Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative
Regular Council Meeting
1/18/2024

The regular council meeting of the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative was held at Anderson School on January 18, 2024 for the purpose of considering business to come before the Council. Vice Chair, Kristi Jacobs, presided over the meeting.

1. **Call to Order**

Kristi Jacobs called the meeting to order at 11:03 am.

Members Present: Amsterdam – Marisa Stewart; Anderson – Kristi Jacobs; Gallatin Co. Supt.– John Nielson; Harrison – Sharyl Allen; LaMotte – Spencer Johnson; Monforton – Laura Axtman; West Yellowstone – Kevin Flannigan; Willow Creek – Bonnie Lower

Members Absent: Big Sky – Dustin Shipman; Ennis – Casey Klasna; Gateway – Kelly Henderson;

Visitors: None

2. **Public Comments**

None

Staff Present: Lani Smith, Director; Joyce Schmidt, Clerk & Business Manager; Riley Russell, Executive Assistant

Staff Absent: None

3. **Consent Agenda**

Approval of

Motion to approve the minutes of October 12, 2023 and November 10, 2023 as well as expenditures

Minutes & Expenditures (#317777- #317827) (October-December). Motion: Marisa Stewart Second: Spencer Johnson - Passed Unanimously.

4. **New Business:**

a.) **Milligan School Data: Adam Milligan**
Adam Milligan was invited to talk about some of the work he does for other Co-ops and schools and how it might benefit the Co-op. Adam collects and analyzes data from these organizations to help them determine how well they are doing and how much they are spending. He takes into consideration how many evaluations per FTE, caseloads per FTE for the current year and former, expenditures and budget, as well as surveys from staff about all positions. Everything is then put into graphs to easily compare between the years and similar organizations. This would cost the Co-op nothing right now as it is still in its first stages but eventually it would cost a percentage of the Co-op’s budget unless any of the Member schools also participate in his business.

b.) Business Manager’s Report

Cash totals reconciled with the Gallatin County Finance Department [GCFD] by fund were presented to the Board for the months comprising September through November 2023. Tentative numbers were provided by fund for the month of December 2023, with GCFD reports expected before month end. Joyce spoke briefly about the very low November ending cash balance in the 315 fund that was a result of our IDEA-B & Preschool grant application being submitted later than years past. Had the fund been in a negative balance by month end the situation would have necessitated borrowing from another fund. Director Lani Smith told the board that OPI was very late in opening the application window & there was additional information required for participating districts that slowed the submission process further.

Grant reimbursement requests for July through November expenditures were submitted & approved by OPI with payment totaling $188,987 for the IDEA-B grant. That payment was reflected in the December fund 315 total. The December expenditure request totaling $45,421 was submitted & approved by OPI & will be reflected in the January 2024 fund 315 total. All carryover dollars for this grant were expended with the December request.

The Preschool Incentive grant reimbursement requests have also been approved by OPI for the period of July through December 2023. The payments on the OPI side have been counted against the new allocation dollars rather than the reallocation total–Joyce will follow up with the new grant analyst.

Expenditures have remained consistent with historical expectations throughout the fiscal year. The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Instructor personnel costs are being captured in the Medicaid portion of fund 315 & we will invoice the school district she serves on a monthly basis to recapture those costs. Our external auditor has recommended we treat the payment of the invoices as revenue rather than a reimbursement as we have in past years. It looks a bit different but the net effect is the cost is zeroed out for the co-op.

The primary differences in the two-year comparison for October through December show that by
this time in the FY we had purchased a vehicle in 2022-23, had paid the annual audiology contract & had not paid for the external audit.

Strom & Associates has completed their fieldwork & we are waiting for the completed report to be issued.

c.) **Random Moments Review**

   (Informational)

Lani explained that she spoke with Marisa and Spencer as they had received reports directly to them and were confused. It turned out to be a clerical issue and they should have never been sent to them. All reports are sent directly to the Co-op and then are printed and distributed to the Member schools by staff. Lani appreciated them reaching out to confirm that no action needed to be taken.

d.) **Director’s Report**

   (Informational)

   i. **Montana School Recruitment Project**

The Co-op has had great success with hiring through them and believes it is a great way to advertise positions if any of the member schools are having issues filling positions. Billi was planning on attending the meeting but couldn’t make it so Lani will send the link to the website to Board members.

   ii. **Evaluations and Caseload Update**

Lani just spoke with staff and confirmed that there are 36 evals across schools with 13 being speech only. She thanked the Board for being so flexible about staff schedules since everyone is so busy at the moment.

   iii. **Staff Recruitment**

Right now Lani is working on filling a Psych position. She plans to meet with Billi next week to meet some potential interns for next year and hopefully entice them. One variable that seems to deter candidates is the cost of living here. Lani asked the Board to keep their ears out for any affordable living in the area. Professional Intention forms will be sent out soon to Co-op staff and that will give a good idea of staffing concerns for next year. P.T. position was filled this year by Caroline and hopefully she will stay. The Teacher of the Deaf position is the hardest to fill.
iv. Professional Development for Sped Staff

MCEC is in April. The date was pushed back farther this year so hopefully more staff can attend. This is a great training for Special Education Teachers and Lani asked Board members to encourage them to attend.

e.) Charging districts for out of district students with the new open enrollment bill: Kristi Jacobs

When it comes to a student in Special Education it is the District’s responsibility to figure it out and then reimburse the Co-op if needed. Lani will talk more with Rob at the Special Education Directors Meeting to get more information about it.

The biggest change to come from House Bill 676 is that consent will now be needed before hearing screenings.

f.) Director’s Performance Review

The Board and Lani met in private for an Executive Session.

5. Board Meeting Schedule: Projected 2023-2024 Third Thursday of the Month (Zoom/In-Person) *no less than 6 meetings per year

a. January 18th In Person - Kristi will host at Anderson.
b. February 15th
c. April 18th
d. May 16th
e. June 20th In Person

6. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn meeting at 1:06 pm.

Motion: Spencer Johnson
Second: Marisa Stewart -Passed Unanimously.

Submitted by: ________________________________ Date: __________________________

Board Chair: ________________________________ Date: __________________________