

Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative
Regular Council Meeting
2/19/2026

The Regular Council meeting of the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative was held virtually via Google Meet on February 19, 2026 for the purpose of considering business to come before the Council. Chair, Laura Axtman, presided over the meeting.

1. Call to Order

Laura Axtman called the meeting to order at 11:04 am.

Members Present

- Amsterdam**– Marisa Stewart
- Anderson**– Spencer Johnson
- Big Sky**–Dustin Shipman
- Ennis**– Jared Moretti
- Gallatin Co. Supt.**– John Nielson
- Gateway**–Kelly Henderson
- Harrison**–Stephanie Stephens, Designated Harrison Board Representative
- LaMotte**– Scott Poloff
- Monforton**– Laura Axtman
- West Yellowstone**– Kevin Flannigan
- Willow Creek**– Bonnie Lower

Visitors:

2. Public Comments

Staff Present Kim Wegner-McCauley, Director; Joyce Schmidt, Clerk & Business Manager;
Riley Russell, Executive Assistant

Staff Absent

3. Consent Agenda

- Approval of a. Approval of January 15, 2026 GMSEC Board Meeting Minutes
- Minutes & b. Approval of expenditures: (#318305, 318318)-Jan Expenditures

Motion to approve minutes and expenditures.

Motion: John Nielson

Second: Stephanie Stephens

- Passed Unanimously.

4. New Business:

a.) **Business Manager's Report:**

(Informational)

Joyce reported that the GCFD financial reports for November-December 2025 were released & have been reconciled with the GMSEC books. Ending cash balances for those months were provided as well as tentative balances for January 2026. January reports are not expected until later in the month & only known revenues were included in the tentative numbers. Joyce pointed out that the ending balances reflect the staff shortage we have experienced FYD.

Grant reimbursement requests have been submitted to OPI for allowable expenditures through January 2026. All requests have been approved & payment sent to GC. The GMSEC recognizes the revenue when the GCFD monthly reports are received.

The January expense comparison continues to show our shortage of school psychologists & SLPs in the current FY. The Retirement Fund [314], Special Revenue Fund [315] & Interlocal Fund [382] reflect these shortages. The difference in the Medicaid portion [280] of the 315 fund is the result of the purchase of a vehicle in FY25. Much of the remaining differences in the 315 fund are due to staffing shortages & the use of Rock Creek Teletherapy for SLP services. Other differences of note in this fund have been discussed at previous Board meetings.

The trend continues with spending through January across all three funds being less than the same period of FY25.

We have reviewed the 2025 audit draft & sent corrections/changes to Storm & Associates. The final piece being the Management Discussion & Analysis [MD&A] is expected to be completed by month end.

All member school district superintendents or designees have been added to the PCG 'all district user' list as requested during the January meeting. There are no system training opportunities presently being offered by PCG but there are resources available on the home page explaining how to navigate the system. We will alert the Board if we learn of any future training opportunities.

Chairperson Axtman inquired that should the staffing shortages continue for the remainder of the FY were any needs identified for use of the excess dollars. Director McCauley responded that she presently had some things in mind.

b.) **Director's Report**

(Informational)

i. Staffing updates

Riley has gathered all of the Professional Intention forms from staff. We have 11 staff returning that wish to remain at their current FTE. Amber has requested to decrease by 1 day. Kaitlin Harding will not return. She has been a great help taking over some of the Ennis caseload since December. Kaitlin Sonderer has requested to increase by 1 day and Megan Kemp requested to increase by a half day. There is only one part-time person leaving. As of now no one has applied for the SLP position.

ii. Ukeru training

Train-the-Trainer Training is \$950 per person. This is for the 2-day initial training. Once you complete this training you are licensed to use Ukeru techniques. They have Ukeru support available virtually for free. They can come to your school for support but I believe you would cover travel and lodging.

Once you are trained as a trainer, they require an annual 1-day (6 hrs) recertification course. This is required for trainers to maintain certification.

The cost for Trainers annual recertification is \$495 per person. The trainers can then provide the annual training for Users within the cooperative member districts. Which is a 4 hr training. There is no cost for the Trainers to recertify Users.

Equipment (safety pads) are needed in order to follow Ukeru techniques. They have the option of a Bundle (\$1300). Districts can also purchase individual pads (\$100-\$370). The safety pads you will need will depend on the student population and needs at your district.

I would recommend we have a few different admin/staff trained from our member districts as Ukeru trainers. They can then attend the annual recertification training. They can also provide the annual training to all member district staff. The Trainer can host an annual training in their district and other coop member admin and staff can attend that training in order to continue their certification.

I would also recommend each district is responsible for paying for their own district staff training fees and pads. The coop would be responsible for coop staff training fees and pads. This would

allow member districts to determine the needs in their buildings and how many trainers and pads would best fit their specific student needs.

Example of fees to complete training and order equipment:

- a. Train Trainer (April)- \$950 (\$800 if attending MCEC)
 - b. Annual recertification-\$495 each
 - c. Pads-larger districts may want to invest in the bundle (\$1300) smaller districts could share a bundle or purchase individual pads (\$100-\$370).
2. Initial cost for district
 - a. \$1050 (1 Trainer and smallest pad) up to \$2250 (1 Trainer and bundle)
 - b. Annual cost for district-\$495 and replacement pads
3. Upcoming trainings
 - a. Moscow, ID March 11 & 12
 - b. Bozeman, MT April 7 & 10
 - c. Ponderay, ID June 17 & 18
 - d. Boise, ID July 29 & 30

Board members discussed what they are presently doing for deescalation & the potential for having both CPI & Ukeru certified trainers within member districts that could certify staff of other member districts. It was noted that Bozeman District 7 is moving away from CPI which is geared toward hold techniques to this type of focus. The Board members would like to discuss this topic further & requested Kim approach District 7 for feedback on their experience. Also, Kim will be attending the Ukeru training while attending MCEC at the reduced rate in April.

iii. Insurance

I met with Beth Wardell, MarshMcLennan Agency (changing to just McLennan Agency) to have her look into insurance options for the coop. With MUST phasing out, we are looking at options of insurance for next year. After reviewing the proposal from Bridged Alliance, I thought it was best to explore other options as well. Given my schedule, I met with Beth to see if she could support the coop in comparing different options of insurance. It is free to have Beth review different insurance plans for us. She was initially told they would have rates available in 90 days which puts us into May. She is working with them to get those quotes earlier to allow us time to review them and share options with employees.

Joyce and I worked together to get her our current information and answer a few clarifying questions to support her search.

She will be looking into BlueCross BlueShield of Montana, Pacific Source, Joint Ventures Trust, Associated Employers and Bridged Alliance.

The goal would be to share those options and have coop staff sign up prior to end of year checkouts in June.

iv. Special Committee for Staff Negotiations

The last negotiations for the coop were noted in the board minutes on March 7th, 2024. Coop staff approached me to begin the discussion of negotiations on 3 different items. They are requesting:

1. Insurance Contribution increase
2. Salary matrix expansion
3. Discretionary leave policy adjustment

Board members discussed the number of negotiation meetings anticipated & if they could be held virtually. After discussion, the committee consists of Board Chair, Axtman, Superintendents Shipman, Flannigan & Lower. Co-op administrative staff was asked to provide the current pay matrix, current FY MUST insurance rates, Bridged proposed insurance rates, & the current discretionary leave policy to the committee.

v. 2026-2027 OPI Monitoring

All of our GMSEC member school districts special education files will be audited next school year. Our monitoring has been scheduled for the week of November 9th. I will be working with OPI to finalize details. OPI is currently looking to fill the monitoring position and they are waiting to fill that position before finalizing their schedule.

For this monitoring, I will ask case managers to have student files ready prior to the week of November 9th. I will pick them up from our different member schools and take those files to the coop office. OPI has requested that the student files be at the coop office for them to review. I, and other directors, have brought up the fact that we do not feel comfortable taking student documents from our district buildings. OPI has directed us that this is their request and how they have done this in the past. I will be the only coop member to transfer the student SPED files to and from member districts.

vi. Staff Cell phones

I would like to request the co-op to look into purchasing a cell phone for the Director to use. Given the duties and needs of our member school districts I am very rarely in the office. I do my best to be in the office at least one time a week to touch base with Joyce and Riley and handle anything else I would need to do while in the office, including checking phone messages. There have been times where I have missed phone calls from member district staff, private agencies and/or parents by a week or more. I am not able to respond appropriately in certain situations given the need for me to travel on a daily basis. I have checked with other coops and the use of a

cell phone for directors as well as the plan for those phones varies. I can collect that data from other coops and look into options of a cell phone plan and share that at our April board meeting.

I would also like to explore options for co-op staff. In my research of other coop work cell phone use, I found that there is an app and other options that can support coop staff when using their personal cell phone for work purposes. I can include these options when presenting information at our next board meeting, as well. No coop staff have asked me for a work phone but I think it would be best that the coop at least offer them an option to use to support the use of their personal cell phone, if they choose to use it for work purposes.

The Board discussed what their districts are currently doing & tentatively explored potential options. Possibilities for staff traveling through coverage dead zones included satellite phones & in reach Garmin. Kim was asked to review options & report her findings at the next board meeting.

c.) **2025-2026 Personnel Contract Amendment**

a. Contract Amendment for Megan Kemp, Physical Therapist

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

Megan and I have discussed her caseload and determined that the PT needs at Amsterdam are growing. This includes more evaluations and IEP meetings in the spring. Last year and this year she has put in extra time past her contracted 4 hours a week to support report writing, evaluations and attendance at IEP meetings of students on her caseload. In order to compensate her for her work and allow the appropriate amount of time for her to manage the needs of her current caseload, I would like to propose we provide her with an additional 4 hours per week (for a total of up to 8 hrs per week) at the hourly rate of \$65.56 (additional maximum of \$5770 for the remainder of the year) . This would begin Jan 1, 2026 and end Jun 12, 2026 . Megan will track the additional 4 hrs a week using a timesheet to be submitted by the end of each month. When speaking with Megan, she does not anticipate to use the additional 4 hrs each week but it will be in place for the weeks where she has an IEP meeting to attend, an evaluation or paperwork to complete.

Motion to amend Megan Kemp's contract as presented.

Motion: Spencer Johnson

Second: Jared Moretti

-Passed Unanimously

5. **Board Meeting Schedule: Projected 2025-2026 Third Thursday of the Month (Zoom/In-Person) *no less than 5 meetings per year**

- a. April 16th (could be removed) Laura recommends keeping for now.
- b. May 21st
- c. June 18th **In Person**

6. **Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting at 11:59am.

Motion: John Nielson

Second: Spencer Johnson

-Passed Unanimously.

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Board Chair: _____ Date: _____