

Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative
Regular Council Meeting
4/16/2026

The Regular Council meeting of the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative was held virtually via Google Meet on April 16, 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 February 19, 2026 GMSEC Board Meeting Minutes
- Minutes & b. Approval of expenditures: (#318319, 318346)- Feb, March Expenditures

Motion to approve minutes and expenditures.

Motion: Spencer Johnson
Second: Kevin Flannigan - Passed Unanimously.

4. New Business:

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

(Informational)

Joyce provided reconciled cash totals by fund for January & February 2026 with tentative totals for March 2026. When compared to the same period in FY 25 cash totals are understandably higher. The February 2026 cash total including all three funds is approximately \$83,000 greater than the total for February 2025. Some of the difference is due to timing but much is the result of having staff positions remain unfilled.

The grant requests through March for both the IDEA-B & the Preschool Incentive Grant have been paid or approved by OPI. The February payments were included in the March tentative total for fund 315 & the March payment will be reflected in the April financials.

Cooperative expenditures have & continue to be predominately labor driven—payroll & related expenses for instruction, specialists & administration staff members. Our March expense comparison continues to show our shortage of school psychologists & SLPs in the current FY & since all our cooperative costs flow through three funds each will reflect the staff shortages. In addition to staff costs, the Special Revenue Fund [315] includes all other expenditures. Differences of note in this fund for the current FY include the use of Rock Creek Teletherapy for some SLP services & not purchasing a new vehicle.

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

The external audit final report has been received from Strom & Associates with the notice published in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle as required by state statute.

b.) **Director's Report**

(Informational)

i. Director cell phone

Kim checked with different phone carriers (T-Mobile and Verizon). T-mobile was \$100 a month for a new phone, plus you paid for the phone with monthly payments (\$800). Verizon phone plan is quoted at \$50 a month for a new phone, no connection fees and the phone itself is free. That includes unlimited minutes/text, hot spot and satellite texting. Kim will plan to move forward with the phone plan at Verizon. This phone will be put under the coop name with Kim listed as a user. If she were to leave or change positions, the cell phone could be passed on to the next director. This phone will have all school contacts, other director contacts, etc. that a new director would have access to. It will also allow people to reach Kim easier as she is not in the office every day.

ii. GMSEC phone system change

On March 25th, Granite technology reached out to Riley via email and shared that our current office phones (Legacy phone system) are outdated and will no longer be able to be serviced if something were to go wrong with the phones. A Granite tech rep met with Joyce, Riley and Kim to share information about the upgraded system Unifi 360. This new system would include new phones in the office and we have the option to include user accounts for staff. The user accounts would have an individual office phone line connected through an app that can be accessed via computer and/or cell phone. Staff personal cell phones would be protected through this app if a staff member were ever included in member district litigation. The litigation investigation could review information via the coop account and the staff personal cell phone would not need to be turned over for investigation as all contact information is stored in the coop account. This is a great option for our mobile staff to provide them with an “office” number and support communication with member district staff and parents as they travel between their assigned schools. This app also has additional features like virtual meetings, access to voicemail via email, etc.

The quote for Unifi 360 was just emailed to the coop last night. The monthly cost would be close to what we pay now for office phones and the internet. Our current phone and internet bundle with Charter is \$316 a month (\$366 with the Director cell phone). The new option we are looking at with Granite Tech would be \$404 a month (Director cell phone, Unifi 360 and Verizon internet). That includes the addition of staff user accounts which we do not currently have but have been looking into. There is a one time installation fee of \$1440 (\$810 discount) for the new phone system and to set up the user accounts. Granite tech provides free phone service and support once we are set up.

The Verizon internet service would be added to the Director cell phone plan for \$30 a month. Our current internet and phone bundle with Charter is \$316 per month. If we dropped the phone lines, internet only with Charter would be \$190 a month.

If the coop decides to move forward with Granite Tech and Unifi 360, we would plan for a new phone system install in July to avoid phone interruption during the school year. The installation will take about a week.

iii. Staffing update

We have one candidate interested in a school psychologist internship. I also visited with a school psychologist from Washington last week who is interested in moving to the area. Our SLP assigned to West Yellowstone, Rose, will not return next year. Kylee, our SLP-A, took a new job and will not be returning. Kait Harding, who stepped in at Ennis one day a week, will not be returning next year. Based on the staff we know are returning next school year, we are short staffed by 1.0 FTE school psychologist and 1.0 FTE SLP.

I have started to plan for school assignments for staff next school year. Unless we hire another SLP, we will need to continue with Rock Creek SLP virtual services to support the needs of our member school districts. If we do not hire another school psychologist, I will plan to keep a few schools as a school psychologist. We may have a school psychologist that can be available as an on-call school psychologist, if needed.

iv. UKERU training

The Ukeru train-the-trainer training that was scheduled on April 7 & 10 was canceled due to low enrollment. The Ukeru rep shared that they plan to be in Helena in the Fall. The coop can plan to register and attend that training in the Fall.

5. 2026-2027 GMSEC 187-day Calendar

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

Member school calendars were collected to review so that GMSEC's Calendar could be created to align with most of the schools. The 3 PIR/staff meeting days in October, January, and April were kept as the staff like the time together to collaborate.

Motion to approve GMSEC Calendar for 2026-2027.

Motion: Marisa Stewart

Second: Kevin Flannagan

-Passed Unanimously

6. Contract approvals

a. 2026-2027 Personnel: Office Personnel Offer of Contracts:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Riley Russell: Executive Assistant: \$22.24/hr

ii. Joyce Schmidt: Business Manager/Clerk: \$27.43/hr

Motion to approve contracts for Office Personnel for the 2026-27 school year.

The Chair suggested that these two positions going forward in FY28 be increased greater than the present 3%.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Spencer Johnson

-Passed Unanimously

b. 2026-2027 Personnel: Speech Language Pathologist Offer of Contracts:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Shannon Childs: MA 60/Level v, 1.0 FTE

ii. Amanda Massey: MA 30/Level m, 0.6 FTE

iii. Amber Fortier: MA 45/Level i, 0.6 FTE

iv. Kaitlyn Sonderer: MA 30/Level o, 0.6 FTE

Kevin stated West Yellowstone would appreciate the additional day being spent with them if possible.

Motion to approve contracts for Speech Language Pathologist Personnel for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Marisa Stewart

Second: Kevin Flanagan

-Passed Unanimously

c. 2026-2027 Personnel: School Psychologist Offer of Contract:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Nicole Bottsford-Miller: MA 60/Level u, 0.8 FTE

Motion to approve contract for School Psychologist for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Spencer Johnson

Second: Marisa Stewart

-Passed Unanimously

d. 2026-2027 Personnel: School Psychologist Internship Offer of Contract:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Yvonne Fields: MA60/Level N, 1.0 FTE

Motion to approve contract for School Psychologist Intern for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Spencer Johnson

Second: Dustin Shipman

-Passed Unanimously

e. 2026-2027 Personnel: Occupational Therapist Offer of Contracts:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Jennifer Lewis: MA 60/Level v, 1.0 FTE

ii. Angela Holmes: BA 75/Level u, 0.8 FTE

Motion to approve contracts for Occupational Therapists for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Dustin Shipman

Second: Marisa Stewart

-Passed Unanimously

f. 2026-2027 Personnel: Physical Therapist Offer of Contracts:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Caroline Rehder: \$66.61/hr, 0.2 FTE

ii. Megan Kemp: \$67.53, 0.2 FTE

The question of why these two positions are not on the matrix was raised by the Chair & then discussed. Kim stated that she had only adjusted the present contracts to reflect the proposed hourly rate but would research further. Marisa offered the rationale used for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing position that came down to the certification requirements.

Motion to approve contracts for Physical Therapists for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Marisa Stewart
Second: Kevin Flanagan -Passed Unanimously

g. 2026-2027 Personnel: Special Ed. Teacher Offer of Contract:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Julia Tucker: BA/Level h, 1.0 FTE

Kim stated Julia is doing a great job of bouncing between member school districts & different level students.

Motion to approve contract for The Special Education Teacher for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Marisa Stewart
Second: Spencer Johnson -Passed Unanimously

h. 2026-2027 Personnel: Teacher of the Deaf Offer of Contract:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

i. Brittany Graham: \$65.56/hr, 0.2 FTE

Presently Brittany is working with two member districts & the potential to increase services 30 minutes per week with Amsterdam SD in FY27 is expected.

Motion to approve contract for Teacher of the Deaf for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Marisa Stewart
Second: Kevin Flanagan -Passed Unanimously

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

The Board discussed the possibility of an additional meeting before May 21st & moving future meetings to begin at 10:00am. Moving forward, Board meetings will begin at 10:00 am & an additional meeting will be added if needed prior to May 21st.

a. May 21st

b. **June 18th In Person**

8. **Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting at 12:10 pm.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Marisa Stewart

-Passed Unanimously.

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Board Chair: _____ Date: _____