



Montana Small School Alliance

220 North Montana St. – Dillon, MT 59725

Phone 988 - 0164 – Fax 998 - 0148

Email –mssa710@gmail.com

Website – www.mt-ssa.org

UNOFFICIAL MINUTES

Montana Small Schools Alliance

QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING 12:30 P.M Wednesday, September 29, 2021

MSSA Office, 220 N. Montana St. (via Zoom)

Dillon, MT 59725

Linda Marsh is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: MSSA Quarterly Board Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94989227665?pwd=ZkhmT054cGZXRnhWcEdNWUpnMXBoUT09>

Meeting ID: 949 8922 7665

Passcode: 373293

Members present: Dr. Jayne Downey, Carolyn Hall, Dr. Erin Lipkind, Laura Straus, Linda Sunderlin, and Linda Marsh

- 12:30 p.m.** **1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair:** Jayne called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m.
- 12:32 p.m.** **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 30, 2021 Board Meeting:** Carolyn moved and Erin seconded approval of the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**
- 12:35 p.m.** **3. CHANGES/ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA (action):** Since no changes were suggested, Erin moved and Carolyn seconded to accept the agenda as presented. **Motion carried.**
- 12:40 p.m.** **4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (discussion & action items)**
- A. Election of Officers for 2021-2022: Jayne stated that she would like to step down from serving as chair. She has been the Chair for 8 years and has several big grant projects she is working on. After some discussion, Erin offered to take the Vice-Chair position and Carolyn said she was willing to serve as Chair. Laura moved and Erin seconded a motion to accept by acclamation Carolyn as Chair and Erin as Vice-Chair. **Motion carried.**
 - B. Selection of NREA Travel Award (Jules Waber) for 2021-2022: After a brief discussion of the application received, Erin moved and Carolyn seconded a motion to award the NREA Travel Award to Pam Birkeland, Madison County Superintendent of Schools. **Motion carried.** Linda Marsh will notify Pam of her selection.
 - C. Update Rural Policy Manual: Linda reported that the policies had not been updated following the 2021 Legislative session. Dan had suggested reaching out to MTSBA for assistance with policy updates. The consensus of the board was that this may be a good way to build on our partnership with MTSBA. After some discussion, Carolyn moved and Laura seconded that MSSA explore the opportunity of coming under the umbrella of MTSBA for policy revision. Erin asked for an amendment to the motion to include an alternate agreement. Carolyn then amended her motion to include that if our proposal was not acceptable to MTSBA, MSSA would look into the use of legal services through the Kaleva Law Offices or Weldon Law Offices. Erin seconded the motion. Laura then requested an amendment to allow the Director to move forward in forming an agreement with the expenditure not to exceed \$5000. Carolyn amended her motion. Erin seconded. **Motion carried.**

- D. Standards Discussion (discussion continued/possible action): Linda Marsh noted that the discussion in regards to pursuing a change in Chapter 55 has been ongoing. It is hard to set specific enrollment numbers due to the uniqueness of the small rural schools. Changes require approval of the Board of Public Education. Erin stated that the Chapter 55 Task Force is currently being formed. She recommended that we have a member of the MSSA Board serve on the Task Force. Linda Marsh agreed to apply, with the understanding that the new director would replace her in January. **No Board action is needed at this time.**

1:20 p.m.

5. **NEW BUSINESS (information/action items)**

- A. Office Manager Salary and Benefits: Linda Marsh made the recommendation to increase the Office Manager's sick and personal leave by 1 day each. This would give her 7 per year, with the ability to carry over one year's worth. She also recommended a salary increase to address COLA and to offer the Office Manger a one-year contract similar to that of a school clerk. Our Office Manager has 10 years of service. Following discussion, Laura motioned and Carolyn seconded an increase in sick and personal days to 7 each and 5% on salary (\$28,672) effective January 1, 2022. Laura also motioned that Linda Marsh work on contract language and explore offering the Office manager PERS. Erin seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**
- B. 2021-2022 MSSA Budget Revision Draft: Linda Marsh presented a revision to the FY 2022 Budget which reflects a more accurate representation of revenues and expenses for a Non-CoVid year. Laura motioned and Carolyn seconded approval of the updated budget for 2022. **Motion carried.**
- C. Director Search/Advertise Executive Director Position: Planning and Discussion was held to organize the search for the New Executive Director. This is our projected timeframe. Notice of Vacancy will be posted the first week of October. Application deadline will be "Until Filled", with a first screening date of November 1, 2021. The Search Committee will meet the week of November 4th to finalize plans for selection and set up interviews, as finalists are available, during the week of November 15. The Board is hopeful to announce their selection prior to Thanksgiving so that training can take place in December. Linda Marsh's last day will be December 31.
- D. 2022-2023 Guidance Specialist Search: After some discussion, Erin motioned that this be tabled and placed on the agenda for the January meeting. Carolyn seconded. **Motion carried.**
- E. Release of Rural Education Scholarship for 2022-2023: Discussion. The District and Individual Scholarship applications will be posted on the website and the office will send them to all member schools by October 1. They will be due by January 15. Completed applications and the rubrics will be sent to Board members for scoring prior to the January Board Meeting.

2:20 p.m.

6. **MSSA REPORTS**

- A. MSSA Update – Linda Marsh: Report is attached.
- B. MSSA Office – Linda Sunderlin: Linda presented the financials as of September 29, 2021. She will clear out the \$1,279.27 from Wells Fargo so we will have all of our funds at Bank of Commerce. Total funds available are \$310,393.22. Revenues from January 1 to September 29, 2021 are \$203,576.23 and expenditures are \$138,362.92. Net income stands at \$65,213.31, with one quarter of the year remaining.
- C. MACSS – Dr. Erin Lipkind & Carolyn Hall: Erin reported that the MACSS Fall Conference was held virtually last Wednesday through Friday. They kept the sessions short and gave frequent breaks. Attendance was good. About half of the members were present. She felt the conference was valuable to the new County Superintendents, who were able to make connections and build relationships in addition to receiving training. She complimented the presenters, also. The Spring 2022 Conference will be in Ennis and the Fall 2022 Conference in Livingston, if held face-to-face. The dates are not yet finalized. Erin is reinstating monthly Zoom meetings and hopes to have a presenter each month. Carolyn added that the County Superintendents have been busy completing E-grants, ESSER applications, and TEAMS reports.
- D. MSU – Dr. Jayne Downey: Jayne reported that she was a presenter for the MACSS

Conference last Thursday and is looking forward to presenting for MACSS again. She is currently working on four new grants geared toward rural teachers, school counselors and kids. The first will assist rural teachers with living expenses for a year as they work toward licensure. The second grant will support counselors with a stipend for the first year. The third will streamline the process educators go through in getting endorsements added. And the final grant is for youth mental health literacy in rural communities.

- E. Western – Laura Straus: Laura began by complimenting Jayne for all the grant work she is doing and her efforts to address current education issues in Montana. Western has been working to start offering advanced degrees again. They have submitted an “Intent to Plan” path to a post-baccalaureate degree. Laura recently presented before the Board of Education in support of teacher preparation and licensure for Chapter 55, 57, and 58. Western is continuing to support a “grow your own” program, which places student teacher and paraprofessionals in reservation schools. Western is not a PRAXIS test site and PRAXIS is required for licensure. Western is looking at the use of PRAXIS at HOME, which allows more students the opportunity to complete the test and will ease their process of Teacher Prep. She is currently serving on the search committee for Western’s new Provost as well.
- F. MTSBA – Vacant
- G. MSSA/NREA – Linda Marsh: Report is included in the previous report.

Next meeting time, date and location: Wednesday January 26, 2022 at the MSSA Office in Dillon @ 11:00 a.m. Lunch to follow.

3:30 p.m. 7. ADJOURN: Erin moved and Carolyn seconded adjournment at 3:28 p.m. **Motion Carried.**