

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**

1325 Poplar St, Helena, MT

April 28 – 29, 2025

ATTENDANCE

John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge
Kara Triplett, Lambert
Aric Harris, Whitefish
Jimmy Patelis, Billings
Joseph McElroy, Missoula
Krystal Zentner, Bridger
Dan Mills, Bozeman
Dee Pretty On Top, Lodge Grass
Brian Michelotti, Helena
Kip Ryan, Helena
Scott Wilson, Helena
Greta Buehler, Helena
Amy Bartels, Helena
Jenise Cockhill, Helena
Ryan Richards, Helena

Delegations:

Jeff Ford, Bozeman
Heather Ford, Bozeman
Mark Ator, Bozeman (Zoom)
Joe King, Bozeman
Bridgett King, Bozeman
Joel Fuhrmann, Charlo (Zoom)
Colby Minert, Opheim (Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Mr. Fitzgerald. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Fitzgerald recited the open meeting law and MHSA policy. There were no items for public comment presented.

REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Michelotti gave a schedule overview and revisions to the agenda. Nothing new was added that was not already printed and/or sent out electronically to the Executive Board and MHSA Staff.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the January 18 & 20 regular meeting minutes and the January 20 annual meeting minutes. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DELEGATIONS/APPEALS

ACADEMIC RULE APPEAL— GALLATIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT MK

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. and Mrs. Ford to the board, and Mr. Ator via Zoom. The Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Mr. Ford chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Ford explained the reasons they have transferred the student from Petra Academy to Gallatin High School and the participation of this student in basketball at Petra Academy. Once the student transferred to Gallatin, the family chose to reclassify him as a sophomore even though academically he would be a junior. Mr. Fitzgerald read the requirements to waive the semester rule from the MHSB Handbook. Mr. McElroy motioned to uphold the MHSB semester rule; Mr. Patelis seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

SEMESTER RULE APPEAL – GALLATIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WF

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. and Mrs. King to the board and Mr. Ator via zoom. The Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Mr. King chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. King presented the history of their move from Las Vegas to Bozeman and the reasons for the move. The family fell on hard times and had some housing instabilities, which led to some emotional, social and mental difficulties for the student. The family has made efforts with counseling and school administration to help the student in these areas and her grades and attendance have improved because of this. Mr. Fitzgerald read the requirements to waive the transfer rule from the MHSB Handbook. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the appeal of the academic rule; Mr. Mills seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MONTANA OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION – JOEL FUHRMANN – REGION 2

Ms. Bartels introduced Mr. Fuhrmann to the board. Mr. Fuhrmann reviewed three issues that the MOA is seeing. 1) The MOA has encountered scheduling problems in covering all the events. The MOA is requesting that the association put together a statement to encourage member schools to consider scheduling events on Wednesdays to alleviate issues with coverage; 2) Requesting guidance on how to ensure there is an active administrator on site at all levels of contests to meet with the officials prior to the contest. The MOA is requesting local training on this issue; 3) Requesting help from member schools regarding recruitment and retention of officials. No action was taken.

REQUESTS

CLASS B BASKETBALL

Ms. Buehler explained that because of the state wrestling tournament date, districts 1B, 2B, 3B and 4B would like to move the date of their district tournament. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the proposal, and Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2025 – 26 SITE SELECTION

Mr. Wilson gave an overview of the remaining sites still open for the 2025-26 academic year. The bid sub-committee proposed awarding State B-C Speech and Drama to Broadwater High School; All Class State Baseball to Butte High School, held at 3 Legends Stadium; State B-C Tennis to Broadwater High School, held at Fort Missoula and Playfair Park in Missoula; State A-C Track & Field to Laurel High School. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the remaining site selections, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2026-27 SITE SELECTION BIDS

Mr. Wilson presented the recommendations from the Bid Subcommittee for 2026-27 State events. All events were considered, and sites were recommended for all except Class C Golf, All Class Baseball, Class A Tennis, Class B-C Tennis, Western State Solo & Ensemble and Class A Speech & Drama. Mr. Fitzgerald read the list of recommended sites and those remaining open. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the Bid Subcommittee's recommendations for 2026-27 state events. Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

ANNUAL MEETING PLACEMENT

Mr. Wilson reviewed the previous sites of the annual meeting for the association dating back to 1980. He also reviewed the bids for the Annual Meeting for 2027. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the Missoula Holiday Inn Downtown as the site for the 2027 MHSAA Annual Meeting. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

WRESTLING COMMITTEE

Mr. Wilson explained there are 4 recommended changes made by the Wrestling Committee. 1) Weight Management – to change the 2-pound growth allowance to January 1st and no allowance for February. Mr. Wilson also recommended to add language stating a weigh in cannot exceed +4 pounds; 2) to eliminate the 50-match limit rule and increase contested events language from 18 to 20; 3) to change language from 6 placers at the state tournament to 8 for the girls tournament; 4) to change to all classifications give max points when 2 wrestlers from the same school wrestle in the postseason. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve items 1, 3 and 4 and table item 2 until after the June caucus meetings, and Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wilson explained that in class AA there is a dual for the boys and not the girls and there has been complaints about this. The AA Athletic Directors will be putting together a proposal to allow for a AA Girls Dual Tournament to help provide for a more equitable schedule with the boys.

DIGITAL TICKETING

Mr. Michelotti discussed the possibility of extending our GoFan contract through fiscal year 2029 with an automatic renewal. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve extending the GoFan contract, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MHSAA AND MOA LOGO

Mr. Michelotti presented two different bids and proposals for rebranding and copyright. Mr. McElroy motioned to accept the proposal from 5518 Designs, and Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NFHS FUNDAMENTALS OF COACHING

Mr. Michelotti explained that the Fundamentals of Coaching series is lengthy and some of our tenured coaches have had to watch it multiple times. Mr. Michelotti proposed we have a one-time requirement of this series and add some additional educational pieces annually instead. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve removal of the 5-year requirement of fundamentals of coaching with the caveat that the MHSAA will mandate further educational training, and Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B/C TENNIS

Ms. Buehler explained that the Executive Board, based on a proposal from the Class B caucus, had approved a change to 24 doubles girls' teams that would qualify for the state tournament last June. The Board heard feedback that the coaches felt they were uninformed of this discussion, so for the 2025 postseason, the qualifying number reverted to 32 for girls' doubles teams. After analyzing state qualifying numbers across all classifications, the B/C Tennis Committee voted to recommend qualifiers for the State B-C Tennis tournament as follows: girls' singles – 32, girls' doubles – 24, boys' singles – 16 and boys' doubles – 12. This is more aligned with all classifications. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the recent Tennis Committee recommendations, and Ms. Triplett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Buehler also explained that there is a proposal to use a 10-point tiebreaker in lieu of a full third set for all postseason B/C tennis matches in the 2025 season. At the current time, most regular season matches follow this format. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve the 10-point tiebreaker for postseason B/C tennis, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

SCOBEEY – OPHEIM ENROLLMENT

Mr. Michelotti gave an overview of Scobey and Opheim enrollment numbers. Mr. Minert reviewed his enrollment numbers at Opheim and requested that the association waive the enrollment rule for this co-op as it would only push Scobey above the enrollment limit of 100 for two years. Opheim does not have a viable option for a co-op if it is not with Scobey. No action was taken.

SPEECH COMMITTEE

Ms. Bartels explained that the Speech Committee proposed that the Online NSDA Springboard Scrimmage events taking place during the regular season are exempt from the interstate meet restrictions and will not count towards a student's interschool meet maximum. Any cost incurred due to participation in these events will be the responsibility of the individual competitor. Ms. Bartels also reviewed the proposed 2025-26 MFEA Handbook changes. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the online scrimmage proposal and the recommended changes to the MFEA Handbook as presented. Mr. Patelis seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

NFHS NETWORK STREAMING

Mr. Wilson proposed the sports of soccer, softball and baseball be allowed to stream their events during the regular season with a platform other than the NFHS Network due to location restraints. The language would be added to restrict who can stream the event to staff only. The school would have to put in a request to stream on an alternative platform and they would be given the rules at that time. Mr. Mills motioned to approve the proposed language, and Mr. McElroy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

QUICKBOOKS ACCOUNTING CHANGE

Mr. Michelotti explained that the audit team has recommended that the association move from a modified cash basis to an accrual basis for accounting. The accrual basis accounting will allow for a more accurate view of the financial performance each fiscal year. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the

change to accrual basis accounting, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

STATE BASEBALL

Mr. Wilson presented a proposed language change to address if the first seed coming out of their division is the host school, that the game time be changed to the prime-time slot on the bracket. All other matchups will remain the same. This allows for better gate receipts for this growing sport. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the All-State Baseball Tournament bracket procedure proposal, and Mr. McElroy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

STATE A SOFTBALL

Ms. Bartels proposed an updated bracket and a 4-year rotation for State A Softball. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the proposal, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCES

Mr. Michelotti highlighted the bills paid. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the bills paid from January 1-March 31, 2025, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti presented the financial statement. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the financial statement as of March 31, 2025, and Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL OFFICE REPORT

Mr. Michelotti handed out the general office report and commented on the following topics:

Insurance

There are no changes currently. We are still waiting for quotes for renewals on Auto, workers Compensation, Directors and Officers and Liability coverages. Concussion and Catastrophic Liability coverage premiums will not increase for the 2025-26 year.

Recent and Upcoming Events

Mr. Michelotti reported on the Arbiter Huddle Meeting in Salt Lake City this past February. He also attended the NFHS Legal Meeting with Bea Kaleva recently in Indianapolis. Summer classification meetings are coming up in June as well as the NFHS Summer meeting in Chicago in late June into early July. The NFHS Section 7/8 Meeting will be held in Las Vegas this coming September.

Policy Manual Changes

Mr. Michelotti proposed adding language to allow a comp day for staff after attending specific state events including volleyball, wrestling, basketball and the Annual Meeting. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the proposed Employee Policy Manual language for comp time, Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Building Update

Mr. Michelotti reported that we are progressing with the renovation of the new building. Permits are being held up as the city wants more windows on the front of the building. Current plans were shown and discussed. Mr. Michelotti requested approval from the Executive Board to move general reserve monies to the Operating Account to continue to pay bills as they come in related to the building. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve a move of reserves to pay for construction costs. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Technology

Mr. Michelotti reported we are continuing to work with ArbiterSports on several items including training the schools with registration, co-ops, registration of officials and record of transfer. Mr. Michelotti also explained we are working closely with Mr. Richards on the website that will integrate with Arbiter.

Sportsmanship

Mr. Michelotti reviewed a positive remark received about the divisional wrestling tournament at Browning. There was also negative fan interaction with Custer-Hysham, and both administrators handled it very well. Mr. Wilson reported a negative incident at the Class C basketball tournament. Both schools involved handled the situation very well together.

Other Issues

Mr. Michelotti shared the testimony that was given for both SB 350 and HB 869 at the respective legislative sessions. Mr. Michelotti also shared the views of the NFHS Network for winter events. A different program called Producer will be utilized by NFHS for state events moving forward, which will hopefully alleviate some of the transmission problems with streaming. Also, a backup service will be researched for future state events.

WINTER TOURNAMENT FINANCES

The Board reviewed the following state tournament financial reports and summaries: basketball financial summary, wrestling financial summary and swimming financial report. Mr. Ryan reviewed the 2025 annual meeting financial summary, and Mr. Wilson reviewed the NFHS Network financial summary.

OFFICE ACTION

Mr. Michelotti stated 84 hardship waivers have been submitted this year. Of those, 59 have been approved and 25 have been denied. Mr. Michelotti reported there have been no age rule waivers. Mr. Michelotti stated there have been 11 penalties imposed thus far, all of them but two being self-reported. There were 14 fines and fees so far this year, including postseason ballot non-compliance and late registration for state cross-country.

LEGAL

Mr. Michelotti reported on legal costs this fiscal year to March 31, 2024. He also brought attention to the ongoing costs of a particular appeal that went to court and this case will be going to the supreme court.

REPORTS/MISCELLANEOUS

State Speech and Drama Meet

Mr. McElroy explained it all went very well at the Class AA event. He reported that he was very impressed with the students and that he was assigned a student delegate for Q&A, and he learned a lot. Ms. Zentner stated that the Class A event went very well also. Mr. Patelis reported that the B/C meet went well also.

State All Class Wrestling Tournament

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the tournament went well. He thought the extra personnel on the floor was less of an issue this year compared to past years. It was an improvement to have coaches chairs in the middle aisle of the mats as well as the utilization of the bike racks to keep athletes and coaches behind these.

State Swim Meet

Mr. Ryan stated the tournament ran very well. Great Falls High did a great job with the tournament.

State Basketball Tournaments

Mr. Mills reported on the AA tournament in Bozeman and that it was ran very efficiently. Mr. Harris and Mr. Ryan reported on the Class A tournament in Billings and that it went well, with no big issues to report other than a couple small fan issues. Mr. McElroy reported on the Class B tournament in Missoula and felt the tournament went very well. Mr. Fitzgerald reported that they changed the entry and exit for teams at the UM Adams Center, and it went much smoother. Ms. Triplett and Ms. Zentner reported on Class C in Butte and that it went well from a fan perspective. There were administrative issues with the programs and merchandise as well as the NFHS Network that need to be addressed.

Ms. Buehler reported that she did not have any reported issues with the lack of 'suggested seating' or clear bag policies.

Ejections

Ms. Bartels explained we have had 48 ejections thus far this year.

Spring Sports Rules Clinics

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the number of views by sport of the MHSA rules clinic attendees. The views were up significantly from last year.

AIM Higher

Mr. Wilson presented the dates for the upcoming year's AIM Higher events that will be held in Kalispell, Missoula, Butte, Great Falls and Billings. The Billings AIM Higher date will be moved to December rather than the last part of January. Sidney will be on the list every other year.

Audit Report

Mr. Michelotti said there were no major concerns. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the audit report. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

NFHS National Student Advisory Committee

Ms. Bartels reported that a student from Sidney has been chosen to be on the National Student Advisory Council and her term will be two years.

All Class Volleyball

Mr. Ryan presented the information he received from the MetraPark in Billings about hosting the All-Class State Volleyball tournament rather than MSU in Bozeman. The bottom line is that the MetraPark has stated they cannot host the tournament due to court size and other facility issues that would be too extensive for them to accommodate.

Corporate Sponsorships

Mr. Richards reported on Corporate Sponsorships for this 2024-25 year. He went over merchandise sales per state event as well as in-kind trade.

Out of Season Coaching Rule

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the current out-of-season coaching rule. Discussion was had and no action was taken. This topic will be brought to the summer caucuses.

Competitive Equity Committee

Mr. Wilson explained that there was discussion in the caucuses at the Annual Meeting in creating a competitive equity committee. Mr. Fitzgerald recommended tabling this idea since there was not much interest. No action taken.

Emerging Sports

Mr. Michelotti reported that they are anticipating having 28 flag football teams next year. He stated that this will probably be proposed at the Annual Meeting to sanction this sport.

Ms. Buehler reported that since the first-person shooter games are not allowed, the Esports Committee has decided that they would like to be a club sport rather than the MHSA as a potential sanctioned sport. The committee would like to invite the Executive Board to come watch these games in action at their events to see the teamwork in action.

RECESS

The meeting was recessed at 3:06 pm and will reconvene the morning of Tuesday, April 29th, 2025.

MEETING RECONVENES

At 8:05 am on April 29th, the meeting was reconvened.

MHSA STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ryan stated there are no committee changes at this time.

RECLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the timeline of reclassification of our member schools. This year there are none to reclassify. The changes made in the April Executive Board meeting in 2023-24 will be implemented for the 2025-26 academic year.

PERSONNEL AND NEGOTIATIONS

The meeting was closed at 8:37 am. When the meeting reopened at 9:27 am, Mr. Harris made a motion to approve a 3-year contract for Mr. Michelotti for fiscal years 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 with salary and terms to be determined. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Michelotti presented options for the upcoming health insurance renewal. Due to a significant increase in premium costs, he recommended adopting the highest deductible plan. To offset the impact on employees, he proposed an additional \$1,000 per employee, to be used at their discretion toward an HSA, 403(b), or HRA contribution. He also recommended a 4% salary increase for all employees, effective July 1, 2025. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the insurance renewal and salary adjustment as proposed. Mr. Harris seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

BOARD REORGANIZATION

Ms. Triplett nominated Mr. Fitzgerald as the new MHSA Board President for one year, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Triplett nominated Mr. Harris as the new MHSA Board Vice President for one year. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Fitzgerald formally welcomed Mr. Pretty On Top to the Executive Board as the inaugural American Indian Representative.

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS TO SPRING ACTIVITIES

Board members were assigned to upcoming spring events.

NATIONAL FEDERATION MEETINGS

The NFHS Summer Meeting will be held in Chicago from June 28th-July 1st.
The Section 7/8 Meeting will be held in Las Vegas September 14-16, 2025.

2025-26 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING DATES

The Board agreed to the following dates for 2025-26 Board Meetings: September 8, November 24-25, January 17 & 19 (Annual Meeting), and April 20-21. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the proposed meeting dates. Mr. Pretty On Top seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

NEXT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

The next scheduled Executive Board meeting will be a zoom Meeting, June 25, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. McElroy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed. Mr. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 10:38 am.