

Hellgate Elementary Board of Trustees

Special Meeting April 27, 2026

12:00 p.m.

OPENING

The Board of Trustees of Hellgate Elementary School District #4 met in special session on Monday, April 27, 2026. The meeting was held in-person. The meeting was called to order by Board Chairman, Tom McLaughlin. Trustees participating were: Rich Thornock, Jacquelyn Ryan, Beth Herron, Tom Cook, Kallie Gatzemeier and Scott Rouse. Superintendent Molly Blakely and District Clerk Justine Reese were present for the meeting. District staff participating included Erin Ellis (Curriculum Coordinator), Brendan Brown (Special Services Director), Zach Cain (Facilities Director), Kelsey Salmela (Payroll Clerk). Community members in attendance included: Chris Casas (Industrial Hygienist). There were up to 18 total guests/participants in the meeting, in-person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

HEEA

No update.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

There was no recognition at this meeting.

BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

No Correspondence.

DISCUSSION ITEMS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Building 3 (Intermediate Grade Building): Review of the Preliminary Environmental Report prepared by GEM Environmental, INC. (full report available by request): Zach Cain introduced Chris Casas as the Industrial Hygienist at GEM Environmental, Inc. who conducted a full mold inspection and air quality test along with preparing a complete report itemizing his findings and included both interim and permanent solutions. Chris introduced himself as an industrial hygienist with about 15 years of combined experience in inspections, abatement, and related work. He was brought in due to a water issue and clarified the mold and air quality report he prepared for Hellgate Elementary Building 3. Last week, he conducted baseline air quality testing, collecting around 40 samples, along with a full visual analysis of the space. Results showed very healthy indoor air quality, with spore levels well below baseline thresholds. He recommended prompt remediation or, if delayed, the use of engineering controls, followed by re-evaluation before occupancy of the space, including cleanliness checks and another air quality test. He noted the building has an excellent ventilation system and that all interim engineering controls were in place prior to his arrival or recommendation, preventing occupants from potential health risk exposure.

Zach Cain reported prompt remediation was completed over the weekend by ServPro Restoration Services, and Chris concluded the efforts were appropriate. Chris reported no acute health hazard to occupants and recommended a follow-up visual inspection and air quality test before the space is occupied. Board discussion followed Chris's presentation. Trustees clarified long term exposure risks, Chris concluded there was no potential for health risks. Chris confirmed that, given all engineered control safeguards were in place and the rooms were fully isolated, it would have been appropriate to leave the space vacant until full remediation could be completed, as this created a stable, controlled environment. Tom McLaughlin inquired whether black mold can be identified through visual inspection alone. Chris provided an overview of the characteristics of black mold, explaining that it cannot be reliably identified visually and addressing why it was not found in high concentrations in the affected area.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting of the Board will be May 11, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm.

Tom McLaughlin, Board Chair

Justine Reese, Business Manager/Clerk