



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 Programs Committee

May Butler Center | 55 S. Rodney Ave

Friday, December 6, 2019 – 12:00pm

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Committee: *Others:*

Jeff Hindoien, Committee Chair
John McEwen, Committee Member

Terry Beaver, Trustee
Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator

Excused Absence:

Sarah Sullivan, Committee Member

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair, Jeff Hindoien, called the meeting to order at 12:02pm.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

None was offered.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested.

IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

No changes were requested.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Salary Schedule Negotiations Update

Dr. Ream referenced the previous deadline of mid-December for the Professional Compensation Alternative Plan (PCAP). The decision was made to postpone discussions regarding the PCAP to first address issues of greater priority to employees. Dr. Ream said next steps will include costing out list of priorities and setting goals at a two-day financial summit January 30-31.

Ms. Collette referenced other items listed in the negotiation process, many of which align with the issues of the Budget Committee, specifically software, hardware, additional programs and staffing –

standard requests expressed during previous negotiations. She added that if employees attended a budget presentation in the spring, they were better educated on how budgets were impacted by staffing and what could be accomplished collectively through the negotiation process to ensure budget stability through declining enrollment.

Mr. Hindoien agreed that it would behoove the district to build a budget model prior to discussing adjustments to PCAP and salary negotiations moving forward.

B. Program Budget Analysis Update

Dr. Ream referenced the last page of the meeting packet – the high school staffing distribution matrix – and commented on the similarities between the high schools’ student to teacher ratios. He said district and school administrators will next look internally at each high school to determine steps moving forward. Dr. Ream clarified that only core classes were included in the matrix.

Mr. McKay discussed the methodology he used for establishing the matrix which included feedback from district and high school administrators. He added that enrollment numbers for the matrix were pulled on November 19, 2020. Mr. McKay offered clarification remedial classes were not included in the matrix for either school since they weren’t necessarily taught by core teachers. He added the methodology was consistent across departments and schools. Mr. McKay said the purpose of the matrix was to provide a full analysis to determine what decisions could be made to help increase efficiency among current FTEs.

Mr. McEwen asked how administration felt about the findings and if a discrepancy between ratios at the schools indicated too many teachers at one school or too few at the other. Dr. Ream referenced current agreements in place affecting the ability to change staffing. He cited that any instance of a disproportionate ratio, if not strategically in place, would need to be considered.

Dr. Ream voiced his appreciation for the administrators, counselors and educators at both high schools as overall, we have only a handful of students below 10 students. He added that since there were so few small classes, there was no easy budgetary solutions.

Dr. Ream addressed the enrollment numbers to be presented at the next board meeting, adding that with the loss of students to the East Helena High School, Helena High is predicted to welcome more predictable, but smaller, classes of freshmen.

Ms. Shawn asked for the number of credits required for each subject. Mr. McKay answered that graduation requirements were four credits in ELA, three in Math, two in Science, and three in Social Studies.

Ms. Shawn asked for confirmation this was the first time a matrix like this had been completed. Dr. Ream answered that it was.

Mr. McEwen asked who made decisions regarding the number of staff within each department. Mr. McKay answered that it was a group decision based on several determining factors, including restrictions of the building, accreditation standards, and the number of tenured staff in the school.

Mr. Hindoien asked what the feedback had been from the principals. Mr. McKay answered that they felt the matrix correctly matched their scheduling and they weren't surprised with the findings. Mr. McKay said that while principals were constantly adjusting to accommodate the needs of students, it was difficult to make significant changes during the school year. However, the principals were already discussing how they would share staffing in the future.

Mr. Hindoien asked for next steps. Dr. Ream answered that PE and elective classes could be added to the matrix. Mr. McKay added that the purpose of the matrix was to guide master schedule and staffing decisions to ensure programs ran as efficiently as possible.

Mr. McEwen requested clarification that, based on the student/teacher ratio, if enrollment dropped by 200 students, it equated to 10 fewer teachers. Mr. McKay answered that the FTEs also included counselors, school psychologists, and librarians – not just teachers.

Mr. Beaver noted that offering only the state required classes would cut staff needs, but it also would limit class offerings and students' educational opportunities. Dr. Ream said it would be a tough discussion if/when Helena High dropped below 1,000 students.

C. Multiyear Budget Projection Update

Ms. Mickelson provided the committee with the current projected budget. She said the adjustments helped the budget remain solvent for a couple of years. Ms. Mickelson said that Todd Watkins will fine-tune calculations by comparing current staff and anticipated replacement staff to authorized budget numbers, and then will run several scenarios to project a budget for the next five years. Ms. Mickelson stated the importance of having a third party affirm her budget projections. She anticipated the forecasting from Mr. Watkins will include trending data for spending in instruction, curriculum, assessments, and utilities. She added that while the state provides a 1% inflationary increase, salaries and benefits – with just steps – increases more than 2%, meaning costs are outpacing revenues. Ms. Mickelson said Mr. Watkins present his findings and recommendations to the board in January.

Mr. Hindoien asked if the committee would see Mr. Watkins's findings prior to its presentation to the board. Ms. Mickelson was unsure if that was an option.

VI. BOARD COMMENT

Mr. McEwen asked Mr. McKay if he had matrixes for each high school department. Mr. McKay answered that he did. Mr. Hindoien added that the budget will drive department structure in the future. Mr. McEwen asked if he was aware of the student/teacher ratio at peer districts. Mr. McKay answered that he could obtain that information.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hindoien adjourned the meeting at 1:11pm. The next Budget and Programs Committee meeting will be January 10, 2020.