “Rustler Pride” values.

21
22 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representative Kaytlynn McClure
23 highlighted a variety of engaging academic, cultural, and community activities. Applied
24 Math and CAP students participated in real-world budgeting simulations using grant-
25 funded materials, while THRIVE and the follow-up “Always Growing” seminar provided
26 students with meaningful opportunities for wellness, reflection, and personal growth.
27 The Indigenous Education Department partnered with Sisters United to host artist Della
28 BigHair-Stump, allowing students to create and showcase cultural designs. Staff
29 member Jordann Lankford Forster was recognized nationally with a “40 Under 40”
30 award for her leadership and contributions. Students were also involved in Youth Art
31 Month and local Art Week events, including a fashion show featuring Director of Indian
32 Education Dugan Coburn and student performers. Additional highlights included
33 recognition of Outstanding Junior Award recipients and appreciation for hosting Lincoln
34 Elementary students during their temporary relocation.

35 36 **B. Superintendent Report**

37 Superintendent Hoyer expressed appreciation to Executive Director Lance Boyd for
38 presenting the previous report in Superintendent Hoyer’s absence and congratulated
39 Executive Director Jackie Mainwaring for her leadership and support of the StarBase
40 program. Morningside Core School recently hosted representatives from Lewistown, the
41 University of Montana Western, and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
42 (OCHE) to support accreditation efforts. Recognition was given to the C.M. Russell
43 illustrated contest winners, highlighting both students and their teachers. Board and
44 audience members were encouraged to wear purple Wednesday, April 15th for Purple
45 Up Day in honor of Month of the Military Child and were provided MIC3 (Military
46 Interstate Children’s Compact Commission) materials supporting military-connected
47 students. Three students—Caimbrie Brost and Kye Wise (Charles M. Russell High
48 School), and Lex Leatham (Great Falls High School)—were recognized as National

1 Merit Finalists, placing them among the top 1% of seniors nationwide. Jordann Lankford
2 Forster was also congratulated for receiving a national “40 Under 40” award for her
3 leadership in Indigenous Education and advocacy for regalia protections, and she
4 expressed “humble” appreciation to the Board. Superintendent Hoyer reviewed
5 Strategic Plan updates from East Middle School, Lewis and Clark Elementary, and
6 PGEC, noting improvements in student behavior, academic growth, and family
7 engagement, while also identifying ongoing challenges such as truancy and external
8 societal factors. The report concluded with positive data on increased spring sports
9 participation, including the addition of baseball, and recognition of Student
10 Representative Emerson Hamma for achieving a personal best at the Nike Invitational
11 Track Meet in California.

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13 **C. Audience Communication**
14 Community member Beth Simpson addressed the Board with concerns regarding
15 retaliation against her child for reporting actions by a high school teacher to
16 Administration.

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18 **ACTION ITEMS**

19
20 **A. Approval of GFPS Auditor for Years Ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027**
21 Director of Business Operations Luke Diekhans explained that the three-year contract
22 between the District and Eide Bailly expired at the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year. He
23 advised it is recommended to stay with auditors for at least five (5) years to create
24 uniform audits. Eide Bailly provided a new two-year audit proposal for fiscal years 2026
25 and 2027.

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27 Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
28 Eide Bailly, LLP as the District’s audit firm and to pay the fees as indicated in the
29 proposal presented for fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

30
31 **B. Cascade County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) and Great Falls Police Department**
32 **(GFPD) Reserve School Resource Officer (SRO) Agreement** – Superintendent
33 Hoyer reminded the Board this was the item that was moved to the “Report” section at
34 the beginning of the meeting.

35
36 **C. Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured Teacher** – Director of Human Resources Heather
37 Spurzem stated a lot of time and consideration go into making sure the Great Falls
38 Public Schools has the best educators for our students. She provided an addendum to
39 the Board of Trustees with the name of one non-tenured teacher recommended for
40 contract non-renewal.

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42 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to
43 approve the non-renewal of the non-tenured teacher listed on the addendum.

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46 **ACTION: OTHER**

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

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3 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**
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5 **A. First Reading of Deleted, Revised, and New Board Policies 2311 – *Instructional***
6 ***Materials*; 2311F (New) – *Supplemental Resources Vetting Document*; 3215**
7 ***(Deleted)* – *Uniform Complaint Procedure (Students)*; and 5215 *(Deleted)* –**
8 ***Uniform Complaint Procedure (Personnel)*** – Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the
9 deletions of Policies 3215 and 5215 as recommended by the Montana School Boards
10 Association (MTSBA) and the Board Policy Committee because they are duplicate
11 policies of Board Policy 1770 – *Uniform Complaint Procedure* that applies to all staff,
12 students, and families. The language changes proposed for Board Policy 2311 –
13 *Instructional Materials*, adds three levels of resources to clarify instructional materials
14 used in classrooms and Superintendent Hoyer stated examples of each level. New
15 form 2311F *Supplemental Resources Vetting Document* will be kept on file to be sure
16 resources support and align with curriculum materials. She asked if anyone had
17 questions or concerns regarding any of the policies mentioned above to contact her
18 prior to the next regular Board meeting.
19

20 **Cascade County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) and Great Falls Police Department**
21 **(GFPD) Reserve School Resource Officer (SRO) Agreement** – After multiple months
22 of work with CCSO, GFPD, City and District Attorneys, and the District Sub-Committee
23 for Safety, Superintendent Hoyer presented the Board with the Reserve School
24 Resource Officer Agreement. Board and community members were asked to review
25 the agreement so that action could be taken for recommended approval at the next
26 regular Board meeting.
27

28 **B. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

29 Trustee Thompson expressed appreciation for the Strategic Plan updates and
30 commended Principal Yenta Jaques for her ongoing efforts to expand services and
31 support more students.

32 Trustee Duff commended students for their many accomplishments and highlighted the
33 positive impact of hearing about their successes.

34 Trustee Skornogoski praised Jordann as a valuable and passionate asset to the district
35 and highlighted positive experiences observing LIFT students’ growth and leadership.
36 She also noted national recognition for our High School House students in a commercial
37 aired with TV personality Mike Rowe.

38 Trustee Sunchild gave recognition to Jordann and the quality of her program, celebrated
39 Foundation grant opportunities for teachers, and appreciated student recognition of
40 impactful educators.

41 Trustee Bronson echoed prior commendations and shared that the MTSBA Strategic
42 Plan is nearing completion, emphasizing collaboration and a clearer focus on desired
43 student outcomes.

44 Trustee Henning expressed appreciation for the parent’s concerns that were brought to
45 light and the Strategic Plan highlights presented.

46 Chairperson Johnson reflected on the value of audience communication, shared Board
47 engagement efforts including school visits and legislative discussions, and noted a
48 positive experience fulfilling his half-day Convocation substitute assignment.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Chairperson Johnson reviewed the many upcoming events presented in the agenda, including Excellence in Education and Scholarship Celebrations and forthcoming Board meetings and graduation ceremonies.

ACTION TO ADJOURN

With no further comments or items to be discussed, motion by Chairperson Johnson and seconded by Trustee Skornogoski to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 6:45 p.m.

Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

Luke Diekhans, Clerk