

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**
Helena Public Schools Administration Building
November 24, 2025

ATTENDANCE

Krystal Zentner, Bridger
John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge
Jim Patelis, Billings
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:

Nate Parseghian, Manhattan
Tony Biesot, Darby
Sarah Griffin, Darby
Student HH, Darby
Annie Begger, Wibaux
Colton Johns, Wibaux
Jacob Bosley, Arlee
Kevin Dighans, Helena
Justin Clement, Helena

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fitzgerald at 8:00 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

REVISIONS/ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

PUBLIC INPUT STATEMENT

Mr. Fitzgerald read the rules for public comment in an open meeting. Mr. Parseghian spoke to the executive board about moving the championships for all levels of football to a central championship location.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

Mr. McElroy motioned to approve the regular meeting minutes for September 8, 2025, and October 13, 2025. Ms. Zentner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

REQUESTS

BASEBALL ALIGNMENT AND STATE TOURNAMENT

Mr. Wilson updated the executive board on the realignment of baseball programs. The AA schools have kept their divisions West and East and will be unbalanced this year, as Helena is expected to add baseball next year. The AA will qualify for the state tournament like AA softball. Class ABC will make up the other classification. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the realignments as presented. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wilson further explained that since there is a split of classifications, that Butte will host the State AA Baseball tournament at Three Legends Stadium, May 28-30, 2026. The other bid that has been received is from Polson. Since the classifications are split into two state tournaments, the bids for Class ABC will remain open and this item will be tabled until the January meeting.

CLASS A SPEECH AND DRAMA 2026-27

Ms. Bartels explained it is a rotational bid for this state event. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve East Helena as the host of this event. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2027-28 CALENDAR

Mr. Wilson stated that the calendar contains nothing out of the ordinary. There has been a request to look at moving state baseball and AA tennis to one week earlier than other spring sports. He suggests the executive board look at this for future years as it is a very busy weekend for schools. Ms. Triplett made a motion to approve the 2027-28 calendar. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

BOYS WRESTLING WEIGHT CLASS SURVEY

Mr. Wilson explained there has been a request for a survey on the weight classes for boys wrestling. It is a request to look at going to the NFHS weight classes. The survey results were extremely evenly divided. There was discussion about the pros and cons of aligning with the NFHS on weight classes with no action taken. It was decided to bring this topic to the caucuses in January.

WRESTLING WALK UP MUSIC

Mr. Wilson reported that there has been a request for walk-up music for wrestling. The wrestling rules interpreter and committee came up with a rule stating that it must be approved by administration and will stop once the wrestler steps onto the mat. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the rule for walk-up music for wrestling. Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

RULES AND REGULATION CHANGES – MEDIA POLICY

Mr. Michelotti explained a proposal to change the current media rules to more clearly define who is allowed on sidelines at postseason events. Mr. Pretty On Top made a motion to approve the media policy changes as written. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT

Mr. Michelotti explained that requests for a flyover, parachutes or horses have been made for playoff events. Mr. Wilson addressed adding language to the rule to prohibit unmanned aircraft as well as manned aircraft and parachuting for all MHS events, regular and postseason. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the rule as written. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

EJECTION RULE INTERPRETATIONS

Mr. Wilson stated that the association gets many questions regarding the rules for ejections from fans, coaches and officials. Language has been created to clarify specifics of ejections at all sites for coaches,

spectators and student athletes. Ms. Zentner made a motion to approve the language addition as written. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

PRACTICE RULE MILITARY EXCEPTION

Mr. Michelotti explained the current practice rule that is in effect for fall sports. Mr. Dighans and Mr. Clement explained their support for an exception to the 8 or 10 practices prior to competition for fall sports. The timeline for basic training will have these soldiers coming back to high school in the fall and missing the first competition as they do not have enough practices per the current MHS rule. These students will have been doing physical workouts throughout basic training and are typically seniors, as they must be 17 to enlist. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve the exception language as written. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

FOOTBALL NON-ELIGIBLE POSTSEASON GAMES AND STANDINGS

Mr. Wilson stated there has been a request that schools who opt down in football and are not postseason eligible, that the games played against them are not counted toward conference standings. There was discussion and it was decided that this should be sent to the caucuses at the annual meeting in January.

BASKETBALL JAMBOREE FORMAT

Ms. Buehler explained this recent request came in to allow for additional games for sub-varsity teams that are in some cases hard to find. The format would be a single day event, and each team would be able to play up to 3 halves within the 6 quarter per day limit. Officials would be paid half the sub varsity game fee for each half officiated. It was suggested this be a pilot program for the membership and go into effect for the 2026-27 school year. Polson made a request for this year, and it will be approved as a trial. Other requests will be considered for this year but must be approved by the Association. Mr. Harris made a motion to approve the sub varsity basketball jamboree format for the 2026-27 school year. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL EMERGING SPORT EXTENSION

Mr. Michelotti explained there is a request to keep girls flag football as an emerging sport for two more years. This is a growing sport and another boys sport will need to be added for equity reasons. By extending the emerging sport classification, it allows the association more time to come up with the equitable boys sport. Mr. McElroy made a motion to approve a two-year extension as an emerging sport for girls flag football. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

RECLASSIFICATION APPEAL – DARBY HIGH SCHOOL

Ms. Buehler introduced Mr. Biesot, Ms. Griffin and student HH to the delegation. The executive board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Biesot presented his appeal for reclassification from Class B to Class C for the 2026-27 school year. He discussed enrollment, competition and socio-economic factors affecting Darby High School. Student HH shared her perspective as a student athlete competing in Class B. Mr. McElroy made a motion to deny the request to move to class C. Mr. Patelis seconded, and the motion passed with two dissenting votes.

6-PLAYER FOOTBALL APPEAL – WIBAUX COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Wilson introduced Ms. Begger and Mr. Johns to the delegation via zoom, and the executive board introduced themselves as well. Ms. Begger stated the specifics that have led them to appeal to move down to 6-Player football. Due to enrollment and decreased participation, they had chosen to participate in a co-op with Dawson County. They are now looking at moving to 6-Player to be on their own rather than a co-op, as the co-op had a negative effect on participation due to travel. Mr. Patelis

made a motion to deny the appeal to go to 6-Player football. Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

8-PLAYER FOOTBALL APPEAL— ARLEE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Wilson introduced Mr. Bosley to the board president, Mr. Fitzgerald. The MHSAA Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Last reclassification cycle, Arlee petitioned to go to 8-Player football and were denied. As a result, Arlee chose to play in 8-Player and was non-eligible for postseason. Mr. Bosley explained that due to a significant drop in enrollment, they are now appealing to stay in 8-Player football and to be eligible for postseason play for the 2026-27 school year. Ms. Zentner motioned to approve the appeal to remain in 8-player football and be varsity and postseason eligible; Ms. Triplett seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FINANCES

Mr. Michelotti discussed the bills paid September 1 – October 31, 2025. Mr. Mills motioned to approve the bills paid. Mr. Pretty On Top seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti reviewed the financial statement as of October 31, 2025. Mr. Harris motioned to approve the financial statement. Mr. McElroy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL OFFICE REPORT

Mr. Michelotti handed out the general office report and commented on the following topics:

Insurance

There are no changes currently.

Staff Update

There are no changes currently. Jane Ryan is a great help in tournament preparation and bulk mailing operations. There has also been success with Rules Interpreters that have been assigned to each sport. Mr. Richards was promoted to the Montana General Manager for PlayFly.

Coming Events

Mr. Michelotti will be going to the NFHS Winter Meeting. The Annual Meeting will be held in Helena this year. Mr. Wilson will be going to the NFHS Football Rules Committee, Mr. Ryan will be going to the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee Meeting and Ms. Bartels will be going to the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee Meeting this coming year. Mr. Wilson reported on the AD Mentorship program that the MHSAA has initiated, and that the first meeting will be held in December.

Policy Manual Changes

There are no changes.

New Building

Mr. Michelotti reported on the move in schedule, as well as a request to member schools for memorabilia to use as décor in the new space. He went over finances regarding costs associated with the renovation of this building. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve utilizing \$75,000.00 of Technology Reserves and \$100,000.00 of General Reserves for the renovation of the new building. Mr. Mills seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Technology

Arbiter transition is going well and website is moving along.

Sportsmanship

Mr. Michelotti discussed reports of fan actions at the state volleyball tournament, and student athlete ejection in soccer. In addition, he reported on a good response to officials' calls by a coach.

Montana Officials Association

There are no background checks performed by the MOA on non-MOA officials. Some pools still choose to hire them, however, they must be approved by the school. There is an upcoming Regional Directors meeting on December 8-9, 2025.

Other Issues

Discussion ensued regarding championship football events and bringing it to the caucuses in January. Other items that were discussed include: creating a reclassification committee, open gym rule, coaching out of season rule, unofficial fall OPI enrollments, student advisory committee and NFHS views for postseason football and volleyball.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

Mr. Richards reported that there are no major sponsorship changes. Town Pump did come on as a new corporate sponsor this year. He also discussed a couple of new potential sponsors.

OFFICE ACTION

Mr. Michelotti stated 51 hardship waivers have been submitted this year. Of those, 33 have been approved and 18 have been denied. Mr. Michelotti reported there have been no age rule waivers. Mr. Michelotti stated there have been 2 penalties imposed thus far, both being self-reported. There were 4 fines and fees so far this year, all for late registration for state cross-country.

LEGAL

Mr. Michelotti reported on legal costs this fiscal year to October 31, 2025. He will be attending the NFHS Legal Meeting in April.

REPORTS

2025 State Fall Tournaments/Meets

Cross Country: Mr. Ryan reported that the All-Class State Cross Country Meet held in Missoula at UM Golf course was a successful event. Mr. Pretty On Top attended and handed out trophies and medals.

Golf: Mr. Michelotti reported that the Class AA State Golf Tournament at Butte Country Club was well run. The event went into extra hole playoff situation. Ms. Triplett reported on the Class A State Golf Tournament in Sidney, stating everything went well.

Soccer: Mr. Harris reported that the Class A Boys Championships in Polson went smoothly with a large crowd. Mr. Mills reported that the Class AA Boys Soccer Championships in Billings was a great event. Ms. Buehler echoed these comments. Mr. Pretty On Top stated that the Class AA Girls Championship in Billings went well.

Football: Mr. Harris reported that the State AA Championship in Kalispell went well with a historically large crowd. Mr. Pretty On Top attended the State A Championship in Frenchtown and reported that this event was great as well, with a great atmosphere. Mr. Mills attended the Class B Championship in Manhattan and reported that it was a well-run event and well attended. Ms. Triplett reported that the 8-Player Championship in Scobey went well. Ms. Zentner stated that the 6-Player championship in Grass Range went well, except for a flyover.

Volleyball: Mr. Ryan, Mr. Harris, Mr. Mills and Mr. McElroy were in attendance. Mr. Ryan stated this has gone the smoothest in comparison to recent years. There were 4 Executive Board members present so it made award presentations nice. Mr. McElroy commented on the amazing atmosphere.

Ejections: Ms. Bartels reported 43 ejections for this year so far.

AIM Higher: Mr. Wilson stated there have been 3 workshops so far. He is heading to Great Falls and Billings in December.

Academic Appeal Progress Reports: Mr. Michelotti reported on the 8 academic appeals thus far this year. Four students are doing well, and four students have become ineligible.

GENERAL

MHSA Committee Appointments

Mr. Ryan reviewed the openings for committee appointments, with a request to send interested administrators to him for consideration.

FINAL ACTION ON TWO WEEK NOTICE ITEMS

Mr. Michelotti reported that there have been no comments on the two-week notice for:

- a) The Board approved new language for this year allowing coaches to coach after July 31st if their summer team advances to a state event. The MHSA office must be notified, and the competition must be approved.
- b) The Board approved the 6-player football bracket for 2025-2029.
- c) The Board approved new language for this year regarding the swimming uniform.
- d) The Board approved new language for this year regarding the use of backstroke ledges.

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

ANNUAL MEETING

Mr. Ryan discussed the schedule of activities for the Annual Meeting. The Saturday board meeting will be held at the MHSA office. He gave a brief explanation of breakout and caucus meetings. In addition, Mr. Ryan went over the Resolutions Committee and the Parliamentarian for the meeting. Mr. Michelotti and Mr. Ryan summarized the awards recipients for the meeting.

PROPOSALS/ANNUAL MEETING

Schools Proposals to By-Laws

Mr. Michelotti reported the following By-Law changes that will likely be submitted by the schools at the Annual Meeting: 1) 6 Player football playoff revenue disbursement. This will allow for any profit to be distributed to the schools in the playoffs rather than the entire Class C member schools.

MHSA Proposals to By-Laws

Mr. Michelotti also stated the by-law change proposals that will be brought by the MHSA are: 1) Academic hardship option with bi-weekly checks; 2) Expedited fee increase and no refund; 3) Change spectator ejection rule from 3 games to two weeks and 4) Nonvalue apparel rule change. The option to allow a transfer, if the move is over a particular mileage will be brought forth to the caucuses in January.

PROPOSED BUDGET

Mr. Michelotti discussed a proposed budget increase for 2026-27 of 4-6% with no additional cost to membership. This will help with costs such as the AD Mentoring program and the audit. Mr. Patelis

moved to approve the proposed 6% budget increase in specific areas. Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

There were no items to discuss.

NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled Executive Board meeting will be the Annual Meeting, January 17th and 19th at the Delta Hotel in Helena, MT. Additional meetings will follow April 20-21, 2026, in Helena and June 18, 2026, via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Patelis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Zentner seconded, and the motion passed. Mr. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 2:47 pm.