

**UNOFFICIAL/UNAPPROVED
POWELL COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING – February 13, 2023 – 6:30 p.m.**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Board Chair Jennifer Nicholson called the meeting to order at 6:31 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:

Jackie Greenwood, John Greenwood, Dawn Hagan, Peggy Kerr, Alesha Ross, Dave Ross, and Luke Ulatowski.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Action: Will Graveley moved to approve the January 9, 2023 regular meeting minutes, seconded by Robert Rabel.

The motion passed unanimously.

6. CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

7. STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT:

Excused.

8. DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION: Special Education

Dawn Hagan was present to discuss the Special Education Department. Mrs. Hagan reviewed her classes and stated she currently has 26 students: 5 utilizing speech services; 9 taking the ACT Exam with accommodations; 14 participating in Pre-ETS/Life Skills; and 10 that are ServSafe certified. Mrs. Hagan was proud to report that 6 of her students earned their learner's permit and/or driver license this year, and she has another 4 students trying for learner's permits. Mrs. Hagan also stated that 3 students are in internship positions, and that she hopes to place 10 students in a job setting next year. Mrs. Hagan also discussed speech-to-text and text-to speech computer programs, which increase student independence and confidence.

9. ATHLETIC DIRECTOR REPORT:

Rick Duncan reported on behalf of Bob Schalk due to a girls' basketball district play-in game. Mr. Duncan stated that if the girls win tonight's game that they will be qualified for both the district and divisional basketball tournaments. Little Guy Wrestling started

today, and 110 kids have signed up; practice will in the gymnasium and will last for 6 weeks. Mr. Duncan also discussed the results of the MHSAA Annual Meeting and the results of the 4 proposals: lacrosse failed; e-sports failed; private school withdrawn; and coop teams total population can't exceed total for class.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Employment Contracts

Custodian

Action: Maureen Mannix moved to hire Hans Schleuter as Custodian, beginning March 1st, as recommended by Rick Duncan, seconded by Will Graveley.

Discussion: Baylee Brown asked if a board member attended the interview, and Mr. Duncan stated that he interviewed Mr. Schleuter, and that the Interview Committee participates in certified teacher and head coach interviews. Maureen Mannix said that we should go for it since Mr. Duncan has made the recommendation.

The motion passed unanimously.

Head Golf

Action: Baylee Brown moved to hire George Mann as Head Golf Coach for 2022-23, seconded by Jennifer Nicholson.

Discussion: Maureen Mannix gave kudos to Mr. Mann for his many years of experience as a golf pro.

The motion passed unanimously.

Assistant Golf

Action: Will Graveley moved to hire Wade Johnson as Assistant Golf Coach for 2022-23, seconded by Robert Rabel.

The motion passed unanimously.

Assistant Track

Action: Baylee Brown moved to hire Justin Best as Assistant Track Coach for 2022-23, seconded by Bart Smith.

Discussion: Baylee Brown asked who Mr. Best is replacing. Mr. Duncan stated that Jace Felde was unable to coach this year. He said that Mr. Best will be a great track coach and added that it will be nice to have a staff member as coach, as we have very few.

The motion passed unanimously.

Election Resolution

Rick Duncan read aloud the following resolution:

TRUSTEE RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN ELECTION

BE IT RESOLVED that the Trustees of Powell County High School District, of Powell County, Montana, will hold the Annual Regular School Election on Tuesday, May 2, 2023, which date is not less than seventy (70) days after passage of this resolution, for

*the purpose of electing two (2) trustees: **one (1) three-year term** in the Deer Lodge High School District; and **one (1) three-year term** in the Helmville/Ovando District. The election will be conducted by mail ballot, and all judges, if available, will be the same as the last mail ballot election. On election day, polls will open at 12:00 noon and close at 8:00 p.m. for ballots to be dropped off in person at the Powell County Clerk & Recorder's Office, Powell County Courthouse, 409 Missouri Avenue, Deer Lodge, Montana. Be it further resolved that the Trustees of Powell County High School District declare the trustee election by acclamation contingent upon the number of candidates not exceeding the number of available positions.*

Approval of additional levies to operate and maintain Powell County High School District for the 2023-24 school year may also be requested.

Action: Baylee Brown moved to approve the Election Resolution, seconded by Will Graveley.

Discussion: Maureen Mannix asked if a technology levy is included in this resolution. Rick Duncan replied that we will run a Technology Fund levy, and that we do not yet know if we need to run a General Fund levy; he added that the Board will approve any levies in March, and that each will be listed on the Notice of Election. Mr. Duncan then explained that a technology levy expires after 10 years, thus the need for a new levy. Will Graveley asked about his trustee term and renewal. Annette Galahan responded that the Avon position was vacant for 2 years, and he should have been elected to serve 1 year. However, the ballot stated a 3-year term, so legally Mr. Gravely is serving a 3-year term, and that upon expiration, we were advised to run a 1-year term to correct the "stagger." The motion passed unanimously.

Policy Review 2330: Controversial Issues and Academic Freedom

Rick Duncan read aloud the following Board Policy 2330:

<i>1 Powell County High School</i>	<i>R</i>
<i>2</i>	
<i>3 INSTRUCTION</i>	<i>2330</i>
<i>4</i>	
<i>5 Controversial Issues and Academic Freedom</i>	
<i>6</i>	
<i>7 The District will offer courses of study which will afford learning experiences.</i>	
<i>appropriate to</i>	
<i>8 levels of student understanding. The instructional program respects the right of</i>	
<i>students to face</i>	
<i>9 issues, to have free access to information, to study under teachers in situations free</i>	
<i>from</i>	
<i>10 prejudice, and to form, hold, and express their own opinions without personal</i>	
<i>prejudice or</i>	
<i>11 discrimination.</i>	
<i>12</i>	

13 *Teachers will guide discussions and procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to*
 acquaint
 14 *students with the need to recognize various points of view, importance of fact, value*
of good
 15 *judgment, and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions.*
 16
 17 *The Board encourages and supports the concept of academic freedom, recognizing it*
as a
 18 *necessary condition to aid in maintaining an environment conducive to learning and*
to the free
 19 *exchange of ideas and information.*
 20
 21 *In a study or discussion of controversial issues or materials, however, the Board*
directs teaching
 22 *staff to take into account the following criteria:*
 23
 24 *1. Relative maturity of students;*
 25 *2. District philosophy of education;*
 26 *3. Community standards, morals, and values;*
 27 *4. Necessity for a balanced presentation; and*
 28 *5. Necessity to seek administrative counsel and guidance in such matters.*
 29
 30
 31
 32 *Legal Reference: Article X, Sec. 8, Montana Constitution - School district trustees*
 33 *§ 20-3-324(16) and (17), MCA Powers and duties*
 34
 35 *Policy History:*
 36 *Adopted on: 03/11/91*
 37 *Reviewed on: 02/11/2013*
 38 *Revised on: 02/11/02*

Bart Smith brought forth a concern regarding an English assignment that prompted a parent to contact him; he reviewed the assignment since his child is in the same class, and said that he thought the assignment crossed the line a bit. He then brought it to the attention of the administration and had a meeting with Mr. Duncan and Mrs. Crofutt. A second meeting was had with the teacher, and he said the teacher was responsive. Mr. Smith's main concern is that the assignment was teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT) and/or Critical Theory (CT), and stated the teacher used a particular book. Rick Duncan and Katie Crofutt both refuted that, and said that no book was ever used, only cited. Mr. Smith thought that the teacher had brought "the book" back from a Critical Race Conference. Mr. Duncan and Mrs. Crofutt both responded that the teacher had attended a National English Teacher Conference. Mr. Smith contends that CRT/CT promotes Marxism, feminism, and postcolonialism. He said his biggest problem is that CRT is a 1-sided topic, that it's anti-American, anti-white, pro-Marxism, and anti-capitalism; he added that it is a skewed theory.

Discussion was held regarding the current BP 2330, and Katie Crofutt stated that she believes the current policy contains everything that we need. Mr. Smith stated that he is adamant that we have a separate policy for this topic. Maureen Mannix asked about the classroom topic, and Mrs. Crofutt said the assignment in question was an exercise in Critical Literary Theory, and that it was not intentional by the teacher to resemble CRT. Discussion around BP 2330 continued, and Mrs. Crofutt stated that item #3 on line 26 of BP 2330 is important: that “Community standards, morals, and values” be taken into account. Jennifer Nicholson asked how we know what those standards are, and Amanda Bohrer recommended a community survey. Mr. Duncan said that it’s necessary to have a balanced approach on this topic, and that our teaching staff is now very aware; he added that our policies are purposely general and that we already have the desired balanced approach. Jennifer Nicholson stated that it’s important to be educated regarding CRT/CT and to know what it is. Mrs. Crofutt stated that we do not teach CRT, and that it is a college-level course. She said she believes the complaint process worked as it should – parents had a problem, contacted the administration, and the problem was addressed and corrected. Mrs. Crofutt supports the current version of BP 2330. Mr. Smith believes teachers learn CRT in college and then bring it to the high school level with them. Mrs. Bohrer discussed curriculum review, and said she’s asked on several different occasions about the Board review and approval of curriculum. Mrs. Mannix said that BP 2330 is not quite the right policy regarding curriculum, and that curriculum policies are in the 3000’s. The conversation went back to CRT, and Mr. Smith said that he doesn’t have a problem teaching where America has failed, but also wants to teach how America is great; he added that CRT can’t be taught objectively, and that it is taught to indoctrinate. Mr. Smith referenced “the book” and said it pits people against people, tells people they are victims, and that you can’t get ahead so why try. Mr. Smith said that he wrote a policy and wants to teach objectivity, not a slanted view. Baylee Brown discussed how CRT/CT are university teachings, where it is a fluent conversation; she believes that we need something in writing regarding the high school academic process. Mr. Duncan’s response was that we have a balanced presentation of BP 2330. At issue was an English lesson for critical thinking, and that we need to help the teachers grow. Other statements regarding the assignment and teacher were made and Mrs. Mannix reminded everyone of the Rights of Privacy regarding the included staff. Further discussion included curriculum review, and supplemental materials; Mr. Smith is not in favor of allowing supplemental teaching materials without Board and administrative approval. Mr. Smith presented the following amendment proposal to BP 2330:

Draft Amendment Proposal to Policy 2330

Line 30

There will be no use of curriculum that include “CRT” (Critical Race Theory), “CT” (Critical Theory), “DEI” (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion), the 1619 Project, or anything else teaching the same content under a different or non-existent title at Powell County High School.

No unequal value shall be placed on any race, ethnicity, identity, religious, or social group.

When teaching on sensitive political, race, or gender related topics, all points of view must be taught.

Sensitive political, race or gender related curriculum and topics will require administrative and school board approval.

Mr. Duncan said that he strongly recommends legal review of the Draft Amendment Proposal to Policy 2330. Mrs. Mannix said there is nothing in BP 2330 regarding supplemental material; she believes that the place to add an amendment might be in BP 2120 lines 19-21. Ms. Brown agreed with Mrs. Mannix and said that BP 2330 is well written, and that the policy amendment could be added to a curriculum policy; she suggested deleting the first sentence of the proposed amendment, and keeping the last 3 sentences. Montana Standards and legal counsel were brought up, and the Board would like legal counsel to review the policy amendment. Mr. Smith said he would like to leave the first sentence in, but he also agrees with Ms. Brown.

Discussion was opened to visitors, and Peggy Kerr commended all on having the CRT discussion, but said she became more and more agitated as the meeting went along. She believes that teachers should stick to the curriculum, and that it bothers her that supplemental materials are used at the teacher's discretion. Mr. Duncan said that we have one example of a teacher with no intent. John Greenwood addressed the Board and referred to a former KGB agent named Yuri Bezmenov and the USSR's tactics to subvert a nation; he mentioned Antifa, communism, starved people, food supply, and capitalism vs. communism. Jackie Greenwood said that the school should stick to the curriculum, she recommends a student assembly that instructs kids to say what they are being taught, she agrees with Mr. Smith, and she mentioned the "Communist Manifesto." Alesha Ross said she has 2 kids in high school and that the English assignment had questions from "the book" and that it is garbage; she added that her son felt uncomfortable. Mrs. Ross said she thinks students are being taught what to think, not how to think. Dave Ross agrees 100% with Mr. Smith's policy amendment, that CRT and LGBTQ is a red flag, and that teachers should just be teaching and not adding any political views, because it can't be done without bias.

Amanda Bohrer said she would like Mr. Duncan to go ahead and get the policy amendment reviewed. Ms. Brown said she strongly believes that the policy amendment does not belong in BP 2330, and she has a problem with "political" appearing in the amendment; she would like a line about supplemental materials being approved by the administration and/or Board. Mrs. Mannix reminded everyone that we do not have a curriculum director, and that it is something for us to think about. Mr. Duncan stated that he will get legal advice.

Policy Review 3350: Random Drug Testing

Rick Duncan stated that this is the third year of the policy, and that 20% of the students in activities are tested, however by spring that 20% grows into a larger and larger number. Mr. Duncan estimates that by spring at least 30 kids will be tested and will take up to 4 hours. Mr. Duncan and Mrs. Crofutt would like to change the policy from 20% of students to 15 students per month. This will fit within the time constraints and Mr. Duncan added that it should cut the cost by a third to a half.

Action: Amanda Bohrer moved to amend BP 3350 to change 20% to 15 students, seconded by Will Graveley.

Discussion: Baylee Brown questioned if there was a minimum number that we are contracted to test, and wondered if we could reduce the number further. Will Graveley said no, that there would not be enough in the sample. It was pointed out that the policy mentions testing during practice time, and Mr. Duncan said that does not happen, and that it would no longer be a random test. He added that we have learned much in the past 3 years. Amanda Bohrer stated that the Board had repeated conversations regarding testing “not-in-season” athletes, and that not testing lets them be free to do what they will.

Baylee Brown is not against testing, but believes testing could be changed to 15 “in-season” athletes, and she is very interested in the cost savings. Mr. Duncan said he looks at drug testing the same way as he looks at the drug dog – as a preventative measure.

Baylee Brown said she would like to survey conducted regarding drug testing.

Action: Maureen Mannix moved to amend BP 3350, line 43 to read “Random testing will occur during an activity season at a rate of 15 individuals in the total pool,” seconded by Bart Smith.

The motion passed unanimously.

11. PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Katie Crofutt reported a February 13, 2023 enrollment of 183 students, and consists of the following: 52 freshman, 61 sophomores, 38 juniors, and 32 seniors (a decrease of 2 from last month). Included in the count are 0 Job Corp students, and 0 Youth Challenge students. Mrs. Crofutt discussed dropouts and factors contributing to the loss of students which include the following: mental health, substance abuse, family lack of value for education, instability in the students’ lives, and lack of interest in school. Mrs. Crofutt discussed the following ways to encourage students to stay in school: Freshman 101, which bridges the gap between grade school to high school, teacher advisement, modified block schedule, curriculum alignment, and pathways to post-secondary goals. Also discussed were teacher evaluations, the curriculum alignment project between the elementary and high school districts, and STAR testing.

12. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT:

Rick Duncan gave a Covid update and stated that there have been no changes. Mr. Duncan then gave a legislative update. He discussed HB 15 which deals with the inflationary increase for schools (a statutory requirement); it contains a 2.7% increase for the first year, and a 3% increase for the second year. Mr. Duncan also discussed numerous other bills dealing with open enrollment, education health care, teacher mentoring, special education savings account, and scientific theory vs. scientific fact.

Mr. Duncan then discussed the next Joint Board meeting, which will be held Monday, February 27, 2023 at 7p.m. at the CPC; legal counsel from the MTSBA will be present to discuss unification.

13. BUSINESS MANAGER

Annette Galahan provided an updated revenues/expenditures spreadsheet through December, 2022, and pointed out that larger increases in revenues are due to the November/December tax collections by the County.

Action: Baylee Brown moved to approve the February bills, seconded by Robert Rabel. The motion passed unanimously.

14. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Proposed amendment to BP 2330.
- Guidance.
- Drug Testing.

15. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m. by unanimous consent.
The next regular meeting will be Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

s/Annette Galahan, District Business Manager/Clerk

s/Jennifer Nicholson, Board Chair