



Governing Board Meeting Minutes March 15, 2023

Attendees

Members

Present	Absent	Member
X		Sharyl Allen , Deputy Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction
X		Joel Graves (Chair), Superintendent, Eureka Public Schools
X		Anthony Lapke (Vice Chair), Teacher, Glacier High School
X		Adrea Lawrence , Dean, Phyllis J. Washington College of Education, University of Montana, Non-Voting
X		Luke Muszkiewicz , Chair, Board of Trustees, Helena School District No.1
	X	Joe Thiel , Interim Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
X		Jason Neiffer , Executive Director, Ex Officio, Non-Voting
X		Mike Agostinelli , Assistant Director/Curriculum Director, Ex Officio

Staff and Guests

- Sarah Marker, Business Manager, MTDA
- Christen Cole, Distance Learning Operation Manager, MTDA
- Kate Peterson, Student Support and Content Specialist, MTDA
- Ryan Schrenk, EdReady Program Manager, MTDA
- Jason Leonard, EdReady Instructional Registrar, MTDA
- Virg Hale, EdReady Lead Ambassador, MTDA
- Robyn Nuttall, Instructional Program Director, MTA
- Jodie Hirsch, Instructional Projects Coordinator, MTDA
- Caitlin Byers, Student Support and Content Specialist, MTDA
- Anna East, Tribal Relations and Education Fellow, MTDA

Minutes

1. Establish The Presence Of A Quorum (Chair Graves) - Chair Graves established the presence of a quorum.
2. Public Comment (Chair Graves) - Chair Graves called for public comment. No public comment was offered.
3. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval Minutes of the January 9, 2023 Minutes (document attached)
 - i. Director Neiffer presented the minutes to the board.
 - ii. Board member Lapke moved to approve the minutes; Board member Muszkiewicz seconded the motion.
 - iii. The board approved the minutes unanimously.
 - b. Approval of Financial Report for February 2023 (Neiffer & Marker; document attached)
 - i. Neiffer noted that Business Manager Sarah Marker has a conflicting appointment, and he would present the budget report. He noted that primary teaching expenses would come out next month. Marker has been working with UM and OCHE budget officials to work on our overall processes and compliance with OCHE budget rules, including our ability to carry over funds year-to-year.
 - ii. Muszkiewicz moved to accept the budget report; Lapke seconded the motion.
 - iii. The board approved the minutes unanimously.
4. Discussion/Updates
 - a. Legislative Update/Discussion (Neiffer)
 - i. Joint Appropriations Subcommittee E Update
 1. Neiffer updated the board on the organization's work with the Appropriations Subcommittee E regarding an inflationary increase to cover the increased employment costs in HB 3. The subcommittee supported the increase to cover employment costs unanimously.
 2. House Appropriations has had several long sessions over the last week, and Neiffer reported that while he couldn't determine if the inflation increase was included in HB2, he would continue to monitor.
 - ii. HB749 (Bill Draft Attached); HB749, Amendment 001 (Amendment Draft Attached)
 1. Neiffer described the current state of HB749, "Revise Montana digital academy laws," proposed by Rep. Jones of Conrad. Neiffer described the bill's evolution from December to March, including proposed board changes. As of today, the bill includes mandates and funding to

support the “clearinghouse” model, including money for staffing and technology/platform upgrades and maintenance.

2. Board member Allen commented that OPI has been analyzing the bill and noted they did not author the fiscal note. She said that many questions about the bill and its implications for the organization and Montana schools need to be answered. She also expressed concern about the amount of work involved in the proposal and its ultimate benefits to schools. She also expressed concern regarding changes to the board, mainly related to eliminating the administrator and teacher vote from the board.
3. Chair Graves express concern about the board changes and their impact on the organic nature of the current organization.
4. Board member Lawrence commented that she is concerned about board changes as well, commenting that the organization has a high level of respect throughout the educational community in the College and beyond. She also questioned the model of focusing on third-party providers that wouldn't benefit from MTDA's existing infrastructure for mentoring teachers.
5. Board member Muszkiewicz discussed his expectation of support from the Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools, based mostly on their desire for MTDA to receive additional funding and resources from the legislature. He is concerned about the changes in board composition and changes related to how members end up on the board. He praised Director Neiffer and the MTDA staff for leaning into the Clearinghouse concept and felt that they are in a position to implement the framework in a way that provides good benefits for students and schools.
6. Board member Lapke commented that he is very concerned about the board changes, especially regarding teacher input and language regarding teacher licensing.
7. Chair Graves commented that he has always supported MTDA's choice for using Montana teachers, as it meant that he knew the teacher was accessible and maintained a certain quality. Lakpe also commented that classes are more than curriculum and videos; the teacher component is critical.
8. Board member Allen commented that the discussion is fundamentally: what do we want MTDA to be in this state?
9. Board member Muszkiewicz asked Director Neiffer about what he needed from the board. Neiffer responded that he has been trying to maintain a careful balance between advocating for the organization

and working with legislators on their ideas and perceptions regarding distance learning and future-looking learning environments. He noted that there were questions regarding the MTDA board during the interim study of MTDA; the organization's stance was that the board was functioning well and provided support for innovative, future-looking programming.

10. Chair Graves commented that if there were a perception that the board was stagnant, he would be happy to hand off his seat to new leadership.
 11. Board member Allen commented on the proposed amendment for the bill and that she has been working to suggest alternative language for HB749 and would continue to do so.
 12. Board member Muszkiewicz commented that the MTDA staff could make the situation work. Director Neiffer expressed that he also felt optimistic about the ability of the MTDA team to work through any parameters to set up the program for success. Chair Graves commended Muszkiewicz and Neiffer for their optimism.
 13. Director Neiffer expressed his gratitude to the board for their work supporting the program and the valuable discussion regarding the legislature.
- b. As the board was at the hour mark, Director Neiffer suggested that Chair Graves postpone the Spring '23 Enrollment Updates and 23-24 Program Updates for a potential April meeting. The board verbally agreed that is best.
- c. April Meeting (Neiffer)
- i. Director Neiffer commented that the initial plan was to have a face-to-face board meeting in April; however, it would be best to move it online in light of the legislature and time pressures.
 - ii. After discussing the calendar, the board agreed to meet on April 11, 2023, at 2:30 pm.
 - iii. Director Neiffer said he would continue to update the board and would organize any additional meetings as they see fit.

5. Adjourn