

**MINUTES OF THE 103rd ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
JANUARY 15, 2024**

The 103rd Annual Meeting of the Montana High School Association was held Monday, January 15, 2024, at the Best Western Plus GranTree Inn in Bozeman, Montana. President Steve Thennis welcomed the attendees and called the first general session to order at 8:30 am. The national anthem was performed by Gallatin Choir Director, Ms. Michelle Mauer.

FIRST GENERAL SESSION

INTRODUCTIONS

President Thennis introduced the head table which included MHSA Executive Board members and MHSA staff. He also introduced the Resolutions Committee (Shawn Holmes, Jim Browning, Les Meyer and Michelle Paine) and the Parliamentarian, Dennis Murphy. The public input statement was then given.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda for the 2024 MHSA Annual Meeting as presented was made by Jake Bosley of Arlee High School and seconded by Brian Rayburn of Lima High School. The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF 2023 MINUTES

A motion to approve the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes was made by Jeremy Kuchel of Florence-Carlton High School and seconded by Gemma Doore of Hays-Lodgepole High School. The motion passed.

ELECTION OF CLASS C BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

A motion to nominate Kara Triplett of Lambert Public Schools as the Class C representative to the MHSA Executive Board was made by Mike Richards of Broadus High School and seconded by Aaron Webster of Medicine Lake High School. The motion passed.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS OF MONTANA (SOMT) PRESENTATION

Executive Director Brian Michelotti welcomed those in attendance and introduced Terri Norman and Maddie Marcellino of Special Olympics Montana. Ms. Norman and Ms. Marcellino discussed Unified Champion Schools, specifically Unified Track & Field.

GOFAN PRESENTATION

Executive Director Brian Michelotti introduced Kamille Cheatham, Customer Success Manager with GoFan and the NFHS Network. Ms. Cheatham discussed an upcoming brand-new platform/interface of GoFan with NFHS Network streaming. This will also include an app for fans as well to view tickets, rosters and streaming in one place. This is set to launch this spring.

MHSA OFFICE REPORT

Executive Director Brian Michelotti spoke to the membership, presenting his MHSA Office Report. He discussed the direction and promised commitments of the Association to the Membership. He also announced the retirement of Mr. Thennis at the end of this 2023-24 school year.

LEGAL COUNSEL REPORT

Executive Director Brian Michelotti introduced MHSA Legal Counsel, Elizabeth (Bea) Kaleva. Ms. Kaleva spoke to the membership on the importance of updated District Activities Handbooks as well as understanding the MHSA Handbook Rules and Regulations. The Ridgway Settlement was also

discussed, highlighting the required equitable number of sports per gender as well as proportionality standards. She advised the membership to conduct interest surveys when potentially adding a sport. She also advised how to prepare for a Title IX audit and how to document it. She discussed 504/IEP individual contracts and requirements for each district to make available activities for students with disabilities. Open enrollment, prime time/marquee equal opportunity for boys and girls play and practice times and fundraising and in kind donations for new sports were all briefly discussed.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Thennis presented his report to the membership.

CAUCUS BREAK

The membership broke for the classifications' caucus meetings at 9:40 am.

SECOND GENERAL SESSION

The meeting reconvened at 12:11 pm.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

President Thennis reported there were a total of 218 registered delegates present with 150 schools represented by voting delegates and 68 non-voting delegates.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mike Perry of Arlee Public Schools presented the Sports Advisory Rules Review Committee's report.

AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

Classification Activities Director of the year were awarded to the following:

2023 Montana Overall Athletic Director of the Year - Kara Triplett of Richey/Lambert, 2023 Montana Class AA Athletic Director of the Year - Chuck Merrifield of Butte High School, 2023 Montana Class A Athletic Director of the Year - Mike Ryan of Billings Central High School, 2023 Montana Class B Athletic Director of the Year - Brendan Miller of Lincoln County High School, 2023 Montana Class C Athletic Director of the Year - Greg Sager of Shields Valley High School.

The NIAAA State Award of Merit was presented to Mark Beckman.

The AIM Higher Awards went to Columbia Falls High School and Jefferson High School.

The NFHS Outstanding Music Educator Award went to Andrew Alley of Plentywood High School.

Karen Hale of Winnett High School was presented with the Heart of the Arts Award.

Jesse Rumsey of Flathead High School was presented with the Spirit of Sport Award.

Marlene Krum and Julie Caster both of Huntley Project High School, and Sandie Hodgkiss of Choteau High School were presented with Mildred Adams Awards.

Chris Hayden of Montana State University and Kathy and Hank Eekhoff of Manhattan Christian High School were all presented with MHSA Service Citation Awards.

Mark Ator of Bozeman Public Schools, Merle Gunderson of Great Falls and the MHSA Swimming Rules Interpreter, and Dennis Murphy of Havre and current MHSA Parliamentarian were all presented the James C. Haugen Meritorious Service Award.

ACTION ON PROPOSALS

President Thennis read the Open Meeting Law to the membership.

1. Proposal to Amend Membership and Association contest By-Law – Non-accredited school

The following amendments are proposed to By-Law, Article I, Section 1.3 on page 7 and subsequently to Article II, Section 1.5 Association Contest on page 10 of the current MHSA Handbook:

Section (1) MEMBERSHIP

(Article I, Section 1.3) If a member school wishes to invite a non-accredited school or accept an invitation from the school to participate in a two-school contest **or in an individual sport, provided all attending member schools consent**, this would not be a violation of this section.

Article II

Section (1) ASSOCIATION CONTEST

(Article II, Section 1.5) If a member school wishes to invite a non-accredited school or accept an invitation from the school to participate in a two-school contest **or in an individual sport, provided all attending member schools consent**, this would not be a violation in this section.

Rationale

This amendment would allow more opportunity for students in member schools as well as non-member schools to compete for their own teams. Non-member schools have the opportunity for their students to compete in individual sport contests, there would be less need to provide roster spots on public school teams for non-public and homeschool athletes taking advantage of Senate bill 157. In the scenario where a member versus non-member dual is set up and additional member schools wanted to enter, this amendment would allow them to do so without any violation. The ability of member schools to accept an invitation from non-member schools would provide more opportunities for meets. This amendment would allow students more opportunity to participate in events within and nearer to their own communities while maintaining the prerogative of member schools to choose whom they compete with. Finally, it would also allow the MHSA and its member schools to advance the fulfillment of its purpose and objectives as stated in its Articles of Incorporation, in "cooperate(ing) with other organizations or individuals interested in or organized for similar or compatible purposes."

Fiscal Note: (if any)

There would be fewer non-public and homeschool participants to fund on public school teams. Additional revenue from entry fees, for a relatively small number of additional participants in a meet.

A motion was made by Tom Dusold of Colstrip High School, and seconded by Celia Hawver of Valley Christian High School, to approve the proposal. The motion failed.

2. Proposal to Amend Eligibility By-Law for Homeschool / Non-Public School Transfers in District

This proposal would impact By Laws Eligibility Section 2.1 4) exception found on page 11. Proposal to modify the MHSA Home and Private School student By Laws to allow homeschool and nonpublic school students to transfer in the same school district from one MHSA member school to another MHSA member school.

Section (2) ELIGIBILITY

2.1.4) The student may only participate in the school in the student's attendance area and cannot transfer - Exception – Home school or nonpublic school students who resides in a school district with more than one high school can participate in extracurricular activities at any high school in their district if approved by the school district. Districts that enforce attendance area restrictions may enforce those restrictions with home and nonpublic school students. Once a student participates in any extracurricular activity in a particular school

and the homeschool or nonpublic student changes to another school in the district, the MHSAs Transfer Rule applies.

Dropping the following language in this exception "that is the only school that student may participate at during the student's high school activities career. There is no transfer in district after the initial approval."

Rationale

Currently we allow public school student to transfer from one MHSAs member school to another in the same district under a formal process that evaluates the transferring student for eligibility in future activities at their new school.

I believe we should extend that same opportunity for transfer, using the same transfer and eligibility guidelines to all participants. By allowing for all transfers to be evaluated the same way regardless of enrollment status in public, private or home school, MHSAs and member schools will be insuring we are treating all equally.

Fiscal Note: None I am aware of with the exception of possible ANB dollars for activities student that would follow the student.

A motion was made by Tim McMahon of Helena Public Schools, and seconded by Steph Thennis of Sentinel High School, to approve the proposal. The motion passed.

3. Proposal to Amend Eligibility By-Law – Exception to the Bricks and Mortar Rule

Billings West High School proposes a revision to the Eligibility section (pg. 10, Section 2.1, first exception) to include a school district approved personalized learning program as an exception to the required twenty hours per week and in regular attendance in ten hours per week at the school where the student participates. This exception requires that the student enrolled and completing the personalized learning program must participate for the district in which they are enrolled.

Section (2) ELIGIBILITY

By-Law

2.1 A student must be enrolled in twenty hours per week and in regular attendance in ten hours per week at the school where the student participates. Regular attendance is defined as actual physical presence in the building (bricks and mortar).

~~Exception: students who are enrolled and participating in a transformational learning program in their school that meets a district's proficiency-based learning requirements pursuant to the adopted policies of the local school board is exempt from the ten hours per week bricks and mortar requirement.~~

Exception: Students are exempt from the ten hours per week bricks and mortar requirement of Section 2.1 if enrolled and completing personalized learning accordance with provisions and intent of Section 20-7-1601, MCA, and consistent with policy adopted by the school district board of trustees. Students enrolled and completing personalized learning must participate for the district for which they are enrolled. All other eligibility requirements in this handbook apply.

Exception: Non-public or home school students who meet the requirements of 20-5-109 can participate in MHSAs member school extracurricular activities with the following stipulations: 1) The same standards for participation must be met as those required of full-time students enrolled in the school (besides enrollment)

New Exception to 2.1 section 5 The student may only participate in the school in the student's attendance areas and cannot transfer – then this Exception would be added: **Students enrolled and completing personalized learning in accordance with the provisions and intent of Section 20-7-1601, MCA in districts with more than one high school can participate in extracurricular activities at any high school in their district as established by school board policy. Districts that enforce attendance area restrictions may enforce those restrictions with personalized learning students.**

Rationale:

1. Section 20-7-1601, MCA, includes the necessary references to remote instruction, work-based learning, and proficiency learning. It also includes a legislative finding and constitutional cross reference. So, if the exception relies on that statute, it can cover all of the potential exceptions to the requirements related to aggregate number of hours and seat time. This would allow for the removal of current exception 1 and confine the entire topic to one exception citing one statute.
2. We have students participating in activities / athletics that never step foot into our schools via the homeschool exception as listed above.
3. At this time a virtual learning student would be eligible to participate provided they drop out of school and go homeschool however school districts lose out on full ANB
4. Inequity of treatment in the existing bylaw. A virtual learning student in the school district vs. homeschool student.
5. Virtual learning program in Billings is relatively small compared to student enrollment so we do not anticipate students exiting out of schools to go virtual. Billings went from 2500 students in virtual learning (2020-21) to 79 students in grades K-12 this year.

Fiscal Note: (if any)

N/A - There could be ANB provided if a bill similar to Senate Bill 8 is passed and signed into law during a future legislative session.

A motion was made by Jeremy Carlson of Billings West High School, and seconded by Jay Wahl of Billings Skyview High School, to adopt the proposal.

A motion was made by Shelli Strouf of Billings Senior High School, and seconded by Jay Wahl of Billings High School, to make the following amendment to the proposal:

New Exception to 2.1 section 5 The student may only participate in the school in the student's attendance areas and cannot transfer – then this Exception would be added: ***Students enrolled and completing personalized learning in accordance with the provisions and intent of Section 20-7-1601, MCA in districts with more than one high school can participate in extracurricular activities at any high school in their district as established by school board policy. Districts that enforce attendance area restrictions may enforce those restriction with personalized learning students. Once a student participates in any extracurricular activity in a particular school, that is the only school that student may participate at during the student's high school activities career. There is no transfer in district after the initial approval.***

The amendment passed.

4. Proposal for an addition to By-Law Article VIII, Section (2) General Penalties

The MHSA Executive Board proposes an addition to by-law Article VIII, Section (2) General Penalties, p. 18 of the current MHSA Handbook:

Article VIII

Section (2)

NEW 2.3 The MHSA and the NFHS Network are owners of the rights and the copyright holder of all audiovisual recording, filming, videotaping, telecasting, webcasting, and photography of MHSA postseason events involving MHSA member schools. Use other than the live webcast of events including, but not limited to, reproduction and/or sale is prohibited without express written consent of the MHSA and the NFHS Network. Member schools that stream postseason events on any platform other than the NFHS Network, will be subject to a fine, imposed by the MHSA Executive Board, in the amount not exceeding \$500.00 per event..

Renumber remaining sections.

Rationale

The MHSA and the NFHS Network are owners of the rights to and copyright holders of all audiovisual recording, filming, videotaping, telecasting, webcasting, and photography of all MHSA postseason events involving MHSA member schools. Use other than the live webcast of the events listed above including, but not limited to, reproduction and/or sale is prohibited without express written consent of the MHSA and the NFHS Network.

A motion was made by John Fitzgerald of Red Lodge High School, and seconded by Jimmy Patelis of Billings, to approve the proposal. The motion passed.

5. Proposal to Add a New MHSA Executive Board Member

The MHSA Executive Board proposes the following amendment to By-Laws, Article 1, Section (4) Administration on page 8 and 9 of the current MHSA Handbook:

This following language will replace 4.1 and 4.2 in the current MHSA Handbook. The MHSA cleaned up editorial changes throughout the section, with the only change being adding a board member which is noted in ***Bold and Italics***

4.1 The regulation and administration of the affairs of this Association shall be vested in a body of **eight (8)** persons known as the Executive Board.

Each member of the Executive Board shall be elected at each annual meeting of the Association for four (4) years, except as is hereinafter provided. The elected members of the Executive Board shall be superintendents, high school principals, or activities directors from the following:

- One (1) of which shall be elected from a school playing Class AA basketball;
- One (1) of which must be elected from a school playing Class A basketball;
- One (1) of which must be elected from a school playing Class B basketball,
- One (1) of which must be elected from a school playing Class C basketball.
- ***One (1) of which must be elected as an American Indian superintendent, high school principal or high school activities director from an American Indian member school. American Indian school shall be defined as any MHSA member school with an American Indian student population of at least 50% in grades 9-12 as reported to the Office of Public Instruction.***

In addition to the elected members of the Executive Board, the following appointees will serve on the Executive Board:

- The Governor of the State of Montana shall appoint one person.
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Montana shall appoint one person.
- The Montana School Board Association shall appoint one person.

The terms of the appointed members of the Executive Board, except as provided for above, shall be four (4) years. No member of the Executive Board shall be elected to successive terms, except an appointed school board member who is a Montana School Boards Association Director may be selected by the Montana School Boards Association at its annual meeting for an unexpired or a subsequent four (4) year term(s). The Montana High School Association permits those persons who are appointed to fill the unexpired term of a board member who dies or resigns to be eligible to succeed themselves at the next Annual Meeting of the Association, provided that the appointee is not filling more than half of the unexpired term of the board member who dies or resigns.

4.2 All classifications of school hereinabove set forth shall be determined by the Executive Board and outlined in the rules and regulations of this Association.

A majority vote of the members present and voting at the annual meeting shall select a superintendent, high school principal, or activities director. Suppose no majority is on the first ballot. In that case, a second ballot shall be spread on the two candidates receiving the most votes, plus any other candidate receiving twenty percent (20%) of the votes on the first ballot (if any). The third ballot will be spread between the two top candidates if necessary.

Any Board member's term shall expire with the reorganization of the Board no later than the last day of the next regularly scheduled meeting following the annual meeting.

4.3 Any elected Board member's term shall expire upon the failure to receive a two-thirds majority vote of confidence from his or her classification at any annual meeting where twenty-five (25) percent or more members of that classification request such a vote of the Executive Director no less than ten (10) days before the annual meeting. An election will be held before adjournment of the annual meeting to fill any unexpired term(s) so created.

4.4 One of the intentions of the Association is to establish and maintain, either by election or by appointment, equal and constant representation on the Executive Board by athletic classification (C, B, A and AA as stipulated in 4.2). Therefore, the term of any elected member of the Executive Board shall automatically expire when (1) as a result of a change of position from one district to another, the member in question is no longer employed in a required position by an Association member school in the same classification from which he/she was elected; or (2) when the school district from which a member was elected changes athletic classification in basketball. In the event such a vacancy occurs, the Executive Board shall have appointment power as stipulated in 4.6, said appointment to remain in effect until the next Annual Meeting. At that meeting, an election shall be held to fill the vacancy, selecting a qualified member from the athletic classification which was originally deprived of elected membership.

4.5 Should a member of the Executive Board cease to hold such a position required for qualification as member of the Executive Board, the term of office for that member shall thereby automatically expire and the office will be considered vacant.

4.6 Vacancies on the Executive Board may occur in two categories: elected positions or appointed positions. Procedures for filling each category of vacancy shall be as follows:

Vacancies in elected positions: Utilizing the qualification criteria of 4.2, the Executive Board shall appoint a member who is employed by a member school in the same athletic classification in which the vacancy occurred. That appointment shall be made not later than the first regular Board meeting following the occurrence of the vacancy and shall be in effect until the next Annual Meeting of the Association.

Vacancies in appointed positions: In the event a vacancy occurs in either of the positions filled by appointment by the Governor or the State Superintendent, the Governor or the State Superintendent, whoever is applicable, will fill by appointment such vacancy at which time the member appointed shall complete the unexpired term. In the event the appointee is not filling more than half of the unexpired term of an appointed board member who dies or resigns, the appointed board member may be appointed for an additional new four year term.

The Executive Committee of the Montana School Boards Association shall have the power to fill a school board member vacancy which may occur in the Executive Board by appointment of a school board member to serve until the next annual meeting of the Montana School Boards Association, at which time a member shall be elected to complete the unexpired term.

4.7 (Editorial changes) The officers of the Executive Board shall be the President, the Vice President. ~~the Executive Director and the Assistant Executive Director. The President and Vice President shall be elected by the members of the Executive Board from among their own members.~~ **Annually, the members of the Executive Board shall elect the President and Vice President from among their members. The President shall serve only one term but may be re-elected.**

~~This election adds to those two members of the Board the added responsibilities described in Section 6, Items 6.1 and 6.2. However, this election does not preclude these members from participation as Board members. They can still vote, discuss and make motions at the meeting, thus participating on an equal basis with all other voting members of the Board.~~

The Executive Director shall be appointed by the Executive Board for a term of office of one to three years, but shall not be a voting member of the said Executive Board, and shall be eligible for reappointment at the will of the Executive Board.

4.8 The officers of the Executive Board shall serve in similar capacity respectively as officers of the Association.

Rationale:

The MHSAs have discussed adding representation for the American Indian on the MHSAs Executive Board for many years. This proposal will add an 8th Board member increase representation in our membership for American Indians. The MHSAs schools that qualify as American Indian Schools at 50% would be 21 member schools. 18 public schools and 3 private schools

Fiscal Note:

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

A motion was made by Krystal Zentner of Bridger, and seconded by Joe McElroy of Missoula, to approve the proposal as amended. The motion passed.

6. Proposal to Amend MHSAs Eligibility Requirements for Approved Charter Schools

The MHSAs Executive Board proposes the following amendment to By-Laws, Article II, Section (2) Eligibility on page 11 of the current MHSAs Handbook: Charter School Language – New 2.10

A student attending a state approved Charter school approved by the Montana Board of Public Education is considered eligible for competition if the student a) is academically eligible from the previous semester, b) is enrolled and in regular attendance for twenty hours per week of approved high school classes, c) is eligible to receive a diploma from the high school for which he/she is competing, and d) the principal of the high school verifies that the student meets all other eligibility requirements such as age, semesters etc. and is in good standing. The Charter School student must participate for the district in which student's family resides.

If charter school students reside in a school district with more than one high school, they can participate in extracurricular activities at any high school in their district if approved by the school district. Districts that enforce attendance area restrictions may enforce those restrictions with charter students. Once a student participates in any extracurricular activity in a particular school, that is the only school that student may participate at during the student's high school activities career. There is no transfer in district after the initial approval.

Rationale

This new language provides eligibility requirements for students attending state approved Charter schools approved by the Montana Board of Public Education.

Fiscal Note:

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

A motion was made by Aric Harris of Whitefish High School, and seconded by Kara Triplett of Lambert High School, to adopt the proposal.

A motion was made by Joe McElroy of Missoula, and seconded by John Fitzgerald of Red Lodge High School, to make the following amendment to the proposal:

Once a student participates in any extracurricular activity in a particular school, that is the only school that student may participate at during the student's high school activities career. There is no transfer in district after the initial approval.

The amendment passed.

7. Proposal to Amend Rule on Adding Sports or Activities in the MHS

The MHS Executive Board proposes a change to the rule regarding the process for adding a new sport or activity in the General Rules and Regulations on page 25 of the current MHS Handbook:

~~Section (24) — POLICY ON INTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES~~

~~When any group which sponsors a high school activity requests consideration by the MHS which may lead to direct supervision and control of this activity, or when the MHS feels any activity is presenting a problem serious enough to merit study, then the MHS, at its annual meeting, should authorize the Executive Board to appoint a special committee to thoroughly study each activity and to present its recommendations concerning this activity at the next annual meeting of the Association for consideration and approval or adoption by the Association.~~

Section (24) - Process for adding a new sport or activity.

The purpose of this rule is to grow meaningful interscholastic participation opportunities for students in athletics and activities for interested students that have the potential to meet the required number of schools participating to be considered for official sanctioning by the MHS.

Listed below are the steps required to request designation as an Emerging Sport/Activity and the timeline involved. Any sport/activity that meets these requirements must successfully complete a two-year provisional period before consideration for adoption as an officially sanctioned sport/activity.

- a) ***Have at least 10 member schools or 25% of the schools in a Classification participating in the sport/activity and/or written indication from schools willing to offer the sport/activity on a provisional basis.***
- b) ***Submit a request to the MHS Executive Board for approval.***
- c) ***Contest limitations, individual player limitations and the applicable season of participation will be determined and specified in the approval by the MHS Executive Board.***
- d) ***If approved, the sport/activity will be listed as an emerging sport/activity in the MHS Handbook and registration in the sport/activity will be offered.***
- e) ***If approved, a committee shall also be formed to help determine specific rules and any other necessary information for the sport/activity.***
- f) ***Emerging sports/activities approved on a provisional basis will be limited in the services they receive until they become officially sanctioned by the MHS. The following MHS administrative services will not be offered to emerging sports/activities:***
 1. ***Assigned rules interpreters, but the MHS will assign a sports / activity liaison to assist with questions and implementation.***
 2. ***Sport/Activity section on the MHS website***
 3. ***State Championships administered by MHS – although the MHS will work with the committee to investigate and implement a state championship.***
 4. ***MHS Membership Dues will be charged as student athletes are covered under the MHS catastrophic and concussion insurance.***
- g) ***Emerging sports/activities approved on a provisional basis, along with member school student and coach participants, must abide by all MHS Regulations.***

At the end of the two-year provisional period, the sport/activity committee shall report back to the Membership at the next MHSA Annual Meeting to summarize the progress that has been achieved.

The Membership will vote to officially sanction the sport/activity, keep the sport/activity in provisional status, or remove it from the list of emerging sports/activities.

Rationale:

The process for adding a new sport or activity in the MHSA has been questioned. This new process allows schools to have more flexibility to add or change activities in their school without the full sanctioning of the entire membership.

Fiscal Note:

The cost of adding a sport to an individual school but overall there is no additional cost if a schools opts to not add a sport or activity.

A motion was made by Jimmy Patelis of Billings, and seconded by John Fitzgerald of Red Lodge High School, to approve the proposal. The motion passed.

8. Proposal to Amend By-Law for Proposals to MHSA Executive Board for Rules and Regulations

The MHSA Executive Board proposes the following amendment to By-Laws, Article I, Section (5) Executive Board on page 9 of the current MHSA Handbook: Amend 5.4.

5.4 There shall be four (4) regular meetings yearly of the Executive Board. One of these meetings shall be held at the time and place of the annual meeting of the Association; other meetings of the Executive Board shall be called and held at such time and place as designated by the President of the Association. Special meetings of the Executive Board may be called by the President or by a vote of the majority of the members of the Executive Board. Four (4) members of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum at any meeting. All Montana High School Association Executive Board meetings shall be open to the public. They will be closed only when allowable by Montana open Meeting Laws. ***Rules and regulation changes, appeals or any other requests for action at a board meeting must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director seven (7) days prior to the meeting.***

A written notice shall be given to all members of the Executive Board at least five (5) days before the date of the meeting.

Rationale:

The MHSA Executive Board is working to improve the process for communicating and distributing information for MHSA Executive Board meetings. This is a step to allow better planning for all stakeholders.

Fiscal Note:

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

A motion was made by Joe McElroy of Missoula, and seconded by Krystal Zentner of Bridger, to approve the proposal. The motion passed.

9. Proposal to Amend By-Law for Expedited Hearings to the MHSA Executive Board

The MHSA Executive Board proposes the following amendment to By-Laws, Article I, Section (5) Executive Board on page 9 of the current MHSA Handbook: Amend 5.5.

5.5 ~~Video conference s calls~~ necessary for the operation of the Montana High School Association shall be conducted in the same manner and with the same restrictions as regular or special meetings. ~~Conference calls will be charged to a specific school or to an appropriate individual who requested the conference telephone call.~~ **Video conference s calls** will be held only when necessary for immediate action for an interpretation of a rule, for a violation or protest which needs immediate action, or for an

appeal on student eligibility when it is necessary. **When an expedited hearing is requested, the Executive Board will assess the appellant a \$250 fee to cover expenses. If the decision is overturned by the Executive Board, the fee will be reimbursed.** The Board may hold video conferences for any of the above items as well as litigation, legislative, and other emergency matters which could affect the operation of the Association.

The MHSAA Board can propose or amend MHSAA Rules and Regulations during a video conference to conduct Association business. The Executive Board may not vote to adopt any proposed change(s) in the rules and regulations until all member schools have received at least a two week notice of the proposed change(s).

Executive Board members must be given 48-hour advance written notice of the call.

Note – Other by-laws and rules and regulations in the handbook would reflect this change in policy including:

- By-Laws – Article VII Protests and Appeals; Subsection B: Individuals' Rules Interpretation and Procedure; Section (1) INDIVIDUAL DUE PROCESS - Page 17 of the current MHSAA Handbook
- Rules and Regulations - Section (30)- CONFERENCE CALLS – Page 26 of the current MHSAA Handbook

Rationale:

The MHSAA Executive Board has four scheduled Board meetings every year, which are posted throughout the year. If a school, parent or other individual wants to have an expedited hearing for an appeal, this allows them an opportunity. They can also wait for the next scheduled meeting of the MHSAA Executive Board at no additional cost.

Fiscal Note:

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

A motion was made by Kara Triplett of Lambert High School, and seconded by Aric Harris of Whitefish High School, to approve the proposal. The motion passed.

10. Proposal to form committee to study esports

Sidney High School proposes the following in accordance with the Rules and Regulations, Section (24) Policy, page 24 of the current MHSAA Handbook:

Section (24) POLICY ON INTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

When any group which sponsors a high school activity requests consideration by the MHSAA which may lead to direct supervision and control of this activity, or when the MHSAA feels any activity is presenting a problem serious enough to merit study, then the MHSAA, at its annual meeting, should authorize the Executive Board to appoint a special committee to thoroughly study each activity and to present its recommendations concerning this activity at the next annual meeting of the Association for consideration and approval or adoption by the Association.

That the MHSAA authorize the Executive Board to appoint a special committee to study eSports as a MHSAA sanctioned sport. Recommendations will be presented at the 2024 MHSAA Annual Meeting.

Rationale:

Esports is one of the fastest growing after school programs and activities in the United States. It has been reported that 90% of all teenagers play video games. Worldwide Esports has a viewing audience of 232 million people. Since 2018 when it was recognized by NFHS as an official sport there have been more than 8,600 high schools participating. In the past four years, Esports has experienced tremendous growth and is now ranked in the top 20 sports in terms of student participation as reported by the NFHS. Esports is officially sanctioned by 20 state associations, including Colorado (CHSAA), and Mississippi (MHSAA), which allows for widespread adoption in those states.

Esports is uniquely positioned for after school programs and activities and reaches students who aren't engaged with traditional extracurriculars. According to a study done by PlayVS, a national K-12 Esports provider, 45% of participating students reported that this is their first after school activity or sport. Upwards of

70% of Esport coaches see improvement in socialization, communication, and leadership skills. In 2021 for one Esports provider, Montana has had 13 schools participate in the current school year, and compete against 600 other high school teams within their time zone.

For the 2022-2023 school year, the first unofficial Montana High School Esports League was formed. There were 11 schools participating in the league. The University of Montana ran the league free of charge for all schools. On May 6th, 2023 the 1st unofficial state championship was held on the University of Montana's campus. The schools competed in three games Rocket League, Super Smash Bros, and Overwatch 2. The league will continue next year and is looking to grow and expand the number of schools participating in this free league.

For the 2023-2024 school year the Montana High School Esports League continued to expand its league. For the 2023-2024 season there are currently 14 schools participating. The spring championship is scheduled for April 6th -7th. The schools compete in four games; Rocket League, Super Smash Bros, League of Legends and Overwatch 2.

Last year 16 million dollars was given in scholarship money for students participating in Esports. There are over 200 colleges with Esports teams. Over the past 3 years Sidney has had 4 students receive scholarships to play Esports at various universities. Schools such as University of Montana, Boise State University and New Mexico State offer scholarships for students to compete under a collegiate banner.

With the gaming industry surpassing 211.2 billion dollars, exposing students to Esports can help them explore careers in engineering, marketing, game design, and audio engineering. Montana has experienced growth in Esports, with schools building lasting programs for years to come. Sanctioning Esports at the high school level would allow for exponential growth, providing opportunities for students that aren't typically engaged by traditional extracurriculars.

Fiscal Note: (if any)

Fiscal responsibility of local school districts may include sourcing technology, games, facilities, and coaching stipends.

A motion was made by Chris Lee of Sidney High School to withdraw the proposal and seconded by Levi Lowery of Fromberg.

BUDGET APPROVAL

A motion was made by Mr. Fitzgerald of the MHSA Executive Board, and seconded by Mr. Patelis of the MHSA Executive Board, to adopt the 2024-25 budget as presented. The motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Tom Dusold of Colstrip High School motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mike Erickson of Lockwood High School seconded and the motion passed. At 1:15 pm, President Thennis adjourned the meeting.