

BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

December 1, 2025
Zoom

Monday, December 1, 2025
8:45 AM

CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:00

Chair Tim Tharp called the meeting to order at 8:45 AM. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance, Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call, and the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan; Dr. Hannah Nieskens; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Renee Rasmussen. Ex Officio members: Dr. Angela McLean, Office of Commissioner of Higher Education; Ms. Tyler Capece, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction, (OPI). Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Lea Ann Munkres, Program Officer; Ms. Cathy Kincheloe, Director of Planning, Community Choice Schools Commission. Guests: Craig Barringer, Deputy Superintendent, OPI; Superintendent Cory Dziowgo, Columbia Falls Public Schools (CFPS); Mr. Dustin Zuffelato, CFPS; Principal Josh Gibbs, CFPS; Assistant Principal Shaun Forrest, CFPS; Mr. Mark McCord, Curriculum Director, CFPS; Board Chair Dr. Jill Rocksund, CFPS; Vice Chair Barb Riley, CFPS; Superintendent Meghan Brown, Miles City Unified School District, (MCUSD); Ms. Lenore Bricco, MCUSD; Board Chair Andy Zook, MCUSD; Mr. Tyler Niedge, MCUSD; Superintendent Don Christman, Lockwood Public Schools (LPS); Principal Gwen Poole, LPS; Assistant Principal Cole Cavan, LPS; Superintendent Eldon Johnson, Livingston Public Schools; Dr. Anne Penn Cox, Student Services Director, Livingston Public Schools; Principal Becky Ayler, Livingston Public Schools; Mr. Todd Wester, Livingston Public Schools; Ms. Hanna Scheiderer, Livingston Public Schools; Superintendent Todd Fiske, Florence-Carlton Public Schools (FCPS); Principal Scott Marsh, FCPS; Principal Sheree Jenkins, FCPS; Superintendent Jon Konen, Stevensville Public Schools, (SPS); Ms. Ayse Haxton, SPS; Principal Zeke Kaney, SPS; Mr. Robert Ryan, SPS; Ms. Katy Cardoza, SPS; Ms. Brittany Leatham, Bitterroot Health; Ms. Jenni West, Montana Manufacturing Extension Center; President Jane Karas, Flathead Valley Community College; Mr. Sam Kuhlin, Morrison-Maerle; Ms. Carolyn Dettori; Ms. Cindy Daniels; Ms. Moffie Funk, Montanans Organized for Education; Ms. Lesa Maher, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Park County.

ADOPT AGENDA – 00:02:03

Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

❖ CHARTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger – 00:02:35

Ms. McCall Flynn outlined the interview process and noted that the livestream will be available on the Board's website upon the conclusion of the meeting.

9:00 AM

COLUMBIA FALLS TRADES ACADEMY – 00:13:45

Cory Dziowgo, Superintendent; Dustin Zuffelato, Business Manager and Clerk; Josh Gibbs, Principal; Shaun Forrest, Assistant Principal; Mark McCord, Curriculum Director; Dr. Jill Rocksund, School Board Chair; Barb Riley, School Board Vice Chair

Superintendent Dziowgo presented the proposal for the Columbia Falls Trades Academy. Principal Gibbs and Assistant Principal Forrest provided specific information on the proposed program and answered Board members' questions. Public comment was made by Ms. West, President Karas, and Mr. Kuhlin.

9:35 AM

CUSTER COUNTY C.L.A.S.S ACADEMY – 00:49:29

Meghan Brown, Superintendent; Lenore Bricco, District Clerk; Andy Zook, School Board Chair; Tyler Niedege, Charter School Committee Liaison; Charter School Committee Members and Trustees

Superintendent Brown, Board Chair Zook, and members of the Board of Trustees presented the Custer County CLASS Academy proposal for a Public Charter School and answered Board members' questions.

10:10 AM

LION'S PATH ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL – 01:24:23

Don Christman, Superintendent; Gwen Poole, High School Principal; Cole Cavan, High School Assistant Principal/Alternate Education Coordinator

Assistant Principal Cavan reviewed the application for the proposed Lion's Path Academy Charter School. Superintendent Christman, Principal Poole, and Assistant Principal Cavan answered Board members' questions.

11:00 AM

PARK PATHWAYS SCHOOLS – 02:14:03

Eldon C Johnson, Superintendent; Dr. Anne Penn Cox, Student Services Director; Becky Ayler, Middle School Principal; Todd Wester, Curriculum Director; Hanna Scheiderer, School Psychologist

Superintendent Johnson opened the interview and Dr. Penn Cox, Ms. Ayler, Mr. Wester, and Ms. Scheiderer reviewed the Park Pathways School application and answered Board members' questions. Public comment from Ms. Maher in support of the proposed school.

11:35 AM

SOAR ACADEMY – 02:49:00

Todd Fiske, Superintendent; Scott Marsh, High School Principal; Sheree Jenkins, Middle School Principal

Superintendent Fiske presented the application for the SOAR Academy and answered Board members' questions.

1:00 PM

STEVENSVILLE ALTERNATIVE STEPS CHARTER SCHOOL "STEPS" – 04:14:53

Jon Konen, Superintendent; Ayse Haxton, Teacher; Zeke Kaney, High School Principal; Robert Ryan, Counselor; Katy Cardoza, Counselor

Superintendent Konen, Ms. Haxton, Principal Kaney, Mr. Ryan, and Ms. Cardoza presented the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School proposal as a group and answered Board members' questions.

1:35 PM

STEVENSVILLE HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY – 04:46:55

Jon Konen, Superintendent; Brittany Leathan, Bitterroot Health; Zeke Kaney, High School Principal; Robert Ryan, Counselor; Katy Cardoza, Counselor

Superintendent Konen, Ms. Leathan, Principal Kaney, Mr. Ryan, and Ms. Cardoza presented the Stevensville Health Sciences Academy Charter proposal and answered Board members' questions. Public comment was made by Trustee Esch in support of the proposed charter. The group answered additional Board members' questions.

Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed next steps for the January Board meeting when the Board will act on the applications.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was made.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:14 PM.

The Montana Board of Public Education is a Professional Development Unit Provider. Attending a Board of Public Education Meeting either in person or via Zoom may qualify you to receive professional development units. Please complete the necessary information on the sign-in sheet if you are applying for professional development units.

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.

The Board of Public Education will make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities that may interfere with an individual's ability to participate in the meeting. Individuals who require such accommodations should make requests to the Board of Public Education as soon as possible prior to the meeting start date. You may write to Kris Stockton, PO Box 200601, Helena MT, 59620, email at: kmstockton@mt.gov or phone at 406-444-0302.