

**POWELL COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING – October 10, 2022 – 6:30 p.m. – PCHS Library**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Board Chair Jennifer Nicholson called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. ROLL:

Board Chair: Jennifer Nicholson.

Board Members: Amanda Bohrer, Baylee Brown, Will Graveley, Maureen Mannix, Robert Rabel, and Bart Smith.

Administration: Rick Duncan, Katie Crofutt, and Annette Galahan.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

4. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

Bernhard family, Jackie Beck, Kaiden Beck, Taylor Bentley, Elizabeth Burnett, Josiah Biddlecomb, Mac Bignell, Susie Bleken, Gayle Boese, Levi Bohrer, Jim Buck, Ashleigh Cease, Jeff Cease, Breydan Campbell, Ashton Coleman, Ben Cotton, Bo Daniel, Kaylene Daniel, Kaden Dolan, Jackie Greenwood, John Greenwood, Brendan Hagan, Chris Hagan, Dawn Hagan, Jaymie Hansen, Orrin Hansen, Rick Hayes, Paul Henze, Bridgit Herrick, Cayman Herrick, Kelly Knight, Norm and Kraukenauer, Shawn Lombardi, Justin Marshall, Bambi Mattila, Diane Mavrinac, Donavan Peterson, Cody Reistad, Misty Reistad, Dodi Rennfield, Mike Rennfield, Riley Rennfield, Patrick Roberts, Jamie Rivers-Ross, Riley Rutherford, Louis Savalla, Meagan Savalla, Bob Schalk, Collin Spears, Michele Spears, Shane Spears, Luke Ulatowski, Ken VanSickel, Andrew Verlanic, Carly Verlanic, Pat Verlanic, James Waite, Tina Wetsch.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Action: Robert Rabel moved to approve the September 12, 2022 regular meeting minutes, seconded by Bart Smith.

FOR: Amanda Bohrer, Will Graveley, Maureen Mannix, Robert Rabel, and Bart Smith.

ABSTAIN: Baylee Brown.

The motion passed.

6. BUSINESS MANAGER:

Action: Baylee Brown moved to approve the October bills, including the delayed bill – Bank of America after check is printed, and a correction to Charter Spectrum, seconded by Bart Smith.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Galahan provided the Statement of Revenue and Expenditures vs. Actuals for July and August via email; there were no questions.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jackie Greenwood asked if PCHS is considering unisex bathrooms? Rick Duncan responded no; he added that we have separate boy and girl bathrooms for our students.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

Jennifer Nicholson read aloud the Notice Regarding Public Comment which states,

*“Montana law 2-3-103, MCA requires school districts and other public agencies to include on the agenda for public meeting an item allowing public comment on **any public matter not otherwise specifically listed on the agenda** that is within the jurisdiction of the agency. As has been the practice of the district, and in accordance with Montana law, if any member desires to speak to an item that is **specifically listed/identified on the agenda**, you will be allowed to do so when the item comes up for discussion and action...*

For those individuals who desire to address the Board during the “public comment” portion of the meeting, if you haven’t already done so, please sign your name to the visitor sheet and indicate the general topic on which you will comment. The Board Chair will call individuals to speak in the order listed. I would like to remind everyone in attendance that to avoid violations of individual rights of privacy, a member of the public wishing to address the Board during this time will not be allowed to make comments about any student, staff member, or member of the general public during his/her designated time to speak...

Depending on the number of persons who wish to address the Board, the Board Chair may place reasonable time limits on comments, in order to maintain and ensure effective and efficient operations of the Board.”

Mrs. Nicholson then stated that she would allow 2 minutes for each speaker, and that she would be flexible.

Possible Executive Session I

Personnel: Classified Employment – Asheigh Cease

Jennifer Nicholson opened public comment. Jeff Cease spoke on behalf of his wife Asheigh Cease and read aloud 3 letters of support for Mrs. Cease. The letters were of a personal nature and mentioned people not in attendance. Rick Duncan reminded attendees of the rights of privacy (the letters will not be printed in the minutes due to privacy issues). James Waite spoke and said that his daughter had Mrs. Cease and that she does a great job; he then stated that Mr. Duncan and Mrs. Crofutt should file their resignations today!

Jennifer Nicholson stated that she would close the regular meeting and go into executive session for a matter of personal privacy, where the employee’s personal privacy exceeds the public’s right to know.

Executive Session I

Board Chair Nicholson called for an Executive Session at 6:55 p.m., which was held in the Business Manager Office/Board Room. Those present included: Board Chair Jennifer Nicholson; Board members: Amanda Bohrer, Baylee Brown, Will Graveley, Maureen Mannix, Robert Rabel, Bart Smith; Superintendent Rick Duncan and Principal Katie Crofutt; and Ashleigh Cease and husband Jeff Cease.

Jennifer Nicholson called the meeting back to order at 8:05 p.m.

Termination of Employment: Session I

Rick Duncan made the recommendation to terminate Ashleigh Cease's employment. Mrs. Nicholson called for a motion three times. No motion was made, the matter dies. Mrs. Cease retains her employment.

Possible Executive Session II

Rick Duncan read aloud the following letter from the PCHS football team:

Dear School Board Members,

As members of the PCHS football team, we are thankful for the opportunity to address you this evening. We are writing concerning the suspension of our head coach, Coach Andrew Verlanic. We appreciate you taking the time to read and listen to our team.

Coach Verlanic has been our head coach for the past 3 years. He is a coach who has a lot of heart and sincerely cares about our team. He is a coach that is passionate about coaching, supportive of us as athletes and students, and cares for our overall well-being. Coach Verlanic finds ways to make playing for the high school fun. He teaches lessons on and off the football field and is helping us to develop the skills we need on the field, but more importantly, skills that will help us the rest of our lives. He has taught us leadership, sportsmanship, and encourages us to never give up. He pushes us to be our best, to play with heart, and to finish strong.

Coach Verlanic loves his players and will do what it takes to help them.

In the words of our team members:

"Coach Verlanic gave me supplies for football because I didn't have all the stuff I needed."

"He wants to help his players on and off the field. He is curious about how we are feeling and helped us to build our teammates up."

"Verlanic is the best coach I ever had. He believed in all of us and wanted to see us succeed."

“Coach gave me a lot of motivation through the season. He was always positive even when we lost. One time at practice he pulled me aside and gave me constructive criticism. He always found a way to help us when we didn’t understand.”

“He tells us to keep going when we want to stop. He helps motivate us when we’re feeling down.”

“Coach would open the weight room for me in the summer and would personally help me out and improve my game. He has such a great personality and is the best fit for our team.”

How are we supposed to have a winning attitude if our coach is not there to teach, lead, and support his team? We all love Coach Verlanic as a teammate, coach and as a friend, so please don’t try and bring us further down than we already are.”

In the words of our team captains:

“Coach Verlanic was the coach I trusted most in my career. I believed in his coaching ability and his ability to make me a better player overall.”

“I’ve known Andrew for 3 years now, throughout these 3 years, Andres has made me into a better player and person. I remember my freshman year, I had to go up against this super big senior Defensive Tackle, I was getting my butt kicked on every play. This was until Andrew told me to stay low, keep one foot back slightly when in your stance. I started doing that and immediately I started winning against this kid. Andrew has given me great advice during practice, always pushing me harder, correcting all my mistakes, and showing me easy ways to beat someone bigger than me. With Andrew coaching, I’ve learned to have a good attitude no matter what and to have a great work ethic. My head coach has always done his job, and this is making me a successful athlete, student, and person.”

“Dear School Board, we would like Mr. Verlanic reinstated as our head coach. He is the core of our team and is fundamentally important to our team. We believe he was unfairly suspended and hasn’t received proper treatment for his actions by the administration. We believe that Mr. Verlanic is, and will be, crucial to having future success with the Warden Football program. He is a great coach who has a lot of heart and sincerely cares about our team.”

Thank you for taking the time to hear from your Powell County High School Football Team.

<i>Riley Rennfield</i>	<i>Louis Savalla</i>	<i>Ashton Coleman</i>
<i>Orrin Hansen</i>	<i>Kaiden Beck</i>	<i>Collin Spears</i>
<i>Breydan Campbell</i>	<i>Jamie Rivers-Ross</i>	<i>Cayman Herrick</i>
<i>Donovan Peterson</i>	<i>Kaiden Dolan</i>	<i>Josiah Biddlecomb</i>
<i>Shawn Lombardi</i>	<i>Bo Daniel</i>	<i>Levi Bohrer</i>

Jennifer Nicholson opened public comment. James Waite asked why it's acceptable for the administration to not support our students. Scott Bernhard asked why Coach Verlanic should be fired, not for **not** doing his job, but for speaking? He said he's doing the job and many people have echoed this. Mrs. Bernhard stated that Coach Verlanic said what's missing in this town, and she discussed Eureka's program; she also said that Coach Verlanic can make a new program. Shane Spears said that he wanted to reiterate the football player's letter, and that he's coached for many years and hasn't seen kids buy in to the program like they are now. Bambi Mattila apologized to the football team for not being supportive and attending the games, and she commended the boys for going out for football. Ms. Mattila also said that Coach Verlanic may have not went about it the right way, but good points were made, and hopefully everyone can work together to build the program. Jackie Beck said that she agrees with everyone, and that the whole culture needs to change; she hopes that we can use this as a learning experience, grow, and build a sports program. Ms. Beck hopes that Coach Verlanic's suspension can be removed and allow him to finish the season. Chris Hagen stated that he's seen a huge, positive change in his son, and to please reinstate Coach Verlanic. Mr. Hagan said, "He's a godsend to this dream team of coaches." Jim Buck asked about the executive session process. Jennifer Nicholson responded that this is not a termination issue, and that in closed session an open and private discussion can be held, and that it is a privacy issue. A determination to lift the suspension or not will be made. Maureen Mannix clarified that Coach Verlanic can make the decision to be in closed session or remain in public. Mac Bignell said that Coach Verlanic is a phenomenal guy, and pointed out how well he knows the game, and how he treats the players. He said, "I am here to ask you to unsuspend Coach Verlanic." Louis Savalla stated that he's known Coach Verlanic for 3 years, and that he's the best coach; he added that he's learned so much, on and off the field, has learned life lessons, and has a better work ethic. Jackie Greenwood talked about First Amendment rights, and asked what process was followed to suspend Mr. Verlanic. She said, "You didn't like what he said, so you suspended him." Rick Duncan responded that Coach Verlanic was notified at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, and later met with the superintendent, principal and athletic director to review the suspension letter. Mr. Duncan stated that as superintendent he has the authority to suspend, not fire. James Waite reiterated that Mr. Duncan and Mrs. Crofutt should resign tonight! Jaymie Hansen said thank you to the Board and the administration, saying that people don't understand all that they do. Mrs. Hansen also said that she doesn't recognize many of the people here, that a JV football game was just played tonight, and that she doesn't recognize the people who have said a lot; she added that the football players have shown respect to the Board, and that she's thankful for the coaches that have taught them this.

Executive Session II

Board Chair Nicholson called for an Executive Session at 8:31 p.m., which was held in the Business Manager Office/Board Room. Those present included: Board Chair Jennifer Nicholson; Board members: Amanda Bohrer, Baylee Brown, Will Graveley, Maureen

Mannix, Robert Rabel, Bart Smith; Superintendent Rick Duncan and Principal Katie Crofutt; and Andrew Verlanic.

Jennifer Nicholson called the meeting back to order at 9:43 p.m.

Reprimand of Employment: Session II

Action: Bart Smith moved to remove Andrew Verlanic's suspension as Head Football Coach, seconded by Amanda Bohrer.

Discussion: Mr. Smith stated that the Board and Coach Verlanic had a good visit, aired things out, and that it was a good discussion. He said that Mr. Verlanic is a good coach, it was a productive meeting, it's important for the kids to finish the season, social media is not always a good thing, and finally, that this can draw us closer and get the public behind the school, sports, academics, and all the way around. Baylee Brown said it was good to talk to Coach Verlanic, a lot of questions were answered, and that he has great support from the community and the kids. Jennifer Nicholson said that students are our center, and we all want the best for them. Amanda Bohrer discussed community, action plans and school spirit.

The motion passed unanimously.

10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m. by unanimous consent.

The next regular meeting will be Monday, November 14, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

s/Annette Galahan, District Business Manager/Clerk

s/Jennifer Nicholson, Board Chair