

Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative
Regular Council Meeting
5/21/2026

The Regular Council meeting of the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative was held virtually via Google Meet on May 21, 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 10:07 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 Flanagan
- 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 April 16, 2026 GMSEC Board Meeting Minutes
- Minutes & b. Approval of expenditures: (#318347- #318358)- April Expenditures
- Motion to approve minutes and expenditures.
- Motion: Spencer Johnson
Second: Kevin Flanagan - Passed Unanimously.

4. New Business:

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

(Informational)

Joyce presented the reconciled totals by fund for March & April with tentative numbers for May. She elaborated further that May has little in the way of revenue each year beyond interest in the Retirement & Interlocal funds. The receivable due the Retirement Fund of nearly \$18,000 is expected to be released in June per the Superintendent of Schools office. The Interlocal Fund does not receive a payment for State Special Education or Quality Educator in May but does receive a double payment in June.

Grant revenue for the IDEA-B & the Preschool Incentive grants have been received for all requests submitted to date. Earlier this week the request for May expenditures was submitted & is now in the OPI review process.

As with previous months, the expenditures for the co-op have remained less than those of the previous year primarily due to staff shortages in SLP & School Psychology.

The audit for FY25 represented the completion of our three-year contract with Strom & Associates. We expect another contract for the Board's consideration before month end that will be included in the June Board meeting agenda.

The company contracted by the State managing the MAC claiming process [random time studies] has set a date of May 29th for the FY27 calendar & staff pool list comprising the August-December 2026 time frame. Presently five school districts have yet to submit their staff pool list & two their calendars.

b.) **Director's Report**

(Informational)

i. Staffing Update

I have been visiting with the director of Valley Speech Pathology. They are a business contracting with schools for special education services but, unlike Rock Creek, they can provide those services as in-person services as well as virtual options. They have an SLP that lives in Belgrade who is interested in working in-person in the valley. They may also have an SLP-CF (Clinical Fellowship) who may be available for in-person speech services as well. I am looking into these options as in-person services would be ideal for our students with speech needs. The coop may also be able to save a little in costs based on the unofficial rates the director and I discussed. I have visited with our SLP's about the idea of supporting an SLP-CF with supervision and they are

open to the opportunity to support an SLP-CF. I hope to hear from Valley Speech Pathology by the end of this week or early next week. If we would move forward with Valley Speech Pathology the coop would end our contract with Rock Creek Teletherapy. According to that contract we would need to notify Rock Creek of the termination of the contract with a 30 day notice. If for some reason Valley Speech Pathology does not work out, we will continue our contract with Rock Creek but it would be for 3 days a week instead of 5.

We still have a school psychologist position open. I will continue to search for a candidate for that position. If that is not filled, I do have a tentative plan to keep a few schools on my schedule next school year. With the one school psych intern we have for next Fall, I should not need to keep all 4 of my current schools.

ii. Program Narrative

I have been working on updating the Program Narrative for the coop. The Program Narrative is a document that lists the policies and procedures of how the coop and member districts will provide services to students with disabilities. The narrative lists policies and procedures regarding FAPE, Full Educational Opportunity Goal, Child Find, Evaluations, Eligibility Determinations, IEP, Educational Placements, Reevaluations, Procedural Safeguards and Due Process. This has been a document that all districts and coops should have had but it has not been monitored consistently by OPI. Some districts have kept them up to date, others haven't, some may not even have a narrative. This fall OPI informed Directors that it was an expectation that all districts and coops update and/or create their Program Narrative and submit them to OPI by June 1. The most recent copy of the Program Narrative for the coop that I have found is from 2009. I have been using that document as well as a template shared from OPI to update our Program Narrative. I plan to have it submitted to OPI soon. Once this is submitted to OPI and approved, I can share it with our board for review and approval. Once approved by OPI and our Board, the Program Narrative is reviewed every five years or as needed with any policy changes.

5. **Nomination and election of GMSEC Board Chair effective June 1st:**

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

Kevin Flanagan nominated Spencer Johnson but he declined as he didn't think he could take it on next year. Marissa recommended Laura Axtman continue on if she was up for it, which she agreed to.

Motion to elect Laura Axtman as GMSEC Board Chair.

Motion: Marisa Stewart

Second: Spencer Johnson

-Passed Unanimously

6. Nomination and election of GMSEC Vice Chair effective June 1st:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

Dustin also agreed to stay on as Vice Chair.

Motion to elect Dustin Shipman as GMSEC Vice Chair.

Motion: Spencer Johnson

Second: Marisa Stewart

-Passed Unanimously

7. Approval of Resolution

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

a. Destruction of GMSEC records

Joyce reported that each year records meeting the state destruction of records schedule are put before the Board as required by state statute. The list of records before the Board qualify for destruction as of July 1st with notice being made to the public two weeks prior to that date.

Motion to approve the destruction of GMSEC records.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Spencer Johnson

-Passed Unanimously

8. Approval of GMSEC Negotiations:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

a. Insurance

Chairperson Axtman presented the negotiation process as more involved than in the past, comprising a couple months in length & had gone very well. She felt the staff negotiators were pleased & felt heard. The Board was informed the co-op contribution amount had not been increased for at least 15 years & originally covered the full single premium including dental & vision. In recent years, the contribution necessitated selecting a plan with a higher deductible with the employee often having to contribute towards their coverage. The amount proposed is \$967 per month for a full single that comprises medical at \$913.50, dental of \$ 42.85 & vision of \$10.32. There was discussion about the longevity of this decision and if it could potentially cause a strain for the Co-op. Joyce explained that as of now most employees fall below the .5FTE and don't qualify for insurance so she doesn't see it being a problem any time soon. Laura

recommended that in the future if the Co-op does feel a strain we could increase the minimum FTE cutoff.

b. Years served pay structure

Chairman Axtman shared that expanding the present matrix was explored & the results then shared with the employee committee. Through that exercise it became quickly apparent expanding the present matrix would not be a viable solution. The recommendation put before the Board is for any certified staff member that has reached the end of the matrix & has worked for the co-op 15-19 years, \$1,500 would be added to the amount in the last step. For years 20-24 the amount would change to \$2,000. The employee handbook wording would need to be updated to reflect any changes.

c. Sick days

Chairperson Axtman shared that although there is no Sick Leave designation for certified staff beginning with our current FY, the negotiated recommendation is any unused Discretionary Leave that is banked only be used for sick leave situations. Further, the staff handbook language will need to be updated to reflect any negotiated changes but she was aware of other areas that were in need of update as well. Director McCauley & Business Manager Schmidt were asked to look into any needed changes.

Superintendent Flanagan asked if any member school districts had used the IBB process for negotiations. Those present had not but expressed a desire to learn more about the process. Superintendent Flanagan stated it is a powerful process & he is willing to meet with those interested.

Motion to approve GMSEC Negotiations as presented.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Spencer Johnson -Passed Unanimously

9. Contract approvals:

(Motion/Discussion/Action)

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

i. Jill Chumbley: \$50.00/hr, .08FTE

Kim reported Jill has been a long time employee of the co-op & her hourly pay has not risen for some time. Jill is normally available until the Big Sky ski season opens since she is an

instructor at the resort. In prior years Jill has helped with Child Find each fall, has covered for maternity leave, & is willing to fill in where needed as her schedule allows.

Motion to approve contract for School Speech Language Pathologist for the 2026-27 school year.

Motion: Spencer Johnson

Second: Jared Moretti

-Passed Unanimously

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

a. **June 18th In Person**

Superintendent Stewart is planning to bring the incoming superintendent for the Amsterdam School District to the June meeting if other members do not object.

8. **Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting at 10:50 am.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Marisa Stewart

-Passed Unanimously.

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Board Chair: _____ Date: _____