



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 Meeting

Capital High School Auditorium via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE: Present unless otherwise noted

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair

Siobhan Hathorne, Board Vice Chair

Terry Beaver, Trustee

John McEwen, Trustee

Sarah Sullivan, Trustee, excused

Jennifer McKee, Trustee

Libby Goldes, Trustee

Jennifer Walsh, Board Member

Claire Downing, Helena High Student Representative

Mariah Mercer, Capital High Student Representative

Dr. Tyler Ream, Superintendent

Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent

Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager

Stacy Collette, Human Resource Administrator

Gary Meyers, Educational Technology Administrator

Jane Shawn, Helena Education Association President

Many Guests of the Helena School District

I. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No Health Benefits Committee at this meeting. The Superintendent search update will be added as part of Chairman Muszkiewicz's report.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Jamie Bright, in Helena School District: Jamie states that she would like there to be open dialog with the Board. She says she had asked for there to be an agenda item on this issue but was denied. She asks the Board to listen with a fresh perspective, open heart and mind and without bias. Decisions to limit in school time are not evidence based. They are not driven by science or data. The American Association of Pediatrics outlines negative repercussions on our youth due to inconsistent schooling and isolation. These impacts will not be short term, but will impact the lives of these children forever. Not everyone is suffering from the hybrid schooling. But many parents are concerned about the lack of real education happening, the lack of socialization and reported lack of motivation and depression in their children. She asks the Board to examine the success of the full-time models. She understands the County Health restrictions, but Helena is in the minority. Many kids are failing. Capital High reported over 900 F's in the 1st quarter alone. Imagine the long-term damage. Isolation can be seen as a form of abuse in a child under any other circumstances so why is Helena so delayed in its response to protect not only the health but the wellbeing of our children? Damage is also being done by eliminating extra curriculums. Varsity activities such as cheer and dance have been cut by at least 30% so varsity participants have to sit their senior year. It is not equal across the board which makes it more frustrating. She invites the Board to look at her public Facebook page to read comments from more concerned parents who are not in attendance.

Howard DesRosier, in Helena School District: At the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, there was not enough data on COVID. He says he requested data and standardized tests score but received none. There was still fear among students, parents and staff at the start of the school year. On January 5, 2021 the American Academy of Pediatrics released guidelines for the safe return to school. These guidelines come from medical Doctors who look at mental, social, physical and educational needs. They state specifically that opening schools does not significantly increase community transmission, particularly when WHO and CDC guidelines are followed. School closures have a negative impact. Schools should have policies that mitigate, not eliminate the COVID risks. School transmission numbers stay low even when community numbers rise. Lewis and Clark Health Department should be

involved but so should the school administration, based on current data. Other things must be considered. Schools provide social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition as well. Consider AAP guidance. Look at the whole picture and look at all the data. 5 day a week school is important. All AA schools except Helena and Missoula are already back.

Courtney McAdams, in Helena School District: I am a parent to a 3rd grader at Broadwater and a 9th grader at CHS. I am here today to ask the Board to call a special board meeting for a time of public comment for parents and educators to create a plan to open our schools back up to 5 days a week in person by the end of January. As far as I know there has not been a vote by the board since August about the phase and hybrid model we are in. Bozeman voted Monday to keep elementary schools open full time and bring HS and middle schoolers back 4 days per week starting January 25th and February 4th. Missoula voted Tuesday to bring K-8th back on January 25th and High school back April 5th. Meanwhile Butte (I talked to their superintendent office this morning), Kalispell, Billings, Great Falls and all other small and mid-sized schools in Montana are open for full time education. Why is Helena not open full time? To say I am extremely disappointed in the board's lack of leadership and preparedness is an understatement. We are the only District in Montana that does not have our kids back full time or specific plan to return them to school full time. This is detrimental to our community and most especially our kids. Action needs to happen now.

Chairman Luke said to me in a letter 2 nights ago that Helena has more Covid-19 cases than other counties and districts. This is simply not true. Yellowstone reports 14,518 cases, Gallatin reports 10,252 cases, Flathead lists 9,343 cases, Cascade lists 6,954 cases, Missoula lists 6,937 cases, Lewis and Clark county reports 5,357 cases and Silverbow is the lowest with 3,220 cases for AA schools. We do not have more cases than these counties. Meanwhile, most of these other districts are operating 4 -5 days per week since September and are successfully managing COVID. They also operated fully open during some of the worst virus peaks our state encountered.

There are so many powerful stories that have not been heard of the real struggles our kids, parents and educators are going through due to the current hybrid model of education. A Facebook post calling for parents to come to tonight's board meeting has 104 comments from parents. People are saying they are at their breaking point and so many kids are failing classes and have given up. We should be doing better for our kids. Do we really have 600 kids failing out of high school? Or 900 classes that kids have failed? This is deplorable and is setting them up to fail as adults applying for college, internships or apprenticeships. A 3rd grade teacher told me this week, 70% of her kids did not progress on the recent I-ready math and reading tests. This is by no fault of her own, as this has never happened to her before. 2 days a week is not enough in person. This teacher is so upset and defeated. This morning I called E. Helena and Lincoln school superintendent offices to see how they are doing with a full-time schedule. These schools are in our same county, under the same inept health board! All have reported they are operating and educating kids

safely and successfully. Lincoln had to shut down from Thanksgiving to Christmas due to cases, but everyone is back as of Jan. 4th. Their district COVID manager told me from a kid's mental health and attitude perspective, they are determined to stay open. Do we think about our kid's wellbeing this way? What is Helena doing? I have a statement from a Kalispell school board member of a K-8 school that has been open since September. I am happy to share this statement to the board in writing. All around the state kids are learning and doing better than our kids. I have even talked to a Plevna school board member and they are open and operating successfully. It is extremely unhealthy mentally, physically, and educationally for kids to be home 3 days a week by themselves in many cases, with no contact with kids or their teacher, except thru brief TEAMS meetings, which my 3rd grader hates.

I am calling for the board to call a special session and take a vote to set a specific date to return our suffering student and educators to full in person learning. I am happy to serve on a return to school committee or focus group. Thank you for listening to my comments today. I hope to see action instead of continuing to do nothing to improve learning for our kids and teachers. Thank you for your service to our community.

Braden Overton, in Helena School District: He states that he has watched his kids struggle for over a year. East Helena goes to school full time. There are 5 main stores in this town and everyone comes together to shop in them. What is the difference? When the kids show they having missing assignments, its because they are not being graded for weeks. There is a lack of communication. Parents don't understand the work so they can't help. If internet is not good you miss whole assignments or get marked absent. There is a lack of social skills for these kids. His child's middle school friends have all but dropped out because its just not working. Parents need to work and can't stay home to stay on top of their kids. Everyone is struggling. Kids played football. They were scratched, bled etc., but then can't shake hands at the end of the game. It makes no sense and it is not effective. Enough is enough. When they ARE in school half the time, they are still just looking at a monitor. Damage is being done that cant be reversed.

Derek Amos, in Helena School District: He started the year with 2 kids in the school district and now has 1. He says he provided the Board a list of DLI issues back in October and never heard anything. He works from home and sometimes has 5 kids from 2 different schools around his table working on school. Every child has the same problems. Those problems are not getting any better. DLI is a failure. There are online schooling programs that are much easier. Taxpayers are being ripped off. No books are being used. It's a mess. He states that he has a background in education and what's currently being done is not getting the job done. When he spoke with his child's administration, he was told to "tell the folks on Rodney Street because we aren't being listened to." Its frustrating and it feels as though the Board is turning their back on the families.

Sue Bannon, in Helena School District, Capital High Cheer Coach: She states that she wonders who is advocating for the children? No one seems to be. Not the Health Department and not the School Board. Her daughter and son-in-law are both teachers in Salt Lake City and have been going to school 5 days a week since August. There are models that will get the kids back to school. She feels glad that the Athletic Director at Capital High sees Cheer as a sport, while some people don't feel it is one. She tells the story, the Tale of the Frog. When the frog is kept in lukewarm water, gradually the heat increases and the frog stays comfortable with the situation until suddenly he boils to death. Without advocating, she feels like a frog just sitting and agreeing with everything. Her cheer team sees this and it teaches them to just wait for someone else to get them out of this. Kids in general need healthy interaction. She has had one cheerleader with COVID, but no one else got it. She is nervous for our community.

Bruce Halcro, longtime supporter of both high schools: He is a local business owner and has a son who is a science teacher in Butte. Butte High has been 5 days a week all year. According to his son, the ones who struggle the most are the ones who have chosen to do school online. There is a lack of common sense in deciding attendance restrictions at sporting events. There is a 25-person max in a gym that holds 2000 people. Between wrestling matches, everyone leaves so they can sanitize the gym, only to have the same 25 people come back in. Where is the science in that? He would like to see a collaboration with the Board, school administration and parents to combat the over-reach of the County Health Department. 3 weeks ago, the Health Department had a special meeting to, according to an Independent Record quote to "tighten rules because we are getting a new governor." Then they say its not political. Who believes that?

Rachel Young, in Helena School District: She states that she appreciates being given the time to speak. She has not been to a meeting before because things have always been going well. Communication was good. But she became concerned when she started hearing that people were requesting to be put on the agenda for a board meeting that affects where their children go to school, and they were told no. Why is that an issue? She agrees with what has been said before her. She doesn't understand why the Health Department would agree to East Helena going back to school but not Helena. The science needs to be looked at. Lewis and Clark County Health should not make all the decisions. Every time she has asked questions, she feels like she has gotten the runaround or has been ignored completely. She feels that the Board's job is to respond to these questions or to be able to point people in the direction of those that can. That is something the trustees took on when they joined the Board. Right now, it is so important. Parents trust the district with their children. The district needs to take that seriously. Answer people when they ask questions. That should be common sense. Listen to what people have to say and take it to heart. Many parents are willing to come talk to the Board and discuss and provide examples of what's not

working. Parents and the public are trying to help. She gives a shout out to the teachers and understand that this is not their fault. Parents want to be involved and communicated with. They want to be heard. They want science and common sense.

Amber Zietz, in Helena School District: Mental health is a big issue. Kids K-12 learn self-discipline and accountability by going to school. This is one of the reasons why online school is more for college level and adults. District is sitting stagnant and the gap is getting larger. Everyone else is moving back to a normal school model. Her family in North Dakota started in the hybrid model but has since progressed back to the 5 days model. She states that she has 1 child that does very well and another who was an honor roll student who is now failing classes and is ready to give up. She wants to drop out. This is creating a division between administrators and parents. She asks that everyone come together and work towards a common goal, which is that of what's best for the children.

Heidi Keaster, in Helena School District: She works for Medicaid but is not speaking on behalf of her job. She is a Bryant parent. She sees many parents in that school who work late so they can be free to be with the kids during the day. Some parents in this part of town are dealing with other things, like addiction. She wants to be a voice for the underprivileged kids in that area. She says Bryant teachers are Rockstars. Before the pandemic, Montana's math numbers were already lower at 45% and Reading/English and 50% the national average. Bryant Elementary was below that at 22% in math and 25% in Reading/English. What are the numbers after the pandemic? She anticipates much lower. The current system is failing them. Helena is the capital city and it is failing underprivileged kids now more than ever. School is their safe space and that's been taken from them.

Jesse Standish, in Helena School District: He states that he is an optometrist in the Helena area. He has students at Capital High and CR Anderson. In Montana so far, 250,000 kids have been COVID tested. Only 660 positive cases have been reported. Of those, some got sick but none have died. Nationwide, 56.7 million school kids, only 120 have died of COVID and most had underlying conditions. In an average school year, 100 kids lose their lives just walking to school. He states that his daughter is one of the 30% who got cut from the Capital High cheer team after working and choreographing a dance that the team used. She was then not even able to be a part in performing it. Overall, the numbers are not there to constitute staying closed.

Kim Beatty, in Helena School District: She says that she had not planned to speak however she is frustrated that there is no dialog. She wants there to be an item put on the agenda so they can speak back and forth about this issue. She asks for clarification on the process and asks that that process be made known more publicly. Kids are struggling and we need to do better. It's the Boards job to engage and work with the

parents and kids. Let the parents help solve the problems. She asks that they consider calling a special meeting for this issue.

TEAMS:

Lisa Schlosser, in Helena School District: She has 2 children at Helena High School and wants the Board to address what is the plan going forward. Helena schools are stagnant. One of her kids is in person and one is fully DLI and every day is a struggle. Her kids were 3.5-4.0 students. The fall out is beginning. She is worried about the area suicide rates beginning to rise. She wants to know that we are moving forward. District needs to step up and make the hard choices. The public needs to hear from the Board. Kids are teaching themselves at this point and are falling behind.

Tammy Stefanik, in Helena School District: She has 2 students at Capital High who are both very driven kids. They both work because they want to, not because they have to. They are both involved in school and sports. She would like to echo what everyone is saying. She herself has 2 monitors for work in order to balance all the open items. Her kids are trying to use laptops that go back and forth between split homes. Its difficult to toggle back and forth between different things. There are not a lot of resources to help with that. Her one daughter prefers book and paper and that is not allowed. She tells the kids daily to do things that are hard. But they don't see adults having the courage to make hard choices to help the kids. Both of her kids are now struggling in more than one way. Changes need to be made because these kids are the future. She says she has emailed Dr Ream but seen no response. Adults need to show kids how to be courageous and that they care. Thank you to all the teachers and decision makers.

Adam Clinch, Helena School District teacher: He asks that everyone write to the governor for an adjustment in the phases for vaccination. Teachers have been moved from phase 1B to phase 1C. Teachers want to get back to in person learning in a safe environment.

Mike Fasbender, in Helena School District: He states that he has a kindergartner in private school, a child at East Helena High School and a student at MT State in Bozeman. His daughter at MT State is on the Presidents List and does a mixture of online and in person classes but she can go to class as much as she wants and chooses to do so. He participated in a forum earlier in the month with teachers, students and administration. The main question was, what can we do? In nature, when the herd is threatened, they protect their young. We are failing to do that. We have to protect them socially and educationally. Helena parents are willing to help. Statistically, the threat to kids is minimal. To staff, it is higher. He says it is great to see all the parents who came to speak today but the Board needs to remember that there are a lot of kids who do not have that support and will fall through he cracks completely if this continues.

Kevin Ward, Helena School District teacher: He would like to reiterate the importance in getting teachers vaccinated. The change in phase was a huge set back. Teachers are excited to get back in the classroom and will be happy to be back. He would like people to plead with the governor to reconsider the phase change. School shut downs happen not because of too many sick students, but because there are not enough staff to stay open. Teachers want to be there but they want to be safe.

Amy Pfister, in Helena School District: She states that she owns a company, chairs a nonprofit, spent 4 years as VP for 2012 football and is a grad of Capital High School. She has 3 students in the district. She says she feels that she is struggling for the right words to say to make the Board see that there are so many families that are barely hanging on. She speaks from the heart and asks the Board to please do what is right, politics aside. Where it was once preached that education is the foundation of our youth, now we can't even get putting our kids back in school on the School Board agenda. We once talked about how important student teacher interactions were, we have now decided that those interactions aren't even needed. All 3 of her kids started in person and slowly all 3 have gone strictly to DLI. Her oldest feared a sniffle in class would get him quarantined for 14 days and he wouldn't be able to play football. So, he sat in school in fear, in a depressing room sometime staring at a laptop because there wasn't even a teacher in the room. Slowly, her vibrant kids started to feel alone at school and started to ask to stay home. Parents and youth are struggling. Parents spend days chasing missing assignments, trying to be teachers, and still working. She has had to pay to hire a tutor to keep her kids from flunking. We are losing our kids mentally to COVID and not physically. We have to do better. Leadership takes courage. We need to move our schools forward and get the kids back in school.

Chairman Luke Muszkiewicz: Thank you all. We appreciate you taking the time to speak. We all listen with open minds. Thank you for your civility and respect and for staying within the 4 minutes.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Items

1. Approval of December 8, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes (See attached)
2. Approval of Personnel Actions (See Attached)
3. Approval of Warrants (See Attached)
4. Acknowledgement of Discretionary Out-of-District tuition Agreements (See attached)
5. Approval of Out-Of-District Attendance agreement (See attached)

Motion: Trustee McEwen makes a motion to approve. Board Vice Chair Hathorne seconds the motion.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 7-0. Motion carries.

B. Items for Information

1. Policy 4005: School Support Associations Board policy
The Policy Committee is now reviewing policy 4005. Minor change on line 13. Does not need Board approval. Superintendent can approve those.

2. Policy 4020: Visitors to Schools
The Policy Committee struck the wording “at appropriate times” which they felt was redundant. They felt that board members, parents, citizens, and taxpayers within degression of the school building administration can schedule a visit. So just a minor change.

3. Policy 4330: Community Use of School Facilities.
The Policy Committee spent quite a lot of time on this policy. The policy is from 2018 and the changes you see are on line 12. We added “for individuals” or organizations can request facility use as can individuals. The request form needs to be in advance of the event and the same stricken language was redundant again. On line 12 you also see that we aligned the name of the form with the name of the procedure. So again, minor changes.
 - a. 4330P: Community Use of School Facilities – Administrative Procedure (see attached) We struck the word school in front of District. The Facility Use Policy and Procedure have worked well. Shout out to Tammy Harbor who manages all of this and does a remarkable job.

4. Mid-Year Strategic Priorities Update
Dr. Ream presented the Mid-Year Strategic Priorities Update. This is the semiannual Strategical Priority update. This is not necessarily specific to schools during the pandemic or any of the phases. This originates back about 2 years. There were some changes that have occurred because of the pandemic that change from where we intended to go to where we are today. 6 months from now we will review again. We review this plan in January and July.

Strategic Priorities are areas of opportunity that, if successfully developed and implemented, significantly improve our district as a whole. They are aligned to the mission and vision of Helena Public Schools. There are 6 Priorities that were introduced in December of 2018. These priorities represent the optimal state meaning, these statements will be true whenever our district has reached an optimal level of performance in a designated area. It does not necessarily represent where we are today but where we want to go.

Priorities represent two distinct but inter-related areas: Teaching & Learning, and Management & Operations. Each priority does include annual goals or deliverables. They are relevant July to June. These things cannot be achieved without an operational plan behind them and they are aligned to Board Committees (two Teaching & Learning, one Facilities & Maintenance and one Budget & Program).

We last looked at the goals and progress on January 12, 2020. 2 months later, schools closed for the rest of the school year. The pandemic has shifted many of the timetables and deliverables. Some things that were not listed, became priorities. Now, we know more about school during a pandemic than when we last reviewed, but there is still uncertainty and we need to have the ability to continue to shift as needed. We have learned a lot but there is still more to learn.

Some items are now complete like the Safety and Security upgrades in the schools associated with the original bond for K-8. That is something you can physically go to those schools and see. Some items are still in progress, and some items are set to begin in the near future. Some things were added and some were canceled or are offline. Some are paused or depreciated.

Teaching & Learning Goals: Ensure that all students are engaged and educators supported by standards that are essential.

1. Interim Data Sessions Complete. Review of former assessments in terms of STAR. It was decided that it did not yield the data needed. The decision was made to shift to iReady as the school assessment. That was started at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year. At that time, it was not known that there would not be another assessment for the school year. Administration is happy iReady was implemented.
Educator Data Dashboard: Stabilize Student Info System (SSIS) There were concerns about the stability of Power School. There have been some staffing changes and strategic investments. No SSIS is perfect but we are in a much better area with Power School from a stability standpoint. There has been a lot of feedback. Gary Meyers has been a huge help. Next step is the professional development of Performance Matters, which is a data dashboard. It opens a side that we haven't had access to. The pandemic slowed that down but it is still on the radar.
We would like to enhance the remote learning environment. There is an ongoing need for professional development in this area. CRF funds helped sustain during the Fall semester. Some of those funds purchased additional Chromebooks and laptops. It is also a priority to develop pandemic grading practices for all levels.

2. The next priority is to ensure that every High School graduate has multiple career, college or service options.
 Developing Measures of Success: Make sure every graduate is connected with the next step after graduation. Paused.
 Post-graduation Connections: Connect with students after graduation to continue support. Paused.
 Youth Apprenticeship Expansion: Partner with organizations to provide more apprenticeships for high school students. Marginally involved.
 Course Patterning Project: Intervention and progress monitoring. Paused.
3. The next priority is to develop social and emotional health tiers for each level that includes the formal teaching and reinforcement of proactive, research-based programs and practices.
 21 century career development to include social awareness and working together. Smith Elementary started a couple years ago with the PAX Good Behavior Game. More schools want to get involved with that.
 Support Tiers: I-Universal, II-Targeted, III- Intensive.
 A behavioral handbook is being developed.
 Working on a Student Needs Screener. Social Emotional Screener to understand the needs of the kids as they come back to school after long school closures.
 Develop Tier Services Protocol to assist students exhibiting signs of stress, anxiety, and current or post trauma.
 Expand professional development options: Redesign summer and fall professional learning options. Live, online, district wide opportunities to focus on physical, academic, and social emotional needs of the school year.
4. The next priority is to ensure that the learning of every student is supported by a school facility that is safe, healthy and (neutral to additive) to their learning. This means that the facility they are learning in is not taking away from their learning opportunity. We were able to open 3 new schools to the school year but there is still much work to do. There were priority changes such as adding physical upgrades consistent with COVID health and safety needs.
 Delivered and started plan for safety and security upgrades for the high schools. Long range facilities plans were paused but it is important to reengage with those as soon as possible.
5. The next priority is to ensure an aligned, balanced and sustainable budget that supports the varied needs of our students, while providing predictability and consistence for our Helena School District colleagues and community. I tip my hat to Janelle for keeping up with all the moving parts in a remote learning environment, especially since they had to figure out and initiate new practices to be good stewards of taxpayer's resources

in and environment that they had never been in before. FY20 audit complete.

Multi Year Budget Projection: Develop 5-year projection of funds outlook for public understanding. Each year we get better.

High School Phase Downs. We have to talk about that. Projections show declining enrollment with the opening of the East Helena High School.

Electronic Time Payroll Reporting: Close to done with that. It was nice to already have some of these things in place before the pandemic.

6. The last priority is to ensure that each Helena School District stakeholder receives and has access to timely, informative and relevant school district information via varied communication platforms. The new website and social platforms are much better from the old ones. The new ones represent our schools. Michelle Skinner has been an asset in this area. People can find what they need now. We have developed better parent/family communication. We have shifted away from school district and then back and found balance. We can monitor the usage of social media platforms. We have seen an uptick in terms of new people looking for info since March. Michelle looks at what is most necessary and makes it easy to find.

How do we measure progression in a pandemic? We need to look at the following: Are students present and ready to learn? Are students connected to and finding meaning in their learning environments? Are students academically growing and developing towards having post high school options to succeed? Helping students understand along the way why school is important is necessity. 2020 created wrinkles. Standardized testing is one of those challenges. iReady assessments for diagnostic purposes are being used. We are using these to drive a teaching a learning environment. Data has a freshness date. This provides feedback on specific struggles and recommendations. We can see how Helena schools are progressing in comparison to other districts.

Mid School year thoughts: At this point, vaccines provide the pathway toward an eventual end to this pandemic. We went to winter break thinking educators would be in the 1B group, which provided a light at the end of the tunnel. Teachers have now been pushed to 1C, with 1B now being 16-69 with pre-existing conditions. While some teachers will qualify under this, not all will. There is still no definite timeline for when 1C will even start. We need to start looking to summer and fall now and its tough when we don't know what that will look like. Harvard Global Health Institute indicates that students are not at heightened risk from school re-openings. "Schools in the 5-day model are not seeing much issue with kids but more so with the teachers. Evidence gathered this fall around the world and in the U.S. suggests that schools can open, even in conditions of wide community spread, and achieve low and even near zero transmission in the school building.

This evidence, combined with the benefits to learners of in-person schooling learning and harms of remote schooling, suggests that the time has come to pursue in-person learning across most school contexts, provided that the school in question has established reasonable infection control protocols to safeguard student, educator (including paraprofessional), and staff safety.” Consider students needs, employee needs, family needs, facility needs, updated findings, local health indicators, vaccine timelines and other developing factors.

Comment from Chairman Muszkiewicz: Thank you. This makes me nostalgic for a time 2 years ago where we saw a roadmap for what we wanted to improve in education for students and families. This past year’s crisis has complicated that. I am so proud of your focus to be a strategically governed organization. You put priorities together with the Board and community input and then returned to them and say this is how things need to change and this is what has been accomplished. Its important in times of crisis. I am happy to see we have adapted to still achieve priorities. We have provided every student with a Chromebook to use at home and also in class, as seen on our tours. The Multi-Year Budget Projection should have a green box in my humble opinion. It is an evolving process and document but it is a huge game changing way in which we look at our budget. I appreciate what you said about communications. The way our website provides information to our families and in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is huge. Something we don’t talk a lot about also are the minutes for our meeting. You read those and can get a concise and clear explanation of the work that the body is doing. The last thing I want to say, with regards to the last few slides, is that I appreciate how you share how the schools are continually evolving in response to the changing dynamic and crisis that we are in. I wish more of the folks who made public comment tonight were still attending the meeting and could hear that. Its late and these meetings are long but this is how we do our work. We dig in to the details and ask questions and we have difficult conversations. The change in vaccine prioritization is heartbreaking, but it is yet another thing that hasn’t gone our way that we have to adapt to.

Other question or comment;

Trustee McEwen asks if the security enhancement at the High Schools are underway or are they done?

A: Dr Ream, During the break and over summer we made physical upgrades. Physical work is the 1st things to do after the design and bid. That sets us up to then do the technical, electrical work and also the programming. We are in the last phase of that. We had to prioritize the High Schools to include them.

Schools are all very different for architecture and flow. Capital High School has a very clear front entrance whereas Helena High did not. We had to build an office on the other end of the school. The internal programming of the doors etc., is

what we have to do now. Then we will be ready to start working with the building administration to roll our procedures for how those will operate with the upgrades.

Trustee McEwen; There were software complaints and push back about various software platforms. Have those issues been squared away?

A: Dr Ream. Primary platforms yes, but there will always be supplemental material to navigate that can be a challenge. Our educators try to link that information but navigating the multiple platforms is hard. Being on TEAMS but then looking also at another website is sometimes a challenge. We may not ever complete that as it is ever evolving. Some software companies are developing all-in-one spaces but there may never be a true all-in-one because the world wide web is just too big. And to build something that works for K-12 is not really possible and would take 2-3 years. We use Moodle now and we will continue to watch for better things.

Board Vice Chair Hathorne: Thank you Dr Ream for managing the pandemic in a strategic way. I know your goal from the beginning of the pandemic has been to provide an academically and educationally sound model and I would also like everyone to know that you have always been a proponent of getting kids back in school and taking care of those kids that need the support that school gives. We are moving in the right direction.

Q: You are leaving in a few months. Is there anything that you would like to highlight as a need from the Strategic Plan that we can focus on now?

A: Dr Ream. The pandemic and research continue to develop. A year ago, I would have anticipated us being in a stable spot by now. We aren't. I am proud of the planning and implementation that went into this school year and keeping classes functioning while keeping people safe and healthy. We have to constantly be ready for change. Navigating the pandemic is priority number 1. Everyone's responsibilities have, at very least, doubled. On any given day, I am doing the Superintendent's intended job and also navigating the pandemic and trying to lead a school system. There are opportunities in the Spring Break and Summer Break to address the need of the students. We have to start planning for that now. It will be a new superintendent but everyone is impacted by this. We may continue with things we have implemented for the pandemic like the Chromebook usage as an aide to learning. We are pushed to develop things that we don't want to undo.

Trustee Beaver: Self evaluation or critic of the Strategic Plan is difficult but satisfying. Anyone in the district can look and see the accomplishments and what is in the works. All processes will evolve. This plan allows for that. Some things we would like to do differently but we have learned as we went. In assessment phase, the things we have taken from COVID are radically different from those we looked at previously. We must look at the satisfaction on the part of the student, teacher and parents. We have yet to meet some of those goals. We have

the opportunity to try and meet those if we can get over the restraints of vaccination and so on. Opportunities are there. The Strategic Plan is part of that process. You have handled it well. We can see strengths and shortcoming in it. Thank you for your efforts.

Trustee Goldes: Remembering back to August of 2016 when the trustees gathered at the May Butler building to work on the Strategic Plan and first brought all their thoughts and hopes and dreams for the kids of the district to the table. She is grateful for all the hard work in the document presented. It has allowed students to reach goals in a way that is dynamic and ever changing. It helps the Board to visualize what needs to be addressed. With COVID, it has identified challenges. It is empowering to hear what families come to tell them even if its hard to hear. There is a lot of pain right now. To hear plans are in place to mitigate these issues is good to hear.

Trustee McKee: She appreciates how much work it has taken to keep the train on the tracks since September. Its great to see the progress being made and that there are goals beyond survival. Regarding in person learning, numbers in October, November and December were very unsettling and the hybrid model is what got us through. It took so much work. People are exhausted and holding on by a thread. The Board is looking forward. Question for Dr Ream, in his opinion, what are the right next steps?

Dr Ream: The is a massive question. As we look as what has gone well and what hasn't gone well, the answer could vary. People are exhausted. Needs and research are both ever changing. We are still looking to make changes. Parents give us one perspective. But educators have another perspective. Educators includes all the employees in the district. Tim McMahon alone is doing 10 jobs all himself. There are so many considerations. Dr Ream has been candid with his view on vaccines. Courage has been mentioned. Courage is needed and demonstrated every day. People are still scared.

Trustee McKee: Any change that the Board decides to make will need to consider all points of view. They need to honor what and why the district did what they did. It has been draining and exhausting. But it got us through when our county was leading the country in COVID concentration and that's not nothing.

Trustee Walsh: The work that goes into creating and adjusting the plan in the midst of a pandemic is appreciated. The inclusion of online opportunities is also appreciated. Even with return to school, the Board may want to still consider online learning. Not that is has to be what it is currently but there are a lot of really great advantages to incorporating technology. Regardless of opinions on

whether this is working or not, all of the students have learned and grown tremendously using technology.

Student Representative Claire Downing: She would like to echo that she wishes the people who spoke earlier were still there. Courage was brought up. The patience and decisions made with research at these meetings demonstrate a lot of courage and we can see the progress from the original statistics. Even talking about opening back up is courageous.

Student Representative Mariah Mercer: She agrees with Claire. Its nice to see the scientific information that backs going back to school. A plan in place to go back at some point this year would help student's mental health and education and it is a relief to see.

C. Reports

1. Policy Committee Report

Trustee Goldes reports that Policy 3000 has been held back with the expectation that the Montana High School Sports Association may have some input. The new governor and his administration may make some changes. She doesn't know what will happen at the federal level. They will look at that in the future. Also, a thank you to Barb for all her hard work going through the 4000 series. The next meeting will be at the beginning of February.

2. Facilities and Maintenance Committee Report

Trustee Beaver reports that the committee last met on December 15 with the Director and executive staff of the capital complex maintenance division. They had proposed a presentation that was initiated by the loss of the maintenance and equipment facility. It has been taken by the new historical museum expansion. They need more space and had proposed to purchase the west half of the Ray Bjork parking lot to use as storage for capital equipment. Presently, that space is being used to store 12 mobile storage units that are needed because of the loss of space at Bryant school gymnasium. The school also still needs the space for staff parking. So, that proposal will not be feasible. They will look elsewhere.

3. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

Trustee Hathorne reports that they have put together a draft of 2021/2022 course offerings. Extended offerings are Unified Art, Social Studies elective of Philosophy, Carpentry 3, Foundational Fitness, and a certified focused health class covering 1st aid and CPR.

The Assessment Platform: iReady that Dr Ream covered most of but a recap to say that the schools have transitioned from STAR to iReady. It is teacher and student friendly but there is no data back yet.

4. Negotiations Report

Stacy Collette reports that they continue to work with Helena Education Association teacher members in coming to a settlement with the teacher's union. They will be starting HEA paraeducator union negotiations next week. They will be starting craft bargaining unit soon. This includes plumbers, electricians, custodians, etc....

5. Montana School Board Association Report

Chairman Muszkiewicz reports that MTSBA is fully engaged in the legislative session and he feels it safe to say that staff are pleased and optimistic with what's happening in the education policies. Governor Gianforte's budget includes inflationary increases for education funding formula. House Bill 3 passed 85-15. K-12 supplemental funding is included. Also, Federal COVID funds. He is looking forward to consistency in the funding formula. MTSBA board meetings will continue to be held online. MTSBA president has asked Chairman Muszkiewicz to chair the Advocacy committee for MTSBA so that is a neat opportunity. He is asking MTSBA staff to help our trustees to become more involved in advocacy before the legislators. He wants to see any trustee who is willing to testify on behalf of bills we support and against those we do not. Everyone always thinks someone else is doing it and then no one does. He is asking MTSBA staff to reach out to trustees to find out who is interested and help them. A survey for this just went out if anyone is interested.

Question from Trustee McEwen: Is MTSBA following bill 102, the gun bill?

A: Chairman Muszkiewicz answers that they are. They have not taken a stand for or against but have asked for a clarifying exemption to the bill text to exclude K-12. Then it would solely focus on college and university campuses.

Question asked by Trustee Goldes: Is the testimony given in person or online?

A; Chairman Muszkiewicz answers that at this point, without mask usage and social distancing, MTSBA staff are not advocating in person. They are doing everything virtually. He is hopeful that conditions will change. With online testimony you must make sure to sign up by noon the day before the hearing.

6. Helena Education Association Report

Jane Shawn reports that early retirement letters are due January 15. They have already received 5 and 1 more from last year to make 6.

In the political aspect of what the union is doing, they are also advocating for education in the legislative session. She will testify online. There are several bills they are responding to and several members of their Rapid Response Team are advocating from all over the state, approximately 1500 people.

She listened to the public comments made by parents and teachers. She has been in contact with representative counsel. The way the structure works is that there are several union leaders at each building. So, they get info from each building and bring it back to the counsel. When asked, does your building feel safe to come back to 4- or 5-day learning environment, they have all said they are concerned about the ability to social distance and many educators feel fortunate that sickness has stayed low. They feel that is due to their ability to mask and social distance currently. Teachers want the kids to come back but safety is a concern. They have sent info out for people to contact the governor to revise the vaccine orders to include teachers in phase 1B. We need to get parents back to work and kids back to school and vaccines would do that much more safely. A member told her that she is again home, quarantined with her son for a 3rd time because he has been a close contact. The student is from the Montana City school where they don't social distance and go 5 days a week. The change to the vaccine schedule was a gut punch. She would love to continue to be included in the back to in person discussions.

7. HHS/CHS Student Representative Reports

Mariah Mercer, Capital High Student Representative, reports that semester tests this year look different than most years. "A" students will go on Tuesday, "B" students will do on Wednesday and DLI students will have school Thursday. Many departments chose not to test. Some are using the time for makeup work and some are doing papers or projects instead of test.

The Academic Assistance Program started in December. They are averaging about 30 students per day after school taking part in this program. They work with teachers to make up work for credit recovery or to get help with current homework. The mentor program will begin 2nd semester using para proctors for struggling students. Accreditation review for the year will take place at the end of February.

Mariah and Claire visited PAL before winter break and the sense of community there was great. Claire will expand on their visit there. Extra Curriculars: Student Council raised about \$3500 for winter break gift card drive. The gift cards were purchased to Vans and given out to needy families in the school. Basketball has begun and both girls' and boys' varsity are currently 1-1. Speech and Debate is doing well. Jordan Shaw has placed 1st or 2nd in Legislative Debate at every tournament. All are online this year.

Claire Downing, Helena High Student Representative reports that semester tests at her school are about the same. There is not a lot of actual testing because there is not enough time and it would not offer a comprehensive assessment. The Food handlers license that she reported on at the last meeting is already being offered as an opportunity at the school and students can do extra training to get certified.

She and Mariah visited PAL (Project for Alternative Learning) and they both like the way it is run. They are on a 3-week schedule. Seniors have to do 15 plus hours of career development outside of school. The small population makes it easier. They have a 96% graduation rate. HHS is modeling PAL to put focus on the students and adapting grading policies and less emphasis on tests.

V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr Ream starts by thanking several organizations that help us. Sam and MTSBA have been keeping things updated on what is happening in the legislature. HB16 added 3–4-year-olds to the ANB calculations. HB27 creates the Handle with Care Program. Governor Gianforte released a proposed budget. It decreases \$100 million from the last governor's budget but does not dip into the stabilization fund. There is a 1.5% increase for FY22 and a 2.57% increase for FY23 in the school funding formula. There is a \$2.5 million incentive for school districts to encourage increasing the salaries of early career teachers. Currently we rank 50th for beginning teacher pay. This would require districts to put in some of their own money. Also \$1 million per year in trades education through credit for employee education and training.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

Chairman Muszkiewicz gives an update on the Superintendent search. Hazzard, Young, Attea and Associates are helping to recruit, interview and select our next Superintendent. The Priority application deadline was January 4, and 25 complete applications were received. Caroline and Jackie are conducting prescreening interviews and will recommend a slate of candidates to the Board. Once the Board finalizes the semifinalists, they will release the names and professional biographies and begin interviews. After that, the Board will select finalists. They will be interviewed a second time and an opportunity will be provided to students, families,

staff and community members to engage. Then the Board will select the next Superintendent. The Board remains thankful to Dr Ream for his visionary leadership and unparalleled dedication in addition to his and his team's assistance in all aspects of this process. All meetings will be publicly noticed. The Board will make sure to accommodate all schedules. They are so thankful to Dr Ream for his work but also happy with the interest in the position from qualified candidates. They are sad but also excited.

Trustee McEwen makes a shout to to 2 people he knows that are on the retirement list, Bill Kaiser and Dawn North. He wishes them best of luck in the future.

Trustee McKee would like to thank Dr Ream and Jane Shaw and all the folks working so hard through everything. All of their efforts matter.

Trustee Goldes would like to echo what has been said to Dr Ream and the teachers. Despite hearing the frustrations of the parents, our teachers want to support the kids and help them succeed. She feels particularly bad for the teachers of special needs and at-risk youth and she understands how worrying that is. She believes everyone would like to be back in school. She is also thankful to the County Health Department because what we read in the paper is looking backwards and not telling what the current situation is. The info coming from wastewater is worrying. There is a lot of COVID out there that hasn't manifested yet. We are also hearing about the new variants that are more infectious and we don't know what that means for the future. We don't know what the future brings but the County Health Department helps to guide us. We have to consider the health of our teachers and staff because we can't be open without them.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other topics for future meetings and no public comments on issues not on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be February 9, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Luke Muszkiewicz, Chair

Gretchen George, Recording Secretary Date