



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, September 6, 2019 – 12:00pm

MINUTES - DRAFT

ATTENDEES

Committee:

Jeff Hindoin, Committee Chair
Terry Beaver, Committee Member
John McEwen, Committee Member

Others:

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board of Trustees Chair
Sarah Sullivan, Trustee
Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Margaret Bentwood, community member

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chairperson, Jeff Hindoin, called the meeting to order at 12:00pm.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested.

IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. McEwen requested a change to Page Two, Paragraph Three: “average number below” be changed to “average number belonging.” He requested “...parade, the...” in Paragraph Four of Page Two be changed to “per ANB.”

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Committee Deliverables for the 2019/2020 School Year

Mr. Hindoin began by stating that for deliverables for this school year needed to be a collaborative work among staff, the committee, and the community. He added the need for

Ms. Janelle Mickelson (District Business Services Manager) to be a part of the process. Dr. Ream added that as it relates to the budget passed at the last board meeting, Ms. Mickelson received notification on a few errors in the budget on the county's side – not the district's. He continued that Ms. Mickelson has since adjusted the district's budget and set it back to the county. Mr. Hindoin inquired into the status of the retirement benefit. Dr. Ream answered that the retirement benefit was initially built to ease the additional burden placed on the elementary budget with readjustment of the budget split. Ms. Collette said teachers can submit a letter recognizing their upcoming retirement to qualify for the benefit up until October 11, 2019. Dr. Ream added that quite a few teachers have already submitted their name for the benefit, and Ms. Collette clarified that 52 people have submitted for the 40 agreed upon slots. She continued that the applicants' information has been sent to payroll to determine the cost of each payout, and then the district can start looking at the cost of replacement for those individuals. Ms. Collette said that since the district will have received names of retirees earlier this year, Human Resources will be able to start the recruitment and transfer procedures earlier this school year – in January instead of March. Ms. Collette added that the district has scheduled a few upcoming meetings regarding the benefit – one on 9/11/19 asking if interested teachers really want to retire, and one on 9/12/19 on the process after deciding to retire. Ms. Sullivan asked how it will be determined who receives the benefit. Ms. Collette answered there is a tiered system in place, taking into consideration seniority, highest salary, TRS years of eligibility, and date/time of application received, which allows some tie-breaking opportunities. Ms. Sullivan asked what feedback the district has been receiving. Ms. Shawn answered that the feedback she has received has been mostly good, adding that if an individual is 60 and close to retiring, they want to take advantage of the benefit, though there are some obvious candidates who have not yet applied. Mr. McEwen asked which teaching positions are hardest to fill. Ms. Collette answered Family & Consumer Sciences and Marketing as a few. Dr. Ream inquired into the split of elementary and high school retirees, and Ms. Collette answered that it was about even. Ms. Collette said that when settling on 40 as the number of retirees who would receive the benefit, the district took into consideration the budget and what it was willing to spend. Dr. Ream added that the district and HEA (Helena Education Association) agreed that additional recipients would be examined on a case-by-case basis if more than 40 individuals applied. He added that the district would await Ms. Mickelson's projections and then consider adding administrators as able to receive the benefit. Mr. McEwen asked if there were salary steps for administrators like there were for teachers. Ms. Collette confirmed there were.

Dr. Ream said a few changes to the projections for the multi-year budget include replacement fees for each retiring teacher at \$53,000 and a consistent annual decrease of approximately 100 students at the high school level. He asked if the committee would like

to consult with Todd Watkins regarding the new practices. Mr. Hindoin answered that would be his preference. Ms. Sullivan asked if Ms. Mickelson would like to have Mr. Watkins meet with her, and Dr. Ream answered that he thought she would be appreciative of the guidance, just to have a colleague to talk it through. Ms. Sullivan added she wouldn't mind having another business official trained on the budget. Dr. Ream answered it would be a good idea, especially since the district didn't have an accountant. Mr. Hindoin added that most AA and A districts in the state had an accountant. Dr. Ream stated that this deliverable would be rolled forward to the next meeting, and that the district potentially could have a good idea on the calculations from the retirement benefit – without specific names – by the October 4 committee meeting. He added that by December 6 – or earlier – the committee could have a discussion on the benefit, and by January, the committee would be able to look at a mid-year piece – what is still left to do. By March 6, he said, the committee could start looking at what decisions needed to be made moving forward, and the committee could finish the school year with enough information from Ms. Mickelson to have an idea where the budget will be going.

Dr. Ream inquired into additional deliverables in which the committee was interested. Mr. Hindoin answered that he would like to see the district put together a model moving forward to determine what the district can and cannot do, to gather as much information as possible in case the district needs it, and to not start from behind again. Dr. Ream added that an accurate model would help with resource allocation. Mr. McKay said that the district has been working with principals to recognize the need to be flexible with their budgets to meet program needs. Mr. McKay said district and school administrators are constantly monitoring program needs and shifting resources from one school to another. Mr. Hindoin recommended using Mr. Watkins to help administration and the board tie program needs to a fiscal model. Mr. McEwen asked if the five-year budget would include any changes – specifically to curriculum – or if it was just based on current operations. Dr. Ream answered that once the district becomes confident with the model, Ms. Mickelson can run different options to see the numbers. Dr. Ream emphasized the importance of making sure the district wasn't limiting options for kids but still make decisions that were not detrimental to the budget.

Mr. McEwen asked what the drop in enrollment was to the East Helena high school. Mr. McKay answered that the district won't be able to obtain a proper estimate until after ten days of school. Dr. Ream added that the district also must factor, of the 124 students currently enrolled in East Helena as 9th Graders, who would have gone to Boulder, be home schooled, etc. Mr. McKay noted that Helena High administration has been happy with the number of Grade 9 registrations. Mr. Hindoin asked if East Helena was set up for open enrollment, and Dr. Ream answered that they are. Dr. Ream said the Helena district will continue to see an impact moving forward and for potentially the next ten years – like

possible kindergarteners from Warren or parents making a district shift now in anticipation for enrollment in the East Helena High School.

Dr. Ream confirmed that Mr. Watkins will be at the October committee meeting.

Ms. Sullivan inquired into a demographics study. Dr. Ream answered that it was on the agenda for the next Facilities and Maintenance Committee meeting (September 9, 2019).

Mr. McEwen asked what trustees should be concerned about when looking at the end-of-year report. Dr. Ream answered that district administration and school principals are paying close attention to overruns, noting that the district has budgeted for some of those. Dr. Ream mentioned the requirement of hiring additional paras or assistant principals based on enrollment. Ms. Ridgway said district administration weighs the costs for accepting a higher class size and applicable staff versus busing students to an alternative school. Dr. Ream added that the district can levy for bus costs but can't levy for additional paras and that all overage must come from the general fund. Ms. Sullivan said district administration does a good job of looking at trends of school size and bringing potential fiscal issues before the board. Dr. Ream said the district has been lower in para overage this year than last, and Mr. McKay added the district has shifted some of the overage to additional teachers, which is a good shift to make.

Mr. Muszkiewicz replied to Mr. McEwen's earlier question and said there could be a better way to frame the budget at the August board meeting by including how the budget affects taxpayers and any year over year increase. He noted that the general fund grew less than the inflationary increase, but the district could have done a better job of showing that. Dr. Ream agreed, adding that the district worked hard to keep the budget below the inflationary increase, but it wasn't reported that way. He suggested next year putting together a piece with the good, the bad, and the ugly without leaving any room for interpretation. Ms. Sullivan requested the entire budget be added online. Mr. McEwen said the budget shows where the district is spending money, but it could also show where the money comes from. Dr. Ream said administration could put together a generalized income stream, but there were so many categories, some would have to be grouped together. Mr. McEwen requested 10-12 categories. Dr. Ream said the other piece that came from budget discussions was showing what comes from the general fund and what comes from the other budgets. He said teachers seemed to appreciate that breakdown.

B. Committee Calendar

Mr. Beaver requested to see other aspects of the budget, like grants, which could change/eliminate programs. Ms. Sullivan suggested it be addressed in the February committee meeting. Dr. Ream recommended the committee discuss preliminary expenditures and the retirement benefit at the October 4 committee meeting. Mr. McEwen asked if the activities fee piece had been revisited. Dr. Ream answered that music fees will not be adjusted until next summer. He added that the family cap piece was never revisited, but there seemed to be trustee interest in the cap, and he didn't believe Activities Director, Tim McMahon was opposed to it.

Mr. Beaver inquired into the status of StarBase. Mr. Hindoin answered that StarBase is a federally funded program.

Mr. Muszkiewicz said he was only able to view last year's budget online. Ms. Sullivan said she wants to see the full budget online. Dr. Ream confirmed that would happen.

VI. BOARD COMMENT/SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

None given.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 1:06pm. The next meeting will be October 4, 2019.