

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**  
Helena Public Schools Administration Building  
September 8, 2025

**ATTENDANCE**

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

*Delegations:*

*John Parente, Browning via Zoom  
Kellen Hall, Browning via Zoom  
Heidi DeRoche, Browning via Zoom  
Student PF, Browning via Zoom  
Summer Douglas, Browning via Zoom  
Student AD, Browning via Zoom  
Sienna Speicher, Browning via Zoom  
Student DL, Browning via Zoom  
Jenny Jankowski, East Helena  
Student CR, East Helena  
Shaun Murgel, East Helena Via Zoom  
Aaron Flint, Whitefish via Zoom  
Jessica Flint, Whitefish via Zoom  
Student JF, Whitefish via Zoom  
Matt Cornelius, Choteau  
Bill Melvin, Butte  
Krystal Carlson, Butte  
Susan Shannon, Great Falls  
Mike McLean, Great Falls*

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

## **REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Mr. Michelotti stated there are no revisions to the schedule.

## **PUBLIC INPUT STATEMENT**

Mr. Fitzgerald read the rules for public comment in an open meeting. There were no public comments made.

## **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES**

Mr. Harris motioned to approve the meeting minutes for April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, June 25<sup>th</sup> and August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Mr. Mills seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **ACADEMIC RULE APPEAL—BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL - PF**

Mr. Michelotti introduced himself and Mr. Fitzgerald to the delegation via Zoom. All the attending Board Members introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting, Mr. Parente, after conferring with the student, chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald summarized the reasons given to the Executive Board to justify the appeal. Mr. Parente explained that due to some social and family issues, last year was an exceptionally hard year for the student. Ms. Foote explained how the loss of his grandfather deeply affected the student and their entire family. The student stated he is working hard this semester to regain his academic foothold. Mr. Hall spoke in support of the student and his work ethic. Mr. Fitzgerald read the rationale for decision of the Executive Board regarding the appeal. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve the Academic Rule appeal with bi-weekly progress reports to the MHSA, and the need to pass all classes during this check with immediate ineligibility if not met. Mr. Harris seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous decision.

## **ACADEMIC RULE APPEAL—BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL - AD**

Mr. Wilson introduced himself and Mr. Fitzgerald to the delegation via Zoom. All the attending Board Members introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Ms. Douglas chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald summarized the reasons given to the Executive Board to justify the appeal. Mr. Parente explained that he has worked with the student over the past years with his commitment to recovery. The student expressed his commitment and work towards keeping his sobriety. Ms. Douglas also spoke in relation to the work the student has put in with his recovery as well as the counseling and mandatory testing required by the recovery program he is enrolled in. Mr. Fitzgerald read the rationale for decision of the Executive Board regarding the appeal. Mr. Pretty On Top made a motion to approve the Academic Rule appeal with bi-weekly progress reports to the MHSA, and the need to pass all classes during this check with immediate ineligibility if not met. Mr. Patelis seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous decision.

## **ACADEMIC RULE APPEAL—BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL - DL**

Mr. Wilson introduced himself and Mr. Fitzgerald to the delegation via Zoom. All the attending Board Members introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; The student chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald summarized the reasons given to the Executive Board to justify the appeal. The student explained his living situation last spring and the lack of resources and transportation to get him to school. Ms. Speicher further added that the student became unaccompanied once his grandfather was placed in a long-term facility. All of this led to his academic decline. Mr. Hall explained that the students' parents have not been present for many years. The student maintains good work and discipline when he is present at school. Mr. Fitzgerald read the rationale for decision of the Executive Board regarding the appeal. Ms. Triplett made a motion

to approve the Academic Rule appeal with bi-weekly progress reports to the MHSA, and the need to pass all classes during this check with immediate ineligibility if not met. Mr. Patelis seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous decision.

#### **ACADEMIC RULE APPEAL—EAST HELENA HIGH SCHOOL - CR**

Ms. Buehler introduced the student and Ms. DeHerrera to the delegation. All the attending Board Members introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Ms. Jankowski chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald summarized the reasons given to the Executive Board to justify the appeal. Ms. Jankowski explained the struggles that the family faced last year. Her father passed away after a long struggle with cancer, and Ms. Jankowski was his advocate and sole care giver. Thus, the remaining children in the home were without guidance and help for some time. The student further stated that soccer practice is a haven for him which is why he continues to practice even though he cannot participate. Mr. Murgel reiterated that the factors affecting the student were out of his control. Mr. Fitzgerald read the rationale for decision of the Executive Board regarding the appeal. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve the Academic Rule appeal with bi-weekly progress reports to the MHSA, and the need to pass all classes during this check with immediate ineligibility if not met, in addition to no attendance issues. Mr. Harris seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous decision.

#### **TRANSFER RULE APPEAL—WHITEFISH HIGH SCHOOL - JF**

Mr. Wilson introduced himself and Mr. Fitzgerald to the delegation via Zoom. All the attending Board Members introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Fitzgerald gave the option of an open or closed meeting; Ms. Flint chose to continue with an open meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald summarized the reasons given to the Executive Board to justify the appeal. Mr. Flint explained that the family relocated to Kalispell for work. He further explained that they made the choice for him to attend Whitefish High School for the smaller school environment, and this choice was made prior to them moving. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the Transfer Rule appeal, Mr. Pretty On Top seconded. The motion passed unanimously with an abstaining vote from Mr. Harris.

#### **POSTSEASON EVENT BIDS – BUTTE CIVIC CENTER**

Ms. Buehler introduced Mr. Melvin and Ms. Carlson to the delegation. The Executive Board introduced themselves. Mr. Melvin stated his disappointment with the decision to have the Butte Civic Center be on rotation every other year. He requested information on the criteria for that decision and information on what the Butte Civic center can do to be in the rotation every year. Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Michelotti led discussion on the revenue that is returned to the schools, based on the gate taken at the facility. Discussion took place surrounding ways the Butte Civic Center can improve the experience for the schools such as ticket control and locker room facilities. Mr. Melvin reported that a new court and scorer tables are a large investment and commitment on their part to improve facilities there.

#### **POSTSEASON EVENT BIDS – GREAT FALLS EXPO CENTER**

Ms. Buehler introduced Ms. Shannon and Mr. McLean to the delegation. Ms. Shannon explained that the improvements in the Great Falls community will help create a better environment for the postseason events that will be held there in the future. She also explained some things their facility is looking at to improve the game day experience for all attendees including a reader board and locker room facilities. Mr. Michelotti explained that the feedback he has received is about the actual building itself and the challenging atmosphere that the building limitations provide.

## **FUNDRAISING – CHOTEAU HIGH SCHOOL – MATT CORNELIUS**

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Cornelius to the delegation. All the attending Board Members introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Cornelius explained that he found that the fundraising accounts were being held outside of the school accounts. He found that the volleyball account was held with the Booster Club and payments were made directly to players and a former coach. Choteau School District held an emergency board meeting to produce a plan of action to remedy the violations. The plan includes training for administrators and coaches, and assurance that funds sent out have been repaid back to the school. In addition, financial oversight will be put in place for all fundraising monies in the future. Further educational opportunities will be presented to the community members and all coaches regarding fundraising rules. Mr. Harris made a motion to assess a \$100.00 fine and a private reprimand to Choteau High School. Mr. Mills seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

## **REQUESTS**

### **2025-26 Music Handbook Approval**

Ms. Bartels reviewed the music handbook for the 2025-26 year. She stated the committee is concerned that music programs take a back seat to athletic and other activities. Music advisors will be encouraged to watch closely for scheduling conflicts. Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the 2025-26 MHSA Music Handbook. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **State Events/Bids**

Mr. Wilson presented a bid from Hardin to host State A Tennis in Billings as a three-day tournament, as they have 9 courts. Mr. Harris motioned to approve the State A Tennis bid in Hardin with the format of 2 or 3 days determined at the annual meeting in January, so Class A schools can discuss as a group first. Mr. McElroy seconded and it passed unanimously.

### **Baseball**

Mr. Wilson presented a proposal from Eureka to potentially move to a 3-conference system based on student enrollment. The recommendation from the association office would be to wait until October 1<sup>st</sup> to get final commitments from Bozeman and Kalispell before deciding upon the conference alignments. The Executive board gave the MHSA staff the option to realign based on the number of teams added: 1) conference split AA and ABC or 2) keep one conference. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the association recommendation for alignment and timeline. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **6-Player Football**

Mr. Wilson presented the playoff bracket proposal for 6-Player football. It has been approved by the schools in this football classification with minimal opposition. Ms. Triplett motioned to approve the alignments as presented, Mr. Patelis seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

### **Rules and Regulations**

Mr. Wilson presented a proposal to further define the Summer Coaching Rule to include State events in addition to the already mentioned Regional and National events of club or Legion activities. Mr. Harris motioned to approve the proposed language change, Mr. Mills seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

## **Swimming**

Mr. Ryan presented a language change to the uniform rule for swimming to address exceptions for patterns that appear from manufacturing once the suit is wet or stretched on the individual. He also discussed a proposal for the adoption of backstroke ledges for postseason events. The association recommends the use of these ledges in the postseason and the individual host can decide to use in the regular season. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve the uniform exception and the addition of backstroke ledges for postseason events. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **AD Mentorship Program**

Mr. Ryan addressed the issue of high turnover of Athletic Directors in our member schools. He explained that the MHSA has created a mentorship program that will use 4 retired Athletic Directors to mentor new administrators in the membership. Mr. Ryan reviewed the key components, structure and budget for the proposed program, including the specific four individuals to represent the regional areas. Mr. Harris motioned approval of the key components and structure of the program, with details provided as they solidify, that would be instituted in the 2026-27 school year. Mr. Pretty On top seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

## **New MHSA/MOA Logo**

Mr. Michelotti presented the new logo materials and usage guidelines for MHSA and MOA logos. Mr. Mills made a motion to approve the logo materials as presented. Mr. McElroy seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **FINANCES**

Mr. Michelotti discussed the bills paid April 1 – August 31, 2025. Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the bills paid. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti discussed the financial statement from July 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the financial statement and Mr. Mills seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **GENERAL OFFICE REPORT**

Mr. Michelotti discussed the General Office Report.

### Insurance Overview

No changes to report.

### Staff Events

Mr. Michelotti discussed the ongoing audit, NFHS Summer meeting preparation and planning. He also reported that the Montana Bowling Association would like to see bowling become a MHSA sanctioned sport. He further reported that Mr. Wilson may attend the NIAAA conference in Tampa Bay later this year and Ms. Cockhill presented to MASBO this summer in Great Falls at their annual conference.

### Building Update

Mr. Michelotti gave a brief update on the progress of the renovations and the anticipated move in date for late October or early November. He also reported on costs to date for the building renovations.

### Technology Update

Mr. Michelotti reviewed Arbiter implementation. Some issues have come up and we continue to work through these. In addition, the new website is set to be released October 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Sportsmanship Items

No issues to report.

#### MOA

Mr. Michelotti explained there is a complaint by an official to the Human Rights Bureau. This is being reviewed.

#### Other Information

Mr. Michelotti stated that a central site is being considered for state football championships. He also reported that Mr. Ryan is on the national volleyball committee and Ms. Bartels is on the national spirit committee.

### **CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS**

Mr. Richards gave an update with new Corporate Sponsors and renewals. He reported that Logan Health and Les Schwab Tires have stepped away. He reported on some new potential sponsors and they are awaiting the levels at which they will participate.

### **OFFICE ACTION**

Mr. Michelotti gave a report on 23 hardship waivers and that 14 have been approved and 9 have been denied. This is roughly a 61% approval rate. There have not been any 19-year-old appeals nor 15-year-old appeals.

Mr. Michelotti stated there have been no penalties nor fines and fees imposed thus far this year.

### **LEGAL**

Mr. Michelotti reported on current legal issues and brought attention to a possible upcoming cost with an official and a complaint to the Human Rights Bureau. He also reported on the NFHS Legal meeting he attended in April.

### **OFFICE REPORTS**

#### State Baseball

Mr. Wilson attended the State Baseball tournament in Hamilton and reported on that event. The facilities were great, and the grounds crew were outstanding. Parking was an issue.

#### State Tennis

Ms. Buehler reported on the state A tennis tournament in Billings. The weather was good, but there were some issues with the separation of events on different courts. Mr. Mills reported on the state AA tournament in Bozeman and that it went well. There was a small issue with Northwest Designs Ink getting set up and running smoothly. Mr. McElroy attended the state B-C tournament in Missoula and reported it went well. Playfair Park courts have been updated and are nice. There was an issue with a coach being present at each site due to the separation of sites. There was also an issue with the City of Missoula and obtaining permits to sell state championship merchandise.

#### State Golf

Mr. Fitzgerald attended the Class B tournament in Shelby. The continual issue was the wireless internet, however the facilities and course were great. Mr. Michelotti reported there was only one issue with a violation of course use for practice during the event. Ms. Triplett attended the Class C tournament in Sidney and said the event was well ran. There was a complaint that the Northwest Designs Ink worker did not speak English well and communication with her was a problem for fans.

#### State Softball

Ms. Cockhill reported on the AA tournament in Great Falls. It was a great tournament with minimal fan issues. There was some questions regarding the second championship game, which has since been rectified with rule clarification by the association. Mr. Michelotti reported on A in Glasgow and that

despite the rain, the tournament ran well at the alternate site. Ms. Bartels reported on B-C in Columbia Falls and that tournament went very well.

#### State Track

Mr. Patelis attended the AA-A meet in Kalispell. He reported that the event was very well run. Mr. Ryan commented that parking was a bit of an issue, and they had buses bringing fans from offsite parking to the facility. Ms. Triplett attended state B-C track in Missoula and reported that the meet ran very well. She received feedback from people that the lack of Athletic.net live in Missoula was a definite issue. In addition, there were insufficient services for bathrooms which resulted in very long lines. Mr. Wilson reported on B-C track as well and that despite the volunteers that failed to show, the tournament manager pivoted and recovered very well. He reported on the long lines for Northwest Designs Ink.

#### National Federation Summer Meeting

Mr. Fitzgerald reported on his attendance in Chicago. He remarked on the AI portion of the conference and networking opportunities. Mr. Harris reported on the great round table sessions particularly involving the topic of legal issues.

#### MCA Clinic, Spirit and MHSA Committees

Mr. Michelotti stated the MCA meetings went well and it is a good kickoff to the start of the year for our association.

#### Section 7/8 Meeting in Las Vegas

Mr. Michelotti reported that the staff and board members are ready to go next week and will report back.

#### Online Clinic Reports

Mr. Michelotti reported on online clinics attended and that attendance is down.

#### Emerging Sport - Flag Football

Mr. Michelotti reported Flag Football is going well and sanctioning is expected.

#### 2025-26 Aim Higher

Mr. Wilson reported on the AIM Higher presentation dates for the 2025-26 school year. The only major change is that the Billings date was moved to December from January.

### **GENERAL**

Mr. Ryan previewed the new committee appointments. He asked the Executive Board and staff to let him know if there are any suggestions to fill the vacancies.

Mr. Michelotti highlighted issues to be discussed at the November Board meeting, including the reclassification of schools. The proposals he expects to see at the Annual Meeting will be amending the Transfer Rule to reflect Open Enrollment set forth by the State Legislature and 6-Player financial reporting and reconciliation. The Class B Board Representative will be nominated and voted on at the Annual Meeting in January as well.

### **ASSIGNMENT TO FALL ACTIVITIES**

Mr. Fitzgerald assigned the Executive Board and MHSA Staff representation for fall championship events.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Mills made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed. Mr. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.