



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 – Policy Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

MINUTES

Attendees

Committee:

Libby Goldes, Committee Chair
John McEwen, Committee Member
Jennifer McKee, Committee Member
Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair

Others:

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Director
Gary Myers, Education Technology Director
Rex Weltz, Incoming Superintendent
Elizabeth Kaleva, District Counsel
Jane Shawn, HEA President

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:06 pm by Committee Chair, Libby Goldes.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

IV. REVIEW OF THE 04.06.2021 POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES

The committee reviewed minutes from the 04.06.2021 committee meeting.

V. PRESENTATION OF POLICIES FOR SECOND READING

A. Policy 5056: Vacation

Ms. Ridgway informed the committee there have been no changes to the policy since the committee's first reading. She reminded the committee this was a new policy addressing what happened to accrued, untaken vacation for employees not covered by a CBA. Ms. Kaleva added Montana law included a provision stating an individual could accrue vacation leave up to a certain amount. Beyond

that amount, the employee must either use the accrued leave or lose it. However, there was section in the law granting school boards with sole discretion to provide cash compensation in lieu of losing vacation time. Ms. Kaleva encouraged the board to make the policy broad enough to include administrators, special education administrators, principals, etc. Ms. Ridgway provided the committee with historical values of unused vacation for the past five years.

The committee agreed to revisit this policy – with revisions and additional language from Ms. Kaleva – at the next committee meeting. Upon approval by the committee, it will be presented to the board with a comparison to other AA districts and associated costs for payouts.

B. Policy 1027: Board Member Conflict of Interest

Ms. Ridgway presented the policy with amended language from the previous committee meeting along with a degree of separation chart for reference. Ms. Kaleva added the changes made to language were better reflective of the statute. She clarified if a trustee abstains from a vote, the vote counted as a “no” when a unanimous vote was required.

This policy will be sent to the full board for a second reading.

C. Policy 1035: Board Development and Self-Evaluation

Ms. Ridgway stated this policy had been amended to formalize a board evaluation process. It changes the intent from “may” to “will.”

This policy will be forwarded to the full board for a second reading.

D. Policy 1040: Board Member Expenses

Ms. Ridgway outlined the changes to this policy requested at the previous committee meeting. Ms. Kaleva added if a trustee had a receipt for a reasonable tip, the district would reimburse the trustee. Ms. Mickelson asked if the practice extended to all staff members or just trustees. Ms. Kaleva clarified this policy pertained to trustees; staff members needed to be addressed in a different policy.

The committee agreed to forward this policy to the full board for a second reading.

E. Policy 1055: Communication to and from the Board

Ms. Ridgway told the committee of one change requested in the previous committee meeting: “electronic mail” to “digital communications.” She confirmed the MCA reference listed was correct. Ms. Kaleva provided historical context for the committee by stating this policy was from a Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) template used to address any issue of staff members jumping the chain of command to individual board members and vice versa.

The committee agreed to forward this policy to the full board for a second reading.

F. Policy 1060: Committees

Ms. Kaleva advised the committee that all boards were required to have some form of committees meeting that must be noticed per open meeting laws. She added committee members participating remotely in meetings had the same rights as those attending in person. Ms. Ridgway told the committee that since the language was taken from state government language, clarification would be

made to modify “trustee” to “a member of the committee.” Ms. Kaleva added if a committee made recommendations to the board, it must be publicly noticed; administrative meetings read “may” be open to the public in Montana law.

Ms. Goldes asked how the policy applied to the Wellness Committee. Dr. Ream answered that committee was a citizen committee with no trustees serving as members. Ms. Kaleva added the distinguishing factor was whether the committee made recommendations to the Board; if so, committee meetings must be noticed.

Mr. McEwen inquired into the effect of this policy on the Health and Benefits Committee. Ms. Kaleva answered those meeting should be noticed.

Ms. Goldes asked who determined the chair of committees. Ms. Kaleva answered the committee typically determined their own chair.

Dr. Ream noted the lack of guidance on any requirements of meeting frequency on administrative meetings. Ms. Kaleva clarified if it was a regularly scheduled meeting, she recommended opening it to the public.

Mr. Muszkiewicz asked if the Health Benefits Committee meetings would need to be public meetings if no trustee sat on it. Ms. Kaleva replied they would not since no recommendations would be made to the Board. Ms. Collette added the formation of the health benefits plan required a trustee be on the committee; it was in the bylaws of the self-funded plan.

The committee and Ms. Kaleva walked through several instances and clarified when the policy would or would not apply before determining to forward the policy to the full board for a second reading.

VI. PRESENTATION OF POLICIES FOR TERMINATION

A. Policy 1904: Use of Transportation Funds During Periods of School Closure

Ms. Kaleva clarified this policy fell under the set of 1900 policies set to sunset in June 2020. She advised the committee to wait until June to let it sunset naturally rather than seeking board action to terminate the policy. Mr. Wertz cautioned against allowing any policies to sunset that the district wished to retain.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS

No further board comments were offered.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair, Ms. Goldes, adjourned the meeting at 1:05pm.