

**Frenchtown School Board of Trustees Meeting**

**May 16, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Middle School Shared Common Area**

I. **Call to Order:** The Regular School Board Meeting was called to order by Board Chair Jami Romney FitzGerald. Trustees Shiloh Lucier, Bryce Simpson, Noah Peters, Rainier Batt and Amanda Hansen were in attendance. Also in attendance were Superintendent Les Meyer, Principals Aaron Griffin, Riley Devins and Jodi Hall, Special Services Coordinator Jennifer Demmons, Technology Coordinator James Forrider and District Clerk Shauna Anderson.

II. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The meeting opened with the pledge at 7:00 p.m.

III. **Board Recognition**

Superintendent Les Meyer discussed Teacher Appreciation week, and thanked the Frenchtown PTSA and Booster Club for everything they did for the teachers. Board Chair Jami Romney FitzGerald acknowledged Music Teacher Elaina Blass for her work with many concerts and the recent memorial service for Justine Luebke. Also acknowledged was Art Teacher Megan Dungan. The custodial staff was thanked for their work through events at the District.

IV. **Public Comment Period**

Natalie Grubb addressed the board. As a substitute bus driver, she enjoyed working with the transportation department. She asked the board to install a parent code of conduct stemming from a recent incident that resulted in her resignation. She felt this was important to provide an expectation of safety for staff and would help with bus driver retention.

Jodi Thomasson addressed the board, thanking English Teacher Annie Sullivan and Trustees Noah Peters and Bryce Simpson for presenting and discussing literature, discussed the influence of literature personally and asked those present to read the book *The Kite Runner*.

Damon Leishman addressed the board as a representative of the West Valley Community Council. Projects in progress include the bike loop on Mullan Road. The WVCC meets every second Thursday at 6:00 p.m. with the exception of the summer months.

V. **Individuals and Delegations to Address the Board**

Frenchtown Community Coalition representative Reagan Mecham discussed the upcoming Frenchtown Youth Summit June 14-16, and distributed a flyer to board members. Topics to be covered are substance use, prevention strategies and coping mechanisms. This Youth Summit is open to ages 12 and up for all of Montana.

VI. **Staff Presentation** – none.

VII. **Approval of Minutes**

Shiloh Lucier made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Bryce Simpson seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.

Principal Jake Haynes and Assistant Principal Beth Terzo arrived at 7:17 p.m.

VIII. **Administrative Reports**

Highlights of the administrative reports were 1) Maintenance Supervisor Sean Mecham discussed the numerous spring and summer projects underway and the recent board walk through. Superintendent Les Meyer indicated that the facilities committee would meet to prioritize summer projects. 2) Technology Coordinator James Forrider discussed working with Blackfoot regarding issues with the infrastructure and improvements being made this summer. 3) Administrative Reports: Special Services Coordinator Jennifer Demmons acknowledged Special Olympic coaches Jennifer Stephens, Jasmine Schreckendgust and Jessica Beers for their work at this amazing event. Elementary Principal Jodi Hall discussed “Kindy Roundup”,

with 62 enrolled for next year already. Also discussed was the Boys and Girls Club after school program, which is an excellent benefit for Frenchtown families. Trustee Noah Peters distributed an art project from the Transitional Kindergarten class for trustees to see. Principal Hall encouraged those in attendance to see the K-5 art installation by Art Teacher Megan Dungan. Principal Riley Devins acknowledged Enrichment Teacher Dalene Normand and the Science Palooza event, an excellent hands-on science experience. The Bronc Stampede will be on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Principal Devins thanked the PTSA for teacher appreciation week, and the conclusion of testing. MS Principal Aaron Griffin discussed the promotion ceremony and acknowledged the custodial crew for all their work with MS track meets. The Iron Bronc had 23 students meet the criteria for the award, which acknowledges those students who demonstrate excellent community service. HS Principal Jake Haynes discussed numerous end of year events, including graduation and academic awards. 4) Superintendent Les Meyer congratulated newly elected trustees Shiloh Lucier and Bryce Simpson. Staffing was discussed, and the District will not be replacing 5.5 teaching positions next year. Recent legislation regarding special education savings accounts and school choice were discussed, as well as increases in insurance costs for the District.

## IX. Business

### A. Old Business

#### 1) Review/Action: Curriculum Committee Recommendation of Adoption

Superintendent Les Meyer discussed the final five books reviewed by the Curriculum Committee for adoption. Numerous meetings over the previous two years were held and the final committee meeting resulted in the recommendation of the final five books: *The Kite Runner*, choice read for seniors; *Into Thin Air*, choice read for juniors; *The Hate U Give*, choice read for juniors; *The Marrow Thieves*, classroom read for juniors with censored copies available; and *Black Boy*, Choice read for seniors.

Noah Peters made a motion to approve the books as listed. Amanda Hansen seconded the motion. Public discussion:

Nate Tollefson addressed the board, and felt none of these books should be a part of the curriculum due to not only language but also content, and expressed concerns that once approved the teachers would introduce the books into the curriculum as assigned, feeling parents know what is best for their students. Jodi Thomasson addressed the board, indicating that alternative texts are available for all students, expressed respect for the teachers' professional judgement, and supported approval of the books. Lauren Atkin addressed the board and discussed HB234 recently signed into law regarding obscenity. Copies of the legislation were provided for the board. Ann Gentry addressed the board, discussing the freedom to read as guaranteed by the Constitution, agreeing the parents are best suited to choose material for their child but not other children. Also discussed was the negative impact of cell phones, and how books are not the problem. Debbie Lester addressed the board, also indicating that books are not the problem and students need literature that is challenging and controversial. Michael Russell addressed the board, and with a degree in English felt that FTSD should focus on teaching English including proper sentence structure, etc., and not what or how to think. Josh Smith addressed the board, indicating with an expletive that this word is not appropriate for school and the students should not be reading it, indicating the school should focus on reading, writing and courses such as finance and resume building. Doug Lundell addressed the board, discussing the unspoken word suggesting that if the school allows the material it is suggesting it is acceptable and rather would prefer providing the best education possible. Elysa Stoker addressed the board, discussed derogatory statements students have said to one another and felt that students are afraid of things they have to read. Liz Delaney addressed the board and acknowledged the teachers as professionals, did not appreciate the language used by others present in this public meeting and felt the differing perspectives in these books need to be shared. Jenny Tollefson addressed the board, felt students need culture but these are not the books for this reading an explicit excerpt from *The Kite Runner*. Damon Leishman addressed the board and felt parents are present tonight to exercise their authority to educate their children, and innocence should be protected in the school. Claudia Ruple addressed the board and felt it was not appropriate for children to read these books and the children should be taught to be better citizens. Doug Henry addressed the board

and felt that in a bleak world we should be choosing books that are a bright spot for the students. Jean Bardwell addressed the board in support of the English department, and felt this literature opens up discussions with parents and children. Crystal Leishman addressed the board and felt teachers do not have training in psychology and should not present socially charged topics since students are not prepared mentally for them. Kari Mazzola addressed the board acknowledging the broad spectrum of opinions about the teachers, and expressed concerns over the impact of social media and cell phones on the students causing the poor behavior in school. Caitlin McIver addressed the board and discussed how the teachers vetted over 200 books in the prior two years and selected books with educational value appropriate for the maturity level of the student, and thanked those in attendance. Mandi Klimpel addressed the board and indicated that teachers are not trying to indoctrinate students, did not take this process lightly and thanked the curriculum committee for reading the books.

Board discussion:

Trustee and committee member Noah Peters indicated that both sides would not be completely happy with decisions made, read all of the books, saw education value, and felt with given choices this is a compromise. Trustee Rainier Batt supports teachers however does not support books with topics demeaning to police officers. Trustee Bryce Simpson spoke about choice reads as being impactful personally and trusts the administration, teachers and committee members. Superintendent Meyer responded to public discussion explaining how the District was part of a curriculum consortium but not with the size of the District is establishing curriculum independently. Principal and Curriculum Coordinator Riley Devins indicated that one content area will be reviewed each year and value the community input and opinions for all subject matters. Board Chair Jami Romney FitzGerald appreciated everyone in attendance and how all care for our students. Trustee and committee member Amanda Hansen thanked all in attendance, indicated this was a long and difficult process with the best interests of the students in mind. A lot of thought and angst went into this process and the committee took into consideration the opinions and input of all sides.

Jami Romney FitzGerald, Bryce Simpson, Noah Peters and Amanda Hansen voted in favor of the motion. Shiloh Lucier and Rainier Batt opposed. The motion passed 4-2.

## B. New Business

### 1) Review/Action: Approval of Bus Drivers for the 2023-2024 School Year

Superintendent Les Meyer discussed the current crisis with the transportation department and the critical need for bus drivers. If the shortage continues, in consideration are difficult decisions such as staggered start times or not offering bus service for students within three miles or out of district students. Superintendent Meyer recommended hiring the bus drivers listed in the board packet. Bryce Simpson made a motion to approve the hires as listed. Rainier Batt seconded the motion.

Public discussion: Michael Russell addressed the board and indicated that poorly behaved students on the busses may be corrected now that they are “enlightened” by the English curriculum. Natalie Grubb addressed the board and indicated it is not just children, but it is also parents and if this behavior is corrected, there may be more drivers. Board discussion: Trustee and transportation committee member Bryce Simpson indicated that there might need to be difficult decisions made regarding bus routes if route drivers are not hired. Unanimous.

### 2) Review/Action: Hire Supervisors and Administrative Support Personnel for the 2023-2024 School Year

Superintendent Les Meyer recommended the hiring of support personnel as listed in the board packet. Rainier Batt made a motion to approve the hires as listed. Shiloh Lucier seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.

### 3) Review/Action: Hiring Classified Employees 2023-2024 School Year

Superintendent Les Meyer recommended the hiring of classified staff members as listed in the board packet. Shiloh Lucier made a motion to approve classified staff as listed. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.

- 4) Review/Action: Hiring of Middle School Coaches/Advisors for the 2023-2024 School Year  
Superintendent Les Meyer recommended the hiring of Middle School coaches and advisors as listed in the packet, noting a resignation was received from the MS Soccer coach so that position is open. Bryce Simpson made a motion to approve the hires as listed. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.
- 5) Review/Action: Hiring of Winter High School Coaches for the 2023-2024 School Year  
Superintendent Les Meyer recommended the hiring of winter high school coaches as listed in the packet, noting a resignation was received from the Cheer coach so that position is open. Bryce Simpson made a motion to approve the hires as listed with the exception of Cheer coach Avery Spacek. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.
- 6) Review/Action: Approval of Girls Swim Co-op with MCPS  
Superintendent Les Meyer recommended approval of the girls swim co-op with MCPS. Bryce Simpson made a motion to approve the girls swim co-op as recommended. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion: Josh Smith addressed the board and thanked coaches for the jobs they do. Board discussion – regarding the success of the swim co-op. Unanimous.
- 7) Review/Action: Approval of Boys Soccer Co-op with Missoula Loyola  
Missoula Loyola requested a co-op for boys' soccer, indicating there are two boys who are interested in playing. Superintendent Les Meyer indicated that if they have the numbers to support a team on their own they would do so. MHSA is aware and supports this. Noah Peters made a motion to approve boys' soccer co-op with Missoula Loyola. Bryce Simpson seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – regarding the historic rivalry with Missoula Loyola, the cost to the District, player maximums and cuts. Unanimous.
- 8) Review/Action: Hiring Staff  
Superintendent Meyer recommended the following for hire: Sub Bus Driver Anna Feusner, Bus Aid 23-24 Kielee Stoker, Summer Workers Kellen Klimpel, Sully Belcourt, Phoenix Miller, Lauryn Lynch, Josh Criner and Seth Mason, Student Workers Corbin Long and Isabelle Cahall, Career Exploration Week Teacher Debbie Wine, Career Exploration Week Student Workers Ryan Moris, Kaiden VanSydow, Angie Maze-Kelly, Anthony Simon, Anjle Cobler and Destiney Stolle, HS Secretary Katie Clute-Morgan, Custodian Corey Hansen, HS Health Enhancement Teacher Brent Yeakey, HS Science Teacher Abigail Jones and HS Science Teacher Madeleine Boller. Noah Peters made a motion to approve the hires as listed. Shiloh Lucier seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.
- 9) Information/Discussion: Resignations  
The resignations of Math Counts Advisors Seth Mason and Josh Criner, MS Student Council Peyton Fulbright, MS Volleyball Mariah Harvey, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher Jennifer Wipplinger, Kitchen Worker Leeza Burklund, HS Science Teacher Hannah Pepper, HS Secretary Anna Feusner, Permanent Substitutes Melody Lindorf, Mackenzie Stickel and Abigail Lynes, Paraprofessionals Cassandra Lindseth, Kielee Stoker and Taryn Johnson, MS Soccer Jessie Yeager, Assistant HS Boys Basketball Mark Quinn, Study Hall Teacher Steve Pinsoneault, Sub Bus Driver Natalie Grubb, Student Council advisors Mandi Klimpel and Annie Sullivan and Kindergarten Teacher Shareena Musso were discussed.
- 10) Review/Action: Approval of Leave of Absence  
Superintendent Les Meyer recommended the approval of the leave of absence request by Art Teacher Megan Dungan. Shiloh Lucier made a motion to approve the leave of absence as requested. Rainier Batt seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – regarding replacing this position. Unanimous.
- 11) Review/Action: Approval – Bus Route Change  
Bryce Simpson made a motion to approve bus route changes 18A to 18B, 18B to 18C and 11B to 11C. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.
- 12) Review/Action: Contracts/Agreements

- a. Fundamentals Therapy Services
- b. Sign Language Interpreter

Superintendent Les Meyer made a motion to approve the contracts as presented in the board packet. Shiloh Lucier made a motion to approve the contracts as presented in the packet. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – regarding the sign language interpreter contract and the possibility of subtitles for future events. Unanimous.

13) Review/Action: Canvass Election Results

District Clerk Shauna Anderson distributed election canvass documents provided by the Missoula County Elections Administration for certification. Amanda Hansen made a motion to approve the Canvass of Votes and Declaration of Results, and the Certificate of Election for Proposition as presented. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.

X. **Policy Review – none.**

Superintendent Les Meyer indicated there would be many policy changes coming due to recent legislation.

XI. **Approval of Warrants/Approval of Financial Report**

Shiloh Lucier made a motion to approve the warrants and financial reports as presented. Noah Peters seconded the motion. Public discussion – none. Board discussion – none. Unanimous.

XII. **Committee Reports – Updated Committees**

- A. Policy (Shiloh Lucier, Jami Wright, Noah Peters)
- B. Insurance (Bryce Simpson, Amanda Hansen & Jami Wright)
- C. Negotiations/Labor Relations (Jami Romney FitzGerald, Bryce Simpson & Jami Wright)
- D. Transportation (Bryce Simpson & Rainier Batt)
- E. Safety (Bryce Simpson & Rainier Batt)
- F. School Improvement/Goals Committee (Jami Romney FitzGerald, Bryce Simpson & Noah Peters)
- G. Ad Hoc Committees – IT (Jami Romney FitzGerald & Amanda Hansen), Facilities – (Jami Romney FitzGerald, Bryce Simpson & Rainier Batt), Curriculum/Professional Development (Noah Peters & Amanda Hansen), Academic Achievement – (Shiloh Lucier, Noah Peters & Jami Wright), Wellness (Jami Romney FitzGerald & Shiloh Lucier).

Upcoming meeting are Negotiations Committee and Facilities Committee.

XIII. **Adjournment**

ADJOURNED 9:24 p.m.

Approved: June 20, 2023

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Shiloh Lucier  
Board Chair

/s/ Shauna Anderson  
District Clerk