

Board of Trustees Meeting

Capital High School Auditorium via Zoom

**Tuesday, April 13, 2021**

5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE:** Present unless otherwise noted

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair

Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Vice Chair

Terry Beaver, Trustee

John McEwen, Trustee

Sarah Sullivan, Trustee

Jennifer McKee, Trustee

Libby Goldes, Trustee (Absent, excused)

Jennifer Walsh, Board Member

Claire, Helena High Student Representative

Mariah, Capital High Student Representative

Dr Tyler Ream, Superintendent

Rex Weltz, Incoming Superintendent

Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent

Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager

Stacy Collette, Human Resource Administrator

Gary Meyers, IT

Brett Zanto, Capital High Principal

Brian Cummings, Principal Jim Darcy School

Tim McMahon, Activities Administrator

Many Guests of the Helena School District

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

1. **REVIEW OF AGENDA**

No changes

1. **STUDENT & EDUCATOR RECOGNITIONS**

A. Two Helena High swimmers took home individual state championships. Robert Wagner for the 100-yd Butterfly and the 50-yd Freestyle Quade Oser for the 100-yd Breaststroke and the 200-yd Individual Medley

B. The Helena High Boys Swim team won the 2021 state championship for the 200-yd Freestyle Relay. Team: Jacob Demmons, Christion Goetsch, Garrett Krattiger, and Robert Wagner

C. The Helena High Boys Swim team also won 2021 state championship. Team: Jacob Demmons, Christion Goetsch, Devin Goetsch, Garrett Krattiger, Quade Oser, Ben Vince, and Robert Wagner Coach: Julia Shannon

D. The Helena High “Baker Team” won the 2021 Mock Trial state championship. Team: Hailey Brewer, Grace Johnson, Caitlin Matthews, Isaac Nehring, Sage Eck-Miller, and Maddie McNeil. Advisor: Kacey Askin

E. Six students qualified for the National Speech & Debate Meet From Helena High: Jonathan DeWald, Tim Cuddy, and Shy Christensen Coach: Jen Hermanson From Capital High: Erin Heaton, Jordyn Shaw, and Brennen Jensen Coach: Chloe Smith

F. Two Capital High wrestlers won 2021 individual state championships. Noah Kovick (205) Carson DesRosier (138) Coach: Jeff Mahana

G. The Capital High Girls Basketball team won the 2021 state championship for the second consecutive year. Team: Mara McGinley, Dani Bartsch, Paige Bartsch, Jaymee Sheridan, Rachael Stacy, Kayla Almquist, Parklyn Heller, Audrey Hofer, Carlie Gross, Keetyn Sayers, and Kaleigh Fiest (manager) Coaches: Katie Garcia-Forba (head coach), Tom Dearborn, Matt Reyant, Taylor Hassler, Shelby VanHemelryck, and Savanna Bignell

H. The Capital High School team won the 2021 Science Bowl state championship. Team: Mariah Mercer, Nate Turner, Tyler Almquist, Zach Boles, and Kilian Humbert Coaches: DeLacy Humbert and Kendra Lunday

I. Capital High student, Jenna Rahn, placed 1st in Legal Office Procedures at the Business Professionals of America state competition. Coach: Terri Norman

1. **PRESENTATION:** 2020 District Audit: Anthony Gerharz, Manager, Wipfli LLP

Janelle Mickelson introduces Anthony as a manager at Wipfli. The audit is coming out on time despite the pandemic. The district received an unmodified opinion on the audit reports, meaning there were no major adjustments that needed to be made. Janelle did a great job on the books and getting them the financial statements on time. There was one finding related to the budget being overspent in the technology fund. That was about $42,000 and it happened because of COVID and the initial lockdown to ensure continued operations. Classified as a significant deficiency which means it has to be brought to the Boards attention, but it is something that happens and is not a shock. Also, they did an audit on the district’s compliance with federal audit programs, and this year they looked at Title 1 and The Comprehensive Development Literacy Program and both had no findings which is a good thing. He asks for questions or comments.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz thanks him for his hard work for being here tonight. He appreciates Janelle’s hard work as well as her team.

Trustee McEwen asks what is audited? Is it general ledger sheets or a sampling of transactions to prove how money was spent? There is a fair amount of cash that moves around.

A: They use a bit of both to create a risk-based audit approach. Part of the audit planning looks at all the transactions and with discussions with Janelle and her staff. Then they make some assessments and look at the materiality threshold where they say this is where we will focus our area of concern. Larger account balances and transactions will get more of the attention. They also look at things that have risk and things that involve cash. Then they do sampling both statistical and non-statistical. They also do random pulls. There are also specific things they look at to follow the Federal Compliance rules. The also try to bring non predictability as well. Each of the student activity funds were also randomly tested at the high school and middle school level. They also look to make sure there are checks and balances in place.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz would like the public to know the full audit is online on the district website and is linked to tonight’s agenda. It’s also on the business and finance page. It’s a good summary of the financial summary for the year ending June 2020.

Janelle would like to give credit to Michelle Schweyen, the District accountant as she could not do this without her. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz agrees and echoes the Boards appreciation.

Trustee Sullivan just wanted to add her thanks. Her husband is a financial planner and she understands how hard an audit this large and complex is.

Trustee McKee says that it represents a huge amount of work and also wants to recognize everyone who puts in the work to create the budgets and everyone who works to stay within their budgets.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

1. **NEW BUSINESS**
2. **Items for Action**

1**. Updated Policies for Approval/Action**

**a. Policy 1905: Face Coverings as Personal Protective Equipment** Dr Ream explains that the addition removes the requirement of masking outdoors. They have consulted with health officials and the consensus is that the outdoors is fairly low risk. It’s not a guarantee but it’s a consideration for when appropriate.

**Motion:** Trustee McEwen makes a motion to approve.Trustee McKee seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** 3 minutes or less, state name and relationship to the District.

**Courtney McAdams:** She is a parent of 2 students in the District. She is in favor of lifting the mask mandate both in doors and while at desks inside. She wants them to be able to see each other and hear each other better. Her sister-in-law is a teacher in Alabama and they have been in person since August. She shows pictures in August with the kids in masks. At Christmas time they had masks off and were close to each other. They have been able to stay open and had no issues. In Florida over Spring break, all the kids were outside without masks. She thinks it can be done here safely. She asks the Board to do this sooner rather than later. County wide we have brought numbers down and people are getting vaccinated. Surrounding counties are removing mask mandates. She would also like to address her hope that in the Fall they can go back without masks and that vaccinations will not ever be mandated.

**Amanda Osborne:** Mother of 3 students in the District. She would like to offer some ideas. She doesn’t want to debate the mask effectiveness. The objective is to reduce infection of COVID 19. Low infection rates and access to the vaccine are helping with the reduction of transmission. We don’t want our kids to get sick but the trends show that 3.5 million pediatric cases across the country, less than 300 resulted in death. The current policies are overly cautious and strip kids or their rights and dignities. When will it be safe enough and by what metric will you be evaluating that? She urges the Board to amend the mask mandate all around as soon as possible. She asks the Board to examine their policies as they pertain to where we are now.

**Amy Hurley:** Mother of 2 students in the District and a guest teacher in the district as well. She wants to give a voice to her children. She is in favor of lifting the mask mandate now and forever. Students can’t hear teachers or their peers. They are zoning out and not paying attention. Masks are inhibiting their social and emotional growth. They are watching screens at lunch instead of socializing. Kids say they can’t breathe, they pull masks down. Kids were talking about child abuse pertaining to the masks. The children have sacrificed too long. She urges the Board to remove mask mandates completely and not mandate vaccination for attendance next year.

**Jamie Bright:** She is a mom of 2 students in the District. As a child they cut out faces and matched with the appropriate expressions. With masks being required, they are not learning what those faces look like. Its is also making proper speech development a problem. Her high schooler is not in the schools. He doesn’t go because of the mask mandate and he knows that wearing one all day is not ok for him. He wants to go back but not until he feels like he can breathe. Her younger student is very social. The Board needs to talk to the kids and see how they feel. The mask is doing more harm than good. Kids play with them, touch them, saturate them, etc. Team work is impossible but it is a crucial skill. What is the end game? What is the metric?

**Tammy Stefanik:** She has 2 high schoolers in the District. She echoes the sentiments of the other speakers. She would add that she is in favor of removing masks completely going forward. They are affecting kids social and emotional health. Right now, they are inhibited. They are more likely to hide and shrink into a room when they can’t hear or have a question. Cleanliness is also an issue. Masks are not getting washed every day. The children are our future and we want critical thinkers and listeners, etc. and in order for them to have those things, they have to be shown.

**Board Comment:** Trustee McEwen says that the Board is following County guidelines and there is still a mask mandate. He asks when the masks won’t be needed in the classroom. Dr Ream says that this policy is for the outdoors only at this time. He can’t say what the County will do at this point. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz says that all the places they look to for guidance are still recommending mask usage in the classroom at this time. Dr Ream says outdoor use is different and the CDC says unmasking outside may be considered. They are not seeing outdoor transmission as driving the infection rate. Trustee McKee says that from the beginning, the Board and District has always used guidance to support the common good. They have always followed a metric. They have kept kids in school even when metrics went above.

**Vote:** 7-0. Motion carries.

**b. Policy 1906: Student Instruction and Services**

Dr Ream explains that another COVID 19 policy was last updated April 28, 2020. The intent is to align with the 1902 policy. Many students have remained online. This aligns with students working to obtain proficiency with credit recovery and summer school, etc. That way kids do not have to start over, just make up what they were not getting.

**Motion:** Trustee McEwen makes a motion to approve as presented.Trustee McKee seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz says he believes these revisions to be in line with what they are looking to do.

**Vote:** 7-0. Motion carries.

**2. Consideration of the Ratification of the Paraprofessionals Collective Bargaining Agreement**

Stacy Collette brings the Board the tentative agreement with the paraprofessionals who work for Helena schools. It is a 2-year agreement and has insurance benefits depending on what happens with the insurance plan. Year 1 the matrix stays the same and in year 2 the employees will meet to discuss a salary that could include a step. In 2021 they will also receive a $1000 bonus prorated to their full-time equivalency. So, those paras working half time will receive $500. The relationship with the paras is great and they have worked in the most diverse manor during COVID. They are working as proctors and working with kids one on one. They are working with behavioral health issues. She would ask that the Board vote yes on this contract.

Trustee McEwen says that the employee gets the step and then the $1000. Is it in 2021? A: It will be paid before June of this year. They will step July 1. The bonus is an incentive for the agreement. He also asks how much it will cost. A: There are 184 paraprofessionals covered under this agreement. The majority work less than 80%. A step on the matrix is less than $200,000. It will cost less than 2% of the budget. He asks as salaries are built for the next year, what will the legislature give as an increase? Janelle says the legislature is not done meeting. The inflationary increase is 1.5%. Trustee McEwen then says that salary increases shouldn’t go over the 1.5% from the legislature unless something else is reduced. Janelle says this is correct.

Trustee Sullivan says that they are critical members of the team and they do so much work helping parents, teachers and kids. They need to get that recognition.

**Motion:** Trustee Beaver makes a motion to approve as presented.Trustee McEwen seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 7-0. Motion carries.

**3. Consideration of the Ratification of the Secretaries Collective Bargaining Agreement**

Stacy Collette brings the Board the tentative agreement with the secretaries. There are 56 secretaries. They do budgets, attendance, and make sure all needs are met. This is a 3-year agreement that begins July 1, 2021. The insurance is the same. Year 1 the matrix stays the same and the employees will step. Years 2 and 3, they will meet again to negotiate salary. They will also receive the $1000 bonus as incentive. She encourages the Board to accept.

Trustee McEwen ask how many people are covered. She again states 56. The overall increase on a step is less than $75,000 total. He asks why this one is a 3 year. A: The secretaries proposed a 3 year and they accepted.

**Motion:** Trustee McEwen makes a motion to approve as presented.Trustee Beaver seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** Trustee McKee says that secretaries do it all from nurse to CEO responsibilities. She is happy that they can ratify this agreement.

**Vote:** 7-0. Motion carries.

1. **Items for Consent**

**1. Consideration of the 1.28.2021 Special Board Meeting Closed Session Minutes**

**2. Consideration of the 02.11.2021 Special Board Meeting Closed Session Minutes**

**3. Consideration of the 02.19.2021 Special Board Meeting Closed Session Minutes**

**4. Consideration of the Personnel Actions**

**5. Consideration of the Warrants**

**6. Approval of Out-of-District Attendance Agreements**

**Motion:** Trustee Sullivan makes a motion to approve all Items for Consent.Trustee McKee seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** Trustee McEwan asks about Rossiter school initials. A: TOSA (Teacher On Special Assignment) is someone who covers the responsibilities while the current Principal, Rex Weltz transitions to the Superintendent position.

**Vote:** 7-0. Motion carries.

**RECESS**

1. **Items for Information**
2. **Class of 2021 Graduation Update**

Dr Ream shares a presentation on the screen. He hopes this to be the only update and that a lot of changes don’t need to be made. They do meet with Lewis and Clark Public Health to make decisions. At this time there will be 4 ceremonies, outdoors at Carroll College in Nelson Stadium. This is similar to last year. Access to Success gets a graduation which is great. They would have a 3 o’clock graduation followed by PAL at 5 o’clock. These would both be on Friday, June 4. Then on Saturday, June 5, Capital graduation will be at 9 o’clock and Helena High at 1 o’clock. Times and date could be adjusted due to weather. If they have to be moved indoors, each student would get 2 tickets. Each school would utilize their own gym. Graduation could also be moved to the following weekend if needed. In the past there have been thunderstorms to work around. At this time, they are anticipating about 75% of capacity at Nelson Stadium. This would allow 10 tickets per graduate to sit by household and have some distancing between them. There will be 2 golden tickets that will have to be used for inclement weather. PAL and Access will not have ticket limits. Some masking is expected in congested areas like restrooms. Distancing for students will be 3 feet and an unmasked processional for pictures. Cleaning efforts will be focused on high traffic areas between ceremonies. Last year, people liked the abbreviated ceremony. 2 years ago, paramedics were active in the stands as it was very warm and the ceremony got long. Band and choir will perform. Students will be allowed to throw caps. There will also be video options. There were also people who felt more comfortable in over flow areas. Graduation practices are important but all of the graduates may not need to be there. Most of the kids can figure it out. They are also looking to bring back the graduation BBQ/picnic.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz thanks Dr Dream and his team for their work in putting all this together. He thought last years graduation was a triumph. He is confident it will be successful and closer to normal. He appreciates the quality relationships Dr Ream has fostered with partners like Public Health, local meteorologists and Carroll College.

Student Representative Mariah asks if teachers will be allowed to come or if they have to have one of the student tickets. A: They are encouraged to come without a ticket. Many volunteer to work. An area will be set up for them to sit.

Student Representative Claire says it all sound very exciting. Mariah says they also like the shorter ceremony.

Trustee Beaver asks if the last day will be the same for Seniors no matter if the graduation has to be moved due to weather. A: Yes. Only those still working on coursework would go that extended week. He also asks if they could be run in the middle of the week if the weekends are anticipated to be too rainy. A: They haven’t talked about that but its could be a possibility. If people know what is going on, it is an option. What is the status of the all-night party and would moving the date effect that? A: Its in the Civic Center which is reserved so he is not sure if it would affect that.

1. **Reports**
2. **Policy Committee Report**

Trustee McKee states that the pattern following the policy is that it can get dusty if you don’t use it so they wanted to make sure they are staying relevant. They cycle through and look on a regular basis. They looked at vacancies on the Board, conflict of interest, etc. They looked at 4 to 5 policies and made some minor recommendations that will come to the Board soon. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz says it is important to stay relevant in policies that govern how the Board operates.

1. **Budget & Finance Committee Report**

Trustee McEwen says that there was a second addition of Stacy’s market analysis presentation and this one focused on how the district is doing with administrator salaries compared to other AA school sand also how teachers are paid in comparison. With Administrators, they are below average in all avenues. The committee encouraged the Superintendent and HR to see what they could do to up salaries. The Board doesn’t decide how much these positions are paid. Its was good information for decision making going forward. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz says at the end of the day, it is the Board obligation to approve a budget.

1. **Health Benefits Committee Report**

Trustee McEwen says they saw a presentation by Allegiance about compliance. They talked about a memo from Stacy which outlined the process to decide premium rates for the coming year. At the next meeting they will have analysis to decide if employer contribution should be changed or left the same. There will be a joint bargaining meeting later.

1. **Negotiations Report**

Stacy Collette reports that they are beginning negotiations with craft unions. There are 5. They have received their demand to bargain and will bring that to the next meeting. They are also beginning bargaining with the custodial union. They hope to have a settlement before the first of June. They transitioned from the PCAP to the Steps and Lanes matrix. They validated the language proposed by HEA and ensured the placement of individual teachers in the appropriate place. They are hoping to begin issuing contracts for the next year in June.

1. **Montana School Boards Association Report**

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz says a lot of the attention is on a trio of bills that would redirect public funding to private schools. HB633 would allow charter schools to not fall under a public district or be accountable to a Board. That failed. HB329 Failed but a blast motion is expected to have it considered again. That would allow redirection of public money to private providers for special education. He urges Board to pay attention to emails that say Call to Action in the subject line from MTSBA. SB400 looks like it will pass. He is hopeful that HB46 will go through. Shout out to the legislatures who are doing a great job. Trustee McKee asks if they are past the transmittal deadline for appropriation bills and if there is a point where once they are dead, they stay dead? A: Yes. We are past it.

1. **Helena Education Association Report**

Jane Shawn reports that the para contract was ratified with 100% approval by para members. Nomination process for educator of the year and paraeducator the year will start in the next week or two. They will be interviewing 5 of the 6 School Board candidates in the next few days. They will make recommendations to membership.

1. **HHS / CHS Student Representatives Report**

Claire: She expresses that there is a lot of excitement and the moral is up. Teachers are also excited. Students are looking forward to vaccinations or have already had some. Juniors have taken their ACT and AP tests are now coming up. They are in person. NHS Induction is coming up next week. Spring Sports are in full swing. Helena High has no reported positive cases since returning. Glacier College is a course that focuses on learning about Glacier National Park. There is a student lead exhibit that will go up at the airport to showcase student classwork.

Mariah: 145 students had an incomplete grade at the end of 3rd quarter. They are working with teachers to allow kids to make up work and improve grades. After School Assistance program is still going on. Summer options are also being looked at. Kids are also involved in credit recovery. Vigilante Parade will be happening in a reverse parade and floats will be stationery and people can drive by and see them. Accreditation review results are back and will be used to make changes starting next year. Prom and Senior All-Night Party will happen and are being organized by Senior parents.

1. **SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Since the March work session, there have been several mentions around the efforts associated with vaccinations. A lot of individuals were able to get vaccine appointments through Barb Ridgeway and they are very appreciative. Anyone who wants to have a vaccination has had the opportunity at this time. Many pharmacies have gone out of their way to give employees those opportunities.

Trustee Beaver asks if there is a meeting sight at Lincoln for the School Board. Can they have a more formal Board Room? A: Still discussions. Having a Board room would be a benefit. Cameras could be permanently set up etc. It is at the will of the Board. There are several options.

1. **BOARD COMMENTS**

April 8 was the transmittal of the bill’s deadline.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other topics for future meetings and no public comments on issues not on the agenda, the meeting adjourned. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be May 11, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Luke Muszkiewicz, Chair

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Gretchen George, Recording Secretary Date