



Superintendent

Rex Wertz
324-2001

Business Director

Sam Holman
324-2040

Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting

Lincoln Center
1325 Poplar St., Helena, MT 59601
and on Teams

Friday, February 6, 2026
12:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Jenny Murnane Butcher,
Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Keith Meyer, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Vice Chair
Rex Wertz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Gary Myers, Director of Educational
Technology
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Eric Peterson, Activities Director
Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent
Sam Holman, Business Director
Shane Swandal, Hulteng CCM, Inc.
Lona Carter, Student Health Services & Special Education Director
Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist
Becca Leaphart, HEF Executive Director
Brenda Carney, HEF Deputy Director
Guests of the Public
Representatives from Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Jennifer McKee called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., and the Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

The Board of Trustees reviewed the agenda, and there were no suggested changes.

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear general public comment.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Rachael Howard gave general public comment. Ms. Howard's general public comment addressed several key topics, including but not limited to concerns regarding the potential formation of a "Club America" chapter within district high schools; information she researched about the organization and its affiliation with Turning Point USA; concerns about messaging she described as inflammatory, provocative, and divisive; and the potential impact such a club could have on school climate and student well-being. Ms. Howard expressed concern about language she believes could disparage certain groups of students and referenced information from the organization's website regarding reporting educators. She urged the Board of Trustees to review and clarify district policies governing the approval and oversight of student clubs to ensure clear guidelines are in place that promote respectful, inclusive learning environments and protect students from disparagement.

The Board of Trustees moved on to New Business.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Item For Action

1. Approve the Committee Recommendation of Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises as Kessler Elementary School GC/CM

Superintendent Rex Wertz presented the action item requesting Board approval of the committee's recommendation to award the Kessler Elementary General Contractor/Construction Manager (GC/CM) to Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises. Six firms responded to the request for qualification and request for proposals. A committee of six members reviewed the submissions on January 27, 2026, and selected the three highest scoring firms to interview. The committee conducted those interviews on February 3, 2026, and Golden Eagle/Swank emerged as the firm recommended by the committee for this project. Golden Eagle/Swank is a joint venture between two highly reputable and professional general contracting firms that have a long history of delivering quality construction projects across Montana and the larger northern Rocky Mountain region. The selection committee is confident they will serve the district well as the GC/CM of the Kessler Elementary School project. Representatives from Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises were present to answer questions from the Board.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion for the following action item: “*Approve the Committee Recommendation of Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises as Kessler Elementary School GC/CM.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the action item, *Approve the Committee Recommendation of Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises as Kessler Elementary School GC/CM.* Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously. *(Please note, Board Vice Chair Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as this action item pertains to the elementary district, and Board Vice Chair Walsh is a trustee strictly for the high school district.)*

That concluded the Item for Action, and the Board of Trustees moved on to hear final Board and Superintendent comments.

V. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

During final Board and Superintendent comments, trustees and the Superintendent expressed appreciation to the administration, project partners, and firms that submitted bids for the significant time, effort, and expertise dedicated to the district’s building projects. Trustees acknowledged the extensive bid packages and the persistence and commitment of community partners. Recognition was given to Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises and other project partners, as well as to the district’s construction owner’s representative, Shane, for his leadership, organization, and ability to keep the projects on schedule following the bond election. The Superintendent noted the rapid progression of work after the election and announced that monthly trustee work sessions will be scheduled to provide ongoing project updates and opportunities to observe progress firsthand.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 12:16 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date