

**MINUTES OF THE REORGANIZATION MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD MAY 11, 2026**

A duly called Reorganization Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Great Falls Public Schools was held at the District Offices Building, 1100 4th Street South, on the 11th day of May 2026.

At 5:30 p.m., Chairperson Johnson called to order the Reorganization Meeting of the Board of Trustees and informed the participants and audience that the meeting was being recorded per Board Policy 1420.

ROLL CALL: Luke Diekhans took roll call.

Trustees Present: Gordon Johnson, Chairperson
Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson – via Zoom Conference
Bill Bronson
Craig Duff
Paige Henning
Marlee Sunchild
Amie Thompson

Others Present: Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Luke Diekhans, Director of Business Operations; Lance Boyd and Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Directors for Student Achievement; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; and Heather Spurzem, Director of Human Resources.

Also present was Tom Cubbage, Great Falls Education Association president.

Chairperson Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPT AGENDA

Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Henning, passed unanimously to adopt the reorganization agenda as presented.

COMMUNICATION

A. Audience Communication – None.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Minutes of the April 27, 2026, Regular Board Meeting – Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Craig Duff, passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2026 Regular Board Meeting as presented.

1
2 **B. Trustee Election Results** – Director of Business Operations Luke Diekhans
3 explained that only three candidates had filed for the three open positions on the Great
4 Falls Public Schools (GFPS) Board of Trustees and no write-in candidates were
5 received. Because there were no levy requests by Great Falls Public Schools on the
6 ballot, an election was not needed and Bill Bronson, Kim Skornogoski, and Amie
7 Thompson were elected by acclamation to three-year terms on the GFPS Board of
8 Trustees.

9
10 Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to approve
11 the May 5, 2026, Trustee Election results that include the Election by Acclamation of Bill
12 Bronson, Kim Skornogoski, and Amie Thompson as duly appointed Great Falls Public
13 Schools Trustees, each to three-year terms.

14
15 **C. Actions of the Present Board** – Director of Business Operations Luke Diekhans
16 explained this action concludes all business and commitments of the present (outgoing)
17 Board and allows for the clear delineation of activities between the present Board and
18 the new Board. All actions are considered complete and there will be no reason for the
19 present Board to return to conclude business on unfinished items.

20
21 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to ratify all
22 actions of the present Board.

23
24 **D. Swearing In and Oath of Office of Newly Elected Trustees** – Motion – Paige
25 Henning, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild and Craig Duff, passed unanimously to Swear in
26 and complete the Oath of Office for the newly elected Trustees Bill Bronson, Kim
27 Skornogoski (via Zoom), and Amie Thompson. Luke Diekhans, Clerk of the Board,
28 administered the Oath of Office to each of the newly elected Trustees.

29
30 **E. Organization of the New Board**

31
32 **1. Elect Chairperson** – Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed
33 unanimously to appoint Gordon Johnson as the Board Chairperson for the Great Falls
34 Public Schools Board of Trustees for the ensuing one-year term.

35
36 **2. Elect Vice-Chairperson** – Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Amie Thompson,
37 passed unanimously to appoint Kim Skornogoski as Board Vice-Chairperson for the
38 Great Falls Public Schools Board of Trustees for the ensuing one-year term.

39
40 **F. Designate and Swear In Clerk of the District/Board** – Motion – Gordon Johnson
41 Seconded – Paige Henning, passed unanimously to designate Luke Diekhans as Clerk
42 of the District and Board for a one-year term. Aly Konecny administered the Oath of
43 Office to Luke Diekhans.

44
45 **G. Common Resources of the Board** – Director of Business Operations Luke Diekhans
46 reviewed the list of common resources used by the District and Board of Trustees that
47 was presented in the agenda.

1 Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
2 Common Resources of the Board as presented. The Common Resources of the Board
3 are the Attorney of Record – Faure Holden Attorneys at Law, P.C.; Property, Liability and
4 School Board Errors & Omissions Insurance – Montana Schools Property and Liability
5 Insurance Plan/Marsh McLennan Agency; Banking and Investments – First Interstate
6 Bank; Workers’ Compensation Insurance – Montana School Group Insurance Authority
7 (MSGIA) and Workers’ Compensation Risk Retention Program (WCRRP);
8 Unemployment Insurance – Montana Schools Unemployment Insurance Program
9 (MSUIP); and Trustee Organizations – Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA).

12 **BOARD COMMUNICATION / DISCUSSION**

13 Chairperson Johnson congratulated Trustees Bronson, Skornogoski, and Thompson for
14 their re-elections and thanked them for their continued service on the Great Falls Public
15 Schools Board of Trustees.

18 **ACTION TO ADJOURN TO REGULAR MEETING**

20 Chairperson Johnson adjourned the Reorganization Meeting of the Board of Trustees at
21 5:45 p.m. and announced there would be a short break before starting the Regular
22 Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

25 **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING** 26 **OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** 27 **HELD MAY 11, 2026**

29 A duly called Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Great Falls Public
30 Schools was held at the District Offices Building, 1100 4th Street South, on the 11th day
31 of May 2026.

33 At 5:48 p.m., Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of
34 Trustees and reminded the participants and audience that the meeting was being
35 recorded per Board Policy 1420.

37 **ROLL CALL:** Luke Diekhans took roll call.

39 **Trustees Present:** Gordon Johnson, Chairperson
40 Bill Bronson
41 Craig Duff
42 Paige Henning
43 Marlee Sunchild
44 Amie Thompson

46 **Trustee Excused:** Kim Skornogoski, Vice Chairperson

Others Present: Heather Hoyer, Superintendent; Luke Diekhans, Director of Business Operations; Lance Boyd and Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Directors for Student Achievement; Jeff Williams, Director of Information Technology; and Heather Spurzem, Director of Human Resources.

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

ADOPT AGENDA

Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Marlee Sunchild, passed unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

Motion – Paige Henning, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

A. Personnel Actions – The Board approved the Personnel Actions as presented.

B. Good Apple Awards – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple Awards for Debbie Hartman, 1st Grade Teacher, Sacajawea Elementary School; Gary and Cathy Schoenthal, Crossing Guards, Lincoln Elementary School; Melissa DeBruycker, Student Services Specialist 9-12, C.M. Russell High School; Madison Hanson and Kim Haney, Core Teacher Aides, East Middle School; Karen Fulbright, Office Assistant, East Middle School; Karin Enyeart, Attendance Secretary, East Middle School; and Austin After Buffalo, Core Teacher Aide and Crossing Guard, Longfellow Elementary School.

C. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates
The Board approved the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) TR-35 School Bus Driver Certificates for the individuals listed in the agenda.

D. Incoming Student Attendance Agreements for the 2026-2027 School Year – The Board approved the incoming student attendance agreements for the 2026-2027 school year for the students listed in the agenda. Tuitions will be paid for by the District of Residence.

E. Donation of Wood to Charles M. Russell Industrial Technology Department – The Board approved the donation of hardwood and walnut from Charles Bradford to the C. M. Russell High School Industrial Technology department, with thanks.

F. Establish Charles M. Russell High School and Great Falls High School Flag Football Student Activity Accounts – The Board approved C. M. Russell and Great Falls High Schools to open “Girls Flag Football” student activity accounts at each high school.

1 COMMUNICATION

3 A. Report of the Student Representatives

4 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGECE) student representative Aspen Logan-Schwecke
5 highlighted recent projects including ukulele lessons connecting science and music,
6 Earth Science and Art collaborative pebble art projects, and science enrichment
7 activities tied to prom preparations. Students also participated in hands-on experiences
8 including the annual Chicken Lab, culinary lessons, archery instruction for Lincoln
9 Elementary School students, and a simulation activity supported by Paris Gibson
10 students. Staff and Student Voice were commended for organizing a successful and
11 memorable 2026 PGECE Prom. Additional activities included the installation of a new
12 beehive, a field trip experience to Sculptures in the Wild integrating conservation,
13 biology, and photography, and willow harvesting for dream catcher lessons. Students
14 also learned from Blackfeet artist John Isaiah Pepion about how the art he creates is
15 ceremonial in understanding his past, his family, and his culture. He shared his
16 traditional ledger and allowed students to create their own art. Aspen recognized Alex
17 Cole, recipient of the Zach Culliton Merit of Distinction Award, for perseverance and
18 creativity, and shared a meaningful “full circle” bellringing moment celebrating a former
19 Lincoln Elementary student graduating from Paris Gibson Education Center.

21 C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Emerson Hamma, Lydia
22 Comstock, and Addie Crist shared highlights from a variety of academic, extracurricular,
23 and community activities across the district. Students participated in hands-on learning
24 experiences including forensic science field trips with the Great Falls Police
25 Department, wildlife observation trips to Benton Lake Wildlife Refuge, chemistry
26 “rainbow” experiments, AP English haiku competitions, art and museum tours, medical
27 suturing demonstrations, and career exploration opportunities with the Western States
28 Carpenters Union and Tobacco Construction. Students also recognized the support of
29 the Great Falls Public Schools Foundation and community partners, including Walmart
30 during Teacher Appreciation Week. Students and staff participated in Special Olympics
31 “Fans in the Stands,” community service projects, JROTC promotion ceremonies, and
32 numerous spring athletic competitions and senior celebrations. Additional
33 accomplishments included BPA national awards, National Honor Society inductions,
34 journalism honors, student government elections, AP art showcases, and national
35 recognition for two speech and debate students, Bristol Meiners and Lydia Comstock.
36 The students also celebrated the orchestra program’s invitation to perform in Chicago in
37 February 2027 for orchestra teachers and students from around the country. C.M.
38 Russell High School is the only school in Montana to receive this invitation twice.

40 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Seth Royer and Weston Stoll
41 reported on a variety of academic, extracurricular, and student engagement activities at
42 GFHS. Students recognized Mental Health Week activities hosted by the LIFT group,
43 which promoted awareness and support through themed dress days and schoolwide
44 participation. Lessons loved included classroom highlights from biology dissections, a
45 hands-on health class lesson demonstrating the effects of lung health choices, and
46 recognition of students preparing for Advanced Placement (AP) testing and the teachers
47 who have invested so much time into their student’s success. Students, along with
48 community businesses, celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week with staff recognition

activities and luncheons. The students also acknowledged community support through scholarship celebrations and Gold Star Awards honoring educators. Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC) students participated in orientation flights and the annual awards ceremony, while spring athletics continued with track, baseball, softball, and tennis competitions. Additional student accomplishments included success in the Trig-Star contest and recognition of GFHS athletic history through Bison Trivia featuring distinguished alumnus Hal Moe.

B. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Hoyer congratulated the three graduating student representatives and wished them success in their future endeavors. She noted that registration is open for summer swimming lessons at Great Falls High School and thanked Carol Paul and more than 30 volunteers for their support of Raising Readers. Very special thanks were also extended to the many community members, businesses, students, and clubs who participated in the Lincoln neighborhood clean-up efforts. Superintendent Hoyer recognized students participating in the upcoming Special Olympics State Games and noted that state champions will be recognized at a future Board meeting. She also highlighted the recent Scholarship Night event, where 108 students received 227 scholarships, expressing sincere appreciation to all donors for providing students with opportunities and support for their futures.

Superintendent Hoyer further recognized the many staff appreciation events held throughout April and May, noting that fifty-four (54) percent of district staff were recognized during the month. Appreciation was extended to bus drivers, food service staff, principals, teachers, and school nurses for their dedication and service to students. Special recognition was given to Erica Harp, Lead Nurse for Great Falls Public Schools, for receiving the Montana Association of School Nurses School Nurse Administrator of the Year award by the National Association of School Nurses. Superintendent Hoyer shared excerpts from Harp's nomination, and Ms. Harp thanked the community and schools for their support, noting her surprise and honor in receiving the award. Superintendent Hoyer also reviewed the accomplishments and qualifications of staff members recognized during each of the appreciation events.

C. Audience Communication – None

Chairperson Johnson dismissed the School Board Student Representatives, wished the seniors luck in their future endeavors, and stated he looks forward to seeing the other representatives back for the 2026-2027 school year.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Cascade County Elections Department to Conduct 2026-2027 School Elections

Director of Business Operations, Luke Diekhans, stated the school district is required by law to officially request that the Cascade County Elections Department run the elections for the school district. The contract provided encompasses the request to have the Cascade County Elections Department run the election for the school district for the 2026-2027 school year.

1 Motion – Marlee Sunchild, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to officially
2 request that the Cascade County Elections Department run the elections for the Great
3 Falls Public School Districts 1 & A during the 2026-2027 school year.

4
5 **B. Second Reading of Board Policies 3612 (Revised) – *District-Provided Access to***
6 ***Electronic Information, Equipment, Services, and Networks*; 3612P (Revised) –**
7 ***Student Computer Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Agreement*; 5450F**
8 ***(Revised) – Staff Computer Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Agreement; and***
9 ***4330P (New) – Community Use of School Facilities Procedure* – Superintendent**
10 **Hoyer stated the above policies were reviewed on first reading at the April 27, 2026**
11 **Board meeting. Only one minor grammatical correction was made in 3612P. No other**
12 **input requesting changes or corrections was received.**

13
14 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Paige Henning, passed unanimously to approve
15 Board Policies 3612 (Revised) – *District-Provided Access to Electronic Information,*
16 *Equipment, Services, and Networks*; 3612P (Revised) – *Student Computer Acceptable*
17 *Use and Internet Safety Agreement*; 5450F (Revised) – *Staff Computer Acceptable Use*
18 *and Internet Safety Agreement; and 4330P (New) – Community Use of School Facilities*
19 *Procedure* as presented.

20 21 22 **ACTION: OTHER**

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

24 25 26 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**

27
28 **A. Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) Compliance Public Notice** – Director of
29 Information Technology Jeff Williams reviewed the District’s compliance with the
30 Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requirements for E-Rate funding eligibility.
31 District internet safety measures include the use of LightSpeed Relay web filtering for
32 student devices, additional firewall protections for staff, and Board policies outlining
33 acceptable use and internet safety responsibilities for students and staff.

34
35 **B. First Reading of the 2026-2027 Board Meeting Calendar** – Director of Business
36 Operations Luke Diekhans presented a calendar of proposed Board meeting dates,
37 times, and places, in compliance with Board Policy 1400, for the 2026-2027 school
38 year. He noted that meeting dates would take place on the first and third Mondays in
39 August to accommodate budget reporting deadlines. Suggestions for changes to the
40 calendar may be made until the second reading and adoption of the calendar at the May
41 26, 2026 Regular Board Meeting.

42
43 **C. STARS Act Report** – Director of Human Resources Heather Spurzem reviewed how
44 calculations to starting teacher salaries were estimated for the 2026-27 school year
45 based on the Student and Teacher Advancement for Results and Success (STARS) Act
46 House Bill 252 being passed in May 2025. Under the negotiated agreement with the
47 Great Falls Education Association (GFEA), GFPS will raise the 2026–27 starting
48 teacher salary to \$48,300. Using 2025-26 data for estimate purposes only,

1 approximately 106 teachers would receive the increase, resulting in an estimated
2 additional District cost of \$35,297. Figures are approximate and will fluctuate slightly
3 when actual salary placements are calculated for the 2026-27 school year.

4
5 Brief discussion ensued regarding the financial impact to the District. Higher starting
6 salaries are creating more interest in employment opportunities and due to the
7 agreement between GFPS and the GFEA, starting salaries significantly increased
8 during the 2025-2026 school year, thus the impact in subsequent years will now be
9 more minimal.

10
11 **D. First Reading of Board Policies 3310 (Revised) – *Student Discipline*; 5240**
12 **(Revised) – *Resolution of Staff Complaints*; 7332 (Revised) – *Advertising in***
13 ***School-Revenue Enhancement*; and 7332F (New) – *Sports Activities-Revenue***
14 ***Enhancement Program Form*** – Superintendent Hoyer reviewed the recommended
15 language revisions from Montana School Board Association (MTSBA) and the Board
16 Policy Committee to each of the Board policies listed, including updates related to
17 District advertising, sponsorships, and revenue enhancement opportunities such as
18 signage and streaming services. She asked if anyone had questions or concerns
19 regarding any of the policies or revisions to contact her prior to the next regular Board
20 meeting.

21
22 Trustee Duff communicated concerns regarding increased business advertising in
23 schools, with emphasis on maintaining strict advertising guidelines and prioritizing
24 promotion of student and staff achievements over commercial content.

25 26 **C. Discussion, Committee Reports, and Comments**

27 Trustee Sunchild recognized Katelyn Marsik for successfully stepping into two major
28 events and noted appreciation for the student presentation that brought back memories
29 of field trips to Benton Lake.

30 Trustee Bronson echoed appreciation for the Scholarship event, highlighting the
31 success of students and the importance of students thanking scholarship donors. He
32 also shared anticipation for the upcoming graduations and the High School House
33 ribbon cutting event.

34 Trustee Thompson shared experiences assisting with Leadership High School
35 interviews at C. M. Russell High School and praised the authenticity of participating
36 students. She noted regret at missing some graduation events due to work travel.

37 Trustee Henning highlighted enjoyment of the Special Olympics and Fans in the Stands,
38 especially seeing Valley View students support a fellow student competitor. She also
39 shared disappointment at missing the High School House ribbon cutting event but is
40 looking forward to attending Ag Day with fourth-grade students.

41 Trustee Duff reflected positively on completing his first year of Board service,
42 expressing appreciation for fellow trustees' support and guidance throughout the
43 learning process.

44 Chairperson Johnson thanked Trustee Duff for his contributions and insight as a new
45 trustee and expressed appreciation for the strong collaboration and teamwork among
46 his fellow trustees. He was honored to be nominated and chosen to continue his tenure
47 as the District Board Chairperson for the 2026-27 school year.

1
2 **UPCOMING EVENTS**
3

4 Chairperson Johnson reminded and welcomed everyone to attend the many
5 celebrations and ceremonies on the agenda that are coming up in May.
6

7
8 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**
9

10 With no further comments or items to be discussed, motion by Chairperson Johnson
11 and seconded by Trustee Henning to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of
12 Trustees at 7:01 p.m.
13
14
15

16
17

Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

18
19

Luke Diekhans, Clerk