



*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 Finance Committee

Thursday, January 21, 2021 – 12:00pm

### MINUTES

#### ATTENDEES

*Committee:*

John McEwen, Committee Chair  
Sarah Sullivan, Committee Member  
Terry Beaver, Committee Member

*Others:*

Tyler Ream, Superintendent  
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent  
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator  
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director  
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff  
Tim McMahan, Activities Director  
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology  
Michelle Schweyen, Assistant Accountant  
Dave Thennis, C.R. Anderson Principal

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair, John McEwen, called the meeting to order at 12:02pm.

#### II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were offered.

#### III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

#### IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The November 6, 2020, committee meeting minutes were reviewed.

## **V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION**

### **1. Budget to Date Reports**

Ms. Mickelson presented current year-to-date budget updates to the committee and noted the numbers could change dramatically with the new ESSER funds. Dr. Ream thanked Ms. Mickelson for her leadership and attention to detail with CRF funds.

Mr. Beaver asked if the salaries listed were sustainable. Ms. Mickelson answered the figures listed were expenditures and encumbered. She had factored appropriating some salaries back into the general fund from CRF funds once those funds expired.

Mr. McEwen asked for clarification on which employees were classified under “professional salaries.” Ms. Mickelson responded nurses, therapists – not educators.

Mr. McEwen asked why the utilities budget was a higher percentage at the high schools when there were only two campuses. Ms. Mickelson replied the buildings were bigger and less efficient. She added the budget was based on previous years’ expenditures, and an average increase had been applied.

### **2. High School Master Schedule and Staffing Update**

Dr. Ream told the committee the report was a way to assess how well the high schools adjusted to decreased enrollment, specifically at Helena High. The intent was to maintain relatively equal student to staff ratios between the high schools. Dr. Ream continued another round of decisions would occur this spring in anticipation of next year’s enrollment. He added the transparency of the numbers was important for future decisions.

Mr. Beaver asked when pre-registration would begin. Mr. McKay answered mid-February, but it was an evolving process through the first quarter of each year. He continued a lot of work would be dedicated to projecting enrollment and the estimated impact of losing a class a year for multiple years to the East Helena high school.

Mr. McKay presented the current staffing matrix, which included the fall student count, FTEs, Student to FTE ratio, FTEs by department, students by department, MEAN students per FTE per class period, MEDIAN students per class period, class periods with ten students or fewer, and class periods with 24 or more students.

Ms. Sullivan asked why ten was set as the class limit. Mr. McKay answered it the two class sizes were representatives of class size extremes. Dr. Ream added single digit classrooms were often referenced, a contributing factor to the class size designation. Mr. McKay added clarification that the smaller class sizes tended to be the higher-level classes.

Mr. Beaver asked for a staffing matrix for PAL. Mr. McKay answered the addition of PAL to the matrix would have skewed the numbers.

Ms. Sullivan asked if the matrix included DLI. Mr. McKay confirmed it included everyone enrolled.

Mr. McEwen asked if a similar analysis was conducted with specials. Mr. McKay answered principals had their own internal schedules and made assessments based on patterns seen in the past and interest or disinterest of students.

Mr. McKay added an additional challenge to staffing was the anticipated affect COVID would have on enrollment.

Mr. Beaver referenced the discussion at a previous meeting about authorizing additional pay for certain staff who were teaching additional classes. Ms. Collette answered that decision had been made to provide additional course time for students to complete prerequisites for upper-level classes or required credits for graduation. Mr. McKay added it has helped students get the requirements they need.

Mr. McEwen asked if enrollment at Helena High was higher than expected. Mr. McKay answered it was within the range of predictions.

The committee discussed options for ensuring consistent growth between the high schools. Mr. McEwen asked if it was advised to have high schools the approximate same size. Dr. Ream replied not necessarily since the high schools provided different options. Mr. McKay added the intent was to provide students with what they needed, which resulted in some combined school classes. Dr. Ream stated another option would be for Helena High to develop a pathway to encourage people to attend that school for a specific program, potentially reducing any need for redistricting.

Mr. Beaver asked if the high schools lost any programs. Mr. McKay answered they had not; additional classes will be offered next year.

## **VI. BOARD COMMENT**

Mr. McEwen asked for an update on ESSER 2 funds. Ms. Mickelson answered the estimate was just under \$5 million with a focus on bridging the academic loss. Dr. Ream added academic intervention was ongoing at all levels and was estimated to continue.

Ms. Mickelson provided clarification that whatever CRF funds were not spent would be sent back to the governor's office. The deadline for spending funds had changed at the federal level but had not at the state level.

Mr. Beaver asked when the date for spending ESSER funds was. Ms. Mickelson replied September 2023.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there was a coordinated effort to lobby for teachers to receive the vaccine sooner. Dr. Ream replied there was not anything comprehensive.

Mr. McEwen asked for the board's role in approving ESSER and CRF funds. Ms. Mickelson replied the board approves the warrants at each board meeting. Dr. Ream added the board chair had been required to sign the district's plan for CRF funds. It was unclear what would be required for ESSER 2 funds.

Dr. Ream discussed tentative agenda items for future committee meetings and recommended moving the multi-year budget update to later in the year. That would mean the next two meeting agendas would include a market analysis of salaries for all district positions.

The committee discussed changing the typical schedule of Budget & Finance Committee meetings and determined to change them to the third Tuesday of each month, beginning on February 16.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. McEwen adjourned the meeting at 1:15pm.