

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD JANUARY 8, 2024**

A duly called Regular 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 8th day of January 2024.

ROLL CALL: Brian Patrick took roll call.

Trustees Present: Gordon Johnson - Chairperson
Kim Skornogoski – Vice Chairperson
Bill Bronson
Mark Finnicum
Marlee Sunchild
Amie Thompson
Paige Turoski

Others Present: Tom Moore, Superintendent; Brian Patrick, Director of Business Operations; Lance Boyd, Heather Hoyer, and Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Directors for Student Achievement; Luke Diekhans, Director of Human Resources; and Tom Hering, Director of Information Technology.

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

At 5:30 pm, Chairperson Johnson called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees and asked Trustee Finnicum to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPT AGENDA

Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Kim Skornogoski, passed unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

A. Minutes of the December 11, 2023, Regular Board Meeting – The Board approved the minutes of the December 11, 2023, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

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

C. Good Apple Awards – The Board approved the nominations for Good Apple Awards for Donde Hayes, Substitute Teacher, District Wide; Terence Brien, 1st Engineer, Whittier Elementary School; Joelle Lundy, 3rd Grade Teacher, Whittier Elementary School; Amber Rausch, Instructional Coach, Whittier Elementary School; Karen and Greg Beeler, Life in Bloom Business Owners; Julie Radonich, Intervention

1 Teacher, Whittier Elementary School; and Aaron Frick, Patrol Sargent, Great Falls
2 Police Department.

3
4 **D. Montana School Bus Drivers Certificates – OPI TR-35's** – The Board approved
5 the Montana School Bus Drivers Certificate – OPI TR-35's for the individual listed in the
6 agenda.

7
8 **E. Transitional Kindergarten Student Attendance Agreements at the Early**
9 **Learning Family Center for the 2023-2024 School Year** – The Board approved the
10 students listed in the agenda to attend the Early Learning Family Center for the 2023-
11 2024 school year due to exceptional circumstances per Board Policy 3100.

12
13 **F. Student Activity Accounts for October 2023** – The Board approved the Student
14 Activity Accounts Monthly Report for October 2023.

15
16 **G. Student Activity Accounts for November 2023** – The Board approved the Student
17 Activity Accounts Monthly Report for November 2023.

18
19 **H. Great Falls High School Chamber Orchestra Travel Request** – The Board
20 approved Great Falls High School Chamber Orchestra travel to Bozeman, MT on
21 February 23-25, 2024.

22
23 **I. Great Falls High School Concert Orchestra Travel Request** – The Board
24 approved Great Falls High School Concert Orchestra travel to Missoula, MT on March
25 3-4, 2024.

26
27 **J. Great Falls High School Symphonic Band Travel Request** – The Board approved
28 Great Falls High School Symphonic Band travel to Boise, ID on February 15-18, 2024.

29
30 **K. Great Falls High School Delphian Choir Travel Request** – The Board approved
31 Great Falls High School Delphian Choir travel to Spokane, WA on April 3-6, 2024.

32
33 **L. Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School and Great Falls High School (GFHS)**
34 **Running Club Travel Request** – The Board approved CMR and GFHS Running Club
35 travel to Spokane, WA on January 19-22, 2024.

36
37 **M. Charles M. Russell (CMR) High School Distributive Education Clubs of**
38 **America (DECA) State Conference Travel Request** – The Board approved CMR High
39 School DECA Club travel to the State Conference in Missoula, MT on February 4-6,
40 2024.

41
42 **N. Christmas Tree Donation** – The Board approved to accept the donation of an
43 artificial Christmas tree from Tom Moore to the Great Falls Public Schools Business
44 Office with thanks.

1 **COMMUNICATION**

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

4 Great Falls High School (GFHS) student representatives Seth Royer, Brooklyn Griffin,
5 and Ryan Harrington reported on favorite classes and projects to include Mr.
6 Napierala's weight training class, making cinnamon rolls in Culinary class, dissecting
7 sheep brains in Mrs. Lloyd's Honors Anatomy and Physiology class, and lab projects in
8 Mr. Hodges's Chemistry class. Community projects and fundraisers included the
9 Student Council Holiday Bell Ringings to fundraise for the Salvation Army, the GFHS
10 Drama Club Gift Wrapping event to support their club and drama productions, and a
11 fundraiser taking place at the Crosstown Girls Basketball games on January 12th to
12 support Oliver and the "Lost Enzyme Project". The Bison Dance team is hosting a
13 dance camp on January 27 in the GFHS Old Gym and the GFHS Cheerleaders will host
14 their annual Mini Camp on February 3 in the GFH Fieldhouse. Students enjoyed
15 "Holiday Theme Week" prior to the winter break as they dressed in their favorite holiday
16 attire and sang Christmas carols throughout the halls at GFH. Over sixty-five Student
17 Council members were celebrated with a salad and pizza party provided by local
18 businesses "The Mighty Mo" and "Enbar", thanking them for their hard work, leadership,
19 and spreading Bison pride throughout the school year. The students thanked the
20 community for their continued support and encouraged everyone to celebrate the
21 amazing talents of the Art students by attending the art exhibition on display at the Dahl
22 Gallery at GFHS.

24 Paris Gibson Education Center (PGEC) student representatives Karsynn Kidrick and
25 Morgan Williams reported there have been many Bell Ringing ceremonies for
26 graduating students as they wrap up their semester. Students and staff had fun
27 dressing up in Holiday themes and counting down the 12 days of Christmas by hiding
28 presents and clues across PGEC. Over 30 PGEC students volunteered at several
29 locations throughout the city. They shopped with elementary students, wrapped gifts,
30 made overnight snack backpacks, and made food baskets to support students and
31 families across the district over the holiday break. "Morning Mindfulness" continues to
32 be a favorite amongst students as they appreciate the calming strategies in the
33 morning. Students have been busy with album cover art projects, doing group
34 speeches and making posters to show differences between plant and animal cells in
35 science, and making drums. Students are enjoying Mr. Logan's "Critical Thinking"
36 class. Students had the opportunity to attend a Free Application for Federal Student Aid
37 (FAFSA) seminar and received support filling out applications and also applying for
38 college scholarships. Jobs for Montana Graduates (JMG) held a graduation ceremony
39 in December.

41 C.M. Russell (CMR) High School student representatives Caroline Hermiller, Lilli Skaer,
42 and Emerson Hamma highlighted community service projects including drama students
43 volunteering as patients for first responder training exercises, donating funds to support
44 the "Shop with a Cop" program, and Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA)
45 wrapping presents for the Children's Receiving Home and singing Christmas carols and
46 gifting hand-painted ornaments to the residents of the Grandview. Students enjoyed
47 learning about CPAP (Controlled Positive Airway Pressure) techniques in Mrs. Virt's
48 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) class, watching the movie "Dead Poets Society"
49 to learn about romanticism and transcendentalism in Mr. Anderson's English class, and
50 learning about fibers and how valuable a piece of fabric can be in helping to solve a
51 case in Forensics class. Senior Government students had the opportunity to ask

1 Attorney General Austin Knudsen questions about topics they have been studying when
2 he visited their senior Government class. Business Professionals of America (BPA)
3 students met with the Chamber of Commerce and helped create a promotional video. In
4 December, CMR was proud to celebrate three students who graduated from the
5 Montana Youth Challenge Academy in Dillon, a life-changing program designed to
6 provide leadership skills and help young adults be successful after high school.
7 Students and staff celebrated the holiday season with “Holiday Theme Week” and said
8 concerts are always a favorite. Homework help was offered during the holiday break in
9 the form of the “CMR Holiday Blitz” – an academic support program offered to allow
10 students to get help or catch up on missing assignments. Four teachers offered to work
11 over the break to support students requesting help. Art students showed a wonderful
12 display of their works at the Luna Coffee Bar. Students were proud to recognize three
13 of their educators who earned National Board Certifications – Holly Ingeman, Riki
14 Johnson, and Christi Virts. They also recognized Mr. Olson as a gifted musician and
15 composer, whose work was recently performed at the 77th Midwest Clinic in Chicago.
16

17 Both GFH and CMR student representatives highlighted some of the accomplishments
18 of their respective winter sports teams and individuals.
19

20 Chairperson Johnson commented how special it is to hear reports from the students
21 and stated, “the future is in good hands”.
22

23 **B. Superintendent Report**

24 Superintendent Moore thanked the students for the preparation and seriousness they
25 put into their reports. He invited the community to the ribbon-cutting ceremony taking
26 place at Meadow Lark Elementary School on January 11th at 2:30 p.m. The addition of
27 classrooms was provided through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to
28 accommodate for a surge in enrollment in this area of our community. Great Falls
29 Public Schools is hosting a Job Fair on February 1st at Paris Gibson Education Center
30 (PGEC). Superintendent Moore thanked Becky Nelson for organizing the event and
31 Yenta Jaques for hosting the event. Local crosstown basketball events, wrestlers in
32 Missoula at the Rocky Mountain Classic, and a swim meet at the GFH Pool were
33 highlighted activities for the week. Superintendent Moore thanked Brian Patrick and
34 Anders Blewitt for the incredible job they are doing in publicizing the State Innovative
35 Tax Credit Program. A huge thank you goes out to the donors. \$421,000 of the goal
36 has already been committed. A plethora of meetings and events are on the horizon,
37 including High Voltage weekend; Budget Committee meetings; District Safety meetings;
38 a Task Force committee formed to write some guidance on Artificial Intelligence;
39 Insurance Trust Fund Summit the end of January (Trustee Bronson and Human
40 Resources Director, Luke Diekhans will be attending); Executive Directors Heather
41 Hoyer and Jackie Mainwaring will present “Profile of a Graduate” to the community in
42 four evening sessions later in January or February; Executive Director and Title I
43 Coordinator, Lance Boyd, will be busy processing the end of ESSER (Elementary and
44 Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds and making sure the District is utilizing the
45 remaining funds wisely; Great Falls Public Schools Foundation Director, Stephanie
46 Becker, is busy reviewing scholarship grants, enhancements projects, and preparing for
47 the annual Excellence in Education Scholarship banquet; several policy changes are
48 being reviewed and updated by the Policy Committee to get them ready for Board
49 approval; and more updates on the CORE school will be made and reported by new
50 CORE Principal, Jennifer Martyn, at the end of the month.

1
2 **C. Audience Communication** – No request to speak.
3
4

5 **ACTION ITEMS**
6

7 **A. Financial Report and Check Register for October 2023** – Director of Business
8 Operations, Brian Patrick, presented the financial report and check register for October
9 2023.
10

11 Motion – Paige Turoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve the
12 October 2023 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #130500 - #131017 in the
13 amount of \$2,087,725.34 and Payroll checks #79469 – #79786 in the amount of
14 \$970,656.80 as presented.
15

16 **B. Financial Report and Check Register for November 2023** – Director of Business
17 Operations, Brian Patrick, presented the financial report and check register for
18 November 2023.
19

20 Motion – Bill Bronson, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to approve the
21 November 2023 Financial Report and Accounts Payable checks #131018 - #131521 in
22 the amount of \$2,587,331.61 and Payroll checks #79787 - #80035 in the amount of
23 \$372,297.28 as presented.
24

25 **C. Warehouse Truck Bid** – Director of Business Operations, Brian Patrick, stated the
26 Board approved the advertising for a new warehouse truck at the November 13, 2023
27 regular Board Meeting. One bid was received from Normont Equipment and presented
28 to the Board that met the requirements in the advertisement. He indicated that the
29 estimate for the vehicle and lift gate was \$120,000 and the bid received came in under
30 that amount.
31

32 Upon comment from an audience member regarding the motion to approve the bid
33 amount of the lift gate, Mr. Patrick clarified there was a typographical error in the
34 recommendation request and the amount should have been \$12,390 for the lift gate and
35 not \$112,390 that was listed in error in the recommendation to the Board.
36

37 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve
38 the bid of \$106,805 for the truck and the amended amount of \$12,390 for the liftgate as
39 documented on the bid from Normont Equipment as presented.
40

41 **D. Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) / Great Falls Public Schools**
42 **(GFPS) Interlocal Agreement** – Superintendent Moore presented a detailed Interlocal
43 Agreement between MSDB and GFPS that will stay in effect for two years unless one or
44 both parties wants to terminate the agreement. The purpose of the agreement is to
45 recognize and encourage the cooperative efforts between MSDB and GFPS in
46 providing educational services to visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf/blind
47 students placed at MSDB and in GFPS. This agreement encompasses the prior
48 informal agreement between MSDB and GFPS.
49

1 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Paige Turoski, passed unanimously to approve
2 the Interlocal Agreement between Great Falls Public Schools and the Montana School
3 for the Deaf and Blind as presented.
4

5 **E. Paraprofessional Wage Increase Effective January 22, 2024** – Luke Diekhans,
6 Director of Human Resources, reported Paraprofessionals are in constant need
7 throughout the District and the positions are never fully staffed. To find highly qualified
8 applicants, the starting salary needs to be increased by \$.75 per hour to make the
9 starting salary more competitive.
10

11 A conversation ensued with Trustee Bronson asking what source of funding will be used
12 when the 10% from ESSER funds will no longer be available. Trustee Thompson asked
13 how competitive the raise will be; and Trustee Skornogoski asked if we are struggling to
14 meet compliance. Mr. Diekhans explained we are not at capacity, so we have funds to
15 cover raises and will adjust the number of full-time positions available if necessary.
16 There are some districts whose pay is substantially above ours, however this raise will
17 put GFPS in the middle of the spectrum. He stated we are working at a minimum level
18 so as new students come in, we need to make sure we have paraprofessionals hired to
19 help.
20

21 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Amie Thompson, passed unanimously to
22 approve the \$0.75 per hour Paraprofessional wage increase beginning January 22,
23 2024.
24

25 **F. Trustee Resolution Calling for an Election on May 7, 2024** – Brian Patrick,
26 Director of Business Operations, informed the Board that he sent information to
27 Cascade County Election Administrator, Devereaux Biddick, in advance for review. The
28 goal is to have a successful election.
29

30 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Mark Finnicum, passed unanimously to
31 approve the resolution calling for an election on May 7, 2024 per the documents
32 presented that set forth the date, purpose, ballot deposit sites, and the times the ballot
33 deposit sites will be open.
34

35 **G. Conduct the 2024 Election by Mail Ballot** – Director of Business Operations, Brian
36 Patrick, explained that a request must be sent from the Trustees to the Election
37 Department of Cascade County, requesting the school election be held by mail ballot.
38

39 Motion – Kim Skornogoski, Seconded – Bill Bronson, passed unanimously to approve
40 the request to the Election Department of Cascade County that the 2024 school election
41 be conducted by mail ballot.
42

43 **H. Cascade County Elections Department to Conduct School Elections** – Director
44 of Business Operations, Brian Patrick, stated the school district is required by law to
45 officially request that the Cascade County Elections Department run the elections for
46 the school district. The contract provided encompasses the request to have the
47 Cascade County Elections Department run the election for the school district for the
48 2024-2025 school year.
49

1 Motion – Mark Finnicum, Seconded – Paige Turoski, 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 2024-2025 school year.

4
5
6 **ACTION: OTHER**

7 There were no items pulled from the Consent Agenda to discuss.
8
9

10 **REPORTS, DISCUSSION, AND POLICIES**
11

12 **A. Review of the 2024 Montana High School Association (MHSА) Proposals to be**
13 **Voted on at the Annual Meeting** – Great Falls Public Schools Athletic Director, Mike
14 Henneberg, reported on ten different proposals that will be voted upon at the Montana
15 High School Association (MHSА) annual meeting taking place on January 15, 2024, in
16 Bozeman, MT. Mr. Henneberg explained how he and voting members Geff Habel,
17 Principal at Great Falls High School, and Jamie McGraw, Principal at Charles M.
18 Russell High School intend to vote on each of the proposals as they represent Great
19 Falls Public Schools at the meeting. Mr. Henneberg will provide an update to the Board
20 upon his return on the voting outcome of each of the proposals.
21

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

23 Trustee Sunchild was appreciative of the fundraising efforts for Oliver and the Lost
24 Enzyme Project. Tee shirts for \$15 are being sold at the Crosstown basketball games
25 to support the cause. She is very impressed and excited about the new Principal hired
26 for the CORE School. Trustee Sunchild thanked Heather Hoyer, Jackie Mainwaring,
27 Marni Napierala, Rachel Cutler, Luke Diekhans, and Tom Cabbage for the incredible
28 amount of time, effort, and enthusiasm they have put in outside the regular workday to
29 have meetings and answer the countless questions from staff and community
30 surrounding the new CORE school.

31 Chairperson Johnson thanked the CORE Advisory Committee for their hard work.

32 Trustee Turoski stated her boys enjoy attending events at CMR. They had a great
33 break but were thrilled to go back to school.

34 Trustee Skornogoski volunteered at the Reality Fair at CMR and said over 150 students
35 got to work with budgeting and see what it is like in the real world. She got to see first-
36 hand how financial literacy is evolving and was excited to be volunteering at the same
37 event happening at GFH tomorrow. She encouraged everyone to volunteer to help at
38 the upcoming, much smaller, Reality Fair at PGEС.

39 Trustee Thompson gave a shout-out to Luke Diekhans for his work on implementing the
40 \$.75 pay raise for the paraprofessionals. This will help retain teachers as the goal
41 would be they would have much needed support in their classrooms.

42 Trustee Bronson stated he and his wife reviewed scholarship applications through the
43 GFPS Foundation. They appreciate the community stepping up to support the
44 Foundation with various programs, college scholarships, and facilities upgrades. He
45 was impressed with the quality of applications submitted from students. He also
46 updated the Board on the status of the Insurance Trust provided by the actions of
47 House Bill 332 in the last legislative session. The AA Districts have selected and hired
48 Mike Bonville to conduct a feasibility study after collecting data from all the AA school
49 districts. Mr. Bonville works for Alliant Insurance Services who also works with our
50 District Insurance Committee. There is a meeting scheduled at the end of the month in
51 which the governance structure will be discussed.

1 Trustee Finnicum thanked Brian Patrick for the excellent work on the Innovative Tax
2 Credit program.
3 Chairperson Johnson reviewed the timeline for the Superintendent Search. The Search
4 Committee is meeting again tomorrow and may have minor changes to the timeline. He
5 encouraged the public to participate in the on-line survey so that we understand the
6 qualifications the public expects to see in the new Superintendent.
7
8

9 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

10
11 Chairperson Johnson mentioned the following upcoming events:
12 Board Budget Committee meeting on January 11th at 5:30 p.m. to review the permissive
13 levies and begin discussing a potential levy for the spring.
14 Regular Board Meeting on January 22nd at 5:30 p.m.
15 Special Board Meeting on January 29th at 5:30 p.m. to review Superintendent
16 Applications.
17 And more meetings listed on the Agenda.
18

19 Chairperson Johnson stated it was a privilege to serve on the Great Falls Public
20 Schools Board of Trustees with such incredible people.
21
22

23 **ACTION TO ADJOURN**

24
25 Motion – Chairperson Johnson, Seconded – Vice Chairperson Kim Skornogoski,
26 passed unanimously to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 6:59
27 p.m.
28
29

30
31 _____
32 Gordon Johnson, Chairperson

33 _____
Brian Patrick, Clerk