

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
APRIL 17-18, 2023**

ATTENDANCE

Jim Hawbaker, Billings
Doug Reisig, Missoula
Aric Harris, Whitefish
Krystal Zentner, Bridger
John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge
Steve Thennis, Helena
Luke Kloker, Fairview
Kara Triplett, Richey
Brian Michelotti, Helena
Scott Wilson, Helena
Kip Ryan, Helena
Greta Buehler, Helena
Amy Bartels, Helena
Ryan Richards, Helena
Anna Doran, Helena

Delegations

Jennifer LaFramboise-Wagner, Browning (Zoom)
Sienna Speicher, Browning (Zoom)
Tony Wagner, Browning (Zoom)
Iona Stookey, Huntley Project (Zoom)
Patrick Hiller, Great Falls
Brian Rayburn, Lima (Zoom)
Nathaniel Hope, Manhattan Christian (Zoom)
Joel Westa, Manhattan Christian (Zoom)
Layne Glaus, Manhattan Christian

CALL TO ORDER

Board President, Mr. Hawbaker, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mr. Hawbaker read the public input statement.

Mr. Hawbaker welcomed the new board members, Mr. Harris and Ms. Triplett. They will be non-voting members today.

REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Michelotti discussed time changes for the delegation/appeals.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

Mr. Reisig motioned to approve the following minutes: January 14 & 16, 2023; MHSA 2023 Annual Meeting; March 15, 2023. Mr. Michelotti called attention to the 2023 MHSA Annual Meeting minutes. Under the *Proposal to Amend Cooperative Sponsorship of Activities*, Jeff Nix, Sunburst, made a motion to amend Section (35) COOPERATIVE SPONSORSHIP OF ACTIVITIES on page 31 of the current MHSA Handbook. It was unclear who seconded the motion. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

FINANCES

A motion was made by Mr. Fitzgerald, and seconded by Mr. Kloker, to approve the bills paid from January 1 to March 31, 2023. The motion carried.

Mr. Michelotti briefly discussed the financial statement. Mr. Thennis motioned to approve the financial statement through March 31, 2023. Mr. Kloker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

GENERAL OFFICE OVERVIEW

Mr. Michelotti gave a report on various insurance packages and rates.

Mr. Richards reported that he recently attended a Playfly conference in Minnesota. He will work to increase the MHSA social media presence. There are currently 16 corporate partners. Logan Health, Honda, Reach Higher Montana, and Pierce Flooring are new partners.

Mr. Michelotti reported that he spoke in support of longtime partner, NorthWestern Energy, at the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Wilson will attend the Montana State Golf Association Meeting in Butte. The next big opportunity will be electronic scoring.

Sportsmanship issues with the Hellgate and Huntley Project girls' basketball coaches were discussed.

Mr. Wilson gave an update on the NFHS Network, reporting on state basketball viewership and checks sent to member schools. The 100% membership state profit was passed onto member schools. This \$150,000 profit was a one-time bonus. Therefore, checks will be less next year. Mr. Wilson said some schools were unaware they received the money because their checks were sent directly to their business departments.

Mr. Wilson also discussed NFHS Network competitor, Hudl. Hudl has contacted member schools but not the MHSA. All streaming must be approved by the MHSA Office. The MHSA has given exclusive rights to the NFHS network for postseason. Having multiple networks would be challenging for viewers because multiple subscriptions would be required. Mr. Michelotti said radio broadcasting was added this year. Bias broadcasting by radio talent can be an issue.

Mr. Michelotti reported on plans to purchase the 2021 Toyota Highlander when the lease expires. Funds from the sale of the 2016 Ford Edge will go toward the purchase.

REPORTS

Financial summaries and tournament financial reports were discussed for basketball, wrestling, swimming and the Annual Meeting.

LEGAL

Mr. Michelotti will attend NFHS Legal Meeting in Indianapolis on April 20th-21st. Ms. Kaleva is unable to attend.

Mr. Michelotti discussed legal challenges in soccer and with MOA Officials.

ACADEMIC AND TRANSFER RULE APPEAL—BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL

Jennifer Wagner, Browning Principal, and Sienna Speicher, Browning Counselor, and Tony Wagner, Browning AD, joined the meeting via Zoom. The option to have an open or closed meeting was given; Ms. Wagner opted for an open meeting. Ms. Speicher discussed the instability Student A.A.B. faces at home which makes consistent school attendance difficult. Despite the challenges, he is engaged in classes and participates in Gear Up MT. Student A.A.B. has connected with the student athletes on the baseball team, making him further engaged in school. Mr. Reisig read the Hardship Rule and asked if it applied. Ms. Speicher said it did. Mr. Hawbaker referred to the Academic Rule. It too applied.

Mr. Reisig motioned to waive the Academic Rule. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Reisig motioned to grant the Hardship waiver. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion carried.

OFFICE ACTION

The Board reviewed waivers of the transfer rule, waivers of the age rule, and the violation summary.

BOARD MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Mr. Ryan addressed the Board regarding their duties at a state meet when the MHSA is paying for their hotel room and per diem. The Board discussed information related to covering state meets and the level of support that is needed at different events.

VOLLEYBALL—CHANGING SIDES REQUEST

Iona Stookey, head volleyball coach at Huntley Project and MHSA Volleyball Committee Member, and Patrick Hiller, head volleyball coach at Great Falls CMR, joined the meeting to discuss switching sides in volleyball. Mr. Hiller presented disadvantages of not switching sides, including officials' view of the setters' hands, coach-setter communication and gym obstacles. Ms. Stookey addressed some of the advantages of switching sides. The affect of cheering during the serve was also discussed. Mr. Ryan said the "cheering during the serve rule" is not a federation rule, just a Montana rule. Mr. Fitzgerald said it is easier from a crowd control standpoint not to change sides. However, this decision should be based on the student athletes, not the administrators. Mr. Kloker motioned to approve changing sides. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-1 (Dissenting: Hawbaker).

REPORTS

Board and staff reported on the following events: State AA, A and B/C Speech and Drama Meets, the State All-Class Wrestling Tournament, the State Swim Meet and State AA, A, B and C Basketball Tournaments.

Mr. Michelotti gave the ejection report for 2022-23. This includes fan ejections and the first ejection in baseball. He said it was a low number compared to past years.

Mr. Wilson reported on the following items from the Wrestling Ad-hoc Committee meeting:

- There are changes being proposed for weight classes. Boys would go from 13 to 14 weight classes. Girls would go from 12 to 13 weight classes. Currently, the boys' weight cap is 285. The girls' cap, 235, will be raised to match boys' cap.
- Currently, girls and boys cannot wrestle one another in the postseason. There is hesitancy to change this rule during the regular season due to the lack of opportunity in some regions in the state.

- Next year, Hellgate High School will host a two-day girls' wrestling meet on the same days as the Rocky Mountain Classic which is also in Missoula.
- In 2023, girls were awarded trophies in two categories, AA and ABC combined. In the 2024 season, there will be three trophy categories, AA, A, and BC combined.
- In the 2024 season, girls' divisional guaranteed qualifiers will jump from two to three.
- The state-wide girls' seeding will change to a western and eastern seeding. The committee offered a "Phase" recommendation with classification. AA coaches said their numbers would support breaking off into their own classification.
- With the anticipated growth, wrestling will eventually have to go to a three-day tournament, but not a three-day weigh in. The weigh in would occur Thursday afternoon and count for Thursday and Friday. A second weigh-in would occur on Friday evening. A three-day tournament would give more attention to the semifinal matches.

The wrestling items will be tabled until the June meeting.

PRE-TOURNAMENT MEETINGS

The Board discussed whether there is a need for pre-tournament coaches' meetings and if the meetings be mandatory with a penalty for not attending. Mr. Michelotti said the meetings will now be required and a Zoom option will be available. There will be a fine issued if someone fails to attend. No action was required.

REQUESTS

Ms. Bartels requested to form an MHSA committee for speech. Currently, there is no speech committee. Every year a new president is elected but an election has not happened this year. Ms. Bartels recommends the committee become a set group and hold an annual committee meeting (rather than wait for the information to be submitted to the MHSA). Mr. Hawbaker recommended Mr. Wilson and Ms. Bartels develop a speech committee proposal to share at the June meeting. Mr. Reisig motioned for a speech committee proposal to be made in June. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion carried.

REPORTS

Ms. Bartels mentioned the Music Committee will meet in August.

Mr. Michelotti reported on the spring sports rules clinics for golf, tennis, softball and track and field.

2023-24 BIDS FOR STATE EVENTS

Mr. Wilson presented recommendations from the Bid Subcommittee for 2023-24 events that are still open. Mr. Kloker motioned to approve the bids. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

2024-25 BIDS FOR STATE EVENTS

Mr. Wilson presented the recommendations from the Bid Subcommittee for 2024-25 State events.

Mr. Wilson said the 2024-25 season received the least number of bids in the last five years which is concerning. Major events like track and field need to be planned well in advance. This should be addressed at the summer meetings and the annual meeting.

Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the Bid Subcommittee's recommendations for 2024-25 state events. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

2024-25 ANNUAL MEETING PLACEMENT

The Board discussed placement of the Annual Meeting. Factors such as lessening travel for members and hotel costs were mentioned. Mr. Michelotti said placement should be balanced geographically and Mr. Hawbaker added that Billings would be appropriate in this rotation. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve the Billings Hotel & Convention Center as the site for the 2025 MHSAA Annual Meeting. Mr. Reisig seconded the motion. The motion carried.

AUDIT REPORT

Ms. Buehler said there were no major concerns. A follow-up report has yet to come which may offer suggestions. Questions about the unrealized loss on investments line item and the Employee Retention Tax Credit were addressed. Mr. Kloker motioned to approve the audit report. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

MISCELLANEOUS

There were no two-week notice items from January.

Mr. Michelotti proposed adding language to the MHSAA Handbook regarding video streaming rights after being approached by different streaming services. The proposed language, regarding postseason video streaming, would give exclusivity to the NFHS Network. This proposed language gives options for the regular season. While other services are allowed to stream during the regular season, member schools are required to parallel stream on NFHS Network at the same time. This will protect the viewer from having to pay for different networks. Mr. Reisig motioned to approve the proposed language. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion carried.

REQUESTS

Mr. Michelotti shared results from the MHSAA survey pertaining to the following:

- Regarding the required number of practices prior to competition, 82.21% supported changing the requirement from 10 to eight days. Mr. Kloker motioned to approve changing the required preseason practice days from 10 to 8 days, except football (10) and golf (2) will remain the same. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Brian Rayburn, Lima Superintendent, Nathaniel Hope, Manhattan Christian Principal, and Joel Westa, Manhattan Christian Superintendent, joined the meeting via Zoom while Layne Glaus, Manhattan Christian AD, joined in person. The delegation addressed the Board regarding the 1.5 reclassification factor for private schools. Mr. Hawbaker gave a recap of the MHSAA Reclassification Criteria Survey; there were 162 responses and 124 were in support of the 1.5 factor for private schools while 38 were not. The Board and delegation discussed recruiting rumors, House Bill 203 (open enrollment), MHSAA legal counsel's opinion, among other topics. After the discussion, Mr. Reisig motioned to table the adoption of the 1.5 factor until the June meeting where more research from other states and information from the legal meeting can be presented. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Mr. Michelotti and Ms. Bartels presented information on digital rules books. The digital books are an underutilized piece of information and they are user friendly. The MOA voted to go 100% digital. Going digital for schools would save money on mailing. A minority of members do not like the digital option so a physical copy can be mailed upon request. Ms.

Zentner motioned to approve digital books be sent to schools with physical books being available upon request. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Michelotti discussed postseason ticket prices and mentioned they have not been raised in 14 years. The proposal for ticket price increases for various sports was presented. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the postseason ticket price increases. Mr. Kloker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

MOA proposals from the March Regional Director's meeting were presented.

- One Way Mileage for Officials – Regular Season and Postseason: Mr. Michelotti has received lots of feedback concerning one-way mileage. Officials who reside outside their pool site are not compensated for their mileage thus making it difficult to recruit these officials. A proposal was made to pay for one-way mileage. One of the benefits of this is that officials would not be required to carpool, which can be difficult at a multi-day event. Questions remain regarding the one-way mileage factor. Mr. Michelotti recommended tabling the one-way mileage for the regular season but putting it in place for the postseason. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to approve one-way mileage for the postseason and table one-way mileage for the regular season. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Sub-varsity Fee Increase: While varsity fees have increased, sub-varsity fees have not. A proposal was made to increase sub-varsity pay for MOA Officials from \$48 to \$55. Mr. Kloker motioned to raise the fee from \$48 to \$55. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Soccer Assigning – Policy and Fee Changes: In the 2023-24 season, soccer will have its own method of paying the assignor. The assignor, who is an independent contractor, will bill the school \$5.00 per official, per game. Assignors will bill the school with one invoice at the end of the season. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to accept the policy and fee changes. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- MOA Handbook Editorial Revision Committee: Ms. Bartels is in the process of revamping the MOA Manual. She will bring it to the Board for approval.

Ms. Buehler reported on the basketball postseason hiring committee that was created to examine how postseason hiring of officials is currently done and what changes could improve the process. Mr. Michelotti said the hiring of postseason officials is one of the most controversial parts of MHSA.

Ms. Bartels presented a request to allow walk-up music and softball and baseball. While most states allow walk-up music, little policy could be found. There have been many requests from member schools to allow walk-up music. Mr. Thennis emphasized the need for administration approval of all music because the lyrics may imply inappropriate topics. Mr. Thennis motioned to approve administrator-approved walk-up music. If there is an issue, officials may order the music turned down or off. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Michelotti recommended that MHSA new corporate partner, Logan Health, become the official recommended health care provider of the MHSA. While they are recommended, students/parents can choose the provider of their liking. Mr. Michelotti also proposed that the Covid-19 language

be removed from the MHS A Pre-Participation Physical Exam. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the physical form changes. Mr. Kloker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ms. Bartels gave a COS software update.

Mr. Michelotti gave an update on technology. Playfly will invest a significant amount of money to create a new website if MHS A can drive more traffic to the website. There will be a push to promote Dragonfly in the schools for scheduling, scores, directory, and co-ops. If this does not work, MHS A will move to Arbitor.

Mr. Michelotti said a Football Classification Committee (A, B, Six-Player, and Eight-Player) was formed to create a rubric that can be used for football classification. The following equally-weighted criteria were offered:

1. Free and Reduced Percentage (data generated by OPI)
2. Boys' Enrollment (grades 8-11)
3. Roster Size
4. Success Factor

Mr. Kloker motioned to move forward with the rubric with the equally distributed criteria. If a co-op fails the rubric criteria, that co-op can remain in its' existing classification but will not be eligible for the playoffs. If the roster changes within the two-year agreement, the co-op will have to play at the next level. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting was recessed at 4:05 pm and reconvened at 8:06 am on Tuesday, April 18th.

Mr. Michelotti discussed the MHS A jewelry rule. The rule is outdated and does not match the NFHS rules. Mr. Reisig motioned to align the MHS A jewelry policy with the NFHS policy, effective immediately. Mr. Kloker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ms. Bartels reported that required coaching clinics will now count toward OPI renewal credits for educators. She will update member schools on the change.

Mr. Michelotti discussed the proposal submitted by Sunburst at the Annual Meeting requiring co-ops that exceed the enrollment limit for the current classification to compete at a higher classification . This proposed rule would only affect the co-ops that are too big and expiring. Three Forks-Ennis wrestling is the only one presently affected; others have dissolved. Co-ops can request an enrollment waiver.

Mr. Michelotti asked if updated language should be drafted for the required number of practice days for a transfer student. After discussion on clarity of the rule, Mr. Reisig proposed that the new language should state, "If a student transfers to a new school after completing the required days of preseason practices for their sport or activity, the student must complete an additional number of practices (equal to half the number of required practices for that sport or activity) at their new school". Mr. Thennis motioned to approve the new language regarding additional practice requirements when a student transfers to another school. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Wilson proposed a change to the summer coaching rule for coaches. Legion coaches who were hired to coach baseball in the member schools do not have to wait until June 1st to coach legion ball so the language needs to be added in a memorandum. Mr. Kloker motioned to approve

the language that legion baseball coaches may begin coaching the Sunday after the state baseball tournament. Mr. Reisig seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Michelotti discussed legislative items, specifically SB 306 and the MHSA presentation at the Montana American Indian Caucus.

Mr. Michelotti proposed new language for the in-season squad rule. Mr. Fitzgerald motioned to amend the squad rule language. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

MHSA STANDING COMMITTEES' APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ryan reported on new appointees to various MHSA committees.

Mr. Michelotti proposed the Athletic Committee be renamed the Sport Advisory Rules Review Committee and the Multicultural Committee be renamed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Mr. Michelotti also proposed adding two at large positions to each of the MHSA committees - one Native American and one female representative. Mr. Hawbaker said he was a proponent of the new positions and suggested adding a Native American representative on the MHSA Board. Mr. Michelotti said to add an additional seat on the board, a proposal would have to be made at the next annual meeting because it is a bylaw change. Mr. Reisig motioned to rename the Multicultural Committee the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee and to rename the Athletic Committee the Sport Advisory Rules Committee, and adding a Native American and female to every committee. Mr. Thennis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

RECLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Michelotti reported there is no reclassification this year. The next reclassification cycle will be in 2025-2026. Member schools will be identified during the April 2024 meeting and schools will have until November to consider realignments of districts and divisions because of the reclassification changes. Schools moving in 2023-24 are Bigfork (B to A); Fairview, Chinook, Lone Peak, Superior, Park City, Ennis, Darby (C to B); and Forsyth (B to C).

PERSONNEL AND NEGOTIATIONS

The meeting was closed. When the meeting reopened, Mr. Kloker motioned to approve a MHSA employee salary 2-year catch-up amount with a 3% increase for 2023-24. Mr. Hawbaker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Reisig motioned to add the 10- and 15-year options to health insurance. Mr. Hawbaker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Hawbaker motioned to approve the addition of a Long-Term Disability buy-up for \$250.00 to the MHSA health insurance plan. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion carried.

ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS

Mr. Reisig nominated Mr. Thennis as the new MHSA Board President and Ms. Zentner as the new MHSA Board Vice President. Mr. Kloker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

ASSIGNMENT TO SPRING ACTIVITIES

Mr. Thennis assigned board members to spring events.

NATIONAL FEDERATION MEETINGS

The NFHS Summer Meeting will be held in Seattle from June 29th-July 2nd.

The Section 7-8 Meeting will be held in Alaska in September, 2023.

2023-24 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING DATES

The Board agreed to the following dates for 2023-24 Board Meetings: September 11, November 20-21, January 13 & 15 (Annual Meeting), and April 22-23. Mr. Hawbaker motioned to approve the proposed meeting dates. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion carried.

OTHER ITEMS

Mr. Hawbaker motioned to table the Class A proposal to limit the number of divisional qualifiers. Ms. Triplett seconded the motion. The motion carried.