

**CRESTON SCHOOL DISTRICT #9
REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
11 SEPTEMBER 2025**

MINUTES

- I. Call to Order. Jessica Sandven-Sorensen called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:05 a.m. The meeting was held in the gym. Present were Board Trustees Jessica Sandven-Sorensen, Twila Brenneman, Megan Derrington, Barry Farrell and Nevada Hafer. Also in attendance were Dr. Cheryl Peterson, Principal, Gina McWilliam, District Clerk, Cindi Conley, Special Education and Title teacher, Jen Johnson, CEA President and fifth grade teacher and Melissa Potts, second grade teacher.
- II. Minutes of 14 August 2025. Nevada Hafer moved to approve the minutes as presented. Twila Brenneman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. Public Participation / Correspondence – an email from a parent expressing appreciation for enthusiasm displayed on the first day of school was shared. Big Fork Chapel sent thank you cards and gift cards to Copper Mountain Coffee for each teacher and staff member. The Flathead County Sheriff's Deputies Association donated ten backpacks full of school supplies and Super 1 donated eight backpacks.
- IV. Information
 - A. Hiring Committee Update – an update was provided. The minutes to those meetings are included in the Board Packet
 - B. City Service Valcon – the district will obtain bus propane refueling services from City Service Valcon.
- V. Reports:
 - A. Clerk. nil
 - B. Principal. Student enrollment is 80. All teachers and staff completed the CPR training in August with Logan Health. In addition, teachers and staff have completed their annual safety training. A few of our teachers participated in the Missoula August Institute. With standards being updated, MAST undergoing major modifications, and other changes occurring in Montana, our focus will be on refining our curriculum implementation, executive function training to enhance our students' skills, and reviewing our math curriculum for alignment with new standards. We had a wonderful turnout at Open House. The Boy Scouts attended and was a good addition to share community opportunities for our students. Friends of Creston were also present with a table to encourage participation. The Friends of Creston School parent organization welcomed parents, students, and teachers back to school on the first day of school. They provided donut holes from "The Spot" for the classrooms, and donuts and coffee for staff. Their next meeting will be at school on Thursday, 9/18. They are considering options to encourage attendance. We have been working with the department of transportation to get the yellow flashing light turned on again. It took a couple visits to get the system working properly. We will keep our eyes on them when the time changes in the fall. Under the oversight of the principal, Mrs. Conley has proactively attended the MAP training by MSSA. She is an invaluable resource to make sure not only Title and SpEd resources are efficiently implemented, but is also available to support teachers when needed for various situations. She is also setting up the technology side of the MAST testing according to the state requirements and teacher requests - she is both enjoying this project and is making a positive impact. See the attachment for MAP ASSESSMENT - ELA (ALL STUDENTS). Benchmark assessments with the new MAP assessment system for the 2025/2026 school year are in progress for math and reading. Once assessments are completed, data will be analyzed to determine which students would benefit from Title I services, additional teacher/staff assistance and/or classroom interventions such as individual and small group instruction. The new state assessment, Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST), for grades 3-6 is

undergoing major modifications at the state level. They are reviewing all data to realign and evaluate - this is an ongoing discussion at many levels. This year, the first modification is a change from four testing windows to three testing windows (October 13-December 5, January 12-March 6, and March 30-May 22). Ongoing updates will follow as information is released. Creston School earned Regular Accreditation Status through the 2026-27 school year and will start the next cycle in the 2027-28 school year. This is a change from the original dates as districts requested the modification from OPI given the changes in assessment methods that are ongoing. Trustees can plan to determine a time to schedule a walk-through of the facilities and grounds. The Montana School Insurance Alliance (MTSIA) has now formed Bridged Health Alliance. The purpose is to provide health insurance coverage to Montana school districts of all sizes. Theoretically, schools can negotiate terms with health care and wellness service providers and third-party administrators. To qualify for the legislative \$40 million incentive, there must be at least 150 school districts with at least 12,000 employees who will participate in the trust by July 1, 2026. Also, the administrative costs must be limited to 12% of total costs. Creston has shared information for Bridged to provide a quote for teachers and the board to consider - no obligations. The principal fills the role of the Homeless Liaison for Creston Elementary and completed the required three hours of training through the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) and the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI). Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Shanks and Mrs. Davidson are filling the role of the Indian Education for All Program Director for Creston Elementary for the 2025-2026 school year. They will provide support to teachers as they plan lessons. The principal fills the role of the Gifted and Talented Program Director with Mrs. Conley and Mrs. Shanks for Creston Elementary. As indicated in the strategic plan, all second-grade students will be assessed using the CogAT cognitive abilities screener this winter. Other students may also be tested if they meet the guidelines set forth in the Gifted and Talented Plan. We have a new Special Education Cooperative Director, Mr. Dave Brown. The cooperative is staffed and provides support to our school through the provision of a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, and school psychologist. Currently, we do not have a student with the need of a physical therapist; however, if the need arises, the FSEC has a physical therapist available to support our school. The principal serves on the Board and attends monthly meetings. Dr. Peterson participates in meetings with the Northwest Montana Association of School Superintendents (NWMASS) and the Rural Schools Administrators two times a month. These meetings are vital to maintain the connection Creston School has with other schools in the valley. Dr. Peterson serves on the Crossroads Management Board that meets every other month. The next meeting will be held October 24, 2025. We had the playground reviewed for potential improvements. At this time, we are placing the addition of bolt caps on a few of the apparatus (6-10 bolt caps) to reduce the possibility of students catching clothes or hair. School Facilities Conditions Inventory Report – the complete report is attached with updates. The monthly building inspection has been completed with no recommendation for repairs at this time. The alarm system has been inspected and passed. We are investigating the potential to add air conditioning to the gym to make the facility better able to meet the needs of both the school and the community. We are very thankful to Kerri Passmore for her willingness to volunteer in our Library on Thursdays to support our K-4 students' access to reading materials. We continue to search for a permanent custodian and maintenance employee. Currently, we are very grateful for Mr. Thunker's willingness to care for our facility on a temporary basis. He has made a huge contribution in keeping our school beautiful. The Safety Committee for the 2025/2026 school year will be Mrs. Davidson, Mrs. Potts, and Mrs. Milne. The team met on 26 August to review/approve the annual Emergency Procedures document and discuss the annual plan for drills. Threat Assessment Committee for the 2025/26 school year is Mrs. Davidson, Mrs. Milne and Mrs. Conley. The committee met on 26 August to review the needs for the 2025/26 school year. The book fair will be held December 1-4 during Parent/Teacher conferences. A new company has been located and is scheduled. The opportunity to review texts/materials available for sale is established and will be completed in early November. Dr. Peterson has participated in the following trainings,

webinars, and meetings: NWMASS, Bridged Health, and Title webinar. Dr. Peterson will be attending MTSBA's MCEL Conference in Helena October 16-17, 2025. Dr. Peterson will pay for this conference as it is part of the education degree she is pursuing. She will also attend the Montana Principal's Conference in Bozeman, January 25-27, 2026. This is in lieu of board paid mentorship as her mentorship is through the University program. The school is using Google Classroom to provide a location for teachers and staff to locate forms, updates and conversations in one location. This allows for better communication and collaboration. We are actively updating the website, but updates are coming slowly. Dr. Peterson provided an update on the Abstract of Water Rights: Per the Montana Water Court: *"I assume you (Creston School) received the 76LJ Notice of Entry of Preliminary Decree and Notice of Availability. That document initiates the adjudication of historical water rights in your area to make sure that the records (abstracts) are historically correct and accurate. The issue remarks (comments within the dashed box on an abstract) are issues or questions the DNRC has about a particular aspect of a water right, and it is incumbent on the Montana Water Court to resolve those questions. Those issue remarks automatically place the issue before the court, so after all objection phases of the basin are complete, the court will contact you for further information, if necessary, to resolve the issue remark."* In response, our notice stated *"The DNRC examination of this claim found no significant facts, data, or issues to report to the water court."* Therefore, we do not need to follow up at this time. The school is researching adding modules (for a fee) to the free version of Infinite Campus. Montana's OPI provides a free version of the database, but it's possible an enhanced version will provide better efficiency in the office with student information and family communication.

C. Staff. Jen Johnson was present to share the report via a Google Slide presentation.

VI. Policies - Consideration of Action Items:

A. MTSBA Policy Updates. The following policies were reviewed:

2nd Reading

New

- Policy 3665: Student Safety
- Policy 5120-{P}1: Hiring Process and Criteria - Federal Background Status: Check, Fingerprint, and Information Handling Procedure
- Policy 5123: Employer Verification of Employee

Amend

- Policy 1007FE: Multidistrict Agreements
- Policy 2150: Suicide Awareness and Prevention
- Policy 3416: Administering Medicines to Students
- Policy 5122: Fingerprints and Criminal Background Investigations
- Notice Form 5430-NF {1}: Volunteers - Volunteer Agreement

Nevada Hafer moved to approve the policy updates as presented. Megan Derrington seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Consideration of Action Items

- A. Abstract of Water Right Claim & Consultant Review. No action needed. See principal's report for more information.
- B. Emergency Operation Plan Update. The safety committee submitted updates to the plan. Megan Derrington moved to adopt the Emergency Operations Plan as presented. Barry Farrell seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- C. District Goals for 2025/2026. This was the first review of the goals of the District that reflect the District's Strategic Plan of Education. No action was needed or made.
- D. MSGIA Annual Meeting. nil
- E. Audit Revised Contract 2025/2026 – a revised contract and proposal letter for a two-year period covering July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025 for \$15,500 was presented. The contract previously approved December 12, 2024 covered a one-year period. Due to time constraints the auditor was unable to conduct the audit. Barry Farrel moved to approve the contract as presented. Twila Brennehan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- F. Records Destruction – SPED Records. Board approval is required to dispose of historical special education records of students who have reached 19 years of age and/or have not

- attended the district for five (5) years. Twila Brenneman motioned to approve the records destruction request as presented. Nevada Hafer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- G. Transportation Contracts. Two (2) contracts were presented. Twila Brenneman moved to approve the transportation contracts as presented. Megan Derrington seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
 - H. Before School Care Contracts. Six (6) contracts were presented. Megan Derrington moved to approve the Before School Care Contracts as presented. Barry Farrell seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
 - I. Out-of-District Requests. Attendance agreements for one (1) student that resides out-of-district, requesting to attend our district. Twila Brenneman moved to approve the attendance agreement. Megan Derrington seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
 - J. Gym & School Grounds Use Requests. A request by Many Lakes Homeowner's Association to use the gym Friday, September 19, from 4:00 p.m. to September 20, 2:00 p.m. for a homeowner's annual meeting was received. Megan Derrington moved to approve the gym use request as presented. Barry Farrell seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
 - K. Open Fund 182. Creston School is requesting to open a new fund for the purpose of holding revenue from interest and General Fund year-end monies. Fund 182 will be managed by Creston School instead of Cayuse Prairie School who managed the multi-school district agreement. Megan Derrington moved to approve opening Fund 182 for the purpose of holding revenue and general fund year-end monies. Nevada Hafer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
 - L. Bus Driver Hire contract – nil
 - M. Principal Evaluation (Goals) – Executive Session. Jessica Sandven-Sorenson closed the meeting at 8:14 a.m. for an executive session to conduct a personnel evaluation for Dr. Cheryl Peterson. The meeting was re-opened at 8:38 a.m. Megan Derrington moved to approve the principal evaluation of goals and to approve the executive session minutes. Nevada Hafer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- VIII. Claims Approval - Consideration of Action. nil.
- IX. Next Meeting Dates:
- A. 9 October 2025, 7:00am, Regular Meeting
 - B. 13 November 2025, 7:00am, Regular Meeting
- X. Adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:39 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Gina McWilliam, District Clerk



Jessica Sandven-Sorensen, Board Chair