



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees – Budget and Program Committee

May Butler Center | 55 S. Rodney Ave
Friday, November 1, 2019 – 12:00pm

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Committee:

Jeff Hindoién, Committee Chair
Sarah Sullivan, Committee Member
John McEwen, Committee Member

Others:

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator
Stacey Collette, Human Resources Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Terry Beaver, Board Trustee

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chairperson, Jeff Hindoién called the meeting to order at 12:04pm.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

None was offered.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested.

IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Changes we requested to correct the spelling of Jeff Hindoién and Todd Watkins.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Retirement Incentive Update and Financial Calculations

Ms. Collette began with an early retirement incentive update, stating the district received letters of interest from 55 educators, and 40 have accepted. She broke down the retirees as follows: 19 at the elementary level, 10 from the middle schools, and 11 from the high schools. She said the next step will be to examine staffing needs and transfer requests for the 2020-2021 school year with

administration and Helena Education Association (HEA). Ms. Collette said listing these openings in December will help the district will be more competitive in recruiting the most qualified applicants. She voiced her appreciation for Ms. Jane Shawn, HEA President, and the retirement incentive committee for their hard work developing and communicating the incentive with educators.

Mr. McEwen asked if there would be retirees in addition to the 40 who have accepted the early retirement incentive. Ms. Collette answered that there would be, but the district would not know until January 15. She added that the additional retirees will still be eligible for the standard retirement benefits.

Mr. McEwen asked when teachers will receive contracts for the 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Collette answered that contracts will be offered earlier than previous years, but she wanted to look at staffing needs prior to offering contracts.

Mr. McEwen inquired into when the district will know which educators will return for the 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Collette answered the statutory deadline is June 1; if that deadline is not met, educators are obligated to return for the next school year.

Mr. McEwen asked for an estimate on the typical year-over-year turnover. Ms. Collette answered typically 60-80, including retirements, resignations, and non-renewals.

Ms. Sullivan inquired into the possibility of extending the early retirement incentive for administrators. Dr. Ream answered that the district wants to go through the same collaborative process as the educator incentive with HEA. He added since the early notice will assist Ms. Janelle Mickelson with future budget calculations, the district will complete the process by December 1.

Mr. McEwen asked which positions were typically the most difficult to hire. Ms. Collette answered math, science, and middle school.

Mr. McEwen asked if the names of retirees have been made public. Ms. Collette answered the district has notified the retirees and their peers and will publicly release the names at the November 12, board meeting. Mr. Hindoien asked if Ms. Collette anticipated presenting the early retirement incentive information at the board meeting or just list the retirees in the Approval of Personnel Actions. He recommended preparing an informational piece to show the hard work that went into the process and to show appreciation for the committee.

Mr. Hindoien asked if the district had estimated savings and costs for the early retirement incentive at the elementary versus high school level. Ms. Mickelson said the costs have not yet been broken down by level, but the total costs for the incentive was estimated at \$4,000,000 – evenly split from the retirement fund and the interlocal fund, and costs at the elementary level would be higher.

Ms. Mickelson estimated a savings of \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 in the first year, subject to change based on the teachers who are hired. Mr. Beaver asked if there was a limit on the years of

experience that would be honored for a newly hired teacher. Ms. Collette answered that the district honors up to ten years of experience.

B. Program Budget Analysis

Dr. Ream referenced the Staff Distribution Matrix document and said the district first looked at whether the FTEs at each school were equal. He added that counselors, nurses, or school psychologists were not included in the FTEs. Dr. Ream said the district next examined whether attendance was equal, then whether the student/teacher ratio was equal at each school

Dr. Ream continued that the next step in the assessment will be to complete the same process by department, by school, for core classes to determine whether there is equal distribution. He said the following step will be to look at distribution at the subject level and attendance in each class. Dr. Ream continued that once the committee reached the class by class analysis, school administrators would be brought back into the discussion.

Mr. McEwen asked if most classes were reasonably full. Ms. Sullivan answered that English classes were typically full because four years of English was required, but other classes varied significantly. Dr. Ream said the district was not set up for funding small classes, so it needed to investigate the most cost-effective way to continue to offer them.

Ms. Sullivan asked if looking at one year's data would be enough to make decisions based on the findings. Mr. McKay suggested the assessment occur annually. He emphasized the need to best address the needs of students in the most equitable way.

Mr. Beaver noted the matrix didn't take into consideration for what classes students applied, adding a teacher-student ratio at the second choice of a class may be due to a lack of staffing in the first-choice class.

C. Multiyear Budget Projections

Ms. Mickelson presented the budget projection document to the committee, first noting the column labeled "part time students." According to Ms. Mickelson, part-time students included those attending Explore School – a program offered at Exploration Works for homeschooled students. She also noted the comparison between last school year's enrollment to this fall's enrollment numbers. Dr. Ream noted that Helena High's enrollment was lower than anticipated. Ms. Mickelson said she had been unable to obtain out-of-district documentation that would show where those students are attending school.

Mr. McKay offered clarification on Explore School and how those students affect enrollment numbers. He said the hours those students spend in Explore School were counted towards Hawthorne's enrollment since there was no risk of exceeding Hawthorne's class numbers, which would affect funding and staff levels.

Ms. Mickelson forecasted enrollment for five years at the high schools, including a projected loss of 100 students each year for the next three years to the East Helena high school and an estimated 3% loss of enrollment from the fall to the spring per current trends. Dr. Ream mentioned the potential funding shift from the Access to Success program that compensate for the anticipated 3% loss.

Ms. Mickelson detailed the steps used to determine the enrollment forecast as follows:

1. She used this fall's enrollment count and projected a 3% loss for spring to obtain an average.
2. She calculated ANB for current enrollment and the three-year average.
3. She carried that number to the next year and repeated the process.

She said she will continue to use the three-year average through 2028 unless the district gets an influx of additional students. Mr. Hindoien asked how these new figures compared to the previous projections. Ms. Mickelson answered they were very similar.

Ms. Mickelson said that after determining anticipated enrollment, she determined a projected five-year budget authority based on that enrollment. She confirmed that the budget projections factored in inflation, legislative changes, and any factors other government offices assumed.

Ms. Mickelson said the projected budget through 2027 shows an estimated loss of \$20,000,000, which included anticipated growth in the elementary but was concerning at the high school level. Dr. Ream asked what hadn't been included in the budget projection, and Ms. Mickelson answered the projections didn't factor any costs since the district didn't have those yet. She added she would be working with Todd Watkins to align costs with the projected budget authority. Dr. Ream added that last year's projections rolled forward all employees, but this year, the district would use a cost replacement model due to the large number of retirees.

Dr. Ream said that he would like to roll out this projected budget out to the board and public in segments rather than presenting the information as a whole, helping to understand how the model was built.

Ms. Mickelson presented the status of the current budget and asked for questions. Mr. Hindoien asked for clarification on the bump to para salaries. Ms. Mickelson answered those salaries were currently being paid out of the general fund, but some of those dollars will be taken from the tuition fund next year. She added that the shift in custodians' salaries has been adjusted back from the 65%/35% split.

Mr. Beaver asked if extracurricular assignments had been factored in. Ms. Mickelson confirmed, adding that it included OT, sabbatical, athletic director, etc.

Mr. McEwen requested confirmation that the budget authority decreased year-over-year. Ms. Mickelson confirmed that it did, by about \$2,000,000 over the next five years.

Dr. Ream said the next steps will be to roll this data forward and present a year-over-year analysis, adding that the biggest adjustments will be the results of the early retirement incentive and factoring the loss in enrollment due to the East Helena high school.

VI. BOARD COMMENT

Ms. Sullivan expressed her appreciation for the work on the budget projections.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

There was no superintendent's report.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hindoien adjourned the meeting at 1:05pm. The next meeting will be December 6, 2019.