

BITTERROOT VALLEY EDUCATION COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

10:00 AM – Cooperative Office/Zoom

MINUTES - DRAFT

1. **Call to Order** – Mr. Thennis called the meeting to order at 10:02. Board members in attendance: Mr. Thennis, Mr. Fiske, Mr. Stiegler, Dr. DoBell. Board members not in attendance: Mr. Biesiot. BVEC administrative staff in attendance: Ms. Rammell, Ms. Gillespie. BVEC staff in attendance: Wendy Schroeder; Liz Pepion and Mathilda Hendin Hoecker via zoom. Board clerk: Jill Reynolds.
2. **Staff Representative Introduction** - Wendy Schroeder, School Psychologist at Darby and Victor. Ms. Schroeder said things are going well in both Darby and Victor schools. Victor has new students and staff. Ms. Rammell brought in MAEP (Montana Autism Education Program) to assist, and they recently had an observer, Jennifer Clausen, at the school. Ms. Schroeder feels she will be able to offer positive guidance and feedback.
3. **Consent Agenda – approved by unanimous consent.** There was discussion regarding resignations regarding if they were expected, were a surprise, and if the cooperative would be replacing. Both were surprises and we are planning to replace them.
 - A. Minutes
 - B. Warrants
 - C. Resignations:
 1. Robin Williams, CSCT Behavior Consultant, Victor Elementary
 2. Liza Gostevskiyh, BVEC Preschool Teacher
 - D. New Hires: none
 - E. Next Meeting: February 25, 2025
4. **Public Comment** – None.
5. **Correspondence/Communications** – None.
6. **Board Action** – None.
7. **Information and Discussion**
 - A. Maternity Leave Accommodation Consideration – Ms. Rammell explained the situation within the Preschool that the teacher would be going on Maternity Leave in April and not returning until June 6 to complete paperwork if accommodations were met. The accommodations requested were to have her child and their care giver on site that day. If accommodations not met, Liza would not return on the 6th, that would transition to her last day of maternity leave. Ms. Rammell explained her concern with setting a precedence of allowing this when it has not been allowed in the past. The Board agreed that the accommodation could be met and would not set a precedence. Other options to meet the accommodation were discussed such as allowing June 6th to be done from

home, or if a new teacher is found allowing them to complete paperwork with the input of the paras.

- B. BVEC Employee Evaluations – Ms. Rammell shared the timing of employee evaluations and shared that she led the process for special education and administration staff, while Ms. Gillespie led the process for the mental health staff. Ms. Rammell will move this review of evaluations to the November Board meetings in the future.
- C. Education Savings Account (ESA)/HB 393 – Dr. DoBell explained the situation with the ESA (Education Savings Account) and the formula including funds from the RSBG (Related Services Block Grant). He questioned if the cooperative should be paying this money back to the districts since the RSBG funds come to the co-op versus going directly to schools. State statute states the ESA payments must come from the general fund, which means they would not come from RSBG. Mr. DoBell asked if it be considered that the co-op help in paying the ESA. Ms. Reynolds explained that the cooperative actually does share IDEA B funding with the districts that does go to their general funds. Both Dr. DoBell and Ms. Rammell have reached out to Kaleva Law Firm to clarify a cooperative responsibility in an ESA but neither have received a reply at the time of the meeting. Ms. Reynolds asked for time to discuss ideas with Ms. Rammell prior to the February Board meeting.
- D. CSCT/School Based Mental Health Financial Review – Ms. Rammell discussed the Mental Health financial overview and that at this time the cooperative does need the districts to pay the CSCT contributions approved in the 24-25 budget. She explained the funds from Districts would be placed in reserves and only used as a last resort and then only after Board review. There was more discussion on the program sustainability, the future need for district financial support and why, how the program structure would evolve to meet needs, etc. Ms. Rammell suggested, and the Board agreed this topic requires more time than available at this meeting and set a working session meeting for February 18th from 1-3 in the cooperative office. Dr. DoBell reiterated his commitment to the cooperative employees and working toward innovation. Mr. Stiegler stated his agreement with Dr. DoBell.
- E. Director Evaluation – the Board went into executive session at 11:20 to review the evaluation. The session concluded at Noon.

8. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.