

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

Tamarack Room, Best Western Plus GranTree Inn, Bozeman, MT

JANUARY 13 & 15, 2024

**ATTENDANCE**

Steve Thennis, Helena  
Aric Harris, Whitefish  
John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge  
Kara Triplett, Lambert  
Jimmy Patelis, Billings  
Joseph McElroy, Missoula  
Krystal Zentner, Bridger  
Brian Michelotti, Helena  
Kip Ryan, Helena  
Scott Wilson, Helena  
Greta Buehler, Helena  
Amy Bartels, Helena  
Jenise Cockhill, Helena

*Delegations:*

*Dean Phillips, Drummond*  
*Stacy Harris, Ronan*  
*Student M.H., Ronan*  
*Lisa Campbell, Dodson (Via Zoom)*  
*Gemma Doore, Hays*  
*Student, K.B., Hays (Via Zoom)*  
*Jennifer Strzelczyk, Harlem (Via Zoom)*  
*Dee Pretty On Top, Lodge Grass*  
*Jim Baldwin, Gardiner*

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 a.m. by Mr. Thennis. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Mr. Michelotti gave a schedule overview and revisions to the agenda. He reminded everyone that the action items have been moved to the front of the agenda and will be in this format going forward. Mr. Michelotti also informed the Board that Mr. Thennis will be retiring this year, and his last board meeting will be in April. Nothing new was added that was not already printed and/or sent out electronically to the Executive Board and MHS Staff.

**PUBLIC INPUT STATEMENT**

Mr. Thennis read the public input statement to the delegation.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no items for public comment presented.

### **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES**

Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the November 20, 2023, meeting minutes, and Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **DELEGATIONS/APPEALS**

#### **DRUMMOND OPPOSITION TO 8-PLAYER FOOTBALL REALIGNMENT**

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Phillips to the board. Mr. Phillips explained that there will be significantly more travel associated with this change, which will lead to increased loss of school hours for students, increased expenses, and limited bus drivers. Mr. Phillips proposed that Drummond/Granite football be moved to the West Division from the South. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to maintain the district placements for the 2024-25 school year. Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed with a dissenting vote from Mr. McElroy.

#### **TRANSFER RULE APPEAL— HAYS/LOGEPOLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT KB**

Mr. Wilson introduced Ms. Doore to the board. Mr. Wilson also introduced Ms. Strzelcyck, Ms. Campbell, and student KB to the board via Zoom. Mr. Thennis gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Ms. Campbell chose to continue with an open meeting. Ms. Doore explained that there have been social issues for the student at Dodson High School. The hardship was originally denied by the MHSAs as Dodson High School denied it on the initial hardship paperwork. Mr. Thennis read the requirements to waive the transfer rule from the MHSAs Handbook. Mr. McElroy motioned to waive the transfer rule, Ms. Zentner seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

#### **TRANSFER RULE APPEAL – CHARLO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT MH**

Mr. Wilson introduced Ms. Harris and student MH to the board. The MHSAs Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Thennis gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Ms. Harris chose to continue with a closed meeting. Mr. Thennis read the requirements to waive the transfer rule from the MHSAs Handbook. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to waive the transfer rule; Ms. Zentner seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

#### **FORFEITURE APPEAL—LOGE GRASS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SFD**

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Pretty On Top to the board. The MHSAs Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Pretty On Top explained the events that led to the student transferring to Lodge Grass and becoming an ineligible player. He is appealing the fine and forfeiture of 7 games that the MHSAs assessed to Lodge Grass High School, as well as the suspension of 7 games for the player once she becomes eligible. Mr. McElroy made a motion to uphold the 7-game forfeiture of games played and the \$100.00 fine to Lodge Grass High School, also reducing the student game suspension to 5. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **COLUMBIA FALLS/FLATHEAD HOME SCHOOL STUDENT--IA**

Mr. Michelotti explained that home school student IA has been playing soccer ineligibly for Flathead High School as a home school student while residing in the Columbia Falls district. The student took an AP class at Columbia Falls and thereby the family and school administrators realized that she is in fact living in Columbia Falls district. Mr. Michelotti reported to the board that this was a mistake made by the family and Flathead administration. The student will be penalized the maximum amount by rule and will compete sub-varsity for the spring semester and will be allowed to compete at Columbia Falls next fall.

## **REQUESTS**

### **METRAPARK ONLINE TICKET FEE MODIFICATION**

Mr. Wilson reported that the MetraPark in Billings has had increased online ticket fees from their online ticket company. They also have an increase of fees for credit card payment. The MetraPark would like to pass these fees on to the individuals using online ticket purchases. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the online ticket fee increase. Mr. McElroy seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **RULES REVIEW COMMITTEE TRACK & FIELD**

Mr. Ryan explained that the committee would like to see the implements impounded at postseason meets. The concern is with host facility management and personnel to do so effectively. They would also like to schedule warm up times for postseason meets. It was decided that discussion on this will be moved to the summer meeting. The process for failing of FAT times during district or divisional meet was also discussed. Effective for the 2023-24: Convert the stopwatch time for the heat in which the timing failed by adding 1 to any tenths (10ths) if there were any hundredths (100ths) on the recorded time, and next add an additional .24 for the total corrected time. You only need to convert the time for the first-place runner because the difference between the first runner and the other runners may be obtained from the timing system and then add this additional time to the first-place time.

### **RULES REVIEW COMMITTEE TENNIS**

Ms. Buehler explained that changes are updating our rule verbiage to match that of the USTA. Jewelry is allowed per USTA rules, except for smartwatches or other devices that can be used to communicate with others. MHSA Tennis uniform language will be changed to ensure that participants are properly dressed for their sport. Proposed language will be added to better explain the rule that coaching will not be allowed once players have taken the court for warmups. A motion was made by Mr. McElroy to approve the changes to the rule language for the 3 tennis items and the FAT process for track and field. This was seconded by Mr. Patelis, and the motion passed.

### **BASEBALL DIVISIONS**

Mr. Wilson explained the process of deciding baseball divisions. Mr. Wilson has since proposed some changes to the conference alignment due to travel for some teams. As teams add this sport, changes may need to be made. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve the conference changes for the 2023-24 school year. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wilson explained the proposal for a play-in game for postseason baseball for the 2023-24 school year. The board has decided to table this discussion and vote until after the breakout meeting for baseball. This will be visited again on Monday, January 15<sup>th</sup>. Upon return from meeting recess, it was proposed that all division champions qualify for the state tournament. The play-in games will be played on Saturday, unless weather is an issue, then the games will be moved to Monday at the home site of the #2 teams. A motion was made to approve the play in schedule by Mr. Harris and Ms. Triplett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **FINANCES**

Mr. Michelotti highlighted the bills paid. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the bills paid from November 1-December 31, 2023, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti discussed the financial statement. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the financial statement as of December 31, 2023, and Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti gave a general office and financial overview of the Association to the Board. He also reported on recent and upcoming events for the Association. Various staff members provided reports as well.

The Board reviewed the following financial reports and summaries: football financial summary, volleyball financial summary, state volleyball financial report, and soccer financial summary. The summaries for volleyball and football were incomplete, as not all reports had been turned in by host schools. Likewise, not all profit checks were received at the time of discussion. Mr. Michelotti explained this is a struggle for the MHSA office every season and we will work on a proposal that may include hard deadlines and a fine for tardiness.

## **OFFICE ACTION**

Mr. Michelotti stated 59 hardship waivers have been submitted this year. Of those, 37 have been approved and 22 have been denied. Mr. Michelotti reported there have been no age rule waivers. There have been 6 penalties imposed thus far, all of them being self-reported.

## **LEGAL**

Mr. Michelotti reported on legal costs this fiscal year to December 31, 2023. He also brought attention to an upcoming hearing on the Semester Rule.

## **REPORTS/MISCELLANEOUS**

Mr. Michelotti gave a report on the winter rules clinics.

Mr. Michelotti reported that there have been 60 ejections thus far.

Mr. Michelotti reported on the National Federation Winter Meeting in San Francisco.

Mr. Ryan discussed the processes used in the Montana High School Association Hall of Fame selections. He stated we should look at the language and processes to change and streamline for future inductees.

Ms. Bartels reported on the MOA meeting from December 3-4, 2023. The MOA Regional Directors Board approved the following items to go before the MHSA Executive Board: 1) Adding a line judge fee of \$25.00 per contest if schools opt to use an MOA official for a regular season contest. Additional line fee changes were approved as follows for the postseason: Districts - \$25.00 per match, Divisional - \$30.00 per match and State - \$175.00 for the tournament. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. 2) A fee adjustment for soccer officials when

there is only the availability of 2 officials. The total fee paid for the contest for the 2 officials will be the same as if 3 officials were used and this is only approved for sub-varsity competition. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve, Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. 3) Adjusted the postseason per diem to \$10.00 per game or \$.12 per mile (whichever is greater) regardless of if the official is in or out of town. Ms. Triplett made a motion to approve, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. 4) Approved a 5 - person official crew to be used for postseason competition in 6-player football when available for the first round and will be required for each subsequent round. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve, Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti reported on the MHSА Leadership Committee and that the continued conversation is about fees and mileage reimbursement and that we as a state are in line with surrounding states in our region.

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

Mr. Ryan highlighted the activity schedule and discussed the Board schedule and assignments for the Annual Meeting. Mr. Ryan presented a summary of each classification's caucus items and Mr. Michelotti reviewed the proposals and proposed budget. Various MHSА staff reviewed the caucus items. Mr. Ryan went over the Annual Meeting agenda.

### **TWO-WEEK NOTICE ITEMS**

#### **REALIGNMENT**

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Michelotti discussed 8-Player realignment for football for the 2024-25 school year. The St. Regis High School/Mullan, ID cooperative sponsorship will be placed in the Western Division. Twin Bridges was approved by the Board to participate in 8-Player football and will be placed in the South Division. Drummond/Granite will remain in the South division. 8-Player football will realign in general to go from 5 divisions to 4.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Michelotti discussed Class C realignment for basketball, track & field, and volleyball for the 13C and 14C districts. They will consolidate to become the 13C for the 2024-25 school year and will be represented by the following schools: Alberton High School, Charlo High School, Drummond High School, Granite High School, Hot Springs High School, Lincoln High School, Noxon High School, St. Regis High School, Seeley-Swan High School, Two Eagle River High School, Valley Christian High School, and Victor High School.

#### **OTHER TWO-WEEK NOTICE ITEMS**

The Executive approved the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) template submitted by the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. Schools must have an EAP for each venue where they practice and/or compete and the EAP completion form must be submitted to the MHSА by July 15<sup>th</sup> for verification of this requirement.

The Board also approved a change to qualifying procedures for the class C Southern Divisional Track Meet. Last year in the 4C, 5C and 6C district meets, the top two places qualified for divisionals and then

the next four best overall times/distances/heights also qualified. Beginning this year, the same procedures will be in place, but participants will also qualify for divisionals through divisional qualifying marks.

Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve all two-week notice action items, Mr. McElroy seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **BOARD ASSIGNMENTS TO SPRING ACTIVITIES**

Board members were assigned to upcoming spring events.

#### **RECESS**

The meeting was recessed at 2:45 pm and will reconvene after conclusion of Annual Meeting business on Monday.

#### **MEETING RECONVENES**

At 1:29 pm on January 15<sup>th</sup>, the meeting reconvened.

#### **FORFEITURE RULE/VARSITY REQUESTS**

Ms. Bartels introduced Mr. Baldwin of Gardner High School. He joined the meeting to request to play varsity football in 2024-25. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the request, and Mr. Patelis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **NEXT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

The next scheduled Executive Board meeting will be a Regular Meeting, April 22-23, 2024, at the Helena Public Schools Administration Building

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Thennis adjourned the meeting at 1:38 pm.