

Gustavus Advisory School Board

Monday, April 27, 2026

5:30pm

(DRAFT)

CALL TO ORDER: 5:33 pm

ROLE CALL:

- Board members: Molly Kelly, Liesl Barker, Deja Jarvis, Lizz Durco
- Principal Karen McSpadden

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE:

- Megan Graham (GBNP Education Specialist)
- Jessie Soder (Teacher)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- Kelly made 1st motion, Jarvis made 2nd motion. Agenda approved by unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING:

- Jarvis made 1st motion, Durco made 2nd motion. Minutes approved by unanimous consent.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- None

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

- None

REPORTS:

- Administrative Report:

Dear ASB,

Gustavus School continues to offer meaningful, engaging opportunities that connect our students to both the arts and our community. I am pleased to share several highlights and upcoming events.

We are excited to welcome Petersburg artist Cindi Lagoudakis to Gustavus School during the week of May 4th. Cindi will be working with students across grade levels, providing hands-on instruction in gelatin plate printing. Students will explore this accessible printmaking technique using plates, acrylic paint, and brayer rollers. Gelatin plate printing allows for creativity at all levels and introduces students to a versatile art form that can extend into collage, bookmaking, and more. Student and community artwork created through this process will be featured at the May Gateway Gallery Show, opening Friday, May 8th at 5:00 PM.

Students will have the opportunity to attend a live performance by Matt Herskowitz, a nationally recognized jazz/classical crossover pianist, at the Gustavus Community Center. This enriching experience supports exposure to live music and the arts. An evening performance will be open to the community at 7:00 PM, and families are encouraged to attend.

Last week, our elementary students participated in an engaging historical experience with Tin-Cup Kelly, a reenactor from the Klondike Gold Rush era. Students traveled back in time, learning about the Gold Rush through storytelling and interactive activities. Following the visit, students took Tin-Cup Kelly to Bartlett Cove, connecting local geography with historical learning.

Students will take part in the Point Hike on May 5-6, followed by the Sea Wolf trip on May 14-15. On May 19, our 4th and 5th grade students will present their Year-Long Study projects. We have applied for the GREAT Alaska Project which focuses on building our own special education workforce in rural districts by growing teachers from within communities. The goal is to support paraprofessionals in working toward certification so we can have more local special education teachers who are more likely to stay long-term. At the same time, the project strengthens all staff capacity around reading instruction and intervention for students with disabilities. It aligns with Alaska's Reading

Strategic Plan and ESSA priorities, so it supports both compliance and improved student outcomes.

In collaboration with The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Summer Work Program will be providing a paid work experience for students, particularly those with disabilities while building essential employability skills and supporting successful transitions beyond high school. For Gustavus School, this program aligns directly with IDEA transition requirements and extends learning beyond classrooms by connecting students to real-world environments. Students gain valuable experience in communication, responsibility, and problem-solving, while also exploring potential career pathways in a supported setting. At the same time, local businesses benefit from an additional workforce during the peak seasons and have the opportunity to help develop and retain future employees within the community. In a rural setting like Gustavus, the program serves as a critical bridge between education and the local economy, strengthening student outcomes, supporting families, and contributing to long-term community sustainability.

Final revisions to the preschool handbook and program materials are currently underway in preparation for the submission to the state for 0.5 ADM funding through Chatham School District for Gustavus. This process includes aligning the handbook with Alaska DEED requirements, ensuring all policies, procedures, and program components reflect compliance with state expectations for early childhood programs.

Quick note on the Middle School Volleyball team, they won half of their games at the tournament in Juneau. Go Foxes!!

Gustavus School remains committed to providing well-rounded, engaging learning experiences that reflect the strengths and opportunities of our community. Thank you for your continued support of our students and staff.

Respectfully,
Karen McSpadden
Principal, Gustavus School

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT:

- Colin Devenny (Student Council President) reported that they have obtained a few names from Kate Boesser for the plaque honoring Gustavus School graduates who have joined the military. They hope to have more names by our next meeting in May so we can order the plaque.

ITEMS FOR ADVISORY SCHOOL BOARD CONSIDERATION:

OLD BUSINESS:

- None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Presentation by Jessie Soder regarding attendance - Jessie proposed the idea of forming an Attendance Committee. She would like it to consist of a broad variety of representatives (example: teachers, an ASB member, parents, community members, and students). There has been a rise in chronic student absences, which is defined as students missing 10% or more days in class. Studies show that students who are chronically absent are less proficient in reading, struggle with middle school achievement, and have decreased rates of high school graduation. Schoolwide chronic absences affect ALL students. It has been proven to cause decreased Math and ELA scores, and it negatively impacts social and emotional learning. Data shows that for the 2025-2026 school year, 60% of Gustavus School students were chronically absent. Middle school students were 50% absent and High School students were 68% absent. If you factor in sports, 95% of both Middle School and High School students were chronically absent. Jessie would potentially like to have an Attendance Committee in place by fall of 2026. ASB will be holding a special meeting to approve the formation of the committee. Jessie's hope is to provide information/outreach in order to reduce student absences and promote a more efficient learning environment.
2. Megan Graham, GBNP Education Specialist, discussed details of the GBNP collaborating with the school. She stressed the importance of having an official written agreement between the GBNP and Gustavus School. It's been fairly informal in the past, but it would be beneficial to have an agreement especially for some of the bigger projects, such as First Bloom or Plume and Navigation/Oceanography. Some activities that have been offered in the past are:

Fishing

Berry picking

Field trip with maintenance division(potentially more career exposure in other divisions)

Coldwater Coral

Bird activities

Gustavus Point Hike

Scientist in the classroom

Dragonfly Mercury Project

Megan is open to ideas of how to collaborate. She would like to at least have a general agreement draft completed by June 1st. The agreement could then be revisited/modified

year to year.

3. Jarvis reviewed Gustavus School Fund. The current balance is \$66,981.86. She mentioned that deposits from middle school athletics are not yet reflected in the final number of the athletics fund.
4. Kelly made 1st motion, Jarvis made 2nd motion to approve Gustavus School fund request by Jessie Soder for the Point Hike in the amount of \$800. Unanimous vote yes.
5. Graduation update - Graduation will be Sunday May 17th. There will be 6 graduates. Flowers and cake have been ordered. Karen will order balloons from Juneau. Durco will be the ASB representative on the stage. ASB will set up the day before at 1:00 and will clean up after the event.
6. Community Breakfast update - The NPS Interp will be serving breakfast in May.
7. Legislative checkin - at our last meeting Leann Weikle (RSB Treasurer) spoke about current legislation. Two bills that she focused on promoting were #261 and #280. Both bills would improve funding and continuity in our school districts. As of now they both have been approved through the education committee and are currently being reviewed by the finance committee. So far there has been positive movement for both.
8. Barker made 1st motion to postpone discussion of future senior trip to the May meeting. Durco made 2nd motion. Unanimous vote yet to postpone.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

- None

DISCUSSION:

- May 6-10 is Teacher Appreciation week. ASB members will try to bring snacks throughout the week.
- ASB will hold a special meeting to approve forming an Attendance Committee
- Barker mentioned some possible grant opportunities for the future. The Rural Cap Grant and the Friends of Gustavus Grant may be possibilities. We would need to go through the proper channels to see if we qualify.

- Barker mentioned she would like to step down from being Chair after November, but will still remain on the board.
- Durco would like to make the Aramark dayboat happen for students in the fall. School will start on 9/2 and the last dayboat is 9/7 so there may be a chance it could work out. She will discuss it with Brian the GBL manager.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA:

- Community breakfast update
- Legislation check-in
- Discuss Senior Trip for future school year
- Meet & Greet Teacher night end of August

NEXT MEETING:

- May 18, 2026

MEETING ADJOURNED:

- Adjourned 7:17 pm