

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**
Helena Public Schools Administration Building
April 22-23, 2024

ATTENDANCE

Steve Thennis, Helena
Krystal Zentner, Bridger
John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge
Aric Harris, Whitefish
Kara Triplett, Lambert
Dan Mills, Bozeman
Brian Michelotti, Helena
Kip Ryan, Helena
Scott Wilson, Helena
Greta Buehler, Helena
Jenise Cockhill, Helena
Ryan Richards, Helena

Delegations

Keli Lake, Missoula
Rob Capell, Missoula
Jason Raether, Cascade
Lawni Raether, Cascade
Levi Collins, Cascade
Jessica Nagy, Superior
Jamie Ball, Fort Benton
Megan Lords, Fort Benton
Joellyn Clark, Fort Benton
Rob Pedersen, Plentywood
Sara Marsh, Plentywood
Tom Temple, Glendive
Tim McMahan, Helena
Rex Wertz, Helena
Elizabeth Kaleva, Missoula
Mike Miller, Helena
Joel Fuhrmann, Charlo
Brandon Gondeiro, Highwood

CALL TO ORDER

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

REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Michelotti stated that nothing new was added that was not already printed and/or sent out electronically to the Executive Board and MHSA Staff.

PUBLIC INPUT STATEMENT

Mr. Thennis read the public input statement to the delegation. There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the regular meeting minutes for January 13 and 15, 2024, the Annual Meeting minutes for January 15, 2024, and the Conference call minutes for February 1, 2024. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

DELEGATIONS/APPEALS

ACADEMIC RULE APPEAL – HELLGATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT JC

Mr. Wilson introduced Ms. Lake and Mr. Capell to the Board via Zoom. The MHSA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Thennis gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Ms. Lake chose to continue with an open meeting. Ms. Lake explained the details that have negatively affected the student regarding her mental health and subsequent diagnosis. She discussed the positive changes and the direction they are now going. Ms. Lake explained that the student was failing classes and is now passing some of those. Mr. Thennis read the requirements to waive the semester rule from the MHSA Handbook. Ms. Zentner motioned to waive the academic rule; Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion and after a roll call vote, it failed unanimously.

RECLASSIFICATION APPEALS

Cascade High School

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Raether, Ms. Raether and Mr. Collins to the Executive Board. The MHSA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Raether discussed their enrollment and projected enrollments through 2027. He further discussed success and participation numbers in various sports. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve Cascade High School to remain in Class C. Mr. Harris seconded, and after a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Superior High School

Mr. Wilson introduced Ms. Nagy to the Executive Board. The MHSA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Ms. Nagy explained projected enrollment through 2032 will be under 100. She further explained her team's success in Class C currently. Ms. Triplett made a motion for Superior to move back down to Class C. Ms. Triplett seconded, and after a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Fort Benton High School

Ms. Buehler introduced Ms. Ball, Ms. Lords, and Ms. Clark to the Executive Board. The MHSA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Ms. Ball appealed to the Board to remain in Class C. She explained the trend she sees for families moving out of Fort Benton as well as the participation numbers. She also discussed the successes of the teams at Fort Benton. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to deny the appeal to remain in Class C. Mr. Harris seconded, and after a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Plentywood High School

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Pedersen and Ms. Marsh to the Executive Board. The MHSA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Pedersen appealed to the Executive Board to stay in Class C. He summarized projected enrollments for Plentywood High School, as well as participation numbers and success rates of teams. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the waiver to remain in Class C. Ms. Zentner seconded, and after a roll call vote, the motion failed unanimously.

OTHER DELEGATIONS

Girls Wrestling

Mr. McMahan brought forth a proposal from the AA Activities Directors to postpone separating girls and boys for practice in the sport of wrestling. He explained concerns that with the girl wrestlers, the numbers of weight classes are not sufficient to put substantially different weight classes together for practice. They

have boys in similar weight classes for the girls to wrestle in practice. Ms. Kaleva explained that in keeping within the Ridgway Settlement, an option can be created for schools to evaluate the situations annually as girls wrestling is a developing sport even though fully sanctioned by the MHSAA. Once girls wrestling is no longer a developing sport, tighter parameters will be put into place. These parameters shall be put in place by the 2028-29 season. A motion was made by Mr. Harris to allow girls wrestling as a developing sport to suspend gender-specific practices until the 2028-29 season. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Fastpitch Softball Forfeiture Appeal – Capital High School

Mr. McMahon explained the softball game played against Butte High School on April 4, 2024, involved an ineligible transfer player. The MHSAA ruled to forfeit the game and issue a fine and public reprimand. Mr. McMahon explained that Mr. Miller attempted to determine eligibility with the Capital High administration. The athlete was inserted into the game as a courtesy runner and made no significant impact on the outcome of the game. Mr. Miller attested to the events that arose to the situation of playing an ineligible player and that he did his due diligence in finding out if a player was ineligible. A motion was made by Mr. Fitzgerald to waive the one game forfeiture against Butte High School. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Montana Officials Association

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Fuhrmann to the MHSAA Executive Board. The MHSAA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fuhrmann discussed the proposed changes to the fee schedule, per diem and mileage reimbursement for regular and postseason events for officials. Ms. Zentner made a motion to accept the following proposals: 1) a 6-year plan of regular season fee increases, 2) a 6-year plan of postseason fee increases, 3) round trip mileage to be paid from their home zip code to the pool city zip code, 4) a regular season per diem rate increase to .16 through 24-25, and 5) increase of postseason per diem rates by \$5.00. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

6-Player Football Rubric

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Gondeiro, Activities Director at Highwood High School, to the Board. The MHSAA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Gondeiro explained the concerns that the Class C schools have with the free and reduced lunch component of the rubric, and the ease of manipulating this metric. He adjusted the rubric for roster size and free and reduced lunch components to bring about a more fair and objective manner for reclassification of 6-Player and 8-Player programs. It was suggested that roster sizes be reported on the Monday after Labor Day weekend. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the rubric changes for both 6-Player and 8-Player reclassification to include 10%, 30%, 35% and 25% for free and reduced lunch, enrollment, roster size and number of wins respectively. With a rubric score of less than 9, the program will be required to participate in the next highest football classification.

REQUESTS

Wrestling Committee

Mr. Wilson proposed to move to a 3-day schedule for state wrestling. This would include a weigh-in at 2pm on Thursday that will cover the Thursday and Friday morning rounds. There will be an additional weigh-in on Friday night for Saturday competition. They are also proposing semi-final matches to be Friday night. This does not add any additional costs to the schools unless coaches wish to go over on Wednesday. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the schedule change, Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wilson also proposed new weight classes for the 2024-25 season. This is an increase from 12 to 14 weight classes for girls. For the boys, it would go to 14 weight classes as well, with an additional class in the 150s range, as there are large participation numbers in this area. Mr. Wilson stated the Wrestling

Committee unanimously agreed to move forward with these weight class changes. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to adopt the weight class changes, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Charter School Rule

Mr. Michelotti reviewed two proposals that were passed at the Annual Meeting in January 2024 that allowed for Charter School and Virtual Academy participation in the district in which the student resides. After discussion about how charter school enrollment could possibly affect the rural public school's participation numbers in areas like the Bitterroot Valley, no action was taken.

Football

Mr. Wilson brought forth a request from Mr. Luke Kloker that the divisional conference trophy be sent to the division president a few weeks prior to the end of the season. This would allow teams to receive this trophy when the regular season is over. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve sending the trophy out early. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wilson asked for final approval of the football reclassification timeline for the 2025-26 season that was discussed at the November 2023 meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the timeline for football reclassification, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Nagy proposed a new 8-Player Bracket for four divisions. She explained it was voted on by the schools in her classification. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve a bracket for four divisions for 8-Player football. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Softball

Ms. Bartels explained in the November meeting, it was discussed to realign Manhattan High School to the East for B/C softball. Ms. Triplett made a motion to realign Manhattan High School to the East; Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Bartels also stated that Valier would like to dissolve the cooperative agreement with Cut Bank for softball. Valier has no interest in softball at all, and they would like to add girls' golf instead. Cut Bank agreed to the dissolution. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to dissolve the Valier/Cut Bank softball co-op, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Revisions to Handbook Language for Cooperative Sponsorships

Ms. Buehler proposed that once a cooperative sponsorship is approved, they are approved in perpetuity until they wish to dissolve the co-op, or the MHSA recognizes any issues within that co-op. This would hold true for all sports except for football. Ms. Buehler stated this would cut down on the amount of paperwork that is done by the schools and the Association. It was decided that there will be a February 1st deadline for new cooperative sponsorship applications. In addition, each co-op will be allowed to have an official name that is recognized by the Association (e.g. Saco/Whitewater/Hinsdale aka North Country). Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve a continuous contract, allow special naming and create a deadline of February 1st for application and dissolution of cooperative sponsorships, with the exclusion of football which will remain on a two-year reclassification cycle. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Sports Medicine Advisory Committee

Ms. Buehler explained that the SMAC is requesting adding the NFHS Learn CPR & AED Training Course to the requirements for coaches. The committee polled membership at the Annual Meeting in January and most schools already require a CPR certification of some kind. The proposed requirement would be the NFHS Learn CPR & AED annually or AHA or Red Cross certification every two years. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the proposal for additional coaches' requirements for CPR and AED training as written by Ms. Buehler and the SMAC Committee. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Buehler discussed proposed changes to the Pre-Participation Physical Form to include questions on mental health and remove the question regarding immunizations. She also discussed future requirements for Pre-Participation Physical changes, that include possibly changing the physical examination requirement to every two years, which could encourage well-child checks with their primary care physicians. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the Pre-Participation Physical form for the 2024-25 academic year. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Basketball

Ms. Buehler explained the process for the Master Basketball Scheduling Committee and that it is somewhat redundant as some classes are doing their own scheduling by committee. She further explained that any changes cause a ripple effect for the MHSA offices to approve, and thereby the original schedule is not even followed. It was discussed that each Class Representative would take the idea to their class caucus in the summer meeting to review.

Ms. Buehler proposed a change to the policy for State Basketball Off-Site games. The bracket would show the Saturday morning sites and the teams would be 'to be determined' and would be announced after the Friday night games. The team selection criteria will take into consideration teams not playing in their home gym, different gender teams at different locations and crowd size. The Executive Director would make the ultimate decision. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the policy changes for State Basketball Off Site game management. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Track & Field

Ms. Triplett explained that for smaller schools, it is more efficient for them to run middle school track meets congruently with the high school meets for time purposes as well as rest and recovery of the athletes. She proposed to allow middle school and high school track meets to be run together at the district level. Mr. Harris made a motion to implement non-high school participants to run their meet in congruence with high school effective for the 2023-24 season, Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Open Gym

Mr. Michelotti explained that our current coaching rule does not allow for any coaching during open gyms. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to allow one on one instruction in open gyms if it is not part of the group activity. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Coaching Rule Adjustments

The Executive Board discussed potential changes to the out-of-season coaching rule. No changes were made.

District Music Festival

Ms. Bartels explained that District #1 would like to change the date for the District Music Festival to not interfere with Easter. Ms. Zentner made a motion to accept the proposed date change to April 10-12, 2025, for the district #1 Music Festival. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Class A Track & Field Divisional Qualifier

Mr. Temple introduced himself to the MHSA Executive Board via Zoom, and the board members introduced themselves as well. Mr. Michelotti explained that for an athlete to be eligible to compete in the Divisional track meet, the athlete must be ranked in the top 30 (plus all ties) in their respective event. Mr. Temple countered that he would like to see the Top 5 per event per school allowed. He stated that he polled Eastern A Head Coaches and they agree 8-1 to keep the Top 5 per event per school. Mr. Thennis stated this will be tabled with the expectation that action will happen at the Summer Meeting.

ESports

Mr. Michelotti explained there is a request from Sidney High School to make ESports an emerging sport. Ms. Buehler explained she went to an Eastern region competition for Esports, and it was interesting with a lot of participation. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve ESports as an emerging sport. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Flag Football

Mr. Michelotti explained that Flag Football is growing, and there will be 17 schools next year. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve Flag Football as an emerging sport. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Baseball

Mr. Wilson proposed that there be specific language for the baseball play in game for the State tournament in the event of game suspension due to weather or darkness. He proposed that if the game is suspended and cannot be completed later, the higher seeded team is declared the winner. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve game ending language for the play-in game for the state baseball tournament. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

FINANCES

Mr. Michelotti discussed the bills paid January 1 – March 31, 2024. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the bills paid. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the financial statement as of March 31, 2024. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the financial statement. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Buehler discussed the basketball financial summary. Mr. Wilson discussed the state wrestling financial summary. Mr. Ryan discussed the state swimming financial summary. Mr. Ryan discussed the Annual Meeting financial report.

GENERAL OFFICE REPORT

Mr. Michelotti summarized the insurance overview for the MHSA office. Mr. Richards discussed the 20 corporate sponsorships and the average amounts they sponsor. 13 of the 20 corporate sponsors are Montana based companies. He also discussed the positive trend of the MHSA social media metrics. Mr. Michelotti updated the Executive Board on recent events and sportsmanship issues in the membership. NFHS viewership, payments and technical support were discussed. Mr. Michelotti discussed some Section 7/8 Meeting details in Whitefish, MT in September 2024. Other topics discussed were a new heating system for the MHSA building, potential clear bag policies and metal detectors at state events, assigned seating for state basketball and NFL Smart Heart policies regarding AED and EAP.

Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to allow metal detectors and clear bag or bag check policies at state events if the facility could do so. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Triplett made a motion to allow budget authority for MOA Study Club video production. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

OFFICE ACTION

The Board reviewed waivers of the transfer rule and the violation summary. There were no waivers for the age rule.

LEGAL

Mr. Michelotti explained the legal expenses thus far for this year. Mr. Michelotti also discussed what he learned at the NFHS Legal Meeting in Indianapolis this month. Mr. Michelotti summarized the OCR

complaint regarding AA softball and the timeline for getting all the information to the Office of Civil Rights. He also explained the AA schools and the MHSAs responses have all been centralized through Ms. Kaleva's office.

RECESS

The meeting was recessed at 4:06pm on April 22, 2024.

MEETING RECONVENES

At 8:02am on April 23, 2024, the meeting reconvened.

REPORTS

State Speech and Drama Meet

Mr. Harris explained it all went very well at the Class A event. Ms. Bartels stated that the B/C and AA events went very well also.

State All Class Wrestling Tournament

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the only negative point he must make is the amount of non-essential people down on the floor. Otherwise, it went very well. Mr. Wilson stated he is working on recommendations with the wrestling committee to pare down the number of people on the floor.

State Swim Meet

Mr. Ryan stated Great Falls does a great job with this event. They moved the 500M race to Thursday rather than Friday which helped with management of teams.

State Basketball Tournaments

Ms. Buehler reported on the AA tournament in Missoula and that it went well. The only complaint was parking and getting fans into tight spaces when teams were leaving the floor and those coming in. Mr. Harris and Ms. Bartels reported on the Class A tournament and that it went well. The only issue they ran into was Butte Central playing on their own home court for the alternate site. Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Ryan reported on the Class B tournament in Billings and felt the tournament ran great, but the oversight and help from the MetraPark facility is lacking. Ms. Triplett and Mr. Wilson reported on Class C in Great Falls and that it ran smoothly. It was attended very well.

Ejections

Mr. Michelotti explained we have had 78 ejections thus far this year. These numbers remain consistent overall with previous years.

Speech Committee

Ms. Bartels said the work being done by this committee has been very helpful and positive. They have been working on an MFEA handbook and will seek approval of that once it is complete.

Spring Sports Rules Clinics

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the number of views by sport of the MHSAs rules clinic attendees.

AIM Higher

Mr. Wilson presented the dates for the upcoming year's AIM Higher events that will be held in Sidney, Kalispell, Missoula, Butte, Great Falls and Billings.

2024-25 Bids for State Events

Mr. Wilson presented the bids received and those still left open. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve all listed sites, including Hamilton for baseball. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

2025-26 Bids for State Events

Mr. Wilson presented the recommendations from the Bid Subcommittee for 2025-26 State events. The State Wrestling Tournament date will be decided after the summer caucuses. Mr. Wilson also explained that the State Baseball site selection will be tabled until the AA schools discuss the addition of 6 more AA schools at the summer caucus. Mr. Thennis read the list of recommended sites and those remaining open. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the Bid Subcommittee's recommendations for 2025-26 state events. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

ANNUAL MEETING PLACEMENT

Mr. Wilson reviewed the bids for the Annual Meeting for 2026. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the Helena Delta Hotel as the site for the 2026 MHSAA Annual Meeting. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Wilson suggested a possible rotation for future meetings to go from East, Central and West and then awarded at least 2 years in advance. Bid requests would go out to that region that is current in the rotation. Mr. Michelotti reviewed an email he received asking to change the date from January for the Annual Meeting. This will be discussed at the summer caucuses.

AUDIT REPORT

Mr. Michelotti said there were no major concerns. It was discussed that the Association is currently getting quotes for a different company to perform the audit. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the audit report. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

MHSAA STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

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

RECLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Michelotti reported that Butte Central High School has submitted a letter to appeal moving from Class A. There were reports of other A school's being frustrated with Butte Central cancelling games. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve of Butte Central staying in Class A for two more years. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Park City High School has been recognized to move from Class B to Class C and they have not appealed. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve Park City High School moving to Class C for two years. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

PERSONNEL AND NEGOTIATIONS

The meeting was closed. When the meeting reopened, Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the MHSAA employee salary catch-up amount with a 3% increase for 2024-25 plus a \$7500 addition, which was put into place two years ago. This addition will be adjusted for Ms. Cockhill who began employment after the first year. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

BOARD REORGANIZATION

Ms. Zentner nominated Mr. Fitzgerald as the new MHSAA Board President, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Fitzgerald nominated Ms. Triplett as the new MHSAA Board Vice President. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Fitzgerald welcomed Mr. Mills to the Executive Board.

ASSIGNMENT TO SPRING ACTIVITIES

Mr. Fitzgerald assigned board members to spring events.

NATIONAL FEDERATION MEETINGS

The NFHS Summer Meeting will be held in Boston from June 28th-July 1st.

The Section 7/8 Meeting will be held in Whitefish September 15-17, 2024. Mr. Michelotti stated that the agenda and itinerary are being finalized.

2024-25 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING DATES

The Board agreed to the following dates for 2024-25 Board Meetings: September 9, November 25-26, January 18 & 20 (Annual Meeting), and April 28-29. Mr. Mills motioned to approve the proposed meeting dates. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Michelotti discussed the NFHS authenticating mark on game balls. The Federation is planning to increase their fee to 5% of the invoice for balls, but a final decision has not yet been made.

NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled Executive Board meeting will be held on September 9, 2024, at Helena Public Schools Administration Building in Helena, MT.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 12:51pm.