

Board of Trustees Meeting

Online

**Tuesday, May 18, 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 (absent, excused)

Janet Armstrong, Incoming Trustee

Student Reps:

Claire, Helena High

Mariah, Capital High

Dr Tyler Ream, Superintendent

Rex Weltz, Incoming Superintendent

Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager

Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent

Barb Ridgeway, Staff Administrator

Gary Meyers, IT

Many Guests of the Helena School District

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

Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order as a reconvening of the May 11 meeting that was recessed due to safety concern and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. **REVIEW OF AGENDA**

No changes.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz states that this is a continuation of the May 11 meeting. Action Items will be taken care of first. Public Comment will be next followed by a presentation on the Social/Emotional services provided to students. Reports will be last. Public Comment will be allowed on each Action Comment. Items not on the agenda will have public comment on the general section. Anyone wanting to comment can enter their name in the chat. Public comment will be limited to 3 minutes. He will give a 1-minute notification. Those that continue speaking past their time will be muted. He asks that everyone be patient and civil. He believes that everyone wants what’s best for kids even if they may disagree on what that is.

1. **NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Items for Action**

**1. Canvass of Election Results**

Janelle Mickelson speaks on the results. The election was held May 4. County election office provided tally sheets. All Board members received on May 11. These must be canvased and certified within 25 days of the election. Total ballots issued for the elementary district were 35,941. Total tabulated were 13,520 with a total voter turnout of 34.99%. High School total issued were 37,875. Total tabulated 14,062. 35.06% total turnout. Trustee election show Janet Armstrong and Terry Beaver received the most votes for the 2 vacant K-12 seats. Janet Armstrong received 6,728 votes at 31.16% of the votes and Terry Beaver received 6,442 at 29.84% of the votes. The elementary general fund mil levy proposition passed with a margin of 52.12%. The high school passed by a margin of 50.90%.

Katrina Chaney is the County Superintendent of Schools and she will administer the oath of office to incoming Trustee Janet Armstrong and Incumbent Terry Beaver.

Questions?

Trustee Sullivan says that she is grateful to the community for passing those. It is vital to what is done in the school district and she is happy that people take the time to educate themselves on the levies and vote for them.

**Motion:** Trustee McEwen makes a motion to canvas the votes and declare the results for the elementary district and accept the trustee vote.Trustee Hathhorn seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

**Motion:** Trustee McEwen makes a motion to canvas the votes and declare the results for the high school district.Trustee Hathhorn seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

**2. Oath of Office 2021 Elected Trustees**

County Superintendent of Schools Katrina Chaney thanks the whole Board on behalf of the county for all the volunteer time they have given to the school. She congratulates Terry Beaver and Janet Armstrong. She asks them both to raise their right hand and repeat the oath after her. The oath is administered. They also acknowledge outgoing Trustee Sarah Sullivan.

**3. Reorganization of the Board of Trustees**

At this point a chair and vice chair will be appointed. Trustee Goldes has run that process.

**Motion:** Trustee McKee makes a motion to retain Luke Muszkiewicz as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Trustee McEwen seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

**Motion:** Trustee McKee makes a motion to appoint Trustee Hathhorn as the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees. Trustee Beaver seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz says he is honored to continue to serve as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. He says it is the honor of a lifetime and also has been the challenge of a lifetime.

Janelle Mickelson reminds trustees that there are several documents to canvas and certify the election. They need to stop in her office before noon on Friday to sign the documents. Trustee Sullivan will need to sign on the canvas of the election.

**4. Appointment of Clerk**

**Motion:** Trustee Hathhorn makes a motion to appoint Janelle Mickelson as the Clerk of the Board of Trustees. Trustee McKee seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

**5. Consideration of High School General Fund Budget Amendment**

Janelle Mickelson says this is the final step to the budget amendment. It is primarily due to the tuition received from East Helena. Dollar amount of the budget is $407,576. It will free the money to use as appropriate. Public notice has already been provided and they have already proclaimed the need. After an approval it will go to the State Superintendent for acknowledgement.

**Motion:** Trustee McEwen makes a motion to approve the high school general fund budget amendment. Trustee McKee seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

**6. Award Workers’ Compensation Contract**

Since one of the proposals was submitted by MSGIA who is governed by MTSBA, and Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz serves as President-Elect of the MTSBA Board of Directors, he will abstain from any discussion or action on the recommendation tonight. He has no actual conflict of interest but would like to avoid a perceived conflict. Assistant Superintendent Josh McKay reads the recommendations of the contract. Members of the review teams were Josh McKay, Janelle Michelson, Stacy Collette, Angie Ford, and Brooke Mahoney. The current contract with Montana State Fund expires June 30, 2021. Deadline for proposal was April 12. Proposals were received from MSGIA, and Payne West Montana State Fund. They evaluated based on the following criteria: Net cost of coverage, experience, qualifications, references, loss control services and subjective fit. After consideration, it is recommended that the contract be awarded to Payne West Montana State Fund. Premium proposals for the fiscal year 21/22 from MSGIA were $278,341 and Payne West Montana State Fund $358,997. Helena school district needs to rely on stable rates over the term of the engagement. Looking at historic rates with MSGIA, they have been variable. Both were evaluated on risk, stability of rates across the network, and flexibility. Payne West Montana State Fund is stable. MSGIA requires a 3-year commitment without a commitment to stability. It is recommended that the contract be awarded to Payne West Montana State Fund.

Trustee Beaver states that there is an $80,000 differentiation between the two proposals. Every work comp company must conform to state statute in coverage and terms of liability and benefits. It seems like they are selecting based on other values. Payne West is capable of funding that but any company should be capable of funding. They don’t have to have the reserves at hand. They all have self-insurance beyond that to cover them. He doesn’t understand the rational in spending an additional $80,000 for the same product. Payne West can go back and renegotiate where MSGIA can’t, but in the past, they have not reached the threshold so has there been renegotiation in the past?

Josh McKay says that the prep document states that MSGIA requires a 3-year commitment without a 3-year commitment to rate stability. Payne West Montana State Fund is year to year.

In the past a carrier had a 3-year agreement but after a year they could renegotiate. Trustee Beaver wants to know if that’s ever been done?

Janelle Mickelson says that since she has been there, they have been with Payne West but have not renegotiated but the rate increase was stable so there was no need. There were years where it would go up or down $40,000 but not stay flat.

Josh McKay explains that in presentation MSGIA said that it would be a breach of contract to opt out after year one while it is year to year with Payne West. There were some calculations that were internally calculated and lower than the experience with them showed. They felt that it wasn’t as accurate as it could be and could lead to higher rates and premiums in the future. The MOD rate this time around was lower than when they were the carrier before. It is worrisome to believe on the rate stability.

Trustee McEwen asks when they came up with the criteria, did they have a way to weight that? Were some items weighted more in the criteria. The answer is yes. He asks what the highest weighted item. The answer is the cost of net coverage.

Stacy Collette says they focused a lot on the totality of the bid and totality of service as well as the relationship to the actual cost. The pricing was very different from what they had seen before and it made them question what they would see in the future. They were also concerned in their ability to back up a large-scale claim. Payne West Montana State Fund had better backing.

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

**Public Comment:**

**Shawn Bubb**, Montana School Board Association, Insurance Services Director for the Workers Compensation Program. He has worked for State Fund for 8-9 years prior. Helena School District was with MSGIA for 25 years before FY17. They currently insure 401 school districts in the state of Montana. MSGIA is regulated by the Department of Labor and they go through a financial analysis each year to determine if they are approved to do business. They had $22.4 million in outstanding claim reserves at last analysis. All 33 years of operation, they have been supported. State Fund is larger but their financial strength ratio is actually lower than MSGIA. Over the last 11 years, 8 have been without adjustment. The other 3 were low increases.

**Rody Holman,** Payne West Montana State Fund, District Contact. He thanks the committee for the deliberation they put into the recommendation. They took the contract 5 years ago. That was about $38,000 less than the MSGIA proposal from the year before. The district was needing safety training, etc. and they have helped with that and done it with a fair price. They have been able to maintain rates so the district can budget.

**Becky Bright, Underwriting Manager Montana State Fund.** There are a few key differences in the 2 companies. MSGIA is self-insured. State Fund have more checks and balances. Montana State Fund carries almost 9 times the minimum surplus required by the state. They can declare a dividend each year to members with good safety records.

**Board Comment:** Trustee McEwen thinks the staff have weighted the criteria and have come up with the best option. Trustee McKee wants to make sure she is understanding that the lower priced product comes with a 3-year contract and no guarantee of pricing. The higher price product has more flexibility. Janelle Mickelson says there are risks with MSGIA as far as the premiums go.

**Vote:** 4-1. Trustee Beaver opposes. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz abstains. Motion carries.

**7. Award Transportation Camera Surveillance RFP**

Thomas Cohn. The bus camera system lasts about 7 years and needs to be replaced. There were 4 bidders for this contract. There were Angel Trax, REI, Pro Vision, and Safety Vision. They had 3 points they needed bidders to hit. 1 was to meet the deadlines asked for. Only one was able to provide that. 2 was price. 3 was overall performance and customer service. The bids came out and the low bid was Angel Trax at $243,722. Safety Vision was $245, 670. Pro Vision was $298,277. REI was $277, 720. They broke the evaluation down with a committee. Out of a possible 500 points, Angel Trax scored 391. Pro Vision scored 406. REI scored 228. Safety Vision scored 480. So, the recommendation is to go with Safety Vision.

Trustee Beaver asks what new technological apparatice was not on the cameras for the last 7 years. Helena runs live cellular data live time. The technology that is in the new contract, is the same but the quality is far better. Trustee Beaver asks what the last contract cost and how long the contract is for. The answer is that there cannot be contract pricing. The last system was around $300,000.

Trustee McEwen asks if the price is per year. The answer is that is a one-time price. It should last 5-6 years. There is no year-to-year price.

**Motion:** Trustee Beaver makes a motion to approve the purchase of a new camera system through Safety Vision. Trustee McEwen seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

**B. Items for Consent**

**1. Consideration of a Resolution to Dispose of Personal Property- Five Qualitone Audiometers**

**2. Consideration of the 04.22.2021 Board of Trustees Special Meeting Minutes – Open Session**

**3. Consideration of the 04.22.2021 Board of Trustees Special Meeting Minutes – Closed Session**

**4. Consideration of the Personnel Actions**

**5. Consideration of the Warrants**

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

**Motion:** Trustee Hathhorn makes a motion to approve the items for consent. Trustee Armstrong seconds the motion.

**Public Comment:** None

**Board Comment:** None

**Vote:** 6-0. Motion carries

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

*This is the time for comment on public matters that are not on the agenda. Public matters do not include any pending legal matters, private personnel issues or private student issues. Please do not attempt to address such issues at this time or you will be ruled out of order. The Board cannot enter into a discussion during General Public Comment.*

Comments will stay in 3 minutes. People will comment in the order their name is entered in chat. Please state your name and relationship to the school district.

**Jamie Bright**

Thank you, Chairman Muszkiewicz and board of trustees, for allowing me 3 timed minutes of this meeting tonight.

I want to talk to you as a mother and as a concerned community member. Some of what I will say to you will be a harsh reality, but I want to talk to you with 100% grace and 100% truth. My observations show me there is a great reluctance on behalf of the board to follow the evolving science, and rethink the all day in school mask mandate. It's time for the board to reconsider its position. The evidence is there. The vaccines are there. The numbers are there. It's time. Sometimes the truth challenges us to make hard choices; but the truth now says its time for you to action to create a better learning environment for our children by removing the requirement that students wear masks in the classroom at all times. You are not following the science or the data with your continued mask mandate. Following actual data shows that masking children all day in school is harmful to their health and slows learning. Its time to step away from the status-quo, follow the evolving science, and do what is right for our children. I challenge you to be brave leaders.

I am not an “anti-masker”. I do believe there are appropriate times and settings where mask usage is prudent. I am also a researcher at heart and a student of science. I have bachelor degrees in biology and chemistry, and a minor in psychology. When I set out to educate myself on the pros and cons of full day mask usage, I attempted to draw a non-biased conclusion based on science, facts, and research driven data from the people most knowledgeable in this field. I looked at studies conducted by medically trained professionals and I gathered data from top-notch pediatric medical institutions. I specifically wanted to become more educated on the underlying science of full day use of face masks and better understanding of the pros and cons.

After hours of research, and compiling a detailed list of pros and cons, I have reached the conclusion that requiring full day mask usage in school aged children is more harmful than not. Through my research, I have learned that the real potential for harm caused by masks is so much greater now than the perceived risk of children becoming very ill from the COVID virus. I had originally planned to review with you my research developing the list of harms that full day masking is causing our children, but that list too long for my allotted 3 minutes of your time.

So I ask you to please consider a few: lack of social emotional connection, inability to see and read facial expressions, inability to communicate non-verbally, dermatological issues ranging from acne to lesions to bacterial infections, rebreathing of air intended to be expelled from the body, lack of adequate oxygenation needed for proper brain function, anxiety, inability to breath freely, letter and word annunciation issues, improper handling of masks causing more viral spread......I won’t go on, but I promise you, I could take up my entire 3 minute time allowance with a list of the ways masking our children is causing damage.

Requiring our children to wear masks all day is not necessary for preventing viral transmission, especially considering the other protective measures the district currently has in place. Medical prevention should cause less harm than the viral infection it is intended to protect against. Based on the list I developed in my research, the medical prevent of masking children all day is having the opposite effect. Please consider a model that will keep our children safe while following guidance issued by the CDC for masking in congested areas such as at a restaurant: Once the child is seated at their work station, distanced, and sometimes shielded by plexiglass, it should be allowable for the child to unmask and remove that obstacle to learning. When the child is in a congregate setting, such as a hallway, masking would be appropriate. I believe you can develop a model, based on science, that is both protective of our children while not requiring full day masking. I challenge you to be those brave leaders our children need right now.

Your primary responsibility as publicly elected school board trustees, is to consider the needs of children and to convert those needs into a vision, policies, and goals that will support students’ opportunities to learn and to foster their academic achievement. The number one job is meeting the needs of the students and ensuring that nothing will interfere with their rights to a public education and quality learning environments. Please immediately remove the full day masking requirement and develop an evidence-based plan more in-line with current disease counts, current guidelines, and developmental needs of the students. The most important pressing issue is to remove obstacles to learning. Full day masking is proven to be causing more harm socially, psychologically, medically, and academically. Do not wait another minute to end the full day masking in our schools and please get a plan in place immediately to address this issue. For our kids! They need you all to be brave leaders. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Reg Hageman**

He thanks the Board for their work in following the science. He would like to offer incentives for students to get vaccinated so they can get back to learning. Missoula School District has used incentives. If the school can be proactive now then they can go back to a more normal year next year.

**Tammy Stefanik**

Hello Chairman and Board Members, First, regarding the comment from a another individual before me in this meeting, it is illegal for the school district to use taxpayer dollars to incentivize vaccines. I am going to be direct. I speak for the handfuls of children who I have spoken to. Many are afraid to speak out because of retaliation. It is concerning the children you have been elected to ensure receive an equal and quality education have become intimidated to the point of not speaking up, their voices silenced by fear. The shaming many have witnessed and felt is real. On Tuesday, May 11th, you violated my rights to freely participate in the Helena School Board meeting because I was not covering my nose and mouth. Prior to the meeting, the District Human Resources Administrator approached me and offered me a mask. I declined. She didn't say anything else to me. I made eye contact with many trustees gathered at the front of the room. Approximately 5 minutes later, the meeting started and lasted 55 minutes with approximately 1/3 of the attendees were unmasked. During the 55 minutes of student awards, I noticed a Trustee pull his mask down and lean over to talk to a Student Representative. I also observed and have photos of Trustees who were unmasked (and not eating or drinking) prior to the start of the meeting. The fact that the meeting was discontinued just before public comment, when it was clearly not an issue for the first 55 minutes, demonstrates a flagrant contempt for and violation of our rights to free speech and assembly. Montana’s State Constitution further guarantees my right to attend this meeting without discrimination. Article Two, Section 4 reads: “Individuals have the right to dignity and may not be discriminated against based on civil or political rights on account of race, color, sex, culture, social origin or condition, or political or religious ideas.” We have a civil right to attend this meeting. When you closed the meeting based on attendees showing their faces, you discriminated against those for whom masking violates their religious or cultural beliefs. Likewise, our children have inalienable rights under Article Two, Section 3 of Montana’s Constitution, which states: All persons are born free and have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to a clean and healthful environment and the rights of pursuing life's basic necessities, enjoying and defending their lives and liberties, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and seeking their safety, health and happiness in all lawful ways. In enjoying these rights, all persons recognize corresponding responsibilities. For many parents, it is obvious masking is neither clean nor healthy, particularly for children. The rights of Helena school children are violated every single day by requiring them to wear a face covering in order to receive an education. Article Ten, Part Ten, Section reads: “It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.” I am not forcing you or others to show your face. Neither am I forcing you to get Vitamin D, eat more salad, get more exercise, or anything else that is healthier than all-day restriction of breathing. All I am asking is that children be able to choose freely whether or not to wear a mask. Thank you for your time.

**Courtney McAdams**

Good evening.  My name is Courtney McAdams and I am the mother of a freshman and 3rd grader in the district.  Thank you to the board and Chair Luke for the chance to gather tonight. I have 3 topics I want to ask the board to consider for the June 8th, 2021 Board meeting.

  The first topic is messaging to parents and educators:

* Last year it was late August when we found out about the hybrid model, which caused panic and scrambling to find coverage for working parents. It also built mistrust and frustration.  Many felt like a hostage in our own school district. With this school year rapidly ending, and much uncertainty still prevalent in the community, when is the board planning to release the fall plan to parents? When will we know that we are returning to a full day schedule, or whether masks will be optional or if vaccines will be forced on our children? Parents deserve to know the answers to these questions now so they can make plans or adjust their plans before school resumes in the fall.
* Many families left HSD1 last year for the predictability and security of a private school schedule and are not coming back to public school this fall.  Many site unhealthy mask mandates, concerns about achievement gaps and forced vaccines as a reason to stay in private school. In talking with current public-school moms, 5 more children were recently enrolled in a private school because moms fear their kids will be forced to wear a mask or be vaccinated.  None of my son’s friends who left public school last fall are returning for fall of 2021. This should not be happening!  Lincoln, E. Helena (voting tonight), St. Andrews and Helena Christian recently removed their mask mandate, all in our county. Will HSD 1 be the last hold out again?
* It should be disclosed now what the district masking and vaccination policy will be for the fall.  Trustee Goldes told door knockers during this last election cycle that parents will either be forced to choose the vaccine for their children or kids will continue to wear a mask in the fall. These types of statements from a board member breeds mistrust and anxiety in parents. And parents unquestionably need to know the district’s plan, whether the board has adopted such policies, and whether Trustee Goldes speaks for the board as a whole. The district needs a clear and transparent message to families now.  Parents deserve no less from their elected officials.
* Will our children finally return to a full 7 hours a day of instruction after over a year and half with a PT schedule?  Will middle and high schoolers finally return to 5 days per week without a shortened day? The attached phase 3 district plan calls for all schedules to return to normal.
* Parents need to hear the fall plans now from the superintendent and board to calm fears, stop rumors and get our enrollment numbers back up to avoid a budget shortfall.

The second topic is Optional Masks for Fall 2021: (Please see the attached OPI Fall recommendation)

* Please make masks an optional choice for our kids returning in the fall. School and the hospital are the only two places kids are forced to wear a mask now. After a summer of no masks, it will be cruel and unnecessary to force kids to once again have their breathing stifled by a mask.
* Teachers will be vaccinated and kids over 12 will have the choice to be vaccinated if they are high risk.  Infection risk is reduced by the vaccinations happening now.
* Since we removed masks outside and relaxed distancing, there have been no spikes in cases in our schools. Over the last 2 weeks, HSD had only 14 new cases.  Single digit new case numbers have been the norm since returning to school 5 days per week for elementary and 4 days per week for middle and high school.
* With no mask mandate in our state and county and an infection positivity rate below 5%, it is time to free our kids from dirty masks, difficult communication and a lack of connection caused by covered faces.  With HB501 written into law, the schools can no longer mandate a mask in buildings paid for by taxpayers’ dollars. The MT university system is also canceling mask mandates now. HSD has no legal leg to stand on, while our children’s freedom to choose to mask is denied.
* I observed in a classroom 2 weeks ago and was shocked to see for myself, how difficult it is to hear the teacher and other kids in the classroom. The kids can’t hear each other across the room. This is not a positive environment to learn in.  The engagement level is frustrating and low due to the masks. Many of the kids did not talk or raise their hands.

The third topic is Normalizing our school Community: (Please see the attached HSD 1 Phase 3 document)

* Schools are a huge part of our Helena community. We saw this in greater focus when schools shut down last March.
* Let parent volunteers back in the classrooms this fall. Elementary Teacher need help.  It was eye opening to see how much help the kids needed in the elementary class I visited.
* Return clubs back to normal.  Return sports, debate, band, choir, theater, and all other activities back to normal.  Older kids need to make connections again and be a part of more than just classes. All kids need social interaction: our younger kids need to learn how to work and play together, our older kids need support that only comes from normal, unmasked social interaction. With Covid case numbers plummeting and vaccines readily available, it is time to allow kids to socialize freely with each other.

Please present a clear vision for the fall and a Covid stage update at the June 8th board meeting, in conjunction with the new superintendent starting. Until we are in Stage 3 or back to normal, there should be a Covid update on each board agenda.  The Covid updates from the board and our superintendent have been sparse and irregular.  Our parents, students and community deserve better.

Tax paying parents have a right to know what the fall looks like and make autonomous decisions for their children. A stated optional mask and vaccine policy, a full school day, a return to rigorous all in person instructional day, a return to normal activities and school community should all be a part of the plan presented to parents in June.  Communication and transparency were severely lacking this last year from the board and superintendent.  We are asking that this trend be reversed and start fresh with the fall 2021 school year fully disclosed to parents and educators in advance.

  Thank you for your consideration.

**Jane Shawn**

President of the Helena Education Association. She represents over 700 teachers and paras. Teachers and paras are in support of continuing masking through the end of the year. They are in support of following CDC guidance.

**Robyn Mohs**

She is a parent in the district and she has grown up in Helena. She asks that the mask policy be changed tonight. If it cannot be changed tonight, she asks for a special meeting to discuss the mask policy. Vaccine manufactures cannot be held liable for injuries or death related to vaccines. Vaccine does not need to be incentivized or coerced. The families should be able to make their own decisions. That is not the school districts place.

**Howard DesRosier**

He has 2 children in the district. State Statute says that public schools are to give quality education to every student but no one believes that the students have gotten that this last year. He has asked for test results in comparison to other years. He has seen none. The children are not part of the population that are being lost to this virus. Montana has lost 0 under 18. The ball was dropped. The big concern was for teachers and their health. Now, schools and hospitals are the own places left requiring a mask. Teachers have the ability to get vaccinated and should be by now. So, who is looking out for the kids?

**Nicole Holycross**

She has 2 children in the district. She feels it is time that masks be optional. Her family was pro mask at the beginning but now sees that they are detrimental to her children’s health.

**Jake Larson**

He is a citizen of Helena and a veteran who fought for our freedoms. He has sent a petition that supports optional masking. Freedom of choice is a staple of America. Petition attached.

RECESS

1. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**A. Policies for First Reading/Approval** Barb Ridgeway

**1. Policy 1027: Board Member Conflict of Interest** They were looking to bring some clarity to 4th degree by blood and 2nd degree by marriage. There is a chart included in the Board member’s packet. There is a change in line 26-38 which they are striking and adding the last bullet on line 29 that describes exceptions to the policy as stated. The prohibition on voting on an issue related to conflict in hiring does not apply to substitute teachers, the renewal of a staff members contract, and also if there is an addition that requires 15 days of written notice and publication in the paper if they will be discussing the hiring of a conflict to a Board member. All other trustees must be available to vote in this situation.

**2. Policy 1035: Board Development and Self-Evaluation** Minor changes. Mostly just clean up stating new trustees in the past were given a print copy of policies. Those are now just found on the district website. The other change will conduct an annual self-evaluation. “Will” replaces “may”.

**3. Policy 1040: Board Member Expenses** Line 17 is clarified to change telephone services to a more updated communication services.

**4. Policy 1055: Communication to and from the Board** More contemporary language. Line 21 would add digital communication.

**5. Policy 1060: Committees** Lines 15 & 16 are added to clarify that a trustee participating in a remote setting has the same rights and responsibilities as in person trustees.

**B. Overview Update: Social-Emotional Support and Services**

Dr Tyler Ream and Josh McKey share a power point. 10 years ago, Dr Ream was visiting a school and heard a discussion with the principal. They were striving to be a 2-sided environment. He talked about above ground and below ground structures. He spoke about an educational Disneyland. They had a framework that tried to really engage students with the beginning of a question. He talked about when someone goes to Disneyland, people see what they want them to see. But from a school standpoint, there are structures behind the scenes that the staff know about but students are not necessarily aware. It is a tiered system that is interdependent with student learning. Some are for all students and some are very learner specific. Tier 1 is Universal, Tier 2 is Targeted and Tier 3 is Intensive. One example is Helena High School using the MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support).

Tier 1 supports and services are available to all students. There are many programs in each tier. Tier 1 programs of focus include welcome activities, mental health screeners, Montana Behavioral Initiative, PAX Good Behavior Game, Second Step, Signs of Suicide and Yam which is Youth Aware of Mental Health. PAX started out as a grant. It has grown through almost all the Helena elementary schools. It’s a great way to regulate without singling out. It has a reward system and they get to play games as a reward.

Tier 2 programs of focus include Student Assistance Programs, Regular check-in and outs, Check and Connect Program, mentor programs, and targeted social skills groups.

Tier 3 programs of focus include targeted social skills sessions, comprehensive school and community treatment, school based out-patient therapy, applied suicide and intervention skills training, question-persuade-respond, and day treatment programs. They partner with Shodair, AWARE and Intermountain. They partner to create a plan for each individual child involved. It also involves family therapy.

The tier model is important any given year but it has been a bit different during the pandemic. A design team worked on what it would look like through the pandemic. They implemented district wide screeners at all levels. They looked at all age groups and genders and any other way they could break down and assess. The pandemic is/was a traumatic event for everyone but it will manifest differently in each individual.

Trustee Comment:

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz thanks them for the presentation and says he knows how important this topic is. Its important to the community.

Trustee McKee thanks them both for the presentation as well. She is very impressed with all the things that go on in the schools and she knows if it weren’t there it would be missed.

Trustee Hathhorn asks if the hardest part is the Tier 1? She is glad that Tier 1 is proactive and can help kids before they get to Tier 2 or 3. Is there an overarching district program or person that is assigned to the social/emotional and consistency and data collection to see if the programs are working? Will all programs like PAX be district wide? A: PAX is close but not in all schools yet. There is a Performance Matters data warehouse now.

Trustee McEwen remembers the first Board meeting he went to at Smith School and they talked about dealing with behavior vs teaching. Can you measure results? Are they improving children’s learning over a week or month or year? A: Yes. If students are more engaged, they will have less behavior and will learn more. The district has been successful at implementing what students need. If a child isn’t learning, they need to figure out why and fix it. They work to get teachers what they need in the form of trainings to get the kids what they need.

Trustee Armstrong thinks there is a bit of a disconnect but is not necessarily separate from the pandemic. If there was a point of contact, could they tweak things as they are transitioning from the pandemic and can it be communicated to the community so they know their concerns are being heard. Dr Ream hopes new superintendent Rex Weltz will be able to have that communication as they transition out of the pandemic.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz likes the ideas of the screeners. He thinks they are powerful. He loves hearing that they are continuing to tweak and get better. He asks what the suicide prevention strategy is and how they measure it. He knows its hard to talk about and important to be respectful. Is there a way to see if the work they are doing is preventing? A: Its hard to measure in Tier 1 more so than 3. Tier 3 is more intentional. There are programs at each level and tier. But when students are in crisis, you always reflect on if its enough. They are doing everything they can or know at this time. They work with targeted groups to build resiliency. They have invested in programs and brought in partners. The addition of the screeners helps to find the internalizers. They are always looking for more opportunities to do more.

**C. Reports**

**1. Policy Committee Report**

No report

**2. Teaching & Learning Committee Report**

No report

**3. Health Benefits Committee Report**

Trustee McEwen says the committee met a few weeks prior and discussed premium changes. They looked at trends in the healthcare marketplace. The meeting was primarily informational. Next meeting, they will formalize recommendations on any premium changes for the next plan year and they will come to the Board.

**4. Montana School Boards Association Report**

Session is over. Governor Gianforte is still signing bills. In terms of education funding, it was a solid session. HB15 secured inflationary increases at 1.5% and 2.5% over the next 2 years. HB46 applies the inflationary increases to special education funding. This was just signed. HB671 says that gap funding to continue the funding for the program was running out so this continues the funding. The May 5 MTSBA post sent out shows a recap to the Board members.

**5. Helena Education Association Report**

Jane Shawn gives the report. She gives congratulations to Katie Wright from Smith Elementary School who is the Montana state finalist for the National Educational Association Award for Teaching Excellence. Congratulations to Jake Warner from Capital High who is the finalist for the 20/21 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science teaching in the math competition. They will be electing the educator and para educator of the year this week. There were 52 nominations for 24 educators. There were 38 nominations for 19 para educators. It will get a $500 reward for the winner’s school. They will be celebrating 11 retiring educators at the end of May.

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

Claire says that Spring meant testing. There was a lot of AP testing but that is complete. Scores will come back in July. Juniors took ACT. Helena High scores have improved since 2019. The Vigilante reverse parade was a huge success and the community supported the event. She thanks everyone who came to the Glacier College exhibit at the airport. She thanks the Board for guiding her through the year and she has learned things she can take with her going forward.

Mariah says 10% of the recipients of the Montana University System Honor Scholarship are Capital High Seniors. Of these students, the minimum ACT score was 28 and the minimum GPA was 3.8. They are focusing on students who can reach proficiency to be able to pass their classes. The greenhouse hosted an outdoor plant sale. They had a lot of participation. They have selected 4 speakers to speak on graduation day. She thanks the Board for their support and increased her interest in a career in education.

**7. Facilities Report (added)**

Trustee Beaver says they discussed moving central administration from May Butler to Lincoln School. This would put all administrative staff to one building. It would reduce cost from an inadequate building. May Butler may be sold or leased later. Meeting will continue the 1st Monday of each month. Trustee McEwen asks when the move will take place? A: Rex Weltz says the expected date would be the first of August.

1. **SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Dr Ream shares a PowerPoint. He highlights the Celebration of Excellence. They will do it at Memorial Park and it will be broken down by last name. Retirement celebration will be at Bryant School outdoors. Graduation plans are moving forward as previously reported. They will be held at Nelson Stadium at Carroll College.

1. **BOARD COMMENTS**

Trustee McEwen welcomes Janet Armstrong and says good bye to Sarah Sullivan. He also thanks Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz for his work and congratulates him on being elected chair again.

Trustee Hathhorn extends a thanks to all the public comment over the last few meetings. She thanks those specially that were wearing masks at the last meeting and were not able to comment. She also wants to thank the entire educating staff for the hard work through the whole year. She says it has been successful but not easy. She agrees with the move to not change policies just yet. She thinks its in best interest to keep them in place through the end of the year. She wants to give families time to decide on the vaccination. She looks forward to discussions on the plans for next year and she invites the public to speak.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz shares that Claire was named one of two National Presidential Scholars in Montana. Claire says that her success is because of the Helena school district.

No further comments.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully Submitted,

Luke Muszkiewicz, Chair

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Gretchen George, Recording Secretary Date