



## SCHOOL FUNDING INTERIM COMMISSION

### 69th Montana Legislature

#### SENATE MEMBERS

Becky Beard  
Forrest Mandeville  
Jacinda Morigeau  
Sara Novak  
Sue Vinton  
Jonathan Windy Boy

#### HOUSE MEMBERS

Brad Barker  
David Bedey  
Lee Deming  
Eric Matthews  
Luke Muszkiewicz  
Melissa Romano

#### PUBLIC MEMBERS

Tom Burnett  
Clayton Christian  
Rachel Green  
Susie Hedalen  
Martha Potter  
Matt Schreiber  
Tim Tharp  
Mike Waterman

#### COMMITTEE STAFF

Pad McCracken – Lead Staff  
Julia Pattin – Fiscal Staff  
Laura Sankey Keip – Legal Staff  
Katharine Johnson - Fiscal Staff  
Rebecca Brown - Research Staff  
Jolanda Songer - Secretary

# MINUTES LOG

February 11, 2026  
Day 1 - Capitol Room 317 & Zoom  
Helena, Montana

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

Access to an electronic copy of these minutes and the audio or video recording is provided from the Legislative Branch home page at <https://leg.mt.gov>. From the home page, select the "Committees" drop down menu at the top, then select Administrative or Interim, and the appropriate committee. The written minutes log can be located by expanding the accordion menu for the date of the meeting. Links to the audio/video files can be located by selecting the Video/Audio button on the same page, then the "past/current recordings" button. From there, use the calendar to select the date of the meeting you wish to view/listen to. The written Minutes Log, along with links to the audio and video recordings, is listed by meeting date on the interim committee's web page. Each of the Exhibits is linked and can be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit of interest. All Exhibits are public information and may be printed. Please contact the Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for more information.

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. David Bedey, Presiding Officer (R)  
Rep. Eric Matthews, Vice Presiding Officer (D)  
Rep. Brad Barker (R)  
Sen. Becky Beard (R)  
Tom Burnett  
Rep. Lee Deming (R)  
Rachel Green  
Supt. Susie Hedalen  
Sen. Forrest Mandeville (R)  
Sen. Jacinda Morigeau (D)  
Rep. Luke Muszkiewicz (D)  
Sen. Sara Novak (D)  
Martha Potter  
Rep. Melissa Romano (D)  
Matt Schreiber  
Tim Tharp  
Sen. Sue Vinton (R)  
Mike Waterman

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

Clayton Christian  
Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy (D)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Pad McCracken, Lead Staff  
Julia Pattin, Fiscal Staff  
Laura Sankey Keip, Legal Staff  
Katharine Johnson, Fiscal Staff  
Rebecca Brown, Research Staff  
Jolanda Songer, Secretary

**AGENDA** ([Attachment 1](#))

**VISITORS' LIST** ([Attachment 2](#))

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

08:02:19 Presiding Officer David Bedey called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

**REVIEW AGENDA AND UPDATED WORK PLAN**

08:04:48 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
[EXHIBIT 1](#)  
08:08:06 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
08:09:19 Laura Sankey Keip joined the meeting.

**INTRODUCE PHASE II CONSULTANT AND ROLE(S)**

08:09:38 Justin Silverstein, Co-Chief Executive Officer, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA Consulting)  
08:10:07 Amanda Brown, Vice President, APA Consulting

**SCHOOL FUNDING - BIG PICTURE AND DISTRICT GENERAL FUND**

08:10:31 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
[EXHIBIT 2](#)  
08:11:15 Julia Pattin, Fiscal Staff, Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD)  
(See Exhibit 2)  
08:14:22 Laura Sankey Keip, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Quiz**

08:22:42 Pad McCracken, LSD  
[EXHIBIT 3](#)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 08:32:57 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
(See Exhibit 3)
- 08:34:19 Sen. Becky Beard  
(See Exhibit 2)
- 08:34:40 Julia Pattin, LFD
- 08:34:57 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution**

- 08:35:19 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 2)
- 08:36:40 Pad McCracken, LSD  
(See Exhibit 2)
- 08:40:42 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy joined the meeting.

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 08:41:54 Sen. Forrest Mandeville
- 08:42:56 Pad McCracken, LSD
- 08:43:36 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

- 08:44:02 Pad McCracken, LSD  
(See Exhibit 2)
- 08:44:57 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 08:49:38 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy
- 08:50:12 Presiding Officer David Bedey
- 08:51:14 Pad McCracken, LSD
- 08:52:32 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 08:53:56 Presiding Officer David Bedey
- 08:54:10 Commissioner Mike Waterman
- 08:54:24 Julia Pattin, LFD
- 08:54:39 Supt. Susie Hedalen

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

- 08:55:36 Pad McCracken, LSD

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 08:57:28 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 08:58:29 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

09:00:35 Pad McCracken, LSD  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

09:01:50 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:02:20 Rep. Lee Deming  
09:02:41 Pad McCracken, LSD

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

09:03:06 Pad McCracken, LSD  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

09:07:09 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:08:02 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
09:08:45 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy  
09:09:13 Julia Pattin, LFD  
09:10:31 Pad McCracken, LSD  
09:11:15 Supt. Susie Hedalen  
09:11:49 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy  
09:12:18 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:12:56 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
09:13:31 Sen. Forrest Mandeville  
09:13:50 Commissioner Tim Tharp  
09:14:42 Commissioner Mike Waterman

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

09:15:37 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

09:18:11 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:18:35 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy  
09:18:54 Pad McCracken, LSD  
09:22:26 Supt. Susie Hedalen  
09:24:35 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
09:25:41 Commissioner Tim Tharp  
09:26:37 Commissioner Mike Waterman  
09:27:22 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy  
09:28:18 Presiding Officer David Bedey

09:29:36 Commissioner Martha Potter  
09:31:02 Supt. Susie Hedalen  
09:32:22 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:34:33 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
09:38:20 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy  
09:41:21 Sen. Sue Vinton  
09:42:17 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:43:07 Pad McCracken, LSD  
09:43:31 Rep. Luke Muszkiewicz  
09:44:34 Pad McCracken, LSD  
09:45:01 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

09:46:10 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

09:51:17 Commissioner Mike Waterman  
09:51:57 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
09:53:12 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
09:54:38 Commissioner Mike Waterman

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

09:55:35 Pad McCracken, LSD  
(See Exhibit 2)  
09:57:15 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

10:00:02 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
10:00:15 Julia Pattin, LFD  
10:01:13 Commissioner Martha Potter  
10:02:13 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
10:02:44 Supt. Susie Hedalen

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

10:03:23 Pad McCracken, LSD  
[EXHIBIT 4](#)  
(See Exhibit 2)

**Breakout Session**

10:09:28 Pad McCracken, LSD

**District General Fund Deeper Dive - Mechanics and Evolution - Continued**

10:26:49 Pad McCracken, LSD

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS**

10:27:41 Presiding Officer David Bedey

10:29:27 Kate Johnson, Fiscal Staff, Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD)

[EXHIBIT 5](#)

10:32:15 Julia Pattin, Fiscal Staff, LFD

(See Exhibit 5)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

10:36:05 Commissioner Mike Waterman

10:36:30 Lance Melton, Executive Director, Montana School Board Association

10:37:27 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

10:37:57 Julia Pattin, LFD

(See Exhibit 5)

10:39:43 Kate Johnson, LFD

(See Exhibit 5)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

10:41:40 Commissioner Matt Schreiber

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

10:42:49 Kate Johnson, LFD

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

10:45:53 Rep. Brad Barker

10:46:18 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy

10:46:47 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

10:46:59 Julia Pattin, LFD

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

10:50:17 Commissioner Matt Schreiber

10:50:26 Julia Pattin, LFD

10:51:20 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

10:52:04 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 5)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

10:59:03 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
11:00:48 Vice Presiding Officer Eric Matthews  
11:02:24 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
11:03:33 Rep. Luke Muszkiewicz  
11:05:30 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
11:05:59 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
11:07:20 Vice Presiding Officer Eric Matthews  
11:08:56 Presiding Officer David Bedey

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

11:09:42 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 5)  
11:11:16 Kate Johnson, LFD  
(See Exhibit 5)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

11:23:09 Commissioner Martha Potter  
11:24:00 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
11:24:44 Julia Pattin, LFD  
11:25:15 Commissioner Matt Schreiber

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

11:26:17 Kate Johnson, LFD  
(See Exhibit 5)  
11:27:28 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 5)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

11:33:12 Commissioner Mike Waterman  
11:37:55 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
11:38:46 Commissioner Matt Schreiber

**INFLATIONARY ANALYSIS - Continued**

11:39:43 Julia Pattin, LFD  
(See Exhibit 5)  
11:40:09 Commissioner Mike Waterman

### **Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 11:47:23 Rep. Brad Barker
- 11:48:34 Rep. Luke Muszkiewicz
- 11:49:17 Lance Melton, Executive Director, Montana School Board Association (MTSBA)
- 11:50:44 Presiding Officer David Bedey

### **Public Comment**

- 11:51:54 Lance Melton, MTSBA
- 11:55:33 Paul Taylor, Office of Public Instruction
- 11:57:38 Bob Story, Montana Taxpayers Association and Self
- 12:02:51 Shelley Turner, Executive Director, Montana Association of School Business Officials
  
- 12:07:12 **Recessed**
- 13:02:31 **Reconvened**

### **COST OF LIVING IN MONTANA**

- 13:02:55 Joshua Poulette, Lead Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD)
- [EXHIBIT 6](#)

### **Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 13:16:04 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 13:16:45 Joshua Poulette, LFD
- 13:18:12 Presiding Officer David Bedey
- 13:18:27 Joshua Poulette, LFD
- 13:20:47 Vice Presiding Officer Eric Matthews
- 13:21:46 Joshua Poulette, LFD
- 13:23:28 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 13:24:49 Joshua Poulette, LFD
- 13:29:21 Commissioner Mike Waterman

### **COST OF LIVING IN MONTANA - Continued**

- 13:30:35 Joshua Poulette, LFD
- 13:36:49 Presiding Officer David Bedey

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION - TRENDS IN STATE FUNDING APPROACHES; FUNDING HIGH-COST INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEP)**

- 13:37:29 Pad McCracken, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

13:38:04      **Recessed**  
13:43:20      **Reconvened**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION - TRENDS IN STATE FUNDING APPROACHES; FUNDING HIGH-COST INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEP) - Continued**

13:44:41      Isaiah Torres, Liaison to the Western States, Education Commission of the States  
[EXHIBIT 7](#)

13:48:12      Chris Duncombe, Principal, Education Commission of the States  
(See Exhibit 7)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

14:11:16      Presiding Officer David Bedey  
14:12:14      Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
14:16:14      Sen. Sara Novak  
14:19:02      Presiding Officer David Bedey  
14:21:44      Commissioner Tim Tharp  
14:22:24      Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
14:23:29      Sen. Sara Novak  
14:24:17      Presiding Officer David Bedey  
14:24:32      Sen. Sara Novak  
14:27:21      Commissioner Mike Waterman  
14:27:43      Presiding Officer David Bedey  
14:28:27      Sen. Sara Novak  
14:33:10      Justin Silverstein, Co-Chief Executive Officer, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA Consulting)  
14:34:09      Supt. Susie Hedalen  
14:39:57      Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
14:42:42      Sen. Sue Vinton  
14:43:58      Commissioner Martha Potter  
14:44:41      Commissioner Tim Tharp  
14:45:32      Presiding Officer David Bedey  
14:46:19      Commissioner Mike Waterman  
14:47:28      Commissioner Matt Schreiber

**Public Comment**

14:48:01      Jenny Murnane Butcher, Deputy Director, Montana Organized for Education  
14:49:56      Karen Lazetich Moses, Retired Schoolboard Member, School District 2

14:53:36      **Recessed**  
15:01:57      **Reconvened**

## **STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR**

### **Introductions of panel**

- 15:02:15 Becca Brown, Research Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
- 15:03:40 Lona Carter, Student Health Services & Special Education Director, Helena Public Schools
- 15:04:03 Dr. Rob Watson, Executive Director, School Administrators of Montana (SAM)
- 15:04:16 Dr. Laurie Barron, Principal, Evergreen School District, Kalispell
- 15:04:29 Rae Cooper, Principal, Lowell Elementary School, Missoula
- 15:04:41 Sarah Music, Director, Coordinated School Health Program, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
- 15:04:49 Kelsey Gummer, Senior Program Officer, Montana Healthcare Foundation (MTHF)
- 15:05:06 Becca Brown, LSD  
(See Exhibit 8)

### **Analysis of Data from Youth Risk Behavior Survey**

- 15:06:31 Sarah Music, OPI  
[EXHIBIT 8](#)

### **Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 15:20:10 Sen. Becky Beard
- 15:20:22 Sarah Music, OPI
- 15:21:27 Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy
- 15:23:23 Sen. Sarah Novak
- 15:24:20 Sarah Music, OPI
- 15:25:08 Presiding Officer David Bedey
- 15:26:11 Sarah Music, OPI
- 15:28:15 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 15:29:21 Sarah Music, OPI

## **STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR - Continued**

### **School-Based Behavioral Inventory**

- 15:30:44 Dr. Rob Watson, SAM

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- **Help the SFIC understand the current state of Student Mental Health across Montana; How do rural schools vs. urban schools compare? Are caseloads increasing? Are mental health/behavior issues distracting from classroom instruction?**
- **What are the tools in your toolbox? Talk about what your school/district is doing, what works, what are the challenges?**

- 15:35:03 Lona Carter, Helena Public Schools  
[EXHIBIT 9](#)

### **Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 15:50:11 Commissioner Matt Schreiber  
15:50:52 Lona Carter, Helena Public Schools

### **Discussion Prompts - Continued**

- 15:55:53 Dr. Laura Barron, Evergreen School District, Kalispell  
[EXHIBIT 10](#)  
16:01:50 Rae Cooper, Lowell Elementary School, Missoula  
16:07:04 Kelsey Gummer, MTHF

### **Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 16:09:55 Sen. Becky Beard  
(See Exhibit 10)  
16:10:44 Dr. Laura Barron, Evergreen School District, Kalispell  
16:12:26 Commissioner Tim Tharp  
16:16:40 Rep. Melissa Romano  
16:18:03 Sarah Music, OPI  
16:19:59 Presiding Officer David Bedey  
16:21:23 Commissioner Matt Schreiber

### **Public Comment**

- 16:23:22 None

### **ENGLISH LEARNERS**

#### **Introductions of Panel**

- 16:24:33 Becca Brown  
[EXHIBIT 11](#)  
16:25:48 Krystal Smith, Education Innovation Manager, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)  
16:26:00 Katie Bloodgood, Deputy Chief of Staff & Policy Director, OPI  
16:26:10 Kaitlyn Hess, Data Assessment Federal Programs Administrator, Helena Public Schools  
16:26:19 Violet Sinclair-Boggs, District Test Coordinator & Title III Project Leader, Browning Public Schools  
16:26:37 Casey Bertram, Superintendent, Bozeman Public Schools  
16:26:48 Bianka Rock Above, District Indian Education Director & Families in Transition Coordinator, Hardin School District

### **State Landscape and Recent Changes**

- 16:27:42 Katie Bloodgood, OPI  
[EXHIBIT 12](#)

**Discussion Prompts:**

- **What’s the current landscape of English Language Learners in your district and/or across the state?**
- **What are the tools in your toolbox? Talk about what your school/district is doing, what works, what are the challenges?**

- 16:32:11 Casey Bertram, Bozeman Public Schools  
[EXHIBIT 13](#)
- 16:40:47 Bianka Rock Above, Hardin School District
- 16:43:50 Violet Sinclair-Boggs, Browning Public Schools
- 16:49:52 Kaitlyn Hess, Helena Public Schools  
[EXHIBIT 14](#)

**Commission Questions / Discussion**

- 16:57:06 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 16:58:55 Katie Bloodgood, OPI
- 17:00:29 Amanda Brown, Vice President, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA Consulting)
- 17:00:54 Sen. Becky Beard
- 17:01:27 Kaitlyn Hess, Helena Public Schools
- 17:02:39 Presiding Officer David Bedey
- 17:04:57 Bianka Rock Above, Hardin School District
- 17:06:12 Commissioner Tim Tharp
- 17:06:35 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 17:08:36 Sen. Becky Beard
- 17:09:53 Supt. Susie Hedalen
- 17:11:33 Presiding Officer David Bedey
- 17:13:04 Katie Bloodgood, OPI
- 17:14:04 Supt. Susie Hedalen
- 17:15:43 Rep. Luke Muszkiewicz
- 17:17:06 Kaitlyn Hess, Helena Public Schools
- 17:18:22 Casey Bertram, Bozeman Public Schools
- 17:19:13 Commissioner Matt Schreiber
- 17:21:27 Violet Sinclair-Boggs, Browning Public Schools

**Public Comment**

- 17:26:52 Therese Tucker, K-12 English Learner/Multilingual Learner Coordinator, Helena Public Schools

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY OTHER TOPIC WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION**

17:35:03 Lisa Verlanic Fowler, Retired Educator, Florence

17:40:23 Kim Popham, Director of Public Policy and Research, Montana Federation of Public Employees

17:46:14 Jaret Stump, Teacher, Glacier Highschool & Montana Digital Academy

17:49:40 Elizabeth Dешner, School Psychologist, Belgrade Public Schools

**IN RECESS UNTIL FEBRUARY 12, 2026, AT 8:00 A.M.**

Recessed: 17:59:56