



Superintendent
Rex Weltz
324-2001

Business Manager
Janelle Mickelson
324-2040

Board of Trustees Meeting

Capital High School
100 Valley Dr., Helena, MT 59601
And on TEAMS

Tuesday, November 9th, 2021
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee
Terry Beaver, Trustee
Elizabeth “Libby” Goldes, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Jennifer McKee, Trustee
Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative
Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Brian Cummings, Assistant Superintendent
Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Gary Myers, Technology Administrator
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Administrator
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Tim McMahon, Activities Director

Many guests of the Helena Community

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Muszkiewicz commented. In the past three days we have suffered the tragic loss of a former student and a current student. Please join me for a brief moment of silence.

II. REVIEW AGENDA

No changes to the agenda were made.

III. STUDENT RECOGNITIONS

Twenty-two students represented Capital High and Helena High at the highest level at the All-State Music Festival in band, choir, and orchestra. Mr. Zach Harris, Director of Orchestras and Modern Band for Capital and Helena High Schools, introduced the students.

- A. Meika Arenseyer attends Capital High School, participates in band, and plays the trombone.
- B. Christian Zehr attends Capital High School, participates in band, and plays the French horn.
- C. Gabe Beckman attends Capital High School and participates in choir as a Bass 1.
- D. Carlin Onstad attends Capital High School and participates in choir as a Tenor 2.
- E. Lindsay Abelin attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the viola.
- F. Keiran Boyle attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the violin.
- G. Hollis Elliott attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the cello.
- H. Maren Elliott attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the violin.
- I. Braelyn Germaine attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the viola.
- J. Makenzie Grotbo attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the violin.
- K. Jenalyn Slead attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the violin.
- L. Rebecca Smillie attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the violin.
- M. Charles Snellman attends Capital High School, participates in orchestra, and plays the cello.
- N. Christopher Kazmierowski attends Helena High School, participates in band, and plays the clarinet.
- O. Annika Nehring attends Helena High School, participates in band, and plays the oboe.
- P. Clare Strode attends Helena High School, participates in band, and plays the clarinet.
- Q. Lyla Ackerman attends Helena High School and participates in choir as an Alto 1.
- R. David Luby attends Helena High School and participates in choir as a Bass 2.
- S. Ashley Nelson attends Helena High School and participates in choir as an Alto 2.
- T. Alexa Randall attends Helena High School and participates in choir as an Alto 2.
- U. Chloe Roberts attends Helena High School and participates in choir as a Soprano 1.
- V. Haily Tolman attends Helena High School and participates in choir as a Soprano 1.

Mr. Muszkiewicz gave the opportunity for the students that were present in person to come to the podium, introduce themselves, and what their favorite part of All-State was.

Clare Strode commented. I was the second clarinet in the orchestra, and that was my third year at All-State, and if it weren't for COVID it would have been my fourth. I want to thank my private clarinet

teacher, Jennifer Scogley, my parents, as well as Mr. Hollow. They have all been really supportive throughout this whole process. In the past I have played with large bands like the All-State band but playing with the orchestra was a really unique experience because I was one of only two clarinets in the entire orchestra, and it was a very big honor, and Anika who is on the oboe, was the first oboe in the orchestra.

Rebecca Smillie commented. I am a senior violinist and I really enjoyed going to All-State. I would like to thank my parents, my private teacher Mrs. Elliot, Mr. Harris, as well as everyone who made All-State happen this year. It was a great opportunity to get to learn from the guest conductor Dr. Marinescu, as well as the violin professor from the University of Montana, Dr. Baldrige. I really loved going to All-State, thank you.

Christian Zehr commented. This was my fourth year going to All-State, and I was on second horn. I would like to thank Mr. Harris and Mr. Zehr. One thing that was really awesome for me was playing with a full section of French horns because I have never had that experience before.

Christopher Kazmierowski commented. I played third clarinet in the All-State band this year. I really wanted to thank everybody that has kept encouraging me to play my instrument since sixth grade. I want to thank Mr. Nevinski at C.R., Mr. Zehr here at Capital, and Mr. Hollow at Helena High for encouraging me to keep playing my instrument and pursuing musical opportunities. I'm very excited and glad that I was able to attend All-State this year.

Lindsay Abelin commented. I played viola in the All-State orchestra this year. It was a really good time. We got to spend more time with other towns, but we also got to be together as a group, and we haven't really had that since COVID started. Even though it was eight, twelve-hour days all together, we all got to be together and that was a really great experience for us. I almost didn't take an audition, and then I decided I should do it. I think that was my favorite part-of getting it over with and realizing that I would probably be just fine because we are all doing this together and everybody is there to be musicians.

Mr. Muszkiewicz commented. Students, thank you very much for sharing those words with us. We are so proud of you and thank you very much for sharing this accomplishment with us, and we can't wait to see what you continue to do in the future. Mr. Harris, thank you for your dedication and advocacy for these students and getting them up here and recognized. Please extend our thanks to your colleagues, I know it is a huge team effort. One of the things I love is when we have students from both of our high schools working together on a team and helping each other and that is always neat to see. Thank you very much.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Rex Weltz began his Superintendent Report by thanking Board Chair Muszkiewicz for the moment of silence and the recognition. Mr. Weltz also thanked Mr. Harris for his work with the students.

Mr. Weltz commented. We had a work session here at Capital High and Brett, Walt, and Kathy did an outstanding job of presenting and I would like to thank them all. It was inspiring and I am proud of the work that they are doing. Last week I spent the day with Lisa Cordingley, Executive Director of the

Helena Education Foundation. We toured the district and handed out Spark Grants and Let's Talk About Great Teachers Awards. I attended a site visit at Smith Elementary and met with the Principal, Ms. Simpson. I also had a site visit at C.R. Anderson and met with Dave Thennis, Sol, and Jilyn. I attended a site visit to our transportation department. I wanted to make sure we recognized the work that they are doing, because they are working extremely hard to cover shifts and routes. I had a great experience here at Capital with Mr. Jim Weber. Mr. Weber helped sponsor and honor Vietnam Veteran John Quintrell. Through Big Hearts Under the Big Sky, Mr. Weber's students were able to listen to three Vietnam Veterans and hear how they served our country. I appreciate Jim and Brett and their work with Big Hearts Under the Big Sky. I think it is important to recognize that November is Military Family Month and Veteran's Day is this month as well.

Mr. Weltz continued with his report. SACC has a birthday this month and they will be celebrating the Lights on After School event at Broadwater on November 11th from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. SACC asked if you can not attend the event, please drive by and honk to show your support. They are an important piece of our community.

Mr. Weltz continued his report by commenting on new business. With approval from CDC, vaccinations are on the way for children ages 5 to 11. We have partnered with Lewis and Clark Public Health, St. Peter's Health, and other medical providers along with our school nurses and East Helena. We are partnering up to have vaccination clinics. On Saturday, November 20th we will be at Bryant from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This is family choice, and we are simply providing the opportunity for those that wish to do that.

Mr. Weltz commented regarding transportation. The transportation update, schedules and routes will take place this Monday. We have talked a lot about it, and I have tried to message as much as we possibly could, so we are not surprising families. Correspondence came out Friday regarding the routes, and that begins this Monday. We had several families reach out to us and say that this just isn't going to work, and we have been working with those families to see what we can do to make it work, because it is that important. Also, around transportation, there has been a new technology implemented. It is a bus pass and proximity reader for K through 12. As a student gets onto a bus and swipes their pass, it checks the student in, and parents can have the app that lets them know their student entered the bus, and that the bus is in motion. They can then track their students and the bus throughout the district. As I spoke with transportation there are issues right now, as we expected. We are working out issues with lost cards. It doesn't mean the student can not get onto the bus if they don't have it. Most drivers recognize the students, and they can enter them into the system as they come through. This is a great tool for transportation and our families.

Superintendent Weltz commented regarding curriculum and instruction. Our instructional coaches throughout the district are making great strides with the instructional framework. We also had grade level meetings across the district. I would like to announce that December 6th is our live date for our family and staff survey, to let us know what is working and what is not, so that we can make adjustments and move forward. I want to know where we are at with our families, staff, and students. There are still tables available for Great Conversations through the Helena Education Foundation. Parent teacher conferences are in November, and I look forward to parents having the opportunity to visit our schools that have not had that opportunity yet.

Mr. Weltz commented regarding the HMS reflector initiative. Helena Middle School and Ms. Rowling came up with the initiative that they are going to place reflective tape on students' backpacks so that they are more visible. I know this is a short-term solution, and lighting and crosswalks are a bigger discussion that we are having right now with the city. As we get into daylight savings time with the darker mornings and evenings, it is important that we try to illuminate our kids as much as possible for safety. If it gains traction, we will carry it over to other schools as well.

Superintendent Weltz concluded his Superintendent Report with a summary of his outreach and meetings in the community the past few weeks. Mr. Weltz has met with HEF, AA Superintendents, MQEC, HEA, Teacher Advisory, Parent Advisory, Lewis and Clark Board of Health, his Cabinet for Pre-Evaluation meetings, as well as meeting with several media outlets.

Mr. Muszkiewicz commented. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Mr. Cohn and his team who have been working very hard. I think the district has done a good job communicating that with parents and our community around why we need to make those sacrifices and everything we are trying to do to remedy that situation. I very much appreciate that. I am very thankful for the opportunity for our students ages 5 to 11 to receive a vaccine if their families choose to do so. I appreciate the cooperation with East Helena Public Schools and Lewis and Clark Public Health on offering our parents another option for that opportunity. We have been through a really difficult time, and at one point our hospital was at capacity, and it is good to see those hospitalization numbers come down. Though they are still high, it is good to see our daily new case rates come down. Superintendent Weltz, what are we thinking in terms of our K-8 mask mandate? How are we going to approach that as we go forward with our case count going down as well as in a few months with the opportunity to having everyone fully vaccinated.

Mr. Weltz replied. This is on our priority list and our radar, and something that we are having conversations about. It is my desire and my philosophy that we are not going to be in masks for forever, so we know that there is going to be some sort of exodus but when does that take place? Now that we are understanding that vaccinations are available, and we see the transmission rates start to drop, I think it is time to start reexamining what that looks like. If vaccinations come out November 20th through mid-December, and then we get through the holidays, it pushes us to the first week in January. Then we start looking at what our transmission rates are, and working heavily with St. Peter's Health, and observing what the hospital looks like. At that point we can start to make decisions around where our community is at. I don't want to ever think we are going to leave them on forever. I am thankful for our community; and I am thankful for our parents helping us keep students in school five days a week. Sometime after winter break, we can reexamine. I will not go on record and say it is going to be a certain date, because we do not know what that date looks like as we go into the future. I also want to mention that Ms. Ridgway and our school nurses inspire me every day with the work that they are doing. Rapid testing will now be available for our staff's immediate family in their household four days a week, as long as we are able to staff for that.

Board Chair Muszkiewicz commented. I really appreciate you reminding us of what this is all about. It is about keeping our schools open and giving students the opportunity to attend school full time with a regular schedule. It is a monumental effort and I appreciate how hard you, your team, and each staff member are working to make sure the schools are open. Thank you.

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Dennison Rivera is the chairman of the Montana Young Republicans. Mr. Rivera commented. The argument commonly made is that we must think about everyone and work towards a greater good. However, we learn that there is no one size fits all option in life. The greater good consistently neglects and sacrifices the few. History shows us great atrocities have been committed against the vulnerable in the guise of security and welfare. When you approach any situation, even in extreme cases such as a global pandemic, when the majority of the general public is prioritized over one's individual liberty, it leads to mob rule and tyranny. Especially if the few lack the power to challenge said authorities or mandates. And who are those few who lack that power to challenge a tyranny and who can not defend their liberty? Our children. That is why it is up to us to stand up and speak on their behalf to ensure children's rights are not infringed. With that said, I am here today to ask this board to make masks optional for children in school. It has been proven that wearing masks is not one hundred percent effective. According to a Danish study in 2020, masks provide very little protection, if any. The CDC recommends that people not touch their masks when wearing them, to sanitize their hands before removing them, and to immediately wash their hands after removing them. No one does this. The Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report claims that 71% of patients reported always using cloth masks or other types of masks. This proves that although people can wear a mask all day, they can still catch the virus. Being involved in politics and giving public testimonies such as these give me the exclusive experience of how insincere leaders can be. I have personally witnessed Democratic Legislators, Democratic Commissioners, Superintendents, and other said authorities have their mask on for the cameras and take them off to engage the public. You tell me if the point of the mask is for the good of public health or for theatrics. I would say it is the latter. I was here last weekend judging a speech and debate tournament and saw participants struggling to perform their speeches while they were wearing masks. How much more are younger children going to struggle to breathe, communicate, and perform tasks while wearing masks? We need to use common sense and teach our children that wearing masks is not the social norm. I would like to remind you that requiring K through 12 to wear masks because of vaccination rates will put you in legal trouble. You are discriminating based on vaccinations which is illegal thanks to HB 702. I would push parents to sue on that premise. If masks are optional for you, then it should be optional for children. It is time to do your duty. Make things right and stop obligating children to wear masks. Thank you.

Amanda Osborne is a mother of three children in the district. Ms. Osborne commented. I'm going to start by saying if the goal is to keep kids in school, that is a very low bar, and I hope that is not your goal for this year. In terms of academic goals, I strive for excellence, and not just to keep schools open. I want to urge the board to consider amending policy 1905 to make masks optional in our schools at all grade levels, and I would like to see that as an action item on the agenda at the next board meeting so that it can be instituted in January of 2022. I went to the August school board meeting and listened to hours of public comment, and then I listened to your arguments to mask K through 8. In the spirit of consistency for the arguments that you made to institute that policy, and in light of the fact that kids all the way down to age 5 can access a vaccine or soon will be able to, I think it is time to revisit the policy and let masks be optional at all grade levels. I already presented the data from the CDC which tells us that COVID-19 poses very little risk of serious illness to our kids and statistically zero risk of death. I promise you that nobody cares about my kids more than I do, and I have three of them. They are not at

risk from this disease, they are safe, and they need to know they are safe. So let me offer to you a really simple way to look at this. How about you do a really simple risk benefit analysis. Are the risks of masking K through 8 too high, or are the benefits too low? So, the risk of sending my thirteen-year-old to school faceless to interact all day with other faceless humans for the last eighteen months is presumably psychological. The risk would also be some academic stagnation and some problematic situations in the classroom. That is hard to measure. The benefits are really easy to measure because if your masking policy for K through 8 is helpful and is reducing COVID transmission, then we would see differences in transmission rates among, for example, C. R. Anderson Middle School and Capital High School. If you look at the website for the school district you will see there is statistically no difference in confirmed COVID positive cases, so I urge you to look at that data. If you don't look at that data, or if you refuse to look at that data, all you are proving to me is this masking is cosmetic theater and it is a political security blanket for the board and for the district. That is not fair to the kids. Parents across the country have been advocating for having a voice to make decisions that are individualized to their own kids. Optional masking, once the vaccine is available for all children, supports that for our Helena families.

Alyssa Townsend has children in the school district. Ms. Townsend commented. Superintendent Weltz, thank you so much for your detailed messages every week. I feel like they have been very helpful in keeping parents informed. For the Superintendent and the Trustees, I want to thank you for continuing the mask mandate for our kids and keeping them safe, especially during this time of high transmission. I know you are looking at what the options are when it is less than high transmission, but that is where we are at right now, so thank you for continuing this. My child was homeschooled last year with her grandparents, it was not easy, and we all suffered. She is back now at Helena Middle School this year and I wanted to say that I was really impressed with Principal Cal Boyle. He was really welcoming to our family and got her right back into classes. I also attended a PTSO meeting, received an overview, and I was left with a genuine reassurance that he is keeping the highest security of our children in mind. Thank you very much.

Jennifer Stacy is a resident here in Lewis and Clark County. Ms. Stacy commented. I am a registered nurse, for both pediatric and adult critical care. I hold a master's degree in Nursing, a Doctorate in Oriental Medicine, and I have worked in clinical research for 22 years. For the past 18 months I have worked in clinical research dedicated to COVID vaccines. I am an Associate Director of Clinical Research for one of the ten largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, and I manage a team of 95 people. I am here to ask you, please do mandate vaccines for our children. As a researcher I am dedicated to evidence-based medicine, stringent statistical analysis, and the Nuremberg code. This code is the underlying document supporting good clinical practice, and basically supporting the code of Federal regulation surrounding clinical research. It is the reason the U.S. has been the gold standard in drug development. The Nuremberg code also seeks to protect vulnerable populations. Children, pregnant women, and prisoners among others. It commands that we act out of an abundance of caution and a preponderance of data to protect those vulnerable populations. I'm here to tell you we do not have that preponderance of data right now to give these vaccines to these children. We haven't had the time; it has been less than a year. Typically, any kind of vaccine is going to take five to seven years to develop. We haven't had the required data safety management boards overseeing these clinical trials. This is not the first time in our history that medicine and politics have been at a crossroads. In the early sixties there was a fabulous woman named Dr. Frances Kelsey who was working with the FDA. At that time there was tremendous pressure on Dr. Kelsey to approve a drug. She said, "I just don't think I have enough

data; I don't know that this is safe." It was going to administered to pregnant women, a vulnerable population in the early sixties. My Mom was pregnant with me. My Mom had terrible morning sickness and she would have been given thalidomide. Thalidomide at the time was being used all around the world, and everybody thought it was safe. A few years later the data came in, and there were horrific effects. Children were born without limbs, and I could have very well been one of those kids. We do not have enough safety data, and I ask you on behalf of our kids, stand up, think this through, and be a Dr. Frances Kelsey. Thank you.

Robin Mohs is a parent of four children, with one in the Helena School District. Ms. Mohs commented. I don't have much contact with the preschool though eight grade families these days, but I asked a couple people just today if they were able to speak with the school Board what they would say. One conversation went right to get the masks off the kids and let them just be kids. Kids are not your shields. We talked about masks needing to be a choice. We also wondered if the plexiglass is still in place. When I asked why parents aren't speaking up, my friend said what is the point because the Board does not listen to us. I asked her, what would you say to the school Board? She said she is concerned about so much vaccine push and coercion. I do not believe we need shot clinics at school property. Based on what you just heard from the gal before me, you are playing an unsafe role in that. I ask you to cancel it immediately. Another family I spoke to mentioned masks and that they have seen plenty of research that the masks do not work and that they cause harm both relationally and physically. Besides, why quarantine kids in a classroom when somebody got COVID if they are wearing masks? Maybe it is time to poll the families and give them an opportunity to talk about how concerned or not concerned they are about the virus relating to their kids, and how they feel about the mask policy being mandated or if it should be optional, and other COVID concerns. Somehow you need to let the parents know you will listen to them unless that is not your plan as a school board member or Superintendent. I want to believe you are here for the parents and the kids, and that you will listen to them and that you are not here to do the bidding of special interest groups and those sending money into our schools. Last month I requested a special school board meeting where everything COVID could be put on the table. It's been a month. The last time I asked a school board for a special meeting, they did it. Are you listening to the families and to me? The benefit of having a special meeting just for COVID is that parents might actually be able to come. They can't sit here for three hours and listen to everything. They have kids to feed, homework to do, and baths to give. I would like to see a special school board meeting where everything COVID is laid out on the table and that should be done sooner than next month since this is the second time I have asked. I'm pretty sure in the last 18 months there have been other requests for the same thing. Thank you.

Courtney McAdams is a parent of two children in the district. Ms. McAdams commented. My request is that the board take a vote on amending Policy 1905 at the December board meeting to make masks optional for K through 8 children when they return on January 03. I would also like the Board to take a vote on allowing parents back into the school buildings for volunteering and parent/teacher interactions. It has been way too long that we have been locked out of our schools, classrooms, and interactions with our teachers. I have a fourth grader who desperately wants school to go back to normal, to not wear a mask, to be able to sit with the friends that he chooses and not at a seating chart and see people's faces. It has been too long. My high schooler is enjoying all these options at school. It is not right for our little kids to continue to cover their faces, muffle their voices, and restrict their smiles. In August the Board voted to open our high schools with no masks because we had close to a 40% vaccine rate, and many kids had natural immunity from prior infections. This decision was not based on community

transmission rate, the hospital situation, or CDC community scores that you are now using to mask our K through 8 students. The vaccine is now available for ages 5-18, by January 3rd they can be fully vaccinated. You cannot continue to discriminate against our younger kids with the vaccine being available and have different standards for high school kids. House bill 702 does not allow for this. Here is the data from our schools. Our school transmission rates do not reflect what is happening in our community at large. In our two high schools we have had 153 cases since August with 2,469 high school kids enrolled. This is a 6.1 percent rate of infection. We had 359 cases in our 5,198 K through 8 kids. This is a 6.9 percent rate of infection with those kids wearing a mask. East Helena in our very own community opened and remains masks optional since August. They have 71 kids that had COVID out of 1,750 total students. They had a 4 percent infection rate with masks optional. I encourage the school board to adjust your policy to reflect the new vaccine availability and the low case numbers in our schools. Give our kids their freedom back to breathe fresh air. I don't know if any of you listened to our Smith teacher, Katy Wright's MPR story on how our kids feel about masks. There are some really interesting comments in there and Katie said at the end of the interview that she was shocked to hear how the kids felt. This is teaching our kids to suppress their feelings and discomforts, and this is not healthy for them mentally. I am very concerned, as many parents are, that the school board continues to take a polarizing stand on masking our kids. This poster that I have says that your rights end at the tip of your nose. This was posted by a school board member on her Facebook page, with her school board logo on it. This is very polarizing and not helpful to where our community is at the moment. It was eventually taken down due to the outrage. Our children's voices matter very much. We are dealing with our kids and their issues with masking every single day. Our rights do not end at the tip of our nose and neither do our children's. Thank you for listening.

Chad Larson is a parent of two children in the school district. Mr. Larson commented. I have two kids in the district, one at Jim Darcy and one at C.R. The last time I was up here I got a little emotional talking about my kids' wearing masks. Every day they come home with a headache. That is not okay with me as a father. I thought about why I was so mad at you guys, and I realized it was because I could not see your faces. It made me think you didn't care. I would like you to put yourself in our kids' shoes. What do you think they see when they see their teachers masked and see you masked? They see no emotion at all on your faces. There is nothing there. That is what we are teaching our kids right now. It also brings up the fact, what are the teachers missing in our kids when our kids are masked. Are they having a bad day? What is going on with those kids? There is a ton of stuff they are probably missing. I pulled out my box of surgical masks, and on the side of the box it says, "does not prevent Corona". What is the point of the mask at this point? There is no point to it. How are you protecting us from other schools? East Helena, Montana City, and Townsend? None of these places are masking. Every person I work with has kids at those schools. They are bringing those germs to me at work. This is doing nothing. My son has been sicker this year wearing a mask than he has been since he started school. If this mask is supposed to prevent Corona, and it can't even stop a common cold, then why are we doing this to our kids. The CO2 that they are inhaling is twice what we are putting them at risk for to get the Corona. As a concerned parent I would like you to really think about giving us our choice back to mask or unmask. Thank you.

Heidi Keaster is a parent of three children in the Helena School District. Good evening members of the Board, students, and staff. Thank you for all that you do. Thank you, Ms. Ridgway, Chief of Staff, for the emails about the clinics. Mr. Weltz, your emails on Friday have been less inflammatory towards school closing. For a parent survey, may I suggest constructive ways to get to all families. What I do

hear from most teachers is that they are also afraid to speak up about masking for that same fear. The fear you instill, which means power. Why hold power over our kids? Let's take ourselves through the eyes of a child. Kids get the dirty masks out of the backpack and wear them in school, take it off to play outside and then they go back in. The teacher then tells them to put the mask back on. The teacher has a mask on, and the kids cannot tell if they are mad, and they cannot hear them half the time. Then they go back outside, and they take the masks off, and the kids think am I going to get COVID, or am I not going to get COVID? Why aren't these masks working? I am asking you to think about kids. Why are we doing this to them? The kids are scared, they don't understand, and there is no logic about why they must put this nasty thing on. Now they think if I get a shot maybe I can get this thing off. None of this makes sense. We have no real scientific, randomized, cluster-controlled data that proves that masks work. So why are we using them? Politics. All of you. It's politics. I don't understand any other reason if you keep these masks on after these vaccines. Prove me wrong. I'm pro-vaccine, but I'm not pro-mask so I don't know where I fit in. But I can tell you that most of you sitting up there are Democrats, and you are trying to make Conservative parents pay. You elected Gianforte so now you are going to pay, and we are going to mask your kids. I don't see any other reason. Our numbers are showing that masks don't work, and our cases are higher in K through 8 then they are in the high school. Stop the politics on your Facebook pages. Some of you are using your Facebook pages to divide the community. Stop using your personal politics over my children. Choose the children and their education over your personal politics. I call B.S. on the transmission rate because now you are telling us we can't stay open. Can you please prove me wrong? Please consider coming back without masks on January 3rd. Thank you.

Kate Serilo is a parent of two elementary aged children. Ms. Serilo commented. At this point I have had several discussions with our school Principal, a few Trustee members, and countless parents and teachers. All discussions have been respectful, and I have received feedback that my feelings have been thought provoking to some Trustee members. I am growing very tired though, and I don't know that I can continue to be patient, but in all things, I will try and remain respectful. I think a crucial point that most parents here tonight would like to make is referring to the seventh paragraph in the most recent email sent out by Superintendent Wertz last Friday afternoon. Many parents will likely know the very words that made us disheartened when we read this email. I quote Superintendent Wertz. "I have been asked recently when we will lift the mask requirement for ages 5 through 11 now that the vaccines will soon be available for this group. The mask protocols are based on community transmission rates which remain at the high level in Lewis and Clark County. However, I am hopeful that the increased availability of vaccines for children and boosters for adults will lesson the transmission and allow us to reevaluate." This does not pair well with what happened with high school students. At no point have the high school students been required to wear a mask this year. This is discriminatory at best for our elementary and middle school aged children. This screams to parents that you are buying time because you do not want to be pinned down to a decision. It is shameful that you assume so many parents are not paying attention. You are using our children as puppets. Our children that just want to be at school to learn amongst their friends. They are doing this charade because they are the young ones, the ones that do not know that they can fight for what is right. I saw a graph this summer that made my heart sink. My oldest child is a third grader. The last time he was in a normal school year was his kindergarten year. No wonder he goes out to recess and still wears a mask. When I showed up one day recently and saw him come outside to play soccer at recess, I walked over and quickly asked him why he was still wearing a mask outside. His response was, "I'm just so used to it." It's truly awful. Many children are doing this. My youngest, a kindergartener, has gone his entire time in school like this. When they went back last year in Pre-K, they were not required to wear masks. No one got COVID the entire year, and the only

time they were quarantined was due to a sibling in elementary that needed a test, which later came back negative. Imagine that. Preschoolers who were never distanced, not masked, and all shared a smaller classroom. Even in our high transmission rate this is affecting roughly six percent of our K through 12 students. It is nice to know that high school students can do normal things like go to Homecoming, which I fully support, however the parents of elementary aged children cannot attend their child's winter program. You are robbing all of us of our cherished memories we should be experiencing. I stand amongst many fellow parents as well as the many teachers who are fearful of speaking up so that they do not lose their jobs, because they too are parents. Although my husband and I love and appreciate our children's teachers, the voice of a parent is no longer valued. Thank you.

Erik Martini has three children in the school district. Mr. Martini commented. I received an email from the Superintendent regarding the fact that he was asked recently when he will lift the mask requirement for ages 5 through 11 now that vaccines will soon be available to this age group. He goes on to say in his email that mask protocols are based on community transmission rates which remains at the high level in Lewis and Clark County. However, I am hopeful that the increased availability of vaccines for children and boosters for adults will lessen transmission and allow us to reevaluate. Respectfully sir, that is not what is being asked. What is being asked, is when is the district going to rescind the forced masking policy now that vaccines are available to children in this age group. The protocols only apply if there is a policy in place. The policy was instituted largely based on the availability, or lack thereof, of vaccines. I was there at the August 10th board meeting. Most, if not all, that were in favor of forced masking, only supported masking until vaccines were available, including several Board members. Guess what. Vaccines are available now. The whole reason the entire rationale behind making masking optional for high school kids is because they had access to vaccines. Now that K through 8 has access to vaccines I am demanding that we rescind the forced masking policy as soon as possible. Additionally, as I have mentioned at previous board meetings, masks do not work for these kids. Kids are constantly touching surfaces such as pencils, crayons, scissors, or each other, and then touching their face or their mask because they are uncomfortable. They are kids. As soon as they touch that mask, or their face, after touching something else, that mask is contaminated. It is no good, and that is just common sense. Additionally, don't you realize how confusing forced masking is for our children? My youngest asked me the other day why she doesn't have to wear a mask at church or the store, or literally anywhere else, but she must wear one to school. I don't have an answer for her. It isn't logical and doesn't make any sense to me. It's like the days when you had to wear a mask in a restaurant until you were seated. It doesn't make sense. My son was in kindergarten when the pandemic hit Montana. He is now in second grade, and this is all he has known. Wearing a mask every day to school. How long must he endure forced masking just so he can attend school? The district is teaching these kids that their presence without a mask, that is simply existing and breathing naturally, is going to hurt or potentially kill somebody. It is despicable and a gross overreach by a government entity. These kids are required to wear masks seven hours a day and even more for SACC students. During the Board Summer Retreat Meeting on July 13th, the Board Chair stated we should be prepared with a document with answers in case the public comes forward with questions regarding CRT. The Superintendent stated the Cabinet would discuss this and come together with a one-page District response. While I appreciate the phone call I received regarding the district's position, that is not what the Board Chair requested. I have asked repeatedly in board meetings on where this document is, and I still haven't received a response. I am beginning to lose my patience. Where is this document? Thank you.

Chelsea Culpon has four children in the Helena School District. Ms. Culpon commented. Thank you for hosting these meetings in person, although I am not there in person, I do appreciate that, as it is not happening everywhere in Montana. I would like to comment about the planned vaccination clinics. There were only 1,029 children that completed the Pfizer study trial for the experimental use authorization of the vaccine. That is fewer students than we have in the high schools in Helena. It's an exceptionally small number to then turn around and open an experimental use authorization vaccine for 25 million children in the United States. I am fearful that the Helena School District is opening itself up to a lawsuit, medical malpractice, or something along those lines. I live in a neighborhood with a lot of retirees, as well as some couples who have no children. Many of them will not be able to bear the cost of increased taxes to cover lawsuits. In Las Vegas parents recently filed suit against the Las Vegas School Board to the tune of 200 million dollars. I would like to protect our schools by protecting them from lawsuits and not holding vaccine clinics on public grounds. Every grocery store and corner drug store have these vaccines available, and they have more extended hours than the planned vaccine clinic. I hold a Class A commercial driver's license which technically makes me almost overqualified to drive a bus, but I have considered becoming a bus driver because of the very nice \$4,000 bonus you offer and the opportunity to supplement our single income family. However, I could never put a mask on my face while driving a vehicle because it cuts down on your peripheral vision as well as your oxygen levels, and that is a deadly combination. I also could never drive a school bus that requires children to wear masks and kick them off like the 8-year-old in Livingston that was kicked off on the side of the road last week. In order to mitigate the transportation crisis, I urge you to find exemptions or work arounds for the mask requirements for both drivers and children. Thank you for your time and for all the public speakers that made it here in person.

Tammy Stefanik commented. First, I want to bring a few things to your attention you may or may not be aware of. My daughter and her friends were telling me there are major bathroom issues at Capital High School. During transition time between classes girls are crammed into the bathrooms blocking doorways, talking, and some vaping. This has prevented them from using the restroom daily. If there is room, stalls are often locked with no one in them. The bathrooms are never clean and there is no soap in the dispensers. This has apparently been happening for weeks now, so I was surprised to just hear about it. Frankly, I was shocked by this information especially when having access to a clean restroom with soap is a very essential thing, especially now. I confirmed this from teachers at the school. A couple of them indicated it was because they couldn't hire anyone, and it was a known issue. This is understandable as everyone seems to be having hiring issues. However, students still need to be able to access a clean restroom with soap in the dispensers. Who is going to step up to the plate and do it? On a similar note, because of not being able to use the restroom between classes, they must ask to use it during class and some teachers are not good about allowing it. I understand instruction time is a premium, but so is using the bathroom. It's a basic human need. I have been in high school bathrooms and understand they can become a mess quickly, so I know this isn't fun or an easy job. I've also heard from teachers who have to "police" bathrooms (in prior years) from vaping and all sorts of questionable behavior. I have empathy for staff and teachers who have to deal with this on a daily basis and how it seems to be worsening. Second, I was very disappointed to see the school district using tax-payer funded, public property to host vaccination clinics. This is a blatant misuse of public property and there is no reason why this should be happening. I know medical providers in Helena are already prepared for administration in their clinics – they have had their supplies ready for weeks before the EUA was approved. Who made this decision and why? Is the school district going to be liable when there is an adverse event to a child?

Scott and Paige Pfahler commented. We are currently online listening to the board meeting and want to formally request that the masks mandate be removed from kids in grade K-8. We second a lot of what was brought to general comment and want to be allowed to make what we feel is the best decision for our kids. Thank you.

That concluded general public comment.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you everyone who showed up tonight and online for sharing your perspective with us this evening. I very much appreciate it. I appreciate everyone bringing their ideas and information and presenting that in a mutually respectful and civil matter. I really appreciate it.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION *(The Board of Trustees will not take public comment on items for information unless specifically noted with the agenda item; discussion only/no voting will occur).*

1. Enrollment Presentation
2. 3050: Student Discipline
3. 7063: Indoor Air Quality
4. 7064: Water Supply and Wastewater

Superintendent Weltz commented. I have asked Assistant Superintendent McKay to put together enrollment numbers for K-12 beginning in 2001 to our current date. East Helena building a new high school has affected our high school numbers. We knew that and predicted that. Prior to the East Helena high school addition our district was 7,900 to 8,000 strong for years. With East Helena building their high school, I think we will now see about 7,500 to 7,600 high school students in our district.

Mr. McKay commented. The sheet that you are looking at is a collection of fall enrollment research that I did through our archive files. When we started this conversation last week in the Budget and Finance Committee Meeting the numbers that you see in front of you are different than ANB which is the average number belonging count. This would be the number of actual students in our system, and ANB reflects the number of whole units of students that are partially enrolled. In the year 2000 our District was at around 8,100. In the high school setting we know that with East Helena building their high school we are losing 125 to 140 kids a year to the new high school in East Helena. We are 405 students smaller than the fall of 2018 which was the last high school number when all of East Helena was this us. We have one more year of decline into the fall for next year.

Mr. McKay then commented on the elementary enrollment. Our District runs about 3,300 to 3,500 students for K through 5. The middle schools are at about 1,800 students. In 2019 we were at 5,300 students. In the fall of 2020, we were at 5,157. This year we are at 5,225 students in K through 8.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you, Mr. McKay. If you take out those East Helena numbers, are we seeing some increase in enrollment at the elementary level?

Mr. McKay replied. If you look at our classes over time from kindergarten to eighth grade, our classes usually increase in size. Over time our grades grow.

Chief of Staff, Ms. Barb Ridgway, gave a presentation on the following policies that would be presented to the board for first reading - 3050: Student Discipline, 7063: Indoor Air Quality, and 7064: Water Supply and Wastewater. Ms. Ridgway commented. The first policy that we are looking at is an existing policy, which is Policy 3050: Student Discipline. The change being made to this policy is the result of Senate Bill 283 which eliminates the requirement to expel a student for having a gun or a weapon. The student may not be expelled unless they intentionally or knowingly brought the gun with them or possess the gun in the school. It addresses the issue of someone accidentally bringing a weapon with them in a vehicle for example. Sometimes a student may go hunting and forget the weapon was left in their vehicle, especially in Montana. That is the only change to this existing policy on lines 65 though 70.

Ms. Ridgway commented on Policy 7063: Indoor Air Quality. This is a new policy created as a result of administrative rule developed by DEQ. It describes the actions the District needs to take to ensure quality air through ventilation systems. Our District has already been doing this.

Ms. Ridgway commented on Policy 7064: Water Supply and Wastewater. This policy is also a result of administrative rule and has expectations on water supply and wastewater and our District has already been following these guidelines.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. On Policy 3050: Student Discipline, it speaks of disciplinary action throughout the entire policy. When you get to lines 69 and 70 it appears there is some conflict there. It states that the student may not be expelled unless the Trustees find that the student knowingly brings a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school. There is no other consideration for expulsion in that entire policy. It says earlier in the policy that they do have the option for expulsion, but then it seems to contradict it when it says that the only time you can expel a student is when he or she has a firearm.

Ms. Ridgway commented. That is specifically for gun-free schools. The Trustees always have the option. Expulsion can only be done by the Trustees.

Mr. Beaver responded. I agree completely, but it doesn't state that. That is the only place in that policy that says there is any reason for expulsion. It contradicts what it says before. On line 19 it says that disciplinary action may range from conferring with a teacher to expulsion from school. We then get to line 69 it says the student may not be expelled unless the Trustees find that the student has a firearm.

Ms. Ridgway commented. Right, that is the new legislation under that Senate Bill.

Mr. Beaver replied. It appears to me to be contradictory. I think in the future if we were to have a student up for expulsion and that person would read this and would say, "no, my student is not up for any firearms, but it says here that is the only reason he can be expelled."

Ms. Ridgway commented. You see the contradiction between gun-free schools and the rest of the policy. I will take it back to the policy committee and we can discuss that.

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. In this it says that the student is expelled for possessing a firearm. Does that mean it has to be on their person or in their bag?

Ms. Ridgway commented. Yes, possessing in school and intentionally bringing it to school. The new language says that the student may not be expelled unless the Trustees find that the student knowingly brought a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school. Generally, I think the exclusion is intended if there is a weapon in the car and they didn't know that it was there. It gives the Trustees more latitude to look at it case by case instead of a blanket statement that "everybody is expelled for at least a year".

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. in general, the authority for expulsion belongs with the Board of Trustees. They have that authority in all areas except the State Legislature has now ruled they are restricting that authority in the area of weapons in the school.

Ms. Ridgway replied. Right, only the Trustees have the authority to expel a student, and they have made these exceptions.

B. Consent Action Items

1. Approval of 10.12.21 Board Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of Personnel Actions
3. Approval of Warrants
4. Approval of Out of District Attendance Agreement
5. Acknowledgment of Out of District Attendance Agreements

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve our Consent Action Items.

Motion: Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the consent action items as written. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0 motion carries.

C. Items For Action

1. 2016: Human Sexuality Instruction
2. 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities
3. 3022: Children of Military Families
4. 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination
5. 5100: Breastfeeding in the Workplace
6. 7062: Outdoor Air Quality
7. Approval of Jefferson Re-roof Bid 2021-2022

Ms. Ridgway commented. These policies are before you for action. You saw them in September. The first policy is 2016: Human Sexuality Instruction. The policy committee made one minor change on line 34 just to be consistent and used the word infections rather than diseases. Infections was used throughout. I would also add that although we are just bringing this for approval tonight, we have updated our handbooks to include language as a result of this legislation.

Trustee Beaver commented. It appears here that there is a 48-hour notification that is necessary for parents to opt out. The course of Biology 2 includes nine weeks of genetics and evolution. Every day is concerning sexual reproduction. In genetics it is essential that you consider the process of meiosis in every process that is involved. Does that mean that you must notify every 48 hours that this is going to happen, or could it be happened in a syllabus?

Ms. Ridgway replied. It could be handled in a syllabus.

Trustee Beaver commented. That is not specified here.

Ms. Ridgway responded. No, but we will do that when we do the administrative procedure.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to adopt Policy 2016: Human Sexuality Instruction.

Motion: Trustee Terry Beaver moved to adopt Policy 2016: Human Sexuality Instruction as proposed amended. Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0 motion carries.

Ms. Ridgway commented. We will move on to Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities. It is an existing policy which has language added on lines 19 through 21 which allows private or homeschool students to participate in extracurricular activities. One of the questions that Trustee Beaver had was the right to participate. I think we either take this back to the policy committee or agree that they may participate subject to the same standards for participation as those required of students enrolled currently in school. They must abide by the same standards and expectations as an enrolled student. If you are in agreement, I can make those amendments if you vote to approve, or we can bring it back. Whatever your preference is.

Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. Will homeschool students have to abide by an academic standard to participate?

Activities Director Tim McMahon replied. There was guidance give by both the Office of Public Instruction and The Montana High School Association. OPI is the overreaching and then MHSA supports that. Both of them do require academic eligibility. It is very similar to the MHSA standard for all our students that are enrolled. If is the case of a private school student, there must be something that shows us they passed four classes the previous semester in that setting. If it is a homeschooled student, the teacher of record-parent or whoever that teacher is for homeschool-must provide something that shows the same thing. We can't evaluate a curriculum for homeschool, but we can ask for verification that in the last completed semester they passed four classes just like our high school students enrolled in school.

Trustee Beaver commented. It was my understanding that homeschool students must go to the high school to participate that is their home school. Is it then possible for a homeschool student in Helena to participate for Billings West?

Mr. McMahon replied. No, the original guidance that was provided was that within a district with multiple high schools, homeschool or private school students must enroll and participate in activities in the school of their residence attendance. That is what was shared with us early, around May. By the end of July OPI's instruction came out around the law and the instruction from OPI, which MHSA did adopt, said that in a multiple high school district you had to treat them the same as you treated any incoming student. For example, we are a school district that allows our freshman to choose. I could live across the street from Capital High, and I could attend Helena High as an incoming freshman. So, we do have some students who live in one high school attendance area but attend the other high school for participation in activities. An East Helena student could not come into Helena for activities only, they must attend school in the district. A homeschool student in Montana City must go to the high school in Boulder if they want to participate in activities.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. Can a student that is in public school, private school or homeschool choose to go to Capital High for one year and then switch to the other high school. Can kids switch back and forth?

Mr. McMahon replied. You are now getting into the transfer rule for MHSA purposes. Once you are enrolled in a high school and have completed a certain number of days of instruction, that is now your high school of record for activities purposes. We do have transfer rules under MHSA and the Helena School District. Our district transfer practices have been that we do not transfer high school to high school except at a semester. If you transferred at the end of the semester, as a transfer student under MHSA rules and you are a general transfer, you are ineligible for a varsity competition for 90 school days or the equivalent semester.

Trustee McKee commented. I wanted to be clear that Trustee Beaver had recommended removing the word right and replacing it with opportunity.

Trustee Beaver replied. I think it is under state statute the way that it is so I don't know that we can change that. What we can do is include the language "subject to the same requirements".

Ms. Ridgway commented. I will do that.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. Regarding the policy on discipline, I think having it go back to the committee for further consideration is important so that matter can be clarified.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to adopt Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities.

Motion: Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn moved to adopt Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities as amended. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries.

Ms. Ridgway commented regarding Policy 3022: Children of Military Families. This policy is an existing policy with additional language added on lines 24 through 27 which allows students of military families to enroll before they have residency or paperwork, which is a practice that we already do.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to adopt Policy 3022: Children of Military Families.

Motion: Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to adopt Policy 3022: Children of Military Families with its additions. Trustee Terry Beaver seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries.

Ms. Ridgway commented regarding Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination. This is an existing personnel policy. The only change is on line 25 which says COVID-19 vaccine status will not be used a basis to deny or allow equal opportunity to employment based on House Bill 702.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to adopt Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination.

Motion: Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to adopt Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination. Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries.

Ms. Ridgway commented regarding Policy 5100: Breastfeeding in the Workplace. Policy 5100 is an existing policy. We did some language alignment, and again this is a practice we were already doing. The new administrative rule spoke to more definition about physical requirements, such as the location cannot be a restroom or a closet, and again we have solid practice around this.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to adopt Policy 5100: Breastfeeding in the Workplace.

Motion: Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn moved to adopt Policy 5100: Breastfeeding in the Workplace as proposed. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries.

Ms. Ridgway commented regarding Policy 7062: Outdoor Air Quality. This is a new policy required under new administrative rule, and again we already have this practice in place for managing outdoor air quality and have had for years. It will not change any existing practice.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 7062: Outdoor Air Quality.

Motion: Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve Policy 7062: Outdoor Air Quality as proposed. Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries.

Ms. Stacy Collette, Human Resources Administrator and interim Facilities Director, commented regarding the approval of the Jefferson Re-roof Bid for 2021-2022. The district receives a comprehensive roofing assessment every two to three years. This assessment supports our ongoing maintenance work and critical structural integrity for our nineteen sites across the community. In the summer of 2022, we plan to reroof three primary buildings: Jefferson Elementary, C.R. Anderson, and Lincoln School. This recommendation tonight is for the Jefferson Elementary School reroof replacement project. We bid that job on October 26th, 2021, and the contractors provided the District with the lowest possible bid with Summit Roofing. Summit Roofing's bid was \$8,658 lower than the next bid. As noted in the considerations, we had four top tier contractors bid on this project, the bid tab is enclosed in your information items, and we are confident in the contractor selected. We believe with this project that it will keep Jefferson's roof intact for twenty years to potentially thirty years if we continue with regular maintenance and ongoing upkeep. I would like to recommend that you approve the contract awarded to the Jefferson reroof project to Summit Roofing.

Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. It seems a bit unusual that the bids vary so much.

Rob Brewer, Facilities Manager, commented. There was a clerical error from one of the contractors which is the most significant number there.

Ms. Hathhorn replied. Thank you, that clarifies that. I wanted to make sure that we are getting quality work.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion for the Approval of Jefferson Re-roof Bid 2021-2022.

Motion: Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the Jefferson Re-roof Bid 2021-2022 to Summit Roofing. Trustee Terry Beaver seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries.

D. REPORTS

1. Helena Education Association Report

Jane Shawn, President of the Helena Education Association, commented. Our thoughts are with Helena High School staff and students this evening. I enjoyed spending time Thursday morning with Superintendent Weltz and HEF and Lisa Cordingley, recognizing so many fabulous teachers in the District. Kids seem to really appreciate being back in school. I'm hearing from high school that many kids are thanking their teachers as they leave classes. That is really awesome to hear, but learning loss is evident especially in the classes that require those prerequisites, particularly in math. I know there are programs in place that are going to help with that. The lack of substitutes has taken a toll on the staff in the buildings and having to constantly regroup. I know that the District is doing everything they can to find substitutes, it is not a criticism it is a reality. Lastly, I have visited all of the building sites, and I have had the opportunity to visit with both Josh

McKay and Brian Cummings to relay what I am hearing on the ground, so that they are tuned into what I am hearing.

2. Budget & Finance Committee Report

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. We reviewed the financial report for 10.29.21 for both the elementary and the high school districts, and they are progressing as anticipated. Calculations were also presented to us as to the preliminary general fund projections based on fall enrollment counts. These projections indicate an approximation of what our operational levies may amount to if we choose to run them in the spring. They will definitely change; they are approximations at this time, and they will change. Our operational levies are what drives part of our general fund expenditures. At the elementary level in the spring, we could possibly run a levy for \$282,892 or something similar, and it will change. That would amount to \$3.19 on a \$100,000 home. In the high school district, we now stand at approximately \$543,832 which would amount to \$5.56 on a \$100,000 home, but that will also change. This is approximately \$800,000 that we would gain in school operational facilities. It is an operational levy, so it would help us operate our schools. If we don't pass that, it is \$800,000 loss in perpetuity forever in this District. There is no chance again to fulfill that \$800,000 that would be represented by these operational levies. It is strategically important that we do run these, in my opinion, and pass them. A difference in \$800,000 in perpetuity is almost more than we can withstand so it is almost essential. We also discussed the remainder of our elementary bond, but it is yet to be determined because of outstanding invoices from Hulteng which should be concluded this week.

3. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

Committee Chair Jennifer McKee commented. The Teaching and Learning Committee met on November 3rd. Our meetings have been a sort of slow unpacking of the ways that Helena Schools are moving well ahead of the pack with a variety of strategies to maximize teaching and maximize every moment of the day using a data driven approach to revolutionize education in our community. What we focused on this time was standards-based grading. This is the first quarter that every elementary school will be getting a standards-based grade. It is not in middle and high school yet. With standards-based grading is, you are not necessarily racking up points, you are showing your teacher that you have mastered a wide variety of benchmarks that a student needs to master in order to move on to the next thing. It is not just getting 70% and moving on and skating by. In our elementary schools the teachers are up fronting this work, and they are getting all their students to mastery. The goal is when students get into middle and high school that they are ready to take those much more complicated steps into much more complicated subject areas.

Ms. Hathhorn commented. The curriculum administration is really making some meaningful changes and those in the middle of COVID can also be taxing on the educational staff, and I really appreciate how they are unrolling them in a stair stepping way to give teachers a chance to get used to things and move to full capacity in a reasonable time frame.

4. Policy Committee Report

Committee Chair Libby Goldes commented. At our meeting in November, we had ten policies that we addressed, and you have been presented with nine of them for approval or for first reading. Kudos to Barb for the great work that she does on these policies which you can see are very far ranging.

5. Facilities & Maintenance Committee Report

Committee Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. We had a very robust meeting with a lot on the agenda. The first topic was a lighting assessment that was presented to us by Ameresco. It is an assessment for the lighting that we have and how we can make that more energy efficient and more cost effective for the District. The numbers looked good and there will still be a decision whether to move forward on that. The next item was the May Butler Center. Our admin will start to move out in the next week or two down to the Lincoln Center which is being finished up. I know they are very excited and appreciative of the opportunity to have a space that suits their needs and big enough to accommodate the staff. We had an assessment on the May Butler Center and what would be the next best use of that. It is the intent to not have it lay idle and figure out what is the best way to move forward with the May Butler Center. We had a report on the deferred maintenance which is being conducted right now in every building in the District. This is really good information not only for our budgeting but also for our facilities master plan so we can get an in-depth idea of the needs of all our facilities. We had a discussion on the master plan that has not been updated since 2013. We discussed ways that we would get that update completed. We came to the conclusion that we really need an interim meeting to really hash that out and talk about our needs. That will be coming up soon hopefully in the next couple weeks, right at the beginning of December.

6. Health Benefits Committee Report

Ms. Collette commented. We had a meeting this week to review our Health Benefits Plan. We looked at our initial review of end of year financials and the impact of COVID and everything else in relationship to that plan as well as our change in benefit dollars. On December 2nd we will have a final review of those documents including any kind of end of year reconciliation for those costs. One of the things that was concerning to the committee overall was the significant hit our plan took. Our reserves dropped to about \$3 millions dollars. We will keep a very mindful eye to ensure that we have enough funds to continue moving our plan forward. In better news, we are continuing with our Wellness Clinics and those are being scheduled in each of our nineteen buildings in the District. Those include flu shots, thyroid checks, blood work, and general health screenings. They are brought to the employees across the District on various days by St. Peter's Wellness team in partnership with our Health Benefits Committee. In addition, we have new committee members and representation for the teachers, paraprofessionals, and custodians. For next steps we will review our plan documents, consider what else is happening in health insurance and health care, and make sure our plan documents stay relevant and maintain their integrity, so we have best possible benefits for our employees covered.

7. Wellness Committee Report

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. We met on October 13th after a long summer break. We had some pretty good conversations around May of last year before taking the summer off and then reconvening. That meant that we needed to have some restructure and focus within the group. What that entailed was having two subcommittees within the Wellness Committee which included the Physical Activity Subcommittee and the Nutrition Subcommittee. At one point we were looking at including mental health within our Wellness Committee and it was decided that was a better fit at the leadership level within the District, so that is no longer a part of this committee. The two subcommittees are going to be meeting once a month, and the larger group is going to be meeting every other month. If anyone is interested in participating or sitting in on those conversations let me know. We had a few things to discuss after we looked at some of the restructuring options. We did have a good discussion about The Harvest of The Month Program. St. Peter's Health has a full time FTE for that program, and it has already been under way. We are hoping that we can help support that group and that team. We also looked at some tangible goals that we wanted to set. Sometimes concepts can be very arbitrary, and we had decided that our focus needed to be on tangible goals that we could benchmark and reach. Lots of various options came up with that. One of the bigger concerns for the Nutrition Subcommittee was the BMI statistics, especially during the COVID time, it nearly doubled. We are going to be taking that on to see how we can help address that within the community. We also talked about the state of the kitchen for SODEXO. It is really challenging for them right now, and we are trying to figure out what we can do in our committee to help bring attention to that and see if there are partnerships or collaborations that we can do to help fix that problem and make it easier for them. We are also looking at alternatives to taking away recess. There are various reasons that happens, but that limits the opportunity for children to have that recess time and that physical activity time away from the classroom. We are looking at different policies that we can recommended and propose to limit the number of times that happens. Our next meeting will be December 8th.

8. Montana School Boards Association Report

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I will give you a brief update on our continued relationship, or lack thereof, with the National School Boards Association. Last Tuesday, the MSBA full Board of Directors came together to discuss the relationship with NSBA and discussed three options. One option is continue being involved in the NSBA regarding advocating for certain governance reforms and advocating for appropriate handling of the NSBA's letter to the Biden Administration and the Attorney General's response and the political upheaval around that. The other option was to rescind our membership effective immediately. The third option was to announce our intent to leave the organization effective June 30th which is the end of our dues period. The MSBA decided on the third option. We will maintain our membership in NSBA with full standing, and we will continue to advocate for the governance reforms that we have for years until June 30th, and then as it stands right now, we will cease to be members of NSBA. In doing that, we have joined, I believe, nine other state school board associations

who have chosen to terminate their membership. Those other nine chose to do so immediately. I would be remiss in my duties to not make absolutely clear that our issues with the NSBA are not at all limited to their letter to the Biden Administration and how they have handled that. I think for years there have concerns around the governance of NSBA, Montana School Boards representation in that organization, and the strategic direction that the organization has taken, or lack thereof. I don't think there is anyone on the MTSBA Board that doesn't want state school boards to not have national representation. I think in terms of federal judicial advocacy that would be a particularly negative outcome out of all this. There is another collection of state school board organizations that are pursuing creating a new organization. If they did, that is potentially another organization that MTSBA could join. Furthermore, as I said, we remain members of NSBA through June 30th. NSBA just announced their intention to hire a new Executive Director who is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Kansas State School Boards Association. I think that is a good forward step. It is certainly possible that NSBA could make significant changes in the next months that could cause MTSBA to reconsider their decision. My focus as President of MTSBA is to run a good board meeting, make sure that everybody has the opportunity to ask questions and give their input, and deliberate in a fair and open manner, and I think we have done that. I appreciate so much the staff and trustees who have reached out to me and shared their opinions and asked questions, even if they disagreed with this decision. I really appreciate that engagement. It is an honor to represent Helena Public Schools on the MTSBA board. I take that very seriously and I hope you will continue sharing your opinion with me and asking questions as they come up.

9. Student Representatives Report

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. The crosstown production of the play, *The Women*, started last Thursday and ran through Saturday. It runs again this Thursday through Saturday. It was great to see students in action in the theater again. While Administrators and the Instructional Coaches started observing the beginnings of lessons to record data in light of our goal, now the school leadership team is also participating. We just reviewed the instructional round process in PLC time this past Monday. The after-school assistance program starts on Tuesday, November 9th and it will run on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:40 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Students will report on Tuesday to the cafeteria and then go to their respective teacher to get assistance in Math, English, Science, or Social Studies. Right now, we have over thirty students signed up and after report cards go home it is expected that number will increase. This past Saturday the Speech and Debate tournament was held here at Capital High. Nine schools visited and a lot of community members helped volunteer. On Wednesday, October 20th we started our series of safety drills with an earthquake drill. We exited the building and congregated at the primary evacuation area which is Northwest Park. From there we walked down Custer, then down Henderson where we entered the fairgrounds, which is our secondary evacuation area. The drill went very well.

Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative, commented. Our school this week had additional counselors to help students in light of the recent events. We had a number of students participate in All-State band, orchestra, and choir along with their teachers.

Next week we will have a shelter in place drill. Fall sports are wrapping up. We had three students go to state for golf. It was Joey Seliskar for the boys and Keaton Normandy and Sarah Halferty on the girl's side. For volleyball our girls lost in divisionals, ending their otherwise successful season which included taking down the Bruins after quite some time. Not once, but twice. Our girls' cross-country team ended up taking 4th this year at state, with two all-state performances by Kylie Hartnett and Odessa Zentz, and our boys team took 13th. This week our football team after taking on Bozeman will face Billings West for the semifinals in Billings on Friday.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. There are perspectives and opinions, but sometimes there are questions or even confusion. I think one of the things I suggest we do is on our agendas is remind people there is a Board of Trustees email address and there is an email address for our Superintendent, and to encourage people who have questions to reach out in that way so that we have contact information and can get back to them. A few things that I heard tonight was frustration around kids and drivers needing to wear masks on the bus. That is an example where whether you think that is a good or a bad idea, that in fact is federal law, and we do not have the authority to change that practice, for example. We heard about critical race theory, CRT, and I think we need to be more clear and public around that, but that is not part of our curriculum. It hasn't been and it won't be. What is part of our curriculum is teaching history, social studies, and political science with fidelity. Attorney General, Austin Knudsen previously made a ruling that there are certain practices that have been inflated with CRT that are against Montana law. We don't do those activities and we maybe need to be clearer about that. Let's think about how we can connect the dots when we hear from members of our community around these questions.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. It is sometimes awkward in a public meeting where people will come and have an opportunity to speak with us, and we do hear them, but because of the way our meetings are structured, we don't have a back and forth at a meeting because the public needs to have a right to participate and if ten people come and spark up a conversation and we make a decision, then no one else got a chance to participate. That is the reason why people can stand up and say whatever they want, and we don't say anything back. It feels awkward socially but there is a good reason for it, so that everyone gets a chance to participate when something important to the community comes before us for a decision.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The board meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary Date