

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
FEBRUARY 19, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Roberts School District No. 5, Roberts, Montana was called to order by Michelle Swansborough at 6:00 p.m. on February 19, 2025 via a Zoom Meeting.

ATTENDANCE

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

Alex Ator, Superintendent
JaLayne Obert, Business Manager/Clerk

Guests: Sanford Langager, Nancy Langager, Taylor Crane, Chase MacArthur, Myrna Lastusky, Ed Zink, Katie Day, Peter Wisniewski, Angela Getchell, Steve Keebler, Patti Keebler, Jaclyn Jessen, Sarah Clark, Abigail Swansborough, Tabitha Swansborough, Zoey Croft, Jessie Croft

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2025 regular meeting and January 29, 2025 special meeting as presented. (YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

WARRANTS

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve warrants 50906 through 50956, direct deposit listing of 221, payroll listing, and non-payroll warrants. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Patti Keebler stated the Roberts Community Foundation voted to pay the school's portion of the housing contract (\$300 per month for first right of refusal).

Mr. Ator thanked the Community Foundation for their continued support of the school.

STAFFING

Mr. Ator stated he received a resignation from Jon Milligan from his science teaching position and will post the position in-house.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE – Brad Norman requested there be substitutes for the teachers serving on the Discipline Committee so meetings can be held during the day and the teachers aren't required to commit extra time.

Consensus of the board is to allow the request.

SAFETY COMMITTEE – Peter Wisniewski stated the heat in the upper gym keeps shutting itself off and has to be restarted. He added snow removal has been difficult with the amount of snow we've gotten.

Mr. Ator thanked Mr. Wisniewski for keeping the heat going.

NEW BUSINESS

STUDENT REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL ABSENCES – Taylor Crane and Chase MacArthur both stated they will be going on a mission trip with their church and asked for additional absences to do so.

Miss Crane stated she will be working with a veterinarian and Mr. MacArthur stated he will be helping with construction.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve up to five additional absence days for Taylor Crane and Chase MacArthur for a mission trip to Honduras. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.)

CONSIDERATION OF CONTRACTED SERVICES FOR TEACHER HOUSING—Mr. Ator stated the contract for affordable teacher housing with Trust Montana, Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, and Roberts School District #5 was included in the agenda packet and needs to be acted upon soon. He stated there may be times the district has to pay the monthly rental fee to keep the house open and asked if the Roberts Community Foundation would be willing to help.

Patti Keebler stated she would have to check with the group.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to approve the contract with Trust Montana and the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation for teacher housing. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.)

ELECTION CONTRACT – Mr. Ator asked for approval of the school election contract with the county elections office.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve the contract with the Carbon County Elections Office to run the trustee election on May 6, 2025. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.)

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR ELECTION – Mr. Ator stated there are two versions of the Resolution Calling for Election in the board packet, one with the polling place at the school and one with the polling place back at the Fire Hall. He added there was some feedback that the election judges preferred having the election at the Fire Hall.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve the Trustee Resolution Calling for an Election with the polling place set at the Fire Hall. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.) (See attached)

SUPERINTENDENT/PRINCIPAL HIRING NEXT STEPS – Michelle Swansborough stated she reached out to the MTSBA and Felt Martin law firm to see about getting help with an administrative search. She added Felt Martin doesn't really do searches but could assist at the cost of about \$4000 and MTSBA does this regularly and charges \$7000.

Michael Bissonnette stated if this is not something one group does and the other does regularly, it's pretty obvious who would be chosen for the job.

Brad Norman stated he doesn't even know if the board is ready for this discussion but he feels the board itself could do it.

Michelle Swansborough stated having an unbiased eye would be helpful.

Mr. Ator stated the board needs to decide what it is looking for and get it advertised.

Joel Bertolino stated we need to decide soon and personally he is in favor of hiring another superintendent.

Michelle Swansborough stated she asked the students what they want from a leader and what can be cut from the budget that would cause the least damage to the students.

What they want from a leader:

- A leader that's involved
- Initiative to get things done and self-starter
- Understanding and cares
- Someone who listens and can help with school and personal problems
- Someone who is open-minded
- Someone who builds relationships and works with us.

Least damage to students to recover budget:

- Combining elementary classes
- Cut electives, art, yearbook, etc.
- Move 6th up
- Sell band stuff
- Cut the secretary and have kids cover the office as an aide
- Cut the ag to part-time or combine in some capacity.

Brad Norman asked if we are having a meeting next week or just a committee.

Michelle Swansborough stated the community elected the five of us and we should be the committee. She stated it would be a special board meeting.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to table this item until Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in a special board meeting. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.)

CERTIFIED STAFF REQUEST TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS – MR. Ator stated as indicated by the letter in the board packet, certified staff are requesting to open negotiations with the board for the 2025-2026 school year. He stated teacher negotiators will be Ed Zink, Darryl Grove, and Misty Pitts.

After discussion by the board, motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to appoint Michelle Swansborough and Brad Norman as the board committee to negotiate with the certified staff. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.)

OLD BUSINESS

INTEGRATED STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN – Mr. Ator asked for approval of the Integrated Strategic Action Plan and Graduate Profile – Portrait of a Graduate as presented.

Motion was made by Brad Norman, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to approve the Integrated Strategic Action Plan and Graduate Profile as presented. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none.)

POLICY REVIEW – Mr. Ator requested this item be tabled.

Michelle Swansborough stated this item will be tabled until the March meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

SUPERINTENDENT SCHEDULE – Mr. Ator stated items on his schedule include Superintendent Meetings in Billings on March 5 and April 2.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Michelle Swansborough called for an executive session of at 7:10 p.m., stating the next items of business are a request from a staff member and a request from a student.

ADJOURNMENT

Michelle Swansborough returned the meeting to regular session at 7:36 and stated both items discussed in executive session were tabled until the March 2025 board meeting. She called for adjournment at 7:37 p.m.

Board Chair

District Clerk

TRUSTEE RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN ELECTION
(Regular School Election, One Voting Location)

BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees for School District No. 5, Carbon County, State of Montana, will hold the Annual Regular School Election on Tuesday, the 6th day of May, 2025, which date is not less than seventy (70) days after the passage of this resolution.

The election will be conducted by:

- Mail Ballot Poll Election (the polls will be open from 12:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.)

The purpose of the election is to elect one (1) trustee for a three-year term.

Approval of additional levies to operate and maintain the General fund for FY 26 and the Technology Fund will also be requested.

If it is later determined that any portion of the election is not required, the Board of Trustees authorizes Crystal Roascio, election administrator, to cancel that portion of the election in accordance with 13-1-304 and 20-3-313, MCA.

The following voting locations will be used for the election and the three electors of this district who are qualified to vote at such election are hereby appointed to act as judges at the election at each voting place as follows:

Voting Location and Address: Roberts Fire Hall, 3 S. 1st Street, Roberts MT 59070 (Election Day Only)

Carbon County Elections Office, 17 W 11th Street, Red Lodge MT 59068

| Election Judge | Address |
|----------------|---------|
|----------------|---------|

1. TBD
2. TBD
3. TBD

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Election Administrator is hereby directed to notify the above named election judges of their appointment and to notify the county election administrator of the date of holding said election, and request the clerk to close regular registration and to prepare and furnish election materials as required by law. If any of these judges should not be able to serve, the election administrator will choose a replacement from certified judges.

No further proceedings were conducted relating to the election.

Print Name of Board Chair

Signature of Board Chair

Print Name of Clerk

Signature of Clerk

DATED this _____ day of _____, 20__.

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
FEBRUARY 27, 2025**

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Roberts School District No. 5, Roberts, Montana was called to order by Michelle Swansborough at 10:00 a.m. on February 27, 2025 in the library of the Roberts School

ATTENDANCE

Michelle Swansborough, Chair
Nick Dobbel, Vice Chair
Joel Bertolino
Brad Norman

Absent: Michael Bissonnette

Alex Ator, Superintendent
JaLayne Obert, Business Manager/Clerk

Guests: Sanford Langager, Sarah Clark, Sarah Wallila, Peter Wisniewski, John Holdbrook, Steve Keebler, Patti Keebler, Ed Zink, Katie Kay, Rio Chadde, Skye Mitchell

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sanford Langager stated the district needs some direction of where it wants to go. He stated our students are academically behind and we need someone to lead in the right direction to address those concerns. He stated we also need someone who will welcome the community and be a leader in the school.

John Holdbrook stated the performance of our students is ranked at 214 out of 243 and we need to be able to find a way to address that issue and track our students' progress.

Katie Day urged the board to keep an open mind as there may be someone in the system interested in moving up.

Michelle Swansborough stated she gets frustrated because there is a big difference in testing results depending on the number of students in a classroom and there is no adjustment for data set size.

John Holdbrook stated other small schools are performing well.

Alex Ator stated our staff is working hard and that needs to be acknowledged.

NEW BUSINESS

DETERMINATION OF LEAD ADMINISTRATOR TITLE AND FTE – Michelle Swansborough stated when she talked with students, they were not in favor of a part-time administrator. She

stated they would like a leader who will drive them scholastically but also do so respectfully. She added she is in favor of a full-time administrator.

Alex Ator stated legally the district can get by with a principal at a pretty low FTE but you would have to look at who takes care of things like personnel and facilities.

Nick Dobbel stated he personally feels a full-time principal with a quarter time superintendent would be a good direction for the district to move toward.

Joel Bertolino stated we need a full-time leader.

Brad Norman stated we could have one person who is .75 FTE principal and .25 FTE superintendent.

Ed Zink stated he feels we need a full-time administrator.

Alex Ator asked who is going to advertise the position and what are the timelines.

Michelle Swansborough stated this would fall into Alex Ator's administrative role and if every applicant was brought forward, he could fill this role.

Alex Ator stated if we advertise for thirty days and get less than five applicants, the position would then qualify for student loan forgiveness. He added we could advertise until March 31 then decide if we want to readvertise.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to advertise for a .75 FTE Principal/.25FTE Superintendent position with a salary range of \$75000 to \$80,000 plus insurance until March 31, 2025 with the opportunity to reopen the position if needed. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Norman. NO—none).

ADJOURNMENT

Michelle Swansborough adjourned the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

Board Chair

District Clerk