



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 – Policy Committee

May Butler Center | 55 S. Rodney Ave

Tuesday June 4, 2019 – 12:00p.m.

MINUTES

Committee:

Libby Goldes, Committee Chair
Terry Beaver, Committee Member
John McEwen, Committee Member

Others:

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board of Trustees Chair
Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Stacy Collette, HR Director

I. CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting was called to order at 12:06pm by Chairperson, Ms. Libby Goldes.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

There were no requested changes to the agenda.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

IV. POLICY COMMITTEE PROCESS

Ms. Ridgway gave an overview of the committee process, beginning by stating that the previous procedure for policies was to bring them before the committee to be reviewed twice before bring them before the board to be reviewed twice. Which meant that – if all went well – it took four months to adopt a policy. Under Luke’s leadership, the committee modified that process a little. Now, if a policy receives general consensus of approval at first reading in the committee, it is taken to full board for comment, and then back to the policy committee for second reading. This reduces the number of rotations by one unless it’s a complex policy or the policy committee wants to spend more time with it. Most are minor edits on each policy, so goes to the full board where they can review it and sent it back to the committee for second reading. Once approved

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by the full board, Ms. Ridgway posts it to the website so it is available to the public. Ms. Ridgway added that manuals typically aren't printed except for distribution to committee members.

Ms. Ridgway reiterated the importance of the committee and policy, stating it influences the district's day-to-day work, district staffing, and student handbooks. She will begin looking at all of the student handbooks this summer to confirm make changes so they comply with the new and modified policies.

Ms. Ridgway continued by discussing the organization of the manuals, stating that the policy manual has gone through several alterations. She stated that while the district had its own numbering system at one time, it has moved to the series that MTSBA uses. Ms. Ridgway has spent some time trying to align the district's policy numbering to match MTSBA, though they don't match number for number, which has been a little challenging. She will continue to align ours with MTSBA when possible.

Ms. Ridgway proceeded to describe each policy series, beginning with Series one which is called Governance. It describes how committees are formed, how elections take place, how records are managed, and the uniform complaint procedure. Ms. Ridgway encouraged the committee to peruse that series first. She added that the committee has reviewed this section recently and has made changes based on committee and board recommendations. Ms. Ridgway said the committee members are working through the 2000 section, which is Student Instruction. It covers everything from the instructional program to limited English proficiency to library collections to field trips. Series 3000 is called Students. It includes student life, school admissions, student appearance, student due process rights, discipline, obligations students have if they're participating in school-sponsored activities, how school nurses administer medications or deal with concussion, and mentioned it's a pretty broad range of topics. The 4000 series is Community & Public – public relations, how visitors enter schools, parent engagement, and how the public can access facilities use. The new policy in that series includes the school resources officer program. Series 5000 is Staff and Employee Policies and relates to staff employment. Series 6000 is District Organization and only includes two policies right now. Series 7000 is Non-instructional Operations and includes food service, meal account, tuition – more the fiscal series of policies. Series 8000 includes the use of unmanned drones, how facilities get named, school closures, and the transportation contract.

Ms. Goldes addressed the issue of language inconsistency through the policy manual, and Ms. Ridgway agreed. Ms. Goldes recommended "shall" be removed from the manual. Ms. Ridgway addressed the inconsistent use of "superintendent and/or designee" sometimes has a comma and sometimes does not.

Ms. Goldes asked for any questions regarding the policy committee process and received none.

V. REVIEW OF 5/7/2019 POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Mr. Muszkiewicz questioned the second page of the minutes and recommended the word "recommendation" be added after superintendent. He was unsure whether he said that, and it was determined the minutes would be reviewed for clarification.

Mr. McEwen questioned the reference to state agency listed as “Human Rights Coalition.” Ms. Ridgway said it should be changed to “Human Rights Commission.”

Ms. Goldes requested that page numbers be added to the minutes.

Ms. Goldes referred to the pages referenced earlier by Mr. Muszkiewicz, specifically the second to last paragraph, the second line, and requested clarification of “the definition of a building or not a building.” Ms. Collette recommended that it be stricken from the minutes. Ms. Ridgway clarified that the phrase described whether a staff member is assigned to a specific building or they are part of the district at large.

Ms. Goldes requested clarification with regards to the “just above” phrase from line 11, questioning to where it refers.

Ms. Goldes stressed the importance of having trustees understand that they cannot comment on non-renewals. Ms. Ridgway asked whether Ms. Goldes was referring specifically to within a board setting, and Ms. Goldes clarified she was meant in any setting. Ms. Ridgway confirmed that because it was a personnel matter, no details could be discussed. Dr. Ream clarified that not commenting applies only to a specific situation, and Ms. Collette added that the topic, the procedure, the policy are fair game – just not the individual renewals or non-renewals or specific people.

Ms. Goldes asked if there there any more comments and received none. Ms. Goldes asked if the minutes needed to be approved, and Ms. Ridgway and Dr. Ream agreed that they did not need to be approved.

VI. PRESENTATION OF POLICIES FOR SECOND REVIEW

A. Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment

According to Ms. Ridgway the only change was the recommendation on Page 9 to add Collective Bargaining Agreements. Originally it just listed “District Policy.” Ms. Goldes asked for clarification of the meaning of ARM as referenced on Line 26, inquiring into whether there was a glossary of terms.

Ms. Collette recommended, in reference to Line 11, the policy talks about “classified employees who are covered by the CBA are subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.” She requested the policy add – for clarification and because it was discussed with certified employees – that classified employees covered by a CBA are also subject to district policy and statute. She also requested that after a paragraph break, the paragraph begin with “classified employees whose positions are not covered by a CBA.” She suggested that since there are three distinct categories included in this policy, the policy should have three distinct paragraphs reflecting that. She also recommended adding the word “statute” in Line 15 after procedures because administrators and independent staff are also subject to district policies and procedures in the statute. Dr. Ream requested clarification that after that sentence the policy would add the phrase “subject to district policies.” He also requested clarification that the next paragraph will address classified staff who are not covered by a CBA. Ms. Ridgway read the

sentences with proposed changes. Ms. Collette recommended the words “after which” be stricken from the policy since employees are subject to district policy at all times, and Ms. Ridgway confirmed it would be removed.

Mr. McEwen asked if there was a conflict between the CBA or the district policy, which one would apply. Ms. Collette answered that there is a potential for that, yes. We don’t put policy into contracts during negotiation. Mr. McEwen requested follow up on whether there was contract language in policy. Ms. Collette answered that there is similar language between the two but there is a little inconsistency. She wants make sure that there is a process for that melds things very well. She emphasized the importance of things looking as even and fair as possible across the board.

Mr. Beaver raised a question in regards to Lines 4 and 5, “What would happen if the majority of the teaching staff did not join the union next fall? Would they be under the extent of the Collective Bargaining Agreement?” Ms. Collette answered that they would be covered until the status of the union was challenged by the employees, and added that as the employer, we stand by and apply the terms of the CBA. If hypothetically there would be a challenge, HEA would go through a process – typically taking 60-120 days with the board of personnel appeals – and we would maintain that status of employment conditions until that issue was resolved amongst the teacher body. The district would maintain and uphold the terms and conditions then make changes as deemed necessary for the upcoming academic year. She stated that, “We would not participate in any of that activity.” Mr. McEwen asked if it has ever happened in Montana, and Ms. Collette affirmed that it has. Ms. Ridgway added that it typically happens in smaller districts where they have a very small membership.

Ms. Goldes asked to refer back to ARM, and Mr. McEwen said it was on the secretary of state’s office website. Ms. Ridgway clarified that ARM is to state procedures as MCA is to state policies.

Ms. Collette confirmed, with regards to Line 20, “statute and policy” will be added.

Ms. Goldes asked the committee if they would like to see this policy again before it goes to the full board. Mr. Beaver suggested it be sent to the board for the June 11, 2019, board meeting, and the committee concurred.

B. Policy 5255: Disciplinary Action

Ms. Collette began by addressing the additions to Line 17: “superintendent and/or designee is authorized to immediately suspend a staff member with or without pay.” She thought perhaps the policy was unclear it includes that the superintendent is also making recommendations on retentions or terminations of employment. Ms. Ridgway questioned the need for reiterating it in this policy since it was referenced in Policy 5025. Ms. Collette recommended that it be in this policy as well for clarification. Ms. Collette recommended the changes read, “After pay on Line 17, there should be a comma, followed by ‘and recommend retention or termination of employment.’”

Ms. Goldes questioned Line 11, which reads “superintendent or building principals...,” and asked if that the statement includes administrators who are in charge of programs. Ms. Collette was unclear whether that was included. Ms. Ridgway recommended adding “ or supervisors” to the statement.

Ms. Goldes asked for any other comments on the policy and asked if it should be forwarded to the board. Mr. Beaver made a recommendation that it be placed before the full board on June 11, 2019, and the committee concurred.

VII. PRESENTATION OF POLICIES FOR FIRST REVIEW

A. Policy 2080: Grading, Progress Reports, and Promotion

Ms. Ridgway stated that this policy was examined by the academic team, and they were not making any recommendations for change. Ms. Goldes asked how often a student is not promoted to the next grade. Dr. Ream answered that it doesn’t happen very often and added that the academic team was examining the policy as it relates to early kindergarten admission.

Mr. Beaver brought up an instance many years ago where teachers would enter grades, and principals would change them. He asked if that was legal. Dr. Ream answered that he was pretty sure state statute would say that no one would be allowed to change grades.

Ms. Goldes asked how this policy relates to weighted grades. Ms. Ridgway answered that she anticipates the district will see a push towards weighted grades in the next several years, and Dr. Ream added that he doesn’t think colleges get into the minutiae of how grading systems are created. Ms. Goldes inquired into how weighted grades affect class ranking. Dr. Ream answered that there are a lot of districts who are going away from class rankings because it exists almost entirely for college admissions. He added that since grading scales are all over the place in Montana, colleges are looking more at what classes students took and they performed in that class versus whether there was a weighted rigor to the class.

Ms. Ridgway concluded that since the academic team was not making any recommended changes to this policy, it did not need to be presented to the board.

B. Policy 2090: Credit Transfer Assessment for Placement

Ms. Goldes asked if this policy was solely regarding assessing credits from students coming into the district. Ms. Ridgway corrected that it is regarding students coming in from non-accredited and/or non-public schools. Ms. Goldes asked how often this happens, and Ms. Ridgway answered that it happens with some frequency, mainly from students who have been homeschooled. Ms. Ridgway said the policy outlines the steps that schools go through to determine whether the credits are of exact value. Mr. McEwen requested clarification on the policy with regards to the high school section and whether homeschool was considered non-accredited, thus duplicate language. He suggested removing homeschool and leaving the language at non-accredited. Ms. Ridgway clarified that there are some homeschool situations who have gone through an accreditation process. Ms. Goldes mentioned a packet she downloaded off the OPI’s website which describes what parents are supposed to do in order to homeschool. She questioned item 3 from the document, which says, “...document that in the

event of a credit request in a lab, industrial, arts, or music course, equipment and facilities are sufficient to meet required learning activities of the course.” Mr. McEwen added that state law reads if a student is taking music lessons from an accredited teacher, he/she can receive credit for the lessons.

Mr. Beaver asked if Items 3 and 4 (?) are things that we do not do in practice, why they are included. He added that he has never seen a test for students coming into the district in his 37 years of teaching. Ms. Goldes answered that the packet says that any child coming from a non-accredited school must adhere to the following: 1. Adopt a district policy. Include in policy the following specific assessment for placement for any student.... and 2. Based on results of assessment, a hearing before the board of trustees if a parent disagrees with placement...

Dr. Ream added that the only place the district utilizes such an assessment is with early kindergarten admission. He added that the district certainly has assessments that could be utilized. Mr. Beaver asked how the district currently assesses a student who may be going into the 10th grade but is reading at a 6th grade level, for instance. Dr. Ream answered it is a real challenge, especially with international students. In that case, the district looks at the whole picture of the student as “age appropriate.” He added that our principals – by practice – look at what the student’s age is and in which grade he/she is. He doesn’t think the district holds incoming students from a non-accredited school to a different standard than from an accredited school.

Ms. Goldes requested that this policy comes back to the committee for further review.

VIII. CONTINUE REVIEW OF POLICY MANUAL: Series 2000 and 3000

Neither were discussed.

IX. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. McEwen asked how it was determined which policies are brought before the committee meetings. Ms. Ridgway answered that it was driven by life. She added her appreciation for the time and effort the committee put into the policies because they make a difference in how the district is run and what decisions are made at the district level. Mr. Muszkiewicz expressed his thanks to Libby and the committee for their dedication to the meetings. He added that with regards to the questions raised about approval of minutes, as a committee in the past, they decided not to approve minutes. He also offered an answer to Mr. McEwen’s question regarding which policies were brought to the committee, stating that some issues were addressed by the committee as it related to similar processes, and suggested that some policies should be brought to the committee by the board. Mr. Beaver suggested looking at RIF related policies. Ms. Goldes added that it might be helpful to see what procedures are developed around a policy so the committee could see the intent of the policies was reflected in the procedures. Mr. McEwen requested the committee members be added to the meeting notifications. Mr. McEwen questioned the need to publish “terminated” for district employees and whether it is appropriate to be in the public domain. Dr. Ream reference attorney, Bea Kaleva, who was very clear about having four classifications: retirement, resignation, non-renewal, and termination. Ms. Collette

added that those classifications are listed for board members because according to policy, the board makes the final decisions on renewal, non-renewal, hiring, and termination.

Ms. Goldes concluded by saying that – with regards to the discussion on students from non-accredited schools – she wished to make it clear that, from her perspective, she welcomes those students in the district, but wants to make sure the district has a place for them.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair, Ms. Goldes, adjourned the meeting at 1:11pm.

**Next Meeting:
August 6, 2019 | MBC Conference Room**