



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

Tuesday, March 16, 2021 – 12:00pm

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Committee Members:

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

Trustees:

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Vice Chair

Others:

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Tim McMahon, Activities Director
Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Administrator
Gary Myers, Education Technology Director

Brian Cummings, Principal
Rex Weltz, Principal
Nick Radley, Principal
Lona Carter, Principal
Kaitlyn Hess, Educator

Neal Blossom, member of the public

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair, John McEwen, called the meeting to order at 12:03pm.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were offered.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The February 16, 2021, committee meeting minutes were reviewed.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

- A. Market Analysis Project: Salary Scale Comparative Analysis (Part II)
Ms. Collette provided a summary of the previous meeting's presentation.

Ms. Collette stated the operational goal for 2020-2021 was pay equity in all classifications with similar market comparables.

Ms. Collette defined “Daily Rate” and “Hourly Rate” comparisons among classifications for the context in the presentation. She confirmed teachers had 187-day contracts and elementary principals had 210-day contracts. Administrator hourly rates were calculated at five days a week at eight hours per day, while teachers, by contract, were calculated at five days a week at seven hours per day. Ms. Collette acknowledged individuals in both categories worked well beyond their contracted hours.

Ms. Collette addressed the teachers’ category, which was represented by Helena Education Association and the Montana Federation of Public Employees. Along with classroom teachers, this category included nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavior specialists, counselors, and other licensed teaching personnel. Through collective bargaining, pay and benefit comparisons were made to other AA schools in Montana. Though HPS (Helena Public Schools) was above average in every category except PhD for entry teachers, it was below average at the top of each lane except MA and PhD.

Ms. Collette stated that within the last 20 days, Bozeman, Great Falls, Billings, and Missoula school districts increased salaries by between .5% and 2.275%. She added these increased applied to both teachers and administrators. She agreed to update the spreadsheet to reflect the most current comparisons.

Ms. Collette provided data on the AA principal comparison and summarized salaries as follows:

- HPS principals were below average at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- The current matrix didn’t show a competitive market advantage, nor did it reflect the internal market interest.
- The current matrix required 19 years to reach the top, while other AAs required only four-six.
- Internal candidates earned less per day moving to a principal position, also negatively impacting TRS earnings.

Mr. Beaver asked if the district’s benefits were consistent with other AA districts. Ms. Collette replied they were consistent for health insurance, but some AA administrators received an additional 13.5% on top of their salary to apply toward other investment arms.

Mr. McEwen asked for confirmation that the best way to make comparisons was to look at data from a daily rate? Ms. Collette confirmed that was the best way to ensure equity across the board. Mr. McEwen asked if pay equity referred to internal equity. Ms. Collette replied it did, adding if comparisons were made for one category of employees, it should be done for all other categories.

Ms. Collette presented comparisons for central office staff among AA districts. In each position, HPS was below average in daily rate and hourly rate. She added not all central offices were comparable across the state – several districts had multiple Assistant Superintendents and Directors of Curriculum, for example. Through a student to building administrator and central administration staff analysis, HPS was about average to counterpart districts.

Ms. Collette summarized the central administration portion of the presentation by stating many of the summations from the principals' analysis held true, and added additional summary points:

- Other AA districts continued to add increase percentages to their salaries.
- Current placement for internal staff wasn't competitive; internal candidates would earn less per day moving to a central office administrative position.

Ms. Collette addressed the administrator matrix from a historic vantage point and noted the following:

- The matrix has been adjusted twice in the last 21 years – once to remove Steps 1-5 from the matrix, and the other to increase salaries 1.5% in 2016.
- While internal candidates began at the current Step 0, external candidates were granted their years of administrative experience.
- In 2016, administrators took a pay and step freeze, and administrators have traditionally taken a freeze as they switched positions within the district.

Ms. Collette described the state funding inflationary trends compared to teacher salary increases. While teacher salaries increased 3-6.5% on a yearly basis since 2016 (compared to .5-2.33% state funding inflationary increase), administrative salaries have not increased other than a universal 1.5% increase for all staff in 2018.

Ms. Collette stated the importance of having a district pay philosophy, making sure internal and market comparisons on job comparisons and scope-of-work were conducted for each position in the district. She added it was also important to consider direct reports and supervision and recommended considering a 10-20% supervisory differential, which was used by the State of Montana and was consistent in market comparisons. Ms. Collette provided the committee with principal and central administration salary estimates if supervisory differentials were applied. She added once these differentials were applied, HPS principal and administrator salaries would be comparable to other AA districts. However, any adjustment to salary would not address issues with scope-of-work.

Ms. Collette emphasized the importance of the following:

- Continuing to support market adjustments for all employee groups in comparison to AA districts and industry markets.
- Leveraging the same pay methodology for occupations throughout the district.
- Creating an equitable pay philosophy based on the market, pay equity, and scope of work.

Ms. Sullivan recommended conducting a similar analysis annually and to determine a strategic process for making salary improvements. She recognized that taking money from the interlocal fund to pay for salaries was not a long-term solution.

Mr. McEwen recommended establishing a few scenarios for adjusted salaries to see estimated budgetary impacts. He asked for confirmation the board didn't approve matrix changes. Ms. Collette confirmed it was an operational decision.

Ms. Sullivan asked what the process would be for fixing the misalignment. Ms. Collette replied it couldn't be fixed in one change, but efforts needed to be made to close the gaps and approach a position where the district could be more competitive. She added the district must be consistent with its methodology.

Mr. Beaver said that while establishing a functional matrix for administrators would take a lot of time, the scope of work must be addressed immediately. He recommended hiring an additional Assistant Superintendent by July 1. The committee agreed.

Mr. McEwen asked if there any an update on the budget. Ms. Mickelson replied there was nothing new to report; expenses were tracking the way they had been projected.

VI. BOARD COMMENT

Ms. Hathhorn agreed to moving forward with making appropriate steps to adjust principal and administrator salaries.

Mr. McEwen asked if next month would include multi-year budget projections. Ms. Mickelson replied that it would pending adjournment of the legislature. She added she would need to cost out the new teacher matrix for the most accurate projections.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McEwen adjourned the meeting at 12:57pm.