

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**
Helena Public Schools Administration Building
September 9, 2024

ATTENDANCE

John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge
Aric Harris, Whitefish
Kara Triplett, Lambert
Joe McElroy, Missoula
Dan Mills, Bozeman
Brian Michelotti, Helena
Kip Ryan, Helena
Scott Wilson, Helena
Amy Bartels, Helena
Greta Buehler, Helena
Jenise Cockhill, Helena
Ryan Richards, Helena

Delegations:

Brian Scott, Great Falls
Jason Purpura, Great Falls
Luke McKinley, Simms (Zoom)
Kelli Matheny, Missoula (Zoom)
Patti Danforth, Missoula (Zoom)
Jordan Overstreet, Ennis (Zoom)
Travis Reynolds, Harrison (Zoom)
Melinda Reynolds, Harrison (Zoom)
Zack Murphy, Harrison (Zoom)
Judd McBurney, Harrison (Zoom)
Jennawade McBurney, Harrison (Zoom)
Student DM, Harrison (Zoom)
Student TM, Harrison (Zoom)
Ron Osborne, Columbus
Chris Lee, Sidney (Zoom)
Russell Binek, Sidney (Zoom)
Sean McConnaha, Deer Lodge (Zoom)
Marne Bender, East Helena (Zoom)
Cale Patenaude, Missoula (Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fitzgerald at 8:32 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Michelotti gave a schedule overview and stated there will be an additional delegation at 10:00 am for the State B/C Tennis discussion.

PUBLIC INPUT STATEMENT

Mr. Fitzgerald read the rules for public comment in an open meeting. There were no public comments made.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

Mr. Harris motioned to approve the meeting minutes for June 6 and June 20, 2024. Ms. Triplett seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

CLASS B/C STATE TENNIS

Ms. Buehler introduced Mr. Scott and Mr. Purpura to the Executive Board. Mr. Scott explained that at the coaches' meeting prior to the state event for class B/C tennis not one coach was in favor of reducing the number of girls doubles teams. He further explained that facilities and time are of no concern unless there is inclement weather. Mr. Purpura stated he is confused that there was no proposal and/or discussion regarding this change. He has perceived that there is a lack of process, procedure and transparency regarding the change that was made which led to a perceived random decision for this change. Mr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Triplett reviewed how the summer caucus meetings work and how topics are brought to the class meetings. Mr. Fitzgerald suggested reverting to previous numbers for the 2024-25 school year, and that a committee be formed to get Class B/C numbers more aligned with other classes and therefore a more competitive state tournament. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve reverting back to girls' tennis numbers for the 2024-25 school year with the caveat that a committee be formed to discuss and eventually get those state participation numbers more aligned with the other classifications. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

TRANSFER RULE APPEAL—ENNIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RR

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Overstreet, Mr. Reynolds, and Mrs. Reynolds via Zoom. Mr. Fitzgerald and the Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds chose to continue with an open meeting. Mrs. Reynolds explained the events that led to their decision to transfer their children to the Ennis District. Early in June when they made the decision, there were significant staffing shortages in the Harrison district. Additionally, she explained the root of staffing shortages included housing costs, transient and young staff as well as a negative social and administrative culture. Mr. Fitzgerald reviewed the requirements to waive the transfer rule from the MHSA Handbook. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the transfer rule appeal. Mr. Harris seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

TRANSFER RULE APPEAL—ENNIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT JM

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Overstreet, and Mr. Murphy via Zoom. Mr. Fitzgerald and the Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Mr. Murphy chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Murphy explained that they chose to transfer their children to the Ennis School District to give them an environment to thrive. He further explained the decline of academic consistency in the district as well the social decline of the adults regarding the administrative issues that the Harrison District has. Mr. Fitzgerald read the requirements to waive the transfer rule from the MHSA Handbook. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the transfer rule appeal. Mr. McElroy seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

TRANSFER RULE APPEAL—ENNIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT DM & TM

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Overstreet, Mr. McBurney, and Mrs. McBurney via Zoom. Students DM and TM were present via Zoom as well. Mr. Fitzgerald and the Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting, Mr. and Mrs. McBurney chose to continue with an open meeting. Mrs. McBurney stated that she chose to enroll her children in online instruction last spring at Harrison High School due to negative social interaction from other students and adults regarding the recent incidents that took place at that school. They learned that their children did not do well online, and they chose to transfer them to Ennis School District due to these ongoing concerns specific to the children's safety and well-being. Mr. McBurney detailed some of his specific issues with the Harrison administration. Mr. Fitzgerald read the requirements to waive the transfer rule from the MHSB Handbook. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the transfer rule appeal for both students. Mr. Harris seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The Executive Board granted Mr. Michelotti authority to approve future transfer waivers from the Harrison School District, if new criteria are met.

CO-OP ENROLLMENT FOR SOFTBALL – COLUMBUS/PARK CITY/ABSORAKEE

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Osborne to the delegation. Mr. Osborne has requested that the girls' softball be allowed to remain in class B/C rather than move to class A. He has had 0 from Absarokee in 8 years, while Park City has had 4 in the last two years. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve Girls Softball to remain in Class B/C for the 2024-25 season. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

ESPORTS COMMITTEE

Ms. Buehler explained that the Esports Committee is proposing two games: Overwatch and Valorant. A video was presented to demonstrate each game. Ms. Buehler introduced Mr. Lee and Mr. Biniek via Zoom to the Board. Mr. Biniek explained how Valorant and Overwatch are played as a team as well as an individual game. He justified the first shooter aspect of the games by comparing it to Basketball plays relating to zone defense as an example. He cited other state leagues that have approved Overwatch and Valorant, although they are not sanctioned per those states NFHS Athletic Associations. Mr. Patenaude from UM Esports advocated for the first shooter games as they are watched over by these committees. He further stated If students play them on their own and are isolated, more problems could arise. Mr. McElroy motioned to not approve Valorant or Overwatch as sanctioned games in Esports for Montana schools. Mr. Mills seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

CO-OP ENROLLMENT FOR SOFTBALL – EAST HELENA/JEFFERSON

Mr. Michelotti explained that this cooperative sponsorship is currently in place with the understanding that if Jefferson High School had enough numbers of their own, then the schools would split and compete individually. Ms. Triplett made a motion to approve this cooperative sponsorship to remain at the Class A level for the 2024-25 season. Mr. McElroy seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

CO-OP ENROLLMENT FOR GIRLS' BASKETBALL – TWIN BRIDGES/SHERIDAN

Mr. Michelotti explained that this cooperative sponsorship is currently in place with the understanding that if either High School had enough numbers of their own, then the schools would split and compete individually. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve this cooperative sponsorship to remain at the Class C level for the 2024-25 season. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

REQUESTS

2024-25 Music Handbook Approval

Ms. Bartels reviewed the music committee fees for the 2024-25 year and stated that Missoula Public Schools is working on being able to host future State events. There is one state event that has been moved from Helena to Great Falls as well. Mr. Mills motioned to approve the 2024-25 MHSA Music Handbook. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

State Events/Bids

Mr. Wilson presented a bid from Billings Central to host State A Tennis in Billings as a two-day tournament. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the State A Tennis bid. Mr. Mills seconded and it passed unanimously.

2024-25 Speech and Drama Handbook Approval

Ms. Bartels reported that the changes to this Handbook have already been approved by the Executive Board and that she wanted them to see the actual Handbook.

Softball

Ms. Bartels requested approval of postseason bat testing for 2024-25 for all classes per NFHS guidance. Ms. Bartels will put together a training manual for all classes to reference. Some colleges have offered to help the smaller schools. Typically, a school administrator and MOA officials perform the testing. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve 2024-25 bat testing for postseason at all levels. Mr. Harris seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Wrestling

Mr. Wilson presented an option for three-day ticket pricing for the 2024-25 all class state wrestling tournament. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve ticket pricing for the 2024-25 all class state tournament. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Baseball

Mr. Wilson explained that we have had a Memorandum of Understanding with the Montana Alberta American Legion Baseball Program. There has been a push by some AA Legion programs to not sign the MOU this year. They are wanting the legion athletes to be able to play both Legion and High School baseball at the same time starting in April. The impact on school programs could lead to some schools not being able to field a high school team as they are worried about non-participation in high school if they are allowed to play legion as early as April. Mr. Wilson requested a rule change for the MHSA Handbook to state that high school teams will not be allowed to play a Legion team during the high school season. This is primarily due to the pitching rule differences between American Legion Baseball and NFHS Baseball. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve addition of the rule to the MHSA Handbook to disallow high school teams to play American Legion teams during the 2024-25 season. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Southern C Divisional Basketball Tournament

Mr. Michelotti explained that the Southern C division has requested to move their basketball tournament to March 5-8, 2025. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve this change. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

FINANCES

Mr. Michelotti discussed the bills paid April 1 – August 31, 2024. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the bills paid. Mr. Mills seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti discussed the financial statement from July 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024. Ms. Triplett made a motion to approve the financial statement and Mr. Harris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL OFFICE REPORT

Mr. Michelotti discussed the General Office Report.

Insurance Overview

There have been no significant changes in the last three years, except for Directors and Officers Premium and staff Health Insurance Premium which have increased minimally.

Building Update

Mr. Michelotti discussed the potential for moving to a building downtown in Helena. This building would allow the MHSAs offices to be ADA compliant, improve our technology infrastructure as well as having a large enough space for future Executive Board meetings and for MHSAs schools to have centralized meetings. Mr. Harris motioned to continue the planning process for an updated building, Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion carried.

MOA Mileage

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the previous change to MOA payment regarding pool city and mileage. Currently, MOA officials are being paid mileage from their home to their pool city for events. There is concern that schools will not hire officials from cities outside of pools when they must pay them mileage.

Technology

Mr. Michelotti reviewed a recent meeting with Arbiter and continuing work with Final Forms. He discussed we are looking for a website that can handle all third-party integration. This is also the last year of the contract with Dragonfly.

Transgender

Mr. Michelotti explained there was a biologically born boy (transgender) that had tried out and made a freshman girls volleyball team. In addition, there was a female athlete who wanted to run cross-country with the boys and was denied citing the Ridgway Settlement. The MHSAs will propose a rule for these situations at the next Annual Meeting.

Other Information

Mr. Michelotti stated the external audit by Wipfli will begin at the end of September. Mr. Ryan reviewed the Academic Excellence winners for the 2023-24 year. Mr. Michelotti reviewed that the Road to 182 will be completed by January and a plan is in place for the staff to get to the remaining schools.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

Mr. Richards gave an update with new Corporate Sponsors and renewals. He discussed the revenue share with Northwest Designs Ink and the state event merchandise.

OFFICE ACTION

Mr. Michelotti gave a report on 34 hardship waivers and that 21 have been approved and 13 denied. There have not been any 19-year-old appeals nor 15-year-old appeals.

Mr. Michelotti stated there have been no penalties imposed thus far. There were fees issued for expedited appeals and all were returned as the Executive Board overturned the original hardship decisions.

LEGAL

Mr. Michelotti reported on current legal issues and brought attention to some possible upcoming litigation instances. He reports business as usual regarding legal costs. Mr. Michelotti also gave an update that the OCR has received all the information they have requested and there is no additional news at this point.

OFFICE REPORTS

State Baseball

Mr. Harris and Mr. Wilson attended the State Baseball tournament in Missoula and reported on that event. The facilities were outstanding, and attendance was high. The Saturday morning play-in games were held at Playfair Park and the fields were mediocre.

State Tennis

Ms. Buehler reported on the state AA tennis tournament. Weather was an issue and therefore went until 4am one day. Mr. Harris reported on the state A tournament in Kalispell and that it went well. Mr. McElroy attended the state B-C tournament and reported it went well.

State Golf

Mr. Fitzgerald attended the Class B tournament in Shelby. The only issue was the wireless internet, however the facilities and course were great. Mr. McElroy attended the Class C tournament in Hamilton and said the event went well. Mr. Michelotti agreed with the comments on both events.

State Softball

Ms. Bartels reported on the weather issues that were present. The AA tournament was moved to Helena and the crowd was very large. She reiterated the importance of having administrators on site for last-minute decisions as that was an issue in Helena. Mr. Michelotti reported on A and B-C in Billings and that those tournaments went well weather aside.

State Track

Ms. Triplett attended the AA-C meet in Great Falls. She reported the weather, fans and facilities were all great. She suggested Opening Ceremonies like state wrestling for track. Mr. Ryan commented that Great Falls did not have the technology to put up immediate results and there were scheduling adjustments due to an eight-lane track. Mr. Fitzgerald attended state A-B track in Laurel and reported there was a lot of work to get the facilities ready due to the amount of rain.

School Division Placements Removed from MHSAs Handbook

Mr. Michelotti explained the document on the MHSAs website that contains the divisions and classifications for schools in each activity and sport.

National Federation Summer Meeting

Mr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Triplett along with MHSAs staff reported on the meeting held in Boston, Massachusetts this past June. The breakout sessions specific to Board Members were very helpful to our board members that participated.

MCA Clinic, Spirit and MHSAs Committees

Mr. Michelotti stated the MCA meetings went well.

Section 7/8 Meeting in Whitefish

Mr. Michelotti reported that the staff has coordinated an itinerary, speakers, events and gifts for the event. The agenda is set, and we have approximately 140 attendees including our Executive Board and MHS staff. Mr. Ryan reviewed the agenda and staff and board assignments during the event.

Ejections

Mr. Michelotti stated zero ejections have been reported to date.

Online Clinic Reports

Mr. Michelotti reported on online clinics attended.

MOA Update

Ms. Bartels reported on MOA numbers up to this point. She stated that there is an increase in younger officials.

Emerging Sport - Flag Football

Mr. Michelotti reported Flag Football is going well. Officials are an issue as there have been reports of calls not being made. There are 17 teams participating and there will be a state tournament in Bozeman on 9/26-27/2024 at Montana State University.

NFHS Network Profit Reimbursement

Mr. Wilson explained that in addition to NFHS profit sharing, GoFan provides a profit as well. Mr. Wilson requested guidance on how to give the profit back to the schools fairly based on postseason representation. The Board has agreed to follow the postseason model for reimbursement of postseason profit. Regular season profits will be dispersed using a factor based upon the how GoFan split the postseason and regular season profits.

2024-25 Aim Higher

Mr. Wilson reported on the AIM Higher presentation dates for the 2024-25 school year.

Co-operative Sponsorship Update

Ms. Buehler summarized the paperwork changes made to reflect the rules change for unlimited terms of cooperative sponsorships. She also reported that there is a state law that requires board approval for multi-district financial agreements to be reviewed every 3 years. It would be up to each school to make sure that these requirements are met. It will be addressed on the MHS Cooperative Sponsorship paperwork in the future.

GENERAL

Mr. Ryan previewed the new committee appointments. Ms. Triplett made a motion to approve the assignments thus far. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Ryan has asked for suggestions to fill some of the vacancies, and these will be brought to the Board in November.

Mr. Michelotti highlighted issues to be discussed at the November Board meeting, including the realignment and reclassification rubric for football, athletic committee recommendations and annual meeting proposals. The annual meeting proposals include Name, Image and Likeness (NIL), charter school revision, home school and residency issues, and adding a 5th formal MHS Executive Board meeting in June. Mr. Michelotti has also sent out requests for nominations for American Indian representation on the MHS Executive Board.

ASSIGNMENT TO FALL ACTIVITIES

Mr. Fitzgerald assigned the Executive Board and MHS Staff representation for fall championship events.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Michelotti reviewed upcoming dates for MHSA Executive Board meetings. He also suggested an Executive Board retreat on November 24 prior to the regular meeting.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Harris made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mills seconded and the motion passed. Mr. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.