

# BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

November 30, 2023  
Zoom

**Thursday, November 30, 2023**  
**8:00 AM**

## **CALL TO ORDER – 00:03:09**

Chair Tharp called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Stockton took Roll Call, and the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation, welcomed guests, and thanked everyone for their participation. Chair Tharp announced that due to the tight schedule, the Board will take public comment on items not listed on the agenda at the end of the meeting.

Board members present: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Ms. Susie Hedalen, Vice Chair; Ms. Jane Hamman; Ms. Renee Rassmussen; Dr. Ron Slinger; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan. Staff members present: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Accounting Technician. Guests: Ms. Jeril Hehn, Billings Public Schools (BPS); Superintendent Erwin Garcia-Velasquez, BPS; Mr. Zack Terakedis, BPS School Board Trustee; Dr. Chris Olszewski, BPS; Dr. Gordon Klasna, BPS; Superintendent Erik Wilkerson, Jefferson Public Schools (JPS); Mr. Mike Moodry, JPS; Mr. Dan Mills, Principal, Bozeman High School; Superintendent Casey Bertram, Bozeman Public Schools; Superintendent Pete Joseph, Corvallis Public Schools (CPS); Ms. Jolene Tollenaar, District Clerk, CPS; Mr. Jason Wirt, Career Pathways Coordinator, CPS; Ms. Josie Hudspeth, Teacher, CPS; Ms. Amy Lewis, CPS School Board Trustee; Mr. Richie Borden, Principal, CPS; Ms. Stacy Jessop, Teacher and Counselor, CPS; Ms. Darci Herbstritt, Teacher, CPS; Ms. Patti Healy, Teacher, CPS; Ms. Jenifer Powell, Science Olympiad Coordinator, CPS; Ms. Lisa Nagel, Administrator, CPS; Ms. Becky Anderson, CPS School Board Trustee; Superintendent Dan Rispens, East Helena Public Schools; Mr. Brian Kessler, East Helena High School Principal; Ms. Lynsi Morris, East Valley Middle School Principal; Superintendent Les Meyer, Frenchtown Public Schools (FPS); Ms. Robyn Richarson, School Counselor, FPS; Ms. Beth Terzo, Assistant Principal, Frenchtown High School; Mr. Jake Haynes, Principal, Frenchtown High School; Ms. Shauna Anderson, District Clerk, FPS; Superintendent Tom Moore, Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS); Ms. Rachel Cutler, Curriculum Director, GFPS; Ms. Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Director of Student Achievement, GFPS; Ms. Marni Napierala, Elementary TSA; Superintendent Tom Korst, Hamilton Public Schools; Superintendent Rex Wertz, Helena Public Schools (HPS); Mr. Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent, HPS; Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, HPS; Ms. Lona Carter, Student Health, HPS; Mr. Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology, HPS; Ms. Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director, HPS; Ms. Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs, HPS; Mr. Matt Jensen, Assistant Superintendent, Kalispell Public Schools (KPS); Mr. Jeff Hornby, Elrod School Principal; Mr. Bill Sullivan, Russel School Principal; Ms. Michele Paine, Flathead High School Principal; Mr. Peter Fusaro, Assistant Superintendent, KPS; Mr. Brad Holloway, Glacier High School Principal; Mr. Alan Stanfield, Glacier High School Assistant Principal; Mr. Dallas Stuker, Kalispell Middle School Assistant Principal; Mr. Todd Hanson, Managing Partner, 4 Poles Consulting; Mr. David Hofer, Liberty School District (LSD) School Board Chair; Superintendent Dan McGee, LSD; Ms. Jenine Synness, District Business Manager and Board Clerk, LSD; Ms. Lona Running Wolf, Instructional Program Expert, LSD; Superintendent Micah Hill, Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS); Ms. Barbara Frank, Director of P-12 Academic and Community Services, MCPS; Superintendent Dan Grabowska, Park City Schools (PCS); Ms. Breann Streck, PCS School Board Trustee; Amber Tilzey, PCS School Board Trustee; Ms. Jenny Murnane Butcher, Montanans Organized for Education (MOFE).

**ADOPT AGENDA – 00:06:58**

**Board member Quinlan moved to approve the agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**❖ CHARTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE – Jane Hamman – 00:07:33**

Board member Hamman, Chair, Charter School Committee, gave opening remarks, and thanked Board members for their work reviewing the applications. Chair Tharp clarified that this meeting is informational only and that the Board will act on the applications at the January 2024 BPE meeting. Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed the order for the meeting, how interviews will be conducted, how much time each applicant will have, and how long Board members will have for questions. Board member Rasmussen began the interviews for the Board.

**8:10AM BILLINGS EARLY COLLEGE SCHOOL – 00:12:58**

**Jeril Hehn, Director of Advanced Academics; Erwin Garcia-Velasquez, Superintendent**

Ms. Hehn gave the introduction for the Billings Early College School to the Board. The Billings Early College School will expand pathways to college for students with an emphasis on students who may not have previously considered college. Mr. Zack Terakedis, Billings Public School Trustee, spoke in support of the Billings Early College School. Ms. Hehn answered Board member questions.

**8:30AM BILLINGS MULTILINGUAL ACADEMY CHARTER – 00:31:28**

**Chris Olszewski, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum K-12; Erwin Garcia-Velasquez, Superintendent**

Dr. Olszewski presented the application for the Billings Multilingual Academy Charter to the Board, explaining the need from the community for educating children whose first language is not English. Dr. Olszewski thanked the Board for their time and to the Legislature for enacting legislation to create charter schools in Montana. Dr. Olszewski and Superintendent Garcia-Velasquez answered Board member questions.

**8:50AM BILLINGS OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL – 00:57:56**

**Gordon Klasna, Executive Director of Secondary Education; Erwin Garcia-Velasquez, Superintendent**

Dr. Klasna reviewed the Billings Opportunity School for Board members and described the benefit students will receive from attending this newly proposed charter school. Dr. Klasna answered Board member questions.

**9:10AM BOULDER JEFFERSON CHARTER ACADEMY – 01:13:02**

**Erik Wilkerson, Superintendent; Mike Moodry, High School Principal**

Principal Moodry and Superintendent Wilkerson presented a short slide presentation to the Board to introduce their charter school proposal. Principal Moodry and Superintendent Wilkerson answered Board member questions.

**9:30AM BOZEMAN BRIDGER CHARTER ACADEMY – 01:30:48**

**Dan Mills, Bozeman High School Principal**

Principal Mills presented the application for the Bozeman Bridger Charter Academy to the Board, a proficiency-based model allowing students to move through the instruction at their own pace. Principal Mills and Superintendent Bertram answered Board member questions.

**9:50AM** **BOZEMAN CHARTER SCHOOL – 01:47:42**  
**Casey Bertram, Superintendent**

Superintendent Bertram presented the application for the Bozeman Charter School for the Board, noting that Bozeman Charter School originated during COVID-19 pandemic, and this allows the school an opportunity to expand the program as a competency-based, flexible program for students. Superintendent Bertram answered Board member questions.

**10:20AM** **CORVALLIS DISTANCE LEARNING CHARTER – 02:23:20**  
**Pete Joseph, Superintendent; Jolene Tollenaar, District Clerk; Jason Wirt, Career Pathways Coordinator; Josie Hudspeth, Teacher; Amy Lewis, School Board Trustee; Richie Borden, Principal; Stacy Jessop, Teacher and Counselor**

Superintendent Joseph introduced the individuals attending the interview with him and explained the intentions of the Corvallis Distance Learning Charter. The Charter will assist students who may be struggling in the traditional classroom, noting this is a new program not currently in existence. Superintendent Joseph answered Board member questions.

**10:40AM** **CORVALLIS GIFTED LEARNING CHARTER – 02:45:36**  
**Pete Joseph, Superintendent; Jolene Tollenaar, District Clerk; Jason Wirt, Career Pathways Coordinator; Darci Herbstritt, Teacher; Patti Healy, Teacher; Jenifer Powell, Science Olympiad Coordinator; Lisa Nagel, Administrator; Becky Anderson, School Board Trustee**

Superintendent Joseph described the proposed Gifted Learning Charter application, how students are identified, and how the new school will serve gifted students. Superintendent Joseph answered Board member questions.

**11:00AM** **CORVALLIS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING CHARTER – 03:03:12**  
**Pete Joseph, Superintendent; Jolene Tollenaar, District Clerk; Jason Wirt, Career Pathways Coordinator; Garrett Middleton, Teacher; Brittany Parson, Teacher; Jeff Kaiser, Teacher; Cammie Knapp, Administrator; Dan Wolsky, School Board Trustee**

Superintendent Joseph described the Transformational Learning Charter program explaining the growing need the district sees for different learning pathways for students and families. Superintendent Joseph answered Board member questions.

**11:20AM** **EAST HELENA 227 ACADEMY – 03:19:39**  
**Dan Rispens, Superintendent; Brian Kessler, East Helena High School Principal; Lynsi Morris, East Valley Middle School Principal**

Superintendent Rispens presented the proposed application for a Charter School for High School and Middle School students who are at risk of failing academically, as well as students who are gifted academically but may not be sufficiently challenged. Superintendent Rispens explained there is currently no alternative program for middle school students and this program would allow them to help at-risk students in the middle school. Superintendent Rispens answered Board member questions.

**11:40PM** **FRENCHTOWN BRONC FAST TRACK PUBLIC CHARTER – 03:40:39**  
**Les Meyer, Superintendent; Robyn Richarson, School Counselor; Beth Terzo, Assistant High School Principal; Jake Haynes, High School Principal; Shauna Anderson, District Clerk**

Superintendent Meyer presented the Frenchtown Public Charter school which is designed to decrease the amount of time students spend in college by utilizing partnerships with Missoula College and the University of Montana, as well as the Montana Digital Academy. The program would allow students to earn college credits while in high school and offer families a reduced cost for college courses while attending Frenchtown High School. Superintendent Meyer answered Board member questions.

**12:00PM**

**GREAT FALLS CORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – 04:01:38**

**Tom Moore, Superintendent; Rachel Cutler, Curriculum Director; Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Director of Student Achievement; Marni Napierala, Elementary TSA**

Ms. Mainwaring, Superintendent Moore, Ms. Cutler, and Ms. Napierala presented the application for the Great Falls CORE Elementary Charter School concept. The school will be a regular elementary school that also hosts college classes onsite. Preservice teachers will work in the school giving students more time with teachers and allowing future teachers to build skills to be a better teacher upon graduation. Ms. Mainwaring, Superintendent Moore, Ms. Cutler, and Ms. Napierala answered Board member questions. Public comment was taken from Great Falls community members and Representative Anderson in support of the proposed charter school.

**12:20PM**

**HAMILTON BITTERROOT POLYTECH – 04:24:10**

**Tom Korst, Superintendent**

Superintendent Korst presented a short slide presentation on the proposed Bitterroot Polytech Charter School. The school hopes to offer proficiency-based learning combined with a flexible schedule to offer personalized learning opportunities for students. The proposed charter school intends to help address work-based learning needs and provide skilled graduates to the community, and to provide students with college credit prior to entering college. Superintendent Korst answered Board member questions.

**1:10PM**

**HELENA MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL – 05:12:45**

**Rex Wetz, Superintendent; Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent; Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff; Lona Carter, Student Health; Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology; Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director; Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs**

Superintendent Wetz presented the Helena Montessori Charter School application noting that the current Montessori program within the district has a waiting list and that the opportunity to expand the program into a Charter school provides a new opportunity for families and students in Helena. Superintendent Wetz answered Board member questions. Public comment was given in support of the Montessori Charter School.

**1:30PM**

**HELENA MOUNT ASCENSION LEARNING – 05:31:12**

**Rex Wetz, Superintendent; Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent; Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff; Lona Carter, Student Health; Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology; Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director; Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs**

Superintendent Wetz presented the Mount Ascension Learning Academy Charter, a program that will assist students in transition in the community who don't fit into a traditional school setting. Superintendent Wetz noted that pieces of this program are currently running in both high schools, and this would allow the program to expand to meet the needs of students. Superintendent Wetz answered Board member questions.

**1:50PM**

**HELENA PROJECT FOR ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CHARTER – 05:46:50**

**Rex Wetz, Superintendent; Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent; Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff; Lona Carter, Student Health; Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology; Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director; Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs**

Superintendent Wetz reviewed the Helena Project for Alternative Learning Charter, which would expand the current Project for Alternative Learning from grades 10-12 to also include 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to provide a learning environment for students who need a "family style" learning experience. Learning is done in a block style with courses rotating every 3 weeks. Superintendent Wetz answered Board member questions.

**2:10PM**                            **KALISPELL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS K-3 CHARTER – 06:02:16**  
**Matt Jensen, Assistant Superintendent; Jeff Hornby, Elrod School Principal**  
Assistant Superintendent Jensen and Principal Hornby presented the Kalispell Community Partnerships K-3 Charter School to the Board. Mr. Jensen noted that the proposed schools intend to capture families who are not currently sending their children to public school, and these proposed charter schools would hope to capture those students within the public school system. A flexible instructional model will be used at the schools, involve families in their child’s education using Professional Learning Communities, and provide students with opportunities they may not otherwise have in a traditional setting. Assistant Superintendent Jensen and Principal Hornby answered Board member questions.

**2:30PM**                            **KALISPELL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS 3-5 CHARTER**  
**Matt Jensen, Assistant Superintendent; Bill Sullivan, Russel School Principal**  
Assistant Superintendent Jensen and Principal Sullivan presented the Kalispell Community Partnerships 3-5 Charter School to the Board. Mr. Jensen noted that the proposed schools intend to capture families who are not currently sending their children to public school, and these proposed charter schools would hope to capture those students within the public school system. A flexible instructional model will be used at the schools, involve families in their child’s education using Professional Learning Communities, and provide students with opportunities they may not otherwise have in a traditional setting. Assistant Superintendent Jensen and Principal Sullivan answered Board member questions.

**2:50PM**                            **KALISPELL FLATHEAD PACE ACADEMY CHARTER – 06:45:05**  
**Michele Paine, Flathead High School Principal; Peter Fusaro, Assistant Superintendent**  
Principal Paine presented the Kalispell Flathead PACE Academy Charter, a two-pronged system offering flexible schedules and personalized learning to explore career opportunities while completing their high school requirements. Principal Paine answered Board member questions.

**3:10PM**                            **KALISPELL RISING WOLF CHARTER – 07:10:35**  
**Brad Holloway, Glacier High School Principal; Alan Stanfield, Glacier High School Assistant Principal; Peter Fusaro, Assistant Superintendent**  
Principal Stanfield and Principal Holloway presented the Rising Wolf Charter School. The School is modeled after the UM Western block schedule with personalized learning opportunities for students. Principal Stanfield and Principal Holloway answered Board member questions.

**3:30PM**                            **KALISPELL ROCKY MOUNTAIN ACADEMY CHARTER – 07:34:43**  
**Matt Jensen, Assistant Superintendent; Dallas Stuker, Kalispell Middle School Assistant Principal**  
Assistant Superintendent Jensen reviewed the proposed Kalispell Rocky Mountain Academy Charter and presented a slide show to review school. The proposed school would provide a different setting than the traditional schools by offering flexible schedules, incorporating community-based opportunities, and learning opportunities that emphasize an outdoor experience. Remote learning and field-based learning offerings allow students flexibility for learning and increased student achievement. Assistant Superintendent Jensen answered Board member questions.

**4:00PM**                            **LIBERTY ELEMENTARY CHARTER – 08:02:55**  
**Todd Hanson, Managing Partner, 4 Poles Consulting; David Hofer, School Board Chair; Dan McGee, District Superintendent; Jenine Synness, District Business Manager and Board Clerk; Lona Running Wolf, Instructional Program Expert**

Mr. Hanson, Board Chair Hofer, and Superintendent McGee presented the application for Liberty Elementary Charter for the Board. Liberty Elementary is a one-room schoolhouse located on a Hutterite Colony, and the proposed charter school would encompass students from seven colonies for a K-8

school. Ms. Lona Running Wolf, Instructional Program Expert, also addressed the Board explaining components of the proposed Charter School. Mr. Hanson, Board Chair Hofer, Ms. Running Wolf, and Superintendent McGee answered Board member questions.

**4:20PM**                    **MISSOULA CONNECT ACADEMY CHARTER – 08:24:47**  
**Micah Hill, Superintendent; Barbara Frank, Director of P-12 Academic and Community Services**

Superintendent Hill and Director Frank presented the Missoula Connect Academy Charter School proposal to the Board. Ms. Frank discussed components of the school which will provide personal relationships, a community school model, flexible timelines, and full support services for students. The school will utilize proficiency-based learning for students to provide the flexibility students' need. Superintendent Hill and Director Frank answered Board member questions.

**4:40PM**                    **MISSOULA TEACH ACADEMY CHARTER – 08:40:20**  
**Micah Hill, Superintendent; Barbara Frank, Director of P-12 Academic and Community Services**

Superintendent Hill and Director Frank presented the Missoula TEACH Academy. This proposed charter school will serve K-5 students in Missoula County Public Schools and will weave Arts into all aspects of the curriculum to encourage creativity and critical thinking. The school also incorporates high school students enrolled in the educator pathway program for high school students. Superintendent Hill and Director Frank answered Board member questions.

**5:00PM**                    **PARK CITY MONTANA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY – 08:54:15**  
**Dan Grabowska, Superintendent; Breann Streck, School Board Trustee; Amber Tilzey, School Board Trustee**

Trustee Tilzey opened the presentation for the Park City Montana Connections Academy, an online learning opportunity partnered with Pearson's online program to create a statewide online learning academy for students. Trustee Streck spoke in support of the school and its distinct and unique features for Montana students. Superintendent Grabowska described the type of students that could benefit from the online learning opportunities which will be offered through the Montana Connections Academy. Trustee Tilzey, Trustee Streck, and Superintendent Grabowska answered Board member questions. Public comment was received from Ms. Jenny Murnane Butcher, MOFE, who spoke with concerns on school budgets regarding the Montana Connections Charter and Mr. Chris Averill who spoke in support of the Montana Connections Charter.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – 09:17:27**

No public comment was made.

Board member Hamman reminded Board members of the tally sheets for the applications to be returned to the Board by January 5, 2024. Additional input is being given by education partners who have volunteered to review the applications and give their thoughts and considerations. Board member Rasmussen thanked the Board members for their thoughtful consideration and questions asked of the applicants.

**ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned at 5:18 PM.

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*Agenda items are handled in the order listed on the approved agenda. Items may be rearranged unless listed "time certain". Public comment is welcome on all items listed as "Action" and as noted at the beginning and end of each meeting.*

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