

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5  
JUNE 19, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Roberts School District No. 5, Roberts, Montana was called to order by Chair Michelle Swansborough at 6:00 p.m. on June 19, 2024 in the library at the Roberts School.

**ATTENDANCE**

Michelle Swansborough, Chair  
Nick Dobbel, Vice Chair  
Joel Bertolino  
Michael Bissonnette (online)  
Brad Norman

Alex Ator, Superintendent  
JaLayne Obert, Business Manager/Clerk

Guests: Sanford Langager, Mariah Holdbrook, Aimee Bailey, Pete Wisniewski, Katy Rausch, Ashley Boslet, Ed Zink

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**STAFFING**

**HIRING** – Mr. Ator recommended approval of the hiring of David Jarussi at Step 0, Lane 1, for the 7-12 math position.

Motion was made by Brad Norman, seconded by Nick Dobbel and carried to approve hiring David Jarussi at Step 0, Lane 1, for the 7-12 math position. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Mr. Ator stated this will be an emergency authorization of employment.

**EXTENDED CONTRACT** – Mr. Ator recommended approving an extended contract for Darryl Grove for 2023-2024 as FFA Advisor for fifteen days in the amount of \$4,559.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve an extended contract for Darryl Grove for 2023-2024 as FFA Advisor for fifteen days in the amount of \$4,559. (YES-- Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

**SUMMER STAFFING** – Mr. Ator recommended hiring Darryl Grove at \$16 an hour for 60 hours in June and \$17 an hour in July and August for approximately 100 hours to work on the Ag shop and other maintenance facility needs.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve hiring Darryl Grove at \$16 per hour for sixty hours in June and at \$17 per hours to approximately 100 hours in July and August to work on the Ag shop and other maintenance facility needs. (YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Mr. Ator recommended hiring Kelly Songstad for summer maintenance at \$20 per hour for June and \$21 per hour for July with the understanding that working at two different positions in the year will be paid at two different rates in the future.

Motion was made by Mike Bissonnette, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to hire Kelly Songstad for summer maintenance at \$20 per hour for June and \$21 per hour for July with the understanding that working at two different positions during the year will be negotiated at two different rates in the future. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO--none).

Mr. Ator recommended hiring Tanya Wright to drive the transit van to the Boys and Girls Club twice daily at \$25 a trip through the ELO grant.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Mike Bissonnette and carried unanimously to hire Tanya Wright to drive the transit van to the Boys and Girls Club twice daily at \$25 a trip through the ELO grant. (YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

ACTIVITY AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR – Mr. Ator recommended approval of the following activity and extra-curricular positions:

Activities Director	Darryl Grove
Facilities Director	Peter Wisniewski
BPA Advisor	Brian Frank
FFA Advisor	Darryl Grove
Head Cross Country Coach	Darryl Grove
High School Head Volleyball Coach	Melissa Bertolino
Asst. High School Volleyball Coach	Theresa Kosel
Head Junior High Volleyball Coach	Jacki Jessen
Head High School Boys Basketball Coach	Alex Ator
Asst. High School Boys Basketball Coach	Rio Chadde
Head High School Track Coach	Melissa Bertolino
Asst. High School Track Coach	Theresa Kosel
Head Junior High Track Coach	Ed Zink

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve the activity and extra-curricular positions hiring as recommended by the superintendent. (YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bissonnette, Norman. NO-none. Abstained: Bertolino (conflict of interest)).

## **MINUTES**

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting May 15, reorganization meeting May 15 and special meetings May 23 and May 31, 2024. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

## **WARRANTS**

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve warrants 50314 through 50409, including voided checks 50344-50350 and 50395. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**COMMITTEE TO REVIEW DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES OF STUDENTS** – Mr. Ator stated last month we heard comments we need to beef up discipline and asked for a committee made up of board members, teachers, and himself to look at that.

Nick Dobbel and Brad Norman volunteered to sit on the committee for the board.

**NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE** – Michelle Swansborough stated the latest offer to certified staff is a one-year contract with a 3% increase on the base, a reduction in PIR days to five days, junior class advisor added to the activities matrix as two points, and an increase in stipend pay from \$200 per day to \$300.

Nick Dobbel asked if the PIR days are paid out of a grant. Mr. Ator stated they are part of teacher salary.

Mr. Ator stated the increase in stipend from \$200 to \$300 per day is only if funds are available and with prior superintendent approval. He stated the teacher may also be asked to lead professional development on the training taken at the request of the superintendent.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve the certified staff negotiations committee recommendation as presented. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none)

**CHANGE TO SCHOOL FOODS PROGRAM** – Mr. Ator stated the district has the opportunity to participate in in the Community Eligibility Provision for school lunch that would provide free breakfast and lunch for all students.

Mrs. Obert stated this would be a four-year commitment and there is the chance the program won't produce as much revenue as the old program and additional revenue may have to come from other funds, such as the Medicaid Reimbursement Fund.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve the district's participation for the Community Eligibility Provision for school Lunch. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

**CLARIFICATION/REVIEW OF MINUTES RELATED TO SUPERINTENDENT CONTRACT IN JANUARY** – Mr. Ator stated he wasn't aware a motion had been passed concerning his contract in January. He stated there were further negotiations and a different contract was later approved. He stated we need to go back and rescind the motion made in January to allow for the later version.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to rescind the following motion and second made at the January 17, 2024 meeting:

“Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve a contract with Alex Ator for Superintendent for the 2024-2025 school year with adding additional days off in lieu of a salary increase, with the ability to cash out up to five days of unused leave.”

(YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Michelle Swansborough stated she reached out to MTSBA for clarification of hours required for an exempt employee and this is the reply she received from Kris Goss:

“This is an issue that is based in both federal law and the individual employment contract, staff handbook, or job description. Exempt employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act, like a school district superintendent, are not eligible for overtime or minimum wage protections. This means the exempt employee is called upon to complete duties beyond normal working hours or without meeting the normal working hours. The employee receives the annual salary on the compensation period set by the employer.

With that understanding of the exempt employee under federal law, school districts have the authority to set the work daily work schedule and expectations through the employment contract, staff handbook, or job description. These minimum expectations can state when an employee should be at work completing assigned duties in order for a work day to be met with the understanding that other duties may emerge outside this established work day. For example, “The regular work day for the superintendent shall be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Duties may require work outside of this regular work day. If the superintendent is not able to work a minimum of 6 hours during a work day a leave day shall be taken for that day. Deviations from this leave day requirement can be arranged with the Board Chair.

This type of documentation can help establish a mutually understood framework to ensure the district operates efficiently. It can be a topic of discussion for placement in the employment contract or in a superintendent position description.”

Michelle Swansborough stated the district has authority to set expectations but didn't do so in negotiations or the contract.

**CLASS SCHEDULE** – Mr. Ator presented the class schedule for the 2024-2025 school year and stated there aren't too many changes in the schedule except that upper level science classes will have to be taken through MTDA.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

**CSCT CONTRACT RENEWAL** – Mr. Ator stated the CSCT contract was discussed extensively at the last meeting and if a board member is voting no he would like to know why.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino and seconded by Brad Norman to approve the CSCT contract with the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch for the 2024-2025 year.

Ashley Boslet stated her children are in this program and have grown with it.

Mr. Ator stated there are about 15 students who get help through this program.

Brad Norman asked how many students graduate out of the program.

Mr. Ator stated likely 60% to 70%.

Nick Dobbel stated he has heard schools pay 35% of the cost.

Mr. Ator stated we do but we get the money back through Medicaid reimbursement and part of the fees are paid out of the Tuition Fund.

Sanford Langager asked if the program requires licensed counselors.

Mr. Ator stated counselors must have a Masters degree and then have five years to pass the licensure and have to be supervised during that time.

Nick Dobbel asked how much of the problem is a discipline problem.

Michelle Swansborough stated we do have a discipline issue but Roberts isn't in a bubble and there are mental health problems here too.

Michael Bissonette asked if there is any discussion of having a full-time counselor in the school as he feels that would be a better service to the students.

Mr. Ator stated the Stronger Connections Grant funds a counselor position and Lisa Young has served in that capacity this year. He added we have the grant for another year.

The motion was voted on and failed. (YES—Swansborough, Bertolino. NO—Dobbel, Bissonette, Norman).

Michael Bissonette stated he feels there needs to be more structure in the classroom and we have to get back to accountability with students.

END OF YEAR ORDERS AND PURCHASES – Mr. Ator stated there is \$89,700 left in the General Fund and outlined the recommended use of the money, including staff year-end bonuses.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Nick Dobbel and carried unanimously to approve the use of year-end money as amended and discussed by the board. (YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonette, Norman. NO—none).

(See attachment.)

#### **POLICY REVIEW**

**POLICY 1420 -- SCHOOL BOARD MEETING PROCEDURE**—Mr. Ator stated this is a current policy but we need to review the portion regarding recording of minutes. He stated we are small enough we aren't required to record meetings but do have the technology to do so.

It was determined Policy 1420 should be kept as is.

(See attachment.)

POLICY 2165 -- EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS – Mr. Ator stated what we do for our preschool is basically the model for a new statewide law and recommended its approval on first reading.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Nick Dobbel and carried unanimously to approve Policy 2165 on first reading. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

(See attachment.)

POLICY 2336 – HEALTH ENHANCEMENT – Mr. Ator stated this policy is to align with a new state law put in place a couple years ago as we are at the deadline for adopting it.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve Policy 2336 – Health Enhancement on first reading. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

(See attachment.)

POLICY 3141 – NON-RESIDENT ENROLLMENT – Mr. Ator stated this is not a required policy but we should review it as it will become a required policy.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to approve Policy 3141 – Non-resident Enrollment on first reading. (YES —Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

(See attachment.)

POLICY 3630 – CELL PHONES – Mr. Ator stated board members have requested this policy and he would recommend Option 2.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to approve Option 2 of Policy 3630 - Cell Phones and Other Electronic Equipment on first reading. YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

(See attachment.)

Peter Wisniewski stated teachers should have feedback on this policy.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Michelle Swansborough adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

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Board Chair

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District Clerk