



Montpelier School Board Retreat February 7, 2026 - 10:00 AM - Gladstone Inn Retreat Minutes

Board Members Present: Scott Harms, Kelsey Naze, Tony Roorda, and Dan Koep,

Also Present: Superintendent Phil Leitner, Principal Sara Wilson, Staff Member Maureen Schrader and Business Manager Brittany Hansen.

Absent: Kyle Throener, Wade Dally, and Abram Valenta.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:15AM by President Scott Harms. The Board was given the opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda: No modifications were requested to the agenda at this time.

Celebrations and Successes:

Mr. Leitner took time to recognize and celebrate the school's outstanding staff and accomplishments with the board.

- Rock Star Staff
 - Back-to-back Stutsman County Teachers of the Year (Charity Dosch and Ryan Nelson)
 - Region 6 Middle Level Principal of the Year - Mrs. Wilson
 - 5 of 15 teachers with master's degree
 - Mr. Lee, Ms. Dockter, Mrs. Bear, Mr. Wright, and Mrs. Fehr
 - 2 teachers working towards master's degree
 - Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Schrader
 - 2 James River Special Education employees with master's degree (Ms. Haugen and Mrs. Nitschke)
 - 1 tech coordinator with master's degree (Mr. Bear)
 - 2 administrators with master's degree (Mr. Leitner and Mrs. Wilson)
 - Best school lunch on this side of the Mississippi!
- ND Climbs Grant Award (800,000)
 - BARR and Literacy
- Best in Class Grant Award for PK (30,000)
- ND Counts Grant (15,000)
- High Quality Instructional Materials Grant (40,000)
 - ELA for Elementary School

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Vision Statement: Preparing today for a better tomorrow.

- Classroom set of Strider Bikes for PE
- Vital Network Grant (30,000)
- Amira Grant (1,000)
- Solidified and strengthened School Board Committees
- Renewed the Curriculum Committee
- Began a Strategic Planning Committee
- Improved base pay for teachers and for those with a master's degree
- Provided consistency through policy for classified staff during snow days or virtual days
- Voted by 'US News and World reports' as 2025 Best Elementary Schools in North Dakota
- #21 Best school districts in ND
- #12 Best teachers in ND
- #22 Best places to Teach in ND
- #1 Best teachers in Stutsman County

Personnel Overview:

An overview of all current staff and administration was reviewed with the Board.

Certified Staff contracts are currently anticipated to be sent to staff around March 2, 2026.

With Mrs. Wilson resigning, Mr. Leitner led discussions about finding a new principal, timeline, and a potential training strategy. Mr. Leitner will assemble a committee to help provide input on the next principal. Tony Roorda will be on this committee.

Eve Scott was hired as a choir/art teacher for the 2026-27 school year. This will allow the school to pursue a solution for offering band.

We currently have one position available for High School or Middle School Science teacher for the 2026-2027 school year.

Enrollment:

Our current enrollment numbers were discussed. Projections of enrollment overall for 2026-2027 school year are PK-12 at 99 students.

Our current enrollment for 2025-2026 is:

- Elementary (K-6) - 56
- High School (7-12) - 41
- Total K-12 -97
- **Total PK-12 –104**

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Our current projected enrollment for 2026-2027

- Elementary (K-6) - 54
- High School (7-12) - 42
- Total K-12 -96
- **Total PK-12 –99**

ND Climbs - BARR and Literacy

An overview of BARR and Literacy was discussed with the board. Various activities and collaboration samples were also discussed.

- U-Time (Elementary) activities for students
- I-Time (High School) activities for students
- Block Meetings – teacher meetings to discuss helping students be successful.
 - Small Block- Teachers collaborating with Teachers
 - Big Block- Teachers, Administration, Counselors, and Special Education all collaborating together.

Overall, the teacher and student feedback from this program has been positive!

VITAL Network

VITAL Network is an essential tool that aligns with the BARR Initiative's.

- **Relationships First:** Both emphasize meaningful connections between students and staff.
- **Team-Based Support:** Both use a collaborative team approach to identify and respond to student needs.
- **Student-Centered Culture:** Both promote a school environment that supports academic success and emotional well-being.
- **Data-Informed Decisions:** Both encourage using student data (attendance, behavior, grades, etc.) to guide interventions early.
- **Equity & Belonging:** Both aim to ensure all students feel included, valued, and supported.

VITAL Network strengthens the same core goals as BARR by supporting students academically, socially, and emotionally through strong relationships and intentional systems.

Mill Levy and DPI Finance Facts

Mr. Leitner reviewed the Mill Levy's and DPI Finance facts with the Board. Our current 2025-2026 Mill Levy is estimated at 86.01 mills. 60 mills are required in the General Fund or State Aid will be reduced.

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Strategic Planning

An update was given by Mr. Harms and Mr. Leitner on the strategic planning committee meetings. Based on prior survey results, discussion around strategic planning has occurred and will continue. The committee has identified Five (5) areas of focus for the Boards consideration:

- Positive School Climate, Culture, and Community
 - Create a positive, welcoming, and caring school where students, staff, families, and community members feel respected, supported, and proud of Montpelier Public School through strong relationships, community involvement, attention to physical and emotional well-being, and intentional communication that highlights and celebrates the great things happening in our school.
- Student Learning and Achievement
 - Help every student reach their full potential by providing strong teaching, high-quality curriculum and materials, and programs that support, challenge, and engage all learners—from those who need extra help to those ready for advanced opportunities.
- Real World and Hands on Learning
 - Provide hands-on, real-world learning experiences that help students prepare for life beyond school.
- Student Opportunities
 - We will provide a wide range of engaging student opportunities—including athletics, music, drama, clubs, and other activities—that support learning and personal growth beyond the classroom and encourage student involvement and school pride.
- Great Teachers and Staff
 - We will attract, support, and retain excellent staff through meaningful training, ongoing professional support, and fair compensation, making Montpelier Public School a place where educators and staff want to grow and stay long term.

Building and Grounds

The current Buildings and Grounds budget was discussed. A snapshot of the playground project was reviewed. The school's septic system also needs to be addressed. The committee will have a proposal for the next Board Meeting.

Transportation

We currently have 5 bus routes. Some current issues that were discussed:

- Jamestown transportation growing
- Finding drivers
- Vehicle efficiency and costs increasing (vehicle costs and driver wages)

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- Some people students get picked up at their house (20ish) and some at the common pickup location
- We don't have a bus big enough to pick up everyone in Jamestown and no one is qualified to drive that bus if we did
- State law says any vehicle that is used for a school bus route that can hold 10 people must meet school bus specifications
- We only have 2 drivers with ability to drive a CDL bus

The Board discussed possible solutions to transportation and plans to set up another committee meeting to further discuss.

Policy Reviews

Mr. Leitner is reviewing options with the North Dakota School Board Association to assist with reviewing our current policies. A proposal for options will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

Principal Search update

Mr. Leitner led discussions about finding a new principal, timeline, and a potential training strategy. Mr. Leitner has assembled a committee to help provide input on the next principal. Tony Roorda is on this committee. The new principal is expected to be hired by the March Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Brittany Hansen
Business Manager