

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
JANUARY 15, 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 January 15, 2025 in the library at the Roberts School.

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, Steve Keebler, Patti Keebler, Molly Mitchell, Mark Herron, Victoria Herron, Brad Caton, Angela Getchell, Myrna Lastusky, Jaclyn Jessen, Jackie Ronning, Rio Chadde, Nicole Srock, Hailey DeMarius, Debbie Hill, Rebekah Easter, Ed Zink, Skye Mitchell, Katie Day, Peter Wisniewski, Sarah Clark, Abigail Swansborough, Tabitha Swansborough

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Michelle Swansborough made the following changes to the December 18, 2024 minutes:

Page 2, Discipline Committee – Michelle Swansborough stated according to policy, board members should never sit in on a student discipline case.

Remove **policy**, insert **legal counsel**.

Page 3, Professional Development Contract – Michelle Swansborough stated we like to think every child is taught respect and how to behave but that isn't true.

Change to read "Michelle Swansborough stated this platform would allow for a standardized teaching of respect and communication skills."

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Nick Dobbel and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2024 regular meeting as amended. (YES--Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

WARRANTS

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Nick Dobbel and carried unanimously to approve warrants 50849 to 50905, direct deposit listing of 219, payroll listing, and expenditure transfers 50533 and 50534, and Student Activity checks 9241 through 9252 and the transfer list as presented. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Motion was made by Michael Bissonnette, seconded by Joel Bertolino and carried unanimously to approve checks 9217 to 9240 in the Student Activity Account as well as voided check 9208. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Patti Keebler stated the Roberts Community Foundation was created in 1997 to boost our community and school and gave board members a letter and chart of items RCF and the Roberts Activity committee would

like the board to consider and possibly put on the agenda at a later time. She added she is also giving the school a check for \$250 for the gym banner and a check for \$2000 for snacks for the classrooms and after school extra-curricular activities.

Michael Bissonnette stated he would like to see a project to have a student/parent breakfast twice a year.

Michelle Swansborough stated the end of her term is coming up in May and although she has enjoyed her time on the board the last six years, she is pursuing a doctoral degree and her daughter will be a senior next year. She stated she won't be running again and hopes whoever replaces her will care as much for the school as she does.

ACTIVITIES REPORT – Mr. Ator reported the MHSA Annual Meeting is next week in Billings and he will be attending with Darryl Grove. He stated there are some lights in the gym that need to be replaced and he would like to order some replacements.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE – Ed Zink stated the Discipline Committee has been meeting and hopes to complete their work before the next meeting.

Brad Norman stated the next meeting will be in March.

NEW BUSINESS

STUDENT REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL ABSENCES – Molly Mitchell stated she qualified for the Air Nationals in Camp Perry, Ohio and is requesting four additional days of absence to allow her to travel there, compete, and travel back.

Motion was made by Nick Dobbel, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to allow Molly Mitchell four additional days of absence over the eight allowed for students for travel to a shooting competition. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Abigail and Tabitha Swansborough addressed the board asking for two additional absences to go on a mission trip to Honduras in March.

Miss Swansborough stated the mission team will be providing medical services, construction, and vacation bible school, which she and Tabitha will be assisting with.

Mr. Ator stated he would recommend approving three additional days to cover unforeseen circumstances.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to approve up to five additional absence days for Abigail and Tabitha Swansborough for a mission trip to Honduras. (YES—Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none. Abstained: Swansborough (conflict of interest)).

CONSIDERATION OF CONTRACTED SERVICES FOR TEACHER HOUSING – Brad Caton of the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation stated that group has been working with Trust Montana to provide affordable housing in Roberts and has a house in Roberts that will be available for rent soon. He stated RLACF would like to enter into an agreement with the school district to pay \$300 per month for the first right of refusal on the rental, which would be available to school district employees for the next five years. He added the \$300 per month would be put into a development fund for the future development of affordable homes in Roberts.

Nick Dobbel asked if there are any grants that could help pay the \$300 per month.

Brad Caton stated an outside entity could help support the project.

Angela Getchell of the RLACF stated the foundation is hoping to be able to provide more units.

Mr. Ator stated the district would not be landlords in this situation, all we would do is spend \$300 per month for the first right of refusal on the house. He added we will need to make a decision on this soon.

OLD BUSINESS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRACT “SOMA SKILLS” – Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Brad Norman and carried unanimously to approve the purchase of Soma Skills, a professional development program for teachers. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

SUPERINTENDENT SCHEDULE – Mr. Ator stated he sent a copy of his schedule to the board and a special meeting has been set for January 29 at 6:30 p.m. for superintendent negotiations and renewal/non-renewal considerations. He stated he and the board will now meet in executive session for the superintendent evaluation.

Mark Herron asked if there is a format for the evaluation.

Mr. Ator stated the district uses a method that has eight different components.

Mr. Herron asked if there is anything in the evaluation about how the students are performing.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Michelle Swansborough called for an executive session of at 7:10 p.m., stating the next item of business is the superintendent evaluation and it is her determination the privacy rights of the individual supersede the merits of public disclosure.

ADJOURNMENT

Michelle Swansborough returned the meeting to regular session and called for adjournment at 8:25.

Board Chair

District Clerk

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
JANUARY 29, 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 6:30 p.m. on January 29, 2025 in the library at the Roberts School.

ATTENDANCE

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

Alex Ator, Superintendent
JaLayne Obert, Business Manager/Clerk

Guests: Katie Day, Ravipau Norman, Steve Keebler, Patti Keebler, Lynette Burgan, Skye Mitchell, Cody Mitchell, Rio Chadde, Angela Getchell, Debbie Hill, Brianna Wentworth, Sanford Langager, Peter Wisniewski, Sarah Clark, Ed Zink, Randy DeVries, Amy Bailley, Jackie Jessen, Lacy Kircher, Myrna Lastusky

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMUNICATIONS

Michelle Swansborough read a letter the board received from a student, Ada Bertolino, expressing student concerns with the community, school board, Roberts staff, and students establishing a more meaningful connection. She invited board members to come to one the school's small group sessions for introductions and communication.

Michelle Swansborough thanked Ada for her letter and stated it took a great deal of strength to write it.

STAFFING

INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF REDUCTION IN FORCE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION -- Mr. Ator stated the staffing requirements from the Office of Public Instruction for administration for a school our size is to have a quarter-time superintendent. He stated this would require the superintendent only be in the school one day per week and we really need to consider what that would look like.

Michelle Swansborough asked if any of the teachers have an opinion.

Rio Chadde asked if there would be a head teacher.

Ed Zink stated if the board is really adamant about the discipline committee, he doesn't know if having an administrator in the building one day a week is enough.

Peter Wisniewski stated consistency is the key.

Nick Dobbel stated we are just starting to look at this.

Sarah Clark stated discipline is what first popped into her head as the biggest red flag.

Katie Day stated as a paraprofessional, there needs to be someone to handle the problems.

Michelle Swansborough stated there has never not been an administrator in the building as long as she's known.

Alex Ator stated his job isn't just about student discipline but also about staff discipline. He stated someone has to be the leader and the board will need to discuss this with the staff.

Debbie Hill stated the board needs to form a committee to determine what is needed and how it will work.

Cody Mitchell asked how we get a levy passed.

Skye Mitchell asked if board members are going door to door to meet people who don't have children in school.

Michelle Swansborough stated the board members all have jobs and families and are busy going to activities to develop relationships. She stated it will take more than five people, it will take a positive community of everyone talking to their friends about needing to pass a levy.

Steve Keebler stated there are a lot of people who don't live here full-time but still get to vote.

Mr. Ator stated staff could be surveyed to see if they want to be on a committee to discuss a different kind of administration.

RESIGNATION – Michelle Swansborough asked for a motion to approve a letter of support for Alex Ator and how the district is reevaluating the administrative needs for his position.

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino and seconded by Brad Norman to accept the letter of support for Alex Ator.

Nick Dobbel stated when a letter of support was first discussed it was in a non-renewal situation and he doesn't know why it is needed if Mr. Ator is resigning.

The motion was voted on and carried unanimously. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Motion was made by Joel Bertolino, seconded by Michael Bissonnette and carried unanimously to accept the letter of resignation from Alex Ator, effective June 30, 2025. (YES—Swansborough, Dobbel, Bertolino, Bissonnette, Norman. NO—none).

Michelle Swansborough thanked Mr. Ator for his time in the district.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH CONTRACTS – Michelle Swansborough stated she wanted to see what it would cost to have a third party conduct the superintendent search. She added this is a consideration for now and we are waiting for replies from the entities we contacted.

NEW BUSINESS

1700 COMPLAINT REVIEW REGARDING STUDENT – Michelle Swansborough called for an executive session at 7:20 p.m., stating the next item of business concerns a student and it is her determination that the privacy rights of the individual supersede the merits of public disclosure.

ADJOURNMENT

Michelle Swansborough returned the meeting to regular session and called for adjournment at 8:30 p.m.

Board Chair

District Clerk