



Superintendent
Rex Weltz
324-2001

Business Manager
Janelle Mickelson
324-2040

Board of Trustees Meeting

Lincoln Center
1325 Poplar St., Helena, MT 59601
And on TEAMS

Tuesday, January 11th, 2022
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee
Terry Beaver, Trustee
John McEwen, Trustee
Elizabeth “Libby” Goldes, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Jennifer McKee, Trustee
Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative
Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena 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
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
Jane Shawn, HEA President

Many guests of the public

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. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We have all eight Trustees present tonight. Trustee Jennifer McKee is joining us online, and everyone else is attending in person. We have both of our Student Representatives here tonight, along with Superintendent Rex Weltz.

II. REVIEW AGENDA

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. One change that has been noted is we have a couple of changes to our December 14th minutes. We are going to remove the December 14th minutes from the Consent Action Items and move them to Items for Action, number five on the agenda. Trustee John McEwen asked for the Health Benefits Committee Report to be crossed off the list because the Health Benefits Committee did not meet since the last full Board meeting. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz crossed off the Montana School Boards Association Report from the list. Trustee Jennifer Walsh asked for the Wellness Committee Report to be crossed off the list as well. Trustee Jennifer McKee commented that Teaching and Learning Committee meets tomorrow, so there would be nothing to report at tonight's meeting.

III. PRESENTATIONS

Solar Energy Update

Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, commented. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce Madalyn Quinlan. Madalyn served as Chief of Staff for the Office of Public Instruction for a number of years and lucky for us, when she retired, she took on a number of community projects, of which we were one. Madalyn has played a key role in ensuring that our three new schools, which were designed to be solar ready, will actually be solar operational. She is responsible for writing the NorthWestern Energy grants that helped fund solar installations at both Central and Bryant. She worked with community groups that worked to raise additional funds not covered by the NorthWestern Energy grant. Madalyn is here tonight to provide the Board with a status update on the progress that has been made and she will have some assistance from others who worked on these various projects.

Madalyn Quinlan commented. I'm really glad to be here tonight. In addition to helping write and shepherd the grants that the District received to be able to install the solar photovoltaic systems on top of Central and Jim Darcy, I also joined with the Helena Sun Run team to raise money to help the District's initiatives for the solar panel systems. We have two other members from the Helena Sun Run team who will be speaking in just a little bit as well, but Pat Judge and Joel Harris are joining me in terms of celebrating the installation of the fifty-kilowatt solar PV systems on Central and Jim Darcy. We would like to announce to the Board that we have raised \$5,000 from the Helena Sun Run this past October. It was an exciting community event and a great way to support the school District's efforts to bring about clean sustainable energy. I would like to give some background. In the 17-18 school year when the District was in the design phase for the three new schools, they instructed the architects at that time to design schools that were solar ready. Even though the District didn't yet have an identified source of funding for those systems, at least the key building blocks would be in place and the roof structure would be built so it could sustain the load from solar panels and snowfall. In 2018 and 2019 over a course of three different cycles, the District submitted requests for renewable energy grants from the

Universal Systems Benefit Program which is administered by NorthWestern energy. The funding from this program comes from a Universal Systems Benefits charge that is authorized by the legislature and that we as NorthWestern Energy customers all pay through our utility bills. The grant program encourages a local match and they're very happy when there's an educational component for the renewable energy projects. As part of the application for these grants, the Helena Public Schools included letters of support from teachers at Central, Jim Darcy and Helena High School, from students who are involved in the Helena Green Group, and from members of the Helena Sun Run team. The letters from the teachers were great and they focused on how they hope to develop classroom lessons and units using the data generated from the solar panel systems. Subsequently, NorthWestern energy awarded Helena Public Schools \$38,000 for the project at Central and \$50,000 for the project at Jim Darcy. The fifty-kilowatt solar PV system was installed on the gym roof at Central in August of 2020. This past summer, a similar system was installed at Jim Darcy, and it was completed in July of 2021. At the time that the grants were submitted using a standard estimating system, the inner energy savings are projected to be roughly \$131,000 at each school over a thirty-year period. The installation of these systems includes a portal that customers can use to track energy production and carbon offsets. I'm very pleased to report the District has installed monitors at each of the schools to display the system data. The screens rotate so you can see real time energy production data for the day, week, month, and year. It also shows information on carbon offsets based on the amount of energy that's been generated over various periods of time. So, hopefully these displays will generate excitement and ownership among students, educators, and the public. It's a great opportunity to know where your energy comes from and to be able to keep track of that. I'm really enthusiastic about the educational component that can come with this. While I've spoken only about Jim Darcy and Central schools, I think it's important to know that there are also panels on Helena High School and Capital High School, and those are from previous efforts. They're smaller systems that are five kilowatts each, and they were installed somewhere around 2010 and 2011, and Jill Van Alstyne, an educator at Helena High School, had a key role in helping all that come about.

Joel Harris commented. The other groups involved in organizing the Helena Sun Run were the Sleeping Giant Citizens Council, and they partnered with the Helena Vigilante Runners and the Helena School District. Sleeping Giant, a local environmental group, devoted quite a bit of resources with their professional staff person McKenna Sellers, who devoted a lot of time to this. That was a big part of the success of the event. We also want to thank Sarah Sullivan and Jennifer McKee for joining the group and helping us organize. This is five years that we have done this, and we are very excited to keep the Sun Run going further. It's now 200 kilowatts of energy savings per year that the Sun Run projects are putting into place and that's really starting to become a big thing. Shiloh Hernandez is the person who had the vision and started this and led it for the first four years.

Madalyn Quinlan commented. The Vigilante Runners have sponsored races to raise money for the Sun Run, Lewis and Clark Library, the Holter Museum of Art, and Carroll College. We raised \$14,000 from the Sun Run for Helena Public Schools in 2019, and \$5,000 in 2021. We were hesitant about going to local businesses trying to raise money in our second COVID year. So, hopefully in the future we'll be able to bring those dollar amounts up. We want to continue the good work and build on the community support for these projects.

Ms. Ridgway commented. Superintendent Rex Weltz and I met with Tim Meldrum and Klint Fischer from SMA and learned that there was an assessment done with a small DEQ grant. We learned that the

flat part of the Bryant roof is solar ready. There have been previous discussions about the library roof, but it is not solar ready. After meeting with Tim and Klint we went down to Mosaic and met with Gretchen Krumm and learned a lot more about what is in place at Bryant. We will have a few more meetings and will then plan our next steps.

In conclusion of the presentation, Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz thanked Madalyn Quinlan for her efforts in this regard, and her volunteer efforts over the past several years. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz also extended his appreciation to Superintendent Weltz, Chief of Staff Barb Ridgway, Pat Judge, Joel Harris, McKenna Sellers, Sarah Sullivan, Trustee Jennifer McKee, and Trustee John McEwen. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. This was truly a wonderful community effort, it was a wonderful day, and this is exciting. Thank you, NorthWestern Energy, for your significant contribution and to the ratepayers who fund this. It is so neat to see these investments in alternative energy sources. Renewable energy sources make sense in terms of reducing carbon emissions, but also make sense economically for the district. I absolutely agree that the educational component is an extraordinary opportunity for our students and our teachers.

Trustee John McEwen asked if there was money available for Bryant or if that money still needed to be raised.

Madalyn Quinlan responded. The next grant application cycle closes May 1st, so if there is an opportunity there to apply for monies for Bryant, I would be happy to help with that. Even if it is not in May, every six months there is a cycle for applying.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Rex Weltz began his Superintendent Report by thanking Madalyn Quinlan for her efforts around renewable energy resources throughout the District. Superintendent Weltz continued with the recognition portion of his Superintendent Report. We have conducted central office site visits to Central Elementary and Bryant Elementary. I would like to recognize Randy Hussey from Helena High and Rachel Heaton from Four Georgians who were recognized as October and November's Teacher of the Month for 105.3 KMTX. Prior to winter break, there were musical performances at the Lincoln Center from the CHS Advanced Orchestra, the Ironhorse Youth Music Group, the CHS Jazz Choir, and the HMS 8th Grade Choir. I would like to thank Montana Rail Link and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation for helping Warren Elementary experience the Polar Express. Our PAL students created backdrops for the Premiere Dance Company. I would like to thank a couple of outstanding therapy dogs, Bluebonnet and Mocha, for assistance around helping students with anxiety during the shot clinics. I would like to thank our school nurses for their efforts and Ms. Ridgeway helping lead that, around not only just vaccines, but also our rapid testing, which is really paying dividends in terms of rapid response. In January we have Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, which is actually today, so thank you to our law enforcement, our sheriff's department, and local police department. We appreciate their efforts and what they do. It is National School Board Appreciation Month, and I do sincerely thank you for sitting in these seats and doing the job for students.

Superintendent Weltz moved on to discuss New Business. Kindergarteners are registering right now, and Kindergarten registration started January 4th. Vaccinations and rapid testing are two key ingredients for us to stay in person five days a week. When we started, we had three testing sites, and we were just

testing symptomatic staff and students in buildings. Then Barb and the nurses expanded that to evening testing clinics, which we had at Capitol High School, Helena Middle School, and Rossiter out in the valley. What we found, was that when we came back and tested here at Lincoln it worked really well, so coupled with the Lewis and Clark Public Health-which test at the fairgrounds Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., we partner up and test here at Lincoln- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. So, there's a window from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. that our staff, students, and their immediate families can test. I say that until last night. There is new information. Remember we offer that free test, and the tests are given to us by the Department of Public Health and Human Services. I learned last night that because of such a high demand in rapid testing, those tests are not as available as they once were. So, we are going to look carefully at our testing if the tests themselves are not available for the school District. I don't have all the answers to that. I do know that it's going to affect how we test, when we test, and how often we can test, if we just don't have the tests. Barb is working with us on that, and she's working with DPHHS to figure out what the supply and demand looks like, and what the chain is to get those rapid tests back in our hands, because they are critical on how we maneuver and adjust to COVID within our school District. There will be more to come around that. I would like to mention that Warren Elementary is our work session and we'll be working around strategic priorities at that point. We also have ABCs, our academics, building relationships, and great communication coupled with management and instruction. So more to come at our work session out at Warren.

Superintendent Wertz concluded his Superintendent Report by discussing his outreach and meetings in the community. I have met with the Helena Education Foundation, the AA Superintendents each week, Helena Education Association and Ms. Jane Shawn, Lewis and Clark Public Health, the media, St. Peter's Health, Montana High School Association, and Parent Advisory Council. I would like to thank the Montana Book Company for their generous donations. They have donated \$20,000 worth of discounts to staff and students through 2021. Autumn Boutin is a school nurse, and she recently passed her National Board Certification in Nursing. There are thirteen Nationally Board-Certified nurses in the state of Montana. We currently have three of them in the Helena Public School District. We're privileged to have them. Those three are Autumn Boutin, Shannon McNamee, and Cori Wellenstein. We are thankful for them. It was a busy day Saturday for facilities, we had four events occur. Someone drove through the fence at Kessler, we had a very quick response and put up a temporary fence right away. The new permanent fence was done this afternoon. At Four Georgians we had a water containment issue. Helena High School had a leak, and Helena Middle School had an electrical problem. Our team worked extremely hard to fix these issues and got everything back and running again, and I appreciate them. Lastly, we had Career Day at Helena High and Capital High today. That concludes my report this evening.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you Superintendent Wertz. Congratulations to our educators and to our esteemed nurses for everything that they do. I appreciate our local law enforcement, and I'm thinking about some of the routine things they do to support our students and staff, and I'm thinking about some of the things that they have done when we have faced tragedy in the past year, and I appreciate that partnership. Superintendent Wertz, I appreciate that you just don't call on them when something goes wrong, you and your team build relationships. That is very important, and I very much appreciate that. Trustees, any other questions, comments?

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. I just want to say congratulations to the nurses who are board certified. I know firsthand how difficult testing is for certification for nursing, so that is quite an accomplishment. I have had the opportunity to know Bluebonnet in person, and I know how healing and helpful she can be, and I have no doubt that our that our students really benefited from having both of them present.

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We will now move on to general public comment. General public comment is the time for comment on matters that are not on our agenda. So, I do want to note that thinking about items that are often topics of public comment in the past, we are considering amendments to our Policy 1905 Students, Staff and Community Health and Safety Needs. So, if you have a comment related to face masks, hygiene, or any of our COVID mitigations, that's a more appropriate place to give that public comment. Then, if you have public comment about that policy or any of the other three policies that we are planning on addressing tonight for action, we'll have a separate public comment period for that. With that said this is the time for general public comment. I'll go over a couple of ground rules for public comment, whether it's general public comment or action items, specific public comment. I will hold you to a three-minute time limit as we've been doing in the past. I'm going to ask you to state your name and relationship to the District before you make public comment. I'll go in person and then I'll see if anybody online wishes to make comment. As usual, we want to maintain an environment of mutual respect and civility. We've done an outstanding job of that, for the most part over the past couple of years, especially related to COVID-19 related issues. As a reminder, no attacks upon individuals or their motives, no abusive language, defamatory language, or insulting language. And again, this is a school Board meeting, so please address the school Board regarding issues the school Board has jurisdiction over. So, with that said, this is the time for 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. So, do we have any general public comment this evening?

Ms. Amy Friez commented. I am a teacher at Helena Middle School, and I am a parent of two students at Helena High School. I came tonight to congratulate you for Board Appreciation Month. I hope you all have a great month. I wanted to talk about some of the great things that are happening at Helena Middle School, especially in and around our library since that is where I spend a lot of my time. I'm really delighted that we've been able to get kids back in person. The library was a lonely place for quite a while when we were all home and we're happy to see that the library is back and kids are back and they are reading more than ever, which has been kind of an interesting side effect I think of COVID. Maybe they got tired of their devices and went to a book every once in a while, which was fantastic. We are seeing a lot of kids engaging in activities in our Makerspace on a weekly basis. They are coming in and working with circuitry, doing all kinds of activities, making things, creating robots, painting, and doing arts and crafts. They are getting a chance to socialize again, which is fantastic because they had a break from that for a long time. Now they're able to sit and make things together and we love to see that. I also wanted to express appreciation for the book vending machine that we have. We have been using it as part of our Bob Pawsitive Program that we have at Helena Middle School. The kids have been loving being able to

take their Bob Pawsitives and exchange those for a token to buy a book from the vending machine. It's been great to see kids being motivated by books, as a librarian that makes me pretty happy. It's been nice to see the kids back. They've been happy to be back, and they've been engaging again. I'm happy to see that kids are thriving in some of those settings that we had them in before COVID, I wanted to make you aware that we're seeing that and thank you for that.

Ms. Robyn Mohs commented. Happy New Year and congratulations for School Board Month. I'm going to start with some non-COVID comments and the COVID comments that I'm going to make don't pertain necessarily to any agenda items coming up. So just want to put that disclaimer in there. I'm hearing there are Smarter Balance scores. We have some parents looking for those, so we'd like to see those turned in and relinquished to the families. We do want to see education become priority again, so let's get there. I know that teachers are working really hard on that. I know last month there was some concern about parents not knowing that their kids were struggling, and so I hope that there are good measures in place for teachers to be able to communicate with the parents on the struggling. I know that last month there was discussion from the Teaching and Learning Committee, and it had to do with weekly the kids that are struggling have some weekly scores they're keeping an eye on. Is that correlating over to the parents? I hope that teachers are able to keep up with that. I can't imagine how much time that would take. I understand there is a Curriculum Review Committee. Is there a way to find out who's on that committee? Parents, teachers, curriculum sellers for lack of a better term. Another bullet point I have here is making sure we're having appropriate conversations when it comes to gender struggles around the kids and their teachers. We need to make sure that the conversation is not just out there, it should be more private, and it should be focused toward having the kids talk to their parents, if not parents, maybe the counselor and I hope that counselors have policies where they need to let the parents know, pretty quickly that there's conversations around that. We want to get back to just conversations about education. We're done talking about COVID. We are done talking about cases, testing, and vaccines. Helena Elementary Schools received \$12,499,079 to the elementary schools and \$5,801,929 to the high schools. I have a feeling that's why we keep talking about COVID. We are getting a bunch of money. I understand that there needs to be a plan submitted to the government every six months, and I say stop submitting that and stop receiving this kind of money. You should stop talking about COVID and get back to our jobs and get back to focusing on education.

Ms. Tammy Stefanik commented. Good evening, Chairman and members of the Board. I just have two comments. One is regarding New Business-Policies for First Reading, Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities. It looks like you want to add a sentence, "COVID-19 vaccine status will not be used as a basis to deny or allow equal opportunity to education." I would like to make a recommendation to remove the word COVID-19. The reason is because I'm thinking this comes from House Bill 702, which makes it discriminatory to discriminate based on vaccine status. It would be better read if it just said vaccine status will not be used as a basis, because House Bill 702 is in reference to all vaccinations. So, that's just a recommendation, I used to write policy, and I think it would be helpful to remove the word COVID-19. Secondly, in the past when I have not been able to attend in person, I have emailed comments. The only time I saw my comments in the meeting minutes from the school Board meeting was when I asked specifically that they be added to the meeting minutes. Secondly, I have heard in multiple meetings since last August, that you guys always receive a lot of emails and comments about things that you were making decisions on. I would like to have clarification. If email is being used as part of your decision-making process as Board of Trustees, at what point do you determine that email is a part of public record? My understanding is if I'm at this meeting, and I'm

providing comment, that is part of the public record. In the cases that I have asked for it to be added, it was added to the meeting minutes. I would just like to have full transparency. If there are emails and other parents have opinions regarding what is happening with our school District and what is happening in the schools, that it becomes a part of the public record if it's in reference to a meeting.

There were no further general public comments. The Board of Trustees moved on to discuss New Business-Items for Information: First Reading.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items For Information: First Reading

1. 3417 Communicable Diseases
2. 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission
3. 2085 Graduation Requirements
4. 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities
5. 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers
6. 9035 Capital Assets

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Typically, when we consider policies, whether it's a new policy or a revision to a policy, it usually receives two readings before the full Board. It usually originates in the Policy Committee, and once the Policy Committee feels like it's ready to go, they would send it to the full Board for first reading. So, these six policies are here for the first reading, we are not taking any action on them tonight, and that's why we don't offer public comment on them. Trustees will then typically give input to the Policy Committee for their consideration. The Policy Committee will then take these policies that have received their first reading before the full Board, discuss them, consider making changes, and once they're ready to go they send it back to the full Board for second reading. That's typically where the Board is poised to take action and either amend the policy or implement the policy if it's new policy. At that time, per Montana statute, we will give the community an opportunity to provide public comment, because our obligation in each of our meetings is twofold regarding public comment. One is, before we take any Board action, we have to give the community an opportunity to provide public comment on the action items that we're contemplating action on. Then in addition to that, we have to offer general public comment, which is for things that are not on the agenda. With that I will welcome Ms. Ridgway up to the podium to run through all six of these policies for the Board, and then Trustees if you have any questions or want to offer any comments for consideration by the Policy Committee, please do so.

Ms. Barb Ridgway commented. Policy 3417 Communicable Diseases and Policy 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission are policies recommended by the Montana School Board Association, and both are intended just to reiterate our practice around health and safety. Policy 3417 reiterates a lot of the practice we have in place around communicable disease and the right to privacy and the fact that we can exclude children or staff with a communicable disease, if necessary, or those with a compromised immune system. For example, a few years ago, we were working with a potential measles outbreak. If

we had one in our schools, we would have excluded anyone who hadn't had the measles vaccination, and if we had children with compromised immune systems, we could have excluded them to. Fortunately, we didn't have measles, which we were grateful for. So, this policy reinforces our practice and both policies address health and safety. Policy 5230 focuses more on training our staff, which we do. We address blood borne pathogens and our nurses do that training for staff, and we reiterate the importance of hand washing and healthy hand hygiene behavior. We will now move on to Policy 2085 Graduation Requirements. The change you see here is based on a new statute passed in the last session. It allows a student who has experienced an educational disruption to potentially graduate with the number of credits required by the State Board of Public Education, which is 20, versus the 23 required by the Helena Public School District. So, for the purposes of this policy, educational disruption could mean homelessness, being involved with the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, it could be a medical or mental health crisis, or another qualifying disruption. It has to occur between grades nine and twelve. This is an effort to help students who have some kind of crisis get a high school diploma. We will now move on to Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities. This is an existing policy, and the only addition is on lines eight and nine, required by recent legislation, particularly House Bill 702. We will take this back to the committee. Policy 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers aligns our practice with Commercial Driver's License Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse. This is an existing policy with additions on lines 52 through 55, which allows the District to do testing as long as it complies with all regulations, both federal, state, and local. It establishes that a breath test can only validate for alcohol not for drugs. If you go to lines 162 through 175 you see the information that's required to be reported to the Clearinghouse. On lines 191 through 195, it establishes that we have to comply with what the Clearinghouse requires. Policy 9035 Capital Assets is an existing policy that has an addition due to recent legislation. It states on lines 18 and 19 that the District will identify anticipated improvements or projects, in any resolution required to pass a permissive levy.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. I really appreciate Barb, and her expertise and calmness. As you will see in Policy 3417 and Policy 5230, there is a discussion about female sanitary products that didn't seem to fit with the communicable diseases, so those were stricken from the policy information.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. For Policy 2085, can COVID constitute as an educational disruption?

Ms. Ridgway replied that it potentially could.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review the Consent Action Items.

B. Consent Action Items

2. Approval of Personnel Actions
3. Approval of Warrants
4. Approval of Out of District Attendance Agreement

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve our Consent Action Items. I would like to note that we pulled out Consent Action Item number one, the Approval of the 12.14.21 Board Meeting Minutes, and we will consider that individually. So, do we have a motion to approve the Consent Action Items?

Motion: Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the consent action items two through four. John McEwen, Trustee, seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review Items for Action.

C. Items for Action

1. 1905 Student, Staff, and Community Health and Safety Needs
2. 3050 Student Discipline
3. 7063 Indoor Air Quality
4. 7064 Water Supply and Wastewater
5. Approval of 12.14.21 Board Meeting Minutes

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We will consider four individual policies for implementation and then we will finish up with our December 14th meeting minutes.

Ms. Barb Ridgway commented. Policy 1905 is an existing policy which is modified on lines 27 through 33. With this modification the Board authorizes the Superintendent to implement a requirement for face coverings to be worn in any or all District schools, not just K-8, should conditions warrant. So, the significant change is authorizing the Superintendent to make that decision for all schools, not just the K-8 schools, which was the prior language.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. You recall that we currently have a Declaration of Emergency for the District through June 30th, 2022. Alongside that we have our 1900 series policies, and they're really intended to be temporary in order to respond to the Declared Emergency which is the COVID-19 pandemic. So, 1905 is one such policy. One of the unique things about our 1900 series policies is that we authorized in one of those policies that we can make changes to them first reading before having to do two readings. We authorized ourselves to make changes quickly in response to the changing dynamics of the situation. I think no one intends for these 1900 series policies to be in place forever. They are temporary by nature, and they are intended to be dissolved when we dissolve our Declaration of Emergency. So, given the situation we find ourselves in with Omicron in our county, in our state, in our country, and in our world, I asked to put this on the agenda and asked the Administration to put together a recommendation around potentially broadening the Superintendent's authority to implement a District mandate. Everybody here understands we do not currently have a mask mandate, and if we were to adopt these particular amendments, we would not have a mask mandate. This will simply broaden the Superintendent's authority to implement a mask mandate, either District wide or potentially at specific grade levels, but he would have that authority and flexibility to do that, District wide, K through 12. If we have a motion to adopt these proposed amendments, I'd like to

consider that first. If we have additional amendments after that made from the floor, I'd like to consider those afterwards. If we get a motion and a second, at that point, I will then go ahead and offer an opportunity for public comment. Anybody who wants to give public comment on this 1905 Policy, that would be fair game, it wouldn't need to be specific to these proposed amendments. It could just be anything that has to do with Policy 1905. Do we have a motion?

Motion: Trustee John McEwen moved to approve the amendments to Policy 1905 as presented. Trustee Libby Goldes seconded the motion.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We will now take Trustee questions, followed by public comment, then Trustee discussion, followed by a vote. Do we have any questions?

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. We are removing lines 27 and 28, which talks about rates of transmission, and I would like to know your reasoning behind that.

Ms. Ridgway commented. It gives us more flexibility with the metric going forward in consultation with St. Peter's Health, Lewis and Clark Public Health, and other health care providers.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. One of the considerations when removing that language was to make it simpler.

Board Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. This whole COVID process has been a learning event for all of us. We might have a high transmission rate in our community, but we don't see it happening in the schools, or the reverse. Or perhaps we must look at it because we don't have enough staff to run our schools and it looks like we might be closing down. That could be a last try to keep all the kids in school. So, there's so many other factors and I think it just brings it down to a local level where we can look at what's happening in our school District and do the best thing instead of relying on a national number or transmission rate that may or may not reflect what's actually happening with our staff and students.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. I'm just curious about the "should conditions warrant". Is that added verbiage to the original policy?

Ms. Ridgway responded that it is.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh continued. I completely agree with line 27 and 28 removal. I'm really glad that we are not held to that anymore and that we have the ability to read our story in our county and make a decision based off that. I'm also curious about how we're defining "should conditions warrant". In my own personal perspective, I feel that is very vague. What are we attaching that to?

Ms. Ridgway replied. Probably our consultation with local health care providers. It gives us flexibility because of the changing environment we're living in today. That is the goal. It gives us the ability to deal with something we didn't anticipate.

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. I think it is important to know this is all about in person learning and keeping that going. It's about keeping kids in the classroom in front of their regular teacher.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I noticed that it says the Superintendent “will consult with St. Peter’s Health, Lewis and Clark Public Health and other local health providers.” There are sideboards on the decision making, am I correct in that assumption?

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. What we're considering here in this seconded motion is we are giving flexibility to our Superintendent to make the best decision for students and staff to keep our schools open. There is a certain degree of trust that we are exhibiting if we choose to do this. I think we are compelling the Superintendent to consult on a regular basis with St. Peter’s Health, Lewis and Clark Public Health, and other organizations as the Superintendent sees fit. We have strong relationships with these organizations. Our Superintendent meets and talks with both of those organizations on at least a weekly basis, but at times much more frequently. They are true partners in a Superintendent’s decision making. So, what we are kind of baking in, as we so often do in policy, is what our practices actually are.

Trustee John McEwen commented. As I think about what conditions might be defined as, I think of the rate of infection, availability of staff, and the capacity of the local health community to provide services to those affected by the illness caused by the pandemic. So those are three things that come to mind that might help guide Rex and his professional ability to discern the unknown.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point, I'll go ahead and call for public comment regarding Policy 1905.

Public Comment: Heidi Keaster commented. Thank you for listening to my vents and at times my tone is very rude, and I'd like to apologize. My question is this. Do we think cloth masks work? So, if they do, why did we post on some of our Facebook pages that cloth masks don't work? If they don't work why does CNN, NBC, and all the other places say they don't work either? If they don't work, then why are we going to put them on our kids? I'm just trying to come to a place of logic. If we put them on our kids and then we're not, we are not being honest with our kids. If they do work, then why aren't they working? It's like, are we going to use this form of contraception if it doesn't work? I don't think masking is the answer. I think we need to stop acting like it is. I want to trust you all and the responses that I get are actually heartfelt. They are, and they want to do the best for the kids. But this isn't about your answers. This isn't about you. It's about having kids trust us. So, we put on masks that don't work. I don't know what the answer is. I know you all want to help, but I don't think masking is the answer. We can't close schools down, because how are the nurses going to work? Why don't we offer remote to the ones that want it? Can we do that? What are some other solutions? If we mask, then you're not being honest to our kids because cloth doesn't work. We don't want to close the schools down. All the ones that traveled probably brought COVID back. So, then we're going to make the underprivileged suffer because of all the ones that got to travel. My friends that live in New York say that they are one hundred percent masking and one hundred percent mandating vaccinations, and it didn't work. The rates are still high. They're one hundred percent masking everywhere, and the rates are high.

Ms. Robyn Mohs commented. I have four kiddos and we have used various forms of school throughout the community for many years. My daughter is graduating this week from the Access Program. She is a half a year early, and I'm really excited about that. On line 32, I understand that the goal is to consult with healthcare professionals but why aren't you consulting with parents? I remember in months past that the conversation around masks had to do with vaccine availability. It's available. I don't know if that needs to be put in there somewhere as a consideration like Trustee McEwen mentioned some list items to consider. So, vaccine percent in the community. In the Superintendent Report he got to visit some schools this week, and I thought how fun was it to see a bunch of faces and hear the conversations with them and see the smiles again. I just want to remind you how good it is to see each other's faces. Also, you know whether you want to wear a mask or not, that's fine. But should you mandate it upon all? I know in our state, we can't mandate the vaccine, specifically the COVID-19 shot. Why would you want to push that or masks again on everyone? On line 31 "may also" was crossed out to become "will". That doesn't sound like flexibility or a choice. I want to remind you of the comments you guys already made about our numbers have already been high while we've been masking. If we took the per capita numbers of East Helena cases with Helena, and East Helena is not mandating masks, we're having great success with having very few cases.

Ms. Brandi Swingle commented. I'm a parent of two elementary school kids in the school District, I also have a toddler and I'm pregnant with another one. I'm seeing Omicron framed as less severe, but I want to caution everybody against thinking that way, because that's not true for everybody. COVID is a disease that has always discriminated against certain parts of our population, particularly the elderly and the immunocompromised, and as we're learning against pregnant people as well, something that affects me directly. I'm worried that in framing it as something less severe even in the midst of a surge, we are treating the lives of immunocompromised people as acceptable losses in the effort to prioritize comfort of people who are not a fan of masking and who see it as a matter of personal preference. For my family it is not a matter of personal preference. I wanted to talk about why I feel that way a little bit. In addition to the higher hospitalization rate of infants-I have a 16-month-old-the stillbirth rates have increased drastically with recent variants. They doubled with COVID and then doubled again with Delta. That number has not shown any evidence of decreasing with Omicron. It threatens pregnancies by damaging the placenta, which is something necessary for a fetus to receive nutrients. I'm sure that there are a lot of people who are pro-lifers, and I'd really like to see that reflected even when it's inconvenient, as well. We don't have a lot of ICU beds in the state. So, when I look at whether or not I should support masking in the schools, it's not a matter of whether my kids enjoy it or whether I'm a particularly big fan. It's because I don't really see the risk of having to explain to my kids the loss of either their baby brother or of this pregnancy, a matter of personal preference. My philosophy with parenting is I must know for sure that I've done everything in my power always to protect my kids from hard things, at least from the worst consequences of those hard things. This is a really small thing that I can do to protect my kids from having to deal with those realities. I don't see a good reason at least to not do that.

Ms. Tammy Stefanik is a parent, taxpayer, community member, family member, and she

watches the meetings. Ms. Stefanik commented. I would like to say I am not in favor of these changes to this policy, specifically on line 31 where it says, “will consult”. I think, “may consult” is better to put in there. I've also looked at some stats. I find it interesting that we've used stats the last two years incessantly now. Stats are only as good as how you look at them and they can be manipulated, and they can be looked at in very different ways. All of a sudden, we're not really looking at stats, which I find is interesting. So, I'm going to go ahead and give you some stats. So earlier this fall, we had about a 1% difference in infection rate between our high schools and our elementary schools here in the Helena School District. That was with our high schools being masks optional and the accessibility of vaccines. So, I find that it's interesting that our elementary students had a higher rate of COVID transmission or positivity rates, while being masked and while not having access to vaccines. Currently 51% of the cases in Lewis and Clark County are breakthrough cases. So that means those individuals had the vaccine and now all of a sudden, they got it. There are currently seven cases in Lewis and Clark County that are hospitalized. Seven. I don't know what kind of variant it is, but there are only seven cases. I think that's a really positive number and that the positivity rate may be high because Omicron is a highly contagious variant. It is pretty clear based on the numbers and based on the folks that I know who supposedly have it or had it, that it is very mild and it's more like a cold. Now I don't mean to say that is the case with everyone, but I think our numbers kind of reflect that. Vaccination rates if you look in Lewis and Clark County, almost three fourths of the entire population are partially vaccinated, and about 60% are fully vaccinated. I also want to talk a little bit about Great Falls. I have a friend whose children are going to Great Falls, and they have been mask required since the start of this last school year this fall. They've only been mask optional since January 3rd, up until they closed the schools. I think that's also in alignment with what we're seeing here from metrics in Lewis and Clark County. I think it's still important that it be optional, and I also am a little bit concerned about what the definition of “should conditions warrant” means. That's such a subjective term.

Mr. Stephen Begley is a parent of two children in elementary school here in the District. Mr. Begley commented. Good evening, Chairman, and members of the Board. It is the national month of recognition for school Boards. You guys have a challenging job that you do incredibly, and you should be recognized for the work that you do. It's important work and I thank you for your service. As far as this specific policy goes, I would be in favor of any and all tools that we may have to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within our schools. The schools in Great Falls had to shut down for a week because of their high case numbers affecting school students and staff. As somebody who has two professionals working in our household, it is a big challenge to have those situations occur where things go digital and online. There are folks and kids out there that struggle, and I think it's best to see what we can do and use all the tools that we have to make sure that kids continue to stay in school. I think this is a policy in a good direction, and I hope that Omicron is not with us long and that eventually cases get to a point where we can all take our masks off for an extended period of time. But until that day, I think we need to empower our local officials to do what they can to protect our kids. Thank you very much.

There were no additional public comments on this issue.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you everyone for your public comment on this. I appreciate it. Trustees, do you have any comments?

Trustee John McEwen commented. There are lots of things to consider K through 12 including capacity of staff to ensure compliance with the policy without causing a lot of turmoil. I'm in favor of the changes to the policy.

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. The language has been brought up on lines 30 and 31. It's very hard to anticipate everything. We have hired the Superintendent specifically because we thought he had the ability to do the job. At the same time, I just want everyone to know just because it says that, it does not mean that Trustees are not having conversations with the Superintendent. I did this morning. He sat down and explained to me his entire thought process so that I can understand it. So, we are continuing to do our own due diligence and making sure that we understand the policies, if there's things that we don't agree with, that we're voicing those and we're having those discussions. I just want everyone to know that we continue to exercise our duty as Trustees. The second point is, with the positivity rate between the schools with masked and unmasked, we are relying on data where parents are voluntarily telling us the reason the child is absent. They could be absent and be positive. They could be absent for the flu. There are several cases where we simply don't know the reason why they're absent. So, it makes it very challenging to start comparing them because we just don't have the data to do that. So, I can understand why parents wonder about that. Given how the reporting is done, I don't view that as a viable tool. So, I just want the public to know that.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I support the policy change. When we tied the decision making to the metrics it really made sense, and I supported it all along, but COVID has changed. Vaccination has changed everything, and what it means to get a positive test today versus what it meant to get a positive test in August of 2020 is completely different. We are not a 100% vulnerable population anymore, and if we had kept to those metrics we would never get out of masks. There is an educational cost to masking and if it buys you something it is worth it, but if it doesn't, then it's not. That is kind of the decision that we have placed in our Superintendent, and he weighs the benefits of every educational decision that he must make. It's not just masks, this is just one more thing that he and his staff balance to give our children their right to their full potential. It's all part of the same thing that everyone at Lincoln does every day. I know speaking for myself, but I haven't heard anyone involved in Helena education differ. The goal is and always has been this school year to keep the doors open, to keep kids in school in person and to plant a seed of progress in every inch of soil and I think that this allows that to happen.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. In talking about the rates of infections in our schools, we don't know where the children or the teachers may acquire COVID. It could be at home, or it could have been at an activity, and one reason for wearing masks is to not transmit it to other people. Many people are asymptomatic, and the information about COVID has been discussed, and it changes all the time. Our goal is to have our students in their class with their teacher. That is one thing that has become apparent about the impact of COVID is the detriment to education, the emotional wellbeing, and the food security of many of our students when they are not in our schools. I appreciate the comments that were made about using the tools that we have to keep our students in schools. However, mandating something is a difficult situation to be in, in terms of working with a set metric, and that's why I like the idea of having the Superintendent have the flexibility to be able to base the decisions on what's going on in our schools

and our community. However, also consulting with our local health experts and providers. I will be supporting this policy.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. I have some struggles and I've been trying to be reserved to hear other opinions and perspectives on this. It's probably not a surprise that I have reservations with this policy. I did the last time when we first went through this. I totally agree that lines 27 and 28 need to go. I understand we need to have the flexibility. I understand the reasoning for putting "should conditions warrant" in there. I still don't know that I'm 100% comfortable with how varied that is for both unmasking and masking. We have community members on both sides of that. When we had the rate connection there, or at least the substantial high etc., we could tie that and support that to something and say, "okay, we're in this phase or we're in this mandate because...". That didn't tell the story of Lewis and Clark County. We were at a point where we had low admissions, we had beds available at St. Peter's, and our rates were trending down and not up. It was great, so let's not tie it to a specific number, but now I feel like it's not tied to anything. So, what is the decision? So, you're going to talk to St. Peter's, and you go and talk to Lewis and Clark County because it says that you have to. What is your decision based off of now? Anticipation of how many teachers might be out because we have a surge? That's where the vague piece for me comes in because it's not tied to anything and then we can't support it with the community when we make a decision on something. This is masking. This isn't closing schools. Am I correct that closing school in in a different policy, or that it's somewhere else, because I was reading through this, and it doesn't say parameters about closing school?

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. It's interesting that you mention that because our Superintendent currently has the authority to switch into remote instruction at any time he wants. Most Superintendents and most Districts based upon their existing policies would have this authority anyway. But what we did, is we said this is a controversial issue, and this is an issue that a lot of people in our community care about, and so we're going to address it explicitly in a temporary emergency policy, and that is what we have done in 1905. We trust our Superintendent, or at least grant him the authority to go remote if he deems fit, but we don't necessarily have a lot more conditions for him to require a mask mandate.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. The mask mandate, from what I recall from fall conversations, was based on the availability of vaccines. What I recall about making that decision and leaving out high school was around that. When we made that decision, we knew Delta was coming. We did not have very much information about it. So, what has changed now is we have vaccinations available now for essentially all groups, we have clinics available, and we have testing available. Masking is still optional for those who feel like they're being compromised in one way or another or choose to wear masks. Is it just coming from schools? It was commented about how we don't know where it came from. If you looked around our community, people are not masking. On our campuses high school students, majority speaking, are not masking. When we look at the rates of our high schools combined, they were still less combined than what one middle school was. That was masking versus not masking. So, I think that's a little bit where my hesitation comes in because we're going to have this variant, and we're going to have more variants. Is that what we're making the decision on whether or not to mask? I feel like there are some contradictory things happening there as well, and I think for me leaving it K through 8, maybe because there hasn't been a lot of time for vaccination, as maybe it was when we decided that for the high schools. That would be a consideration or something that I would support, but certainly adding in high schools to this policy, is something I'm very uncomfortable with.

Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. Does Policy 1905 sunset at the end of June?

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. It's intended to sunset when we end our Declaration of Emergency. As it stands now, our Declaration of Emergency will end June 30, 2022. We could end earlier, or we could extend it, and then technically, we will take a separate action to dissolve those 1900 series policies.

Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. The other point that I have is whether it says, "should conditions warrant" or you "will consult", I don't think that affects the actionability or the way that this administration is set up. I don't think that would change the outcome in any way. I think that we have a great relationship with other health professionals in the community. I know that Superintendent Weltz communicates with them regularly, daily, almost. I think we have a Superintendent that we've recruited and that we trust in, and of course, conditions are going to have to warrant before he does something. I don't worry about the verbiage; I would vote for it either way. I would vote for it whether those items were in or out because I don't think it would have any meaningful difference. Looking back to what happened in August when we voted, I think that there is a different perspective from a lot of the Board members. I trust Superintendent Weltz to use this when there's a really tough situation such as we barely have enough staffing, and maybe we put masks on to try to keep our schools open. I'm not looking at this as something that would be taken lightly or something that would be implemented under more minor conditions. The fact that we're hoping it will be somewhat temporary, I would be in favor of amending it in either direction, still voting for it, and I would have always supported the ability to mask at any level should that be necessary.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. Considering the actions we took in the past, for me, something has changed since we last considered it. It is the number of breakthrough infections that I have heard of in people who were fully vaccinated, had their booster shot, wore masks, and took many precautions. Our goal here is keeping our schools open, with our students with their teacher. I think we put our teachers at risk if we don't consider the fact that when they get exposed, they can't be there. For me that is the value of this amended policy, to give the Superintendent another tool to keep our schools open.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. I agree, I like how you say a tool, because that's exactly how this should be looked at, as a tool to use. At the same time, we have not had to close any of our high schools. It has not gotten to a point where we've had issues with staffing or anything for all this time, and we had spikes. I was looking back at the data, and I think it was October 18th we had an extremely large spike in the community, and it declined fairly quickly. As far as I know, we had schools open, and kids were going to school. To me there hasn't been enough data for me to say that we need to include our high schools in this. We are nearly in the middle of January, and then you have February, and March, and then we're coming out of that whole season to begin with. We are considering that possibly sometime in June, we wouldn't have this active anyways. But that's also not a guarantee. We still have vaccines, we haven't had to close the schools down, and the high school rates over time have been extremely reasonable. Clearly, students and staff do not want to wear masks in the high schools. I have been on campus, I have been to events, I have been during school times, and I've been after school. Teachers are also not wearing masks for a large majority, and our students certainly are not. Parents are not with sporting events and with performances. My son had a wonderful orchestra performance, and my daughter had a beautiful band performance for Christmas time. I cannot even tell you if I saw five

people masked in the audience, obviously, you know, the students were. I'm still torn. I'm hearing a lot of perspective. I'm hearing a lot of information, but when we keep coming back to saying that we're looking at tangible numbers and we're looking at tangible data, I don't see it.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. This is high quality dialogue that we're having, and I'm very thankful for it, and I think our community is to. At the end of the day, we can share our rationales and we can ask questions and we can kind of go back and forth, but we need to vote in what we believe is in the best interests of students first, and all our stakeholders.

Trustee John McEwen directed a comment towards the Student Representatives. If suddenly we have a huge spike in high school and the Superintendent mandates a mask for high school kids, how do you think that would go over? Would there be full compliance? Would there be arguments?

Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative, commented. I think at Helena High that there would be some resistance. I think that a good number of students would not care either way and would comply, but there would also be a large number that would not be in favor of it.

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. I think at Capitol, there would be more resistance than there was in the past simply because it would seem like we're going back, and we don't want to go back, and we just want to move past it. I think for the most part even if we didn't want to, I think there would be majority compliance.

Trustee John McEwen commented. Do we know the vaccination rate of our student population, or is that a county number?

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. It is a county number.

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. Twelve to nineteen is 55%, and five to eleven is about 28% with their first shot.

Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative, commented. I would just add with all the students I encounter every day the majority of the students that are masking, to my knowledge, are vaccinated.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Well, it's interesting to me that the observation of people in our community, whether it's in our schools or in our community, whether they are masking or aren't masking, it's interesting to me that people use that on both sides of the argument. You can say that our community members aren't masking voluntarily and so that must mean that they don't want to or that even if we mask in the District, if we're not masking in the community around the District, what difference will it make. On the other hand, you have the observation that people are masking voluntarily. Well, that's exactly why we need a mandate, because if it's important to do, sometimes it's important to require people to do things. I understand that people are confused and tired of this and I'm certainly in that camp. I appreciate those who have pointed out and reminded us that this is a novel Coronavirus. We are into year two and it doesn't seem like it should be so, but I think what the Omicron variant is presenting to us is a unique challenge that, quite frankly, has me pretty rattled. If Helena turns out to be this exception, this one magical place in the country that doesn't follow the trajectory of the rest of the

country, that's great, but I don't think we're going to be that lucky. If you look at case spikes and hospitalization spikes on a chart it is surrounding us and is coming in towards us. The case counts in Gallatin County far exceed the highest point they ever were during Delta. Missoula is behind them, and we're kind of in the middle of the pack. I think the next week to three weeks are going to be extraordinarily challenging. To me, that's humbling, in that it causes me to almost go back to basics and consider this anew. If I had a nickel for every time I told somebody how proud I was of our nurses for the rapid testing program they've stood up for this community. It is an incredible effort, and it is preventing infection in our schools more than I think we'll ever give it credit for. That is a huge factor that the Department of Health and Human Services is out of those tests, and we don't know when they're going to get more in stock, which means we don't know when we're going to get more. That alone is enough to reset your perspective. Quite frankly, I'm confident in the safety of our students and staff right now for a lot of different reasons, including that rapid testing program, including the HEPA filters that we have in classrooms, including the vaccination rate among our staff, which of course I don't know but if you look at national averages, it's really quite high and I'm thankful for that. I'm worried about their families, in particular, those who are elderly, those who are unvaccinated, or those who have other risk factors for serious illness. If you look at this from an individualized perspective, that's not going to make much sense, but when you look at it from the perspective that we have families, we have social circles, we have workplaces, and we have communities, it starts to make a lot of sense. Here's the two bottom line factors, and I trust that Superintendent Weltz is focused on these too. First and foremost, keeping our schools open no matter what the risk COVID-19 presents to our students and our staff. If they are quarantined and if they are isolated, they cannot be in our schools. If there's one consensus thing we all seem to agree on in this community, is we need to keep our schools open. That's about keeping our staff free of COVID, or at least even slowing it down, and preventing everyone from getting it at the same time. That is what is bringing organizations to their knees. If our staff are healthy our schools are open, but if our students are positive, and they must isolate at home, they're not in person. The second thing is our hospitals. Our hospitalization numbers do look pretty good right now, but hospitalization is always a lagging indicator. I'm concerned that if our cases skyrocket like they are in other places in Montana and other places in our country, that we're going to see our hospital fill up, and we have heard from our hospital, that they have staffing issues of their own, some related to COVID, some not. If we pack our hospital with COVID patients like we did in the worst of the Delta surge, that doesn't just affect people with COVID, that could affect one of our students. If they get hurt on the playground and they need to go to the ER that could prevent them from getting the care they need. Or one of our teachers has scheduled for a procedure that is going to keep them healthy and keep them in the classroom but that gets delayed because our hospitals are full of COVID patients. I am very scared of those things occurring and whether we amend this policy or not, whether Superintendent Weltz implements a mask mandate or not, I know that the bottom line that he's looking at is how do we keep our schools open and how do we keep our hospital ready to serve our community? The last thing I'll say is quite frankly, I am skeptical about the efficacy of cloth masks, especially in response to Omicron. I think you are seeing Omicron has happened so fast, and we don't have a lot of good studies that have been done. I don't know of any regarding face masks and Omicron. We're kind of in the dark, but you're seeing public health experts the past several weeks say we need higher quality masks. I read an article just today that they anticipate the CDC to come out with a recommendation for everyone. I mean, it's important. I am incredibly proud, again, of Ms. Ridgeway and our nurses. We have surgical masks, which are more effective than cloth, not as effective as a respirator, and we have respirators, some that should fit most children well. We have those in stock thanks to our partnership with DPHHS, we have them in our schools, and that is great. So, I support this amendment to this policy because COVID-19 has thrown

another curveball, and I think Superintendent Weltz needs all the tools he can get. If he chooses to implement a mask mandate, which I hope he does, then will it make a difference? I don't know. But if we have to close a school, or if our hospital says we're full, I'm not going to be able to forgive myself if I can't say we tried everything we could. My final recommendation is Superintendent Weltz, if you do at any point end up exercising this authority, is that you strongly consider the feasibility of requiring at least a surgical mask for all our students and staff. That means we would need to be able to provide them. I can't speak to that ability. I think that is important and I would urge you to consider that if you move forward with this. Trustees, any other questions, or comments before we vote?

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I really appreciate this conversation. Our whole society has been in an endless conversation for years about how to prevent COVID and how do we live with it. I agree with you on the cloth masking. I think that Omicron is the thing for me that introduced the change to my decision making from last summer. It's a real change. The RNA of the virus changed, and the notion of what a breakthrough case is. There was kind of this naivety, that vaccination was going to be like a shield and that a breakthrough case was some kind of failure and that's not true. I mean, a quote unquote, breakthrough case is vaccination and your immune system, working robustly, and it's also what keeps you out of the hospital, but that doesn't keep you from getting sick. I think it will be very temporary. I think this is completely different than 2020 where we didn't know what the future held. These spikes go up, they rattle human organizations, and then they drop. That's why I want our Superintendent to be able to respond to something that's going to be brief and intense, and then pull us back to a place where we are not in masks. I would prefer our students not be in masks. I also wanted to say something about the Superintendent. Since we don't know what the future holds, somehow this empowers him more than some would want. This isn't the only policy that our Superintendent follows. It's just the one that we're talking about tonight. He follows every single policy in our policy manual, and he also follows the law. Executing something that has an educational cost for no reason is already against the policy. So, I think it's important to remember that we're just talking about 1905 tonight but that's not everything that governs him. It's a difficult, open-ended decision-making process but I think being able to robustly respond is better than not being able to robustly respond. Even though cloth masking, which is the most actionable thing we've been able to do, isn't going to prevent the absenteeism that Omicron has brought to every community that it has visited. I think it's worth giving our Superintendent every tool that he needs.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. I'm in favor of Policy 1905 as it is written. I think it's just a tool that gives our Superintendent, no matter who that Superintendent might be in the future, gives that Superintendent the flexibility to react to an unknown and an unseen condition that might appear in the future. I am particularly concerned about different variations. The cloth mask may not be effective against Omicron, but it might be the best tool against a different variant. So, wherever we can use it, however we can use it, it's going to happen, this thing is not going to end with Omicron. I guarantee you, it will not. We've got a great number of people experiencing Omicron and people are thinking we are getting herd immunity from that. Well, we're not, because every person who gets it goes through a mutational stage and even if they don't express any exterior, physical characteristics of having the COVID virus, it still mutates within them. If they come up with a variant composite of mutations that is receptive to the propagation of that mutation or that variation, then it is just going to blow up again. We have not seen the end of it. There's no way when this is as prolific as it is throughout the world, throughout the entire Earth, that we have seen the end of it with Omicron. So, we have got to have all the tools that we can possibly have. This just gives the school Superintendent another tool to use for

unseen things in the future.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. I just want it to be known that with the discussion I've participated in, it has nothing to do with not trusting you or feeling like just out of the blue you're going to decide to mask. I would like that to be understood. I have full faith in you, and I have full faith that you will make decisions to the best of your ability with consulting with other people. I also agree that we are not done with variants. This is just another variant, and we continue to have more of them emerging, and we're going to continue to have more that emerge. So then what does that mean? Does that mean in June we still say we are in a state of emergency? Are we still going to have our 1900s in place because we have four or five more variants that are coming? So, I think for me, we haven't had to close schools, we have vaccinations, and we have staff who are going back home after not wearing masks all day. That's a choice that they're currently able to make and are choosing. Same thing with our students. The large majority is choosing not to mask, they're going home to their home environment after not having done that. So, I hope that it's clear that we're also not saying, "no, you can't wear a mask". If you have concerns and you want to wear an N95, or you want to wear a cloth, or you want to wear surgical, do that. Protect yourself that way. We know that Omicron is here. We know that we haven't seen the tip top of it, and it's going to continue to surge, and I understand that part of it too. At the same time, we have gone all this time through the Delta, and through surges, and have not had to close schools. I don't believe that putting masks on is going to prevent school closure. This is not removing or adding authority to be able to do that. I'll probably eat crow if we have to close school for two weeks or whatever that might look like but keep that in mind. This is not telling us that we can't close school if we don't have staff or if there are other reasons to do that. I just want to put it out there that we have people making choices to go home to their families, to go out to communities to expose other people currently right now, and we're not having to close and we're seeing minimal numbers for high school.

Superintendent Weltz commented. I've sat here and watched this unfold and I marvel at the experience and the passion. We all want one thing and that's for students to be in school. The daunting responsibility to keep our kids in school, which is not the high watermark, it's keeping kids in school so they can access high quality education. That is where I've been, and that's where my team is at. There is not a day that goes by, and there is not a night that goes by that I don't think about it. More importantly, there's not a day that goes by that I have absolutely not the right answer for this community, because either side is going to cause grief and concern. I cannot make everyone happy; it's not going to happen. I will do this. I promise that I will make decisions, which I always have, not based on an agenda or a party. It's based on kids and our staff, and I will continue to do that. With the advice through our community and through my team, we will make decisions. I will be the first to say not everyone's going to be happy with them. I ask for some grace. Live down the middle, it's short lived and we're going to move on. This Board and my team want to be in a school without a mask at some point. That's what our goal is. We need to get there, but I don't know what the future looks like. So, I would support having another tool that we could use if needed. I don't know what warrant means; it means our staffing, our community health, and our effectiveness in education. There's a lot of variables which change. The matrix in which we're looking for, we can't have because the variables in which affect the matrix change. So, it's very difficult to have a matrix with set numbers when we don't know what the numbers look like, and they change daily. So, this is going to be as we said, for me to make decisions based on good intel from our community, from my team, and from my staff. We will do the best we possibly can.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you Superintendent Wertz. All right, we have a seconded motion on the floor, we have held public comment, and we have had robust discussion. Let's go ahead and vote. So, all those in favor of this amendment to existing emergency Policy 1905 please signify by saying aye. All those opposed.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I need to ask, are there any further motions from the floor regarding Policy 1905?

Motion: Trustee Libby Goldes moved to amend Policy 1905, by striking the language on lines 36 and 37 “for the immediate successive school week by 3:00 p.m. on Friday of the previous week” and changing it to read “no less than 48 hours in advance”.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. So, it would read “In the event it is determined face coverings are required, the Superintendent shall announce the face covering requirement to students, parents, staff, and visitors no less than 48 hours in advance.”?

Trustee Libby Goldes replied. Yes.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. So, the motion on the table is looking at lines 35 through 37. In the event it is determined face coverings are required, the Superintendent shall announce the face covering requirement to students, parents, staff, and visitors no less than 48 hours in advance.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. Is that to cover if there is a midweek decision, that we don't have to wait until Friday to implement on a Monday?

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. Right. Say on Friday no notice was made that masking was going to be required, and then on Monday or Tuesday, whatever was going on seemed to indicate the prudence of wearing masking, that would give the Superintendent more flexibility.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Do we have a second?

Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Alright, so we have a motion by Trustee Goldes and a second by Trustee Armstrong. Do we have any questions for Superintendent Wertz or Ms. Ridgway about the implications or impact of this proposed amendment?

Trustee John McEwen commented. Is this a concept amendment or do you have the specific language?

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Yes, Trustee Goldes stated the specific language.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. In the event it is determined face coverings are required, the Superintendent shall announce the face covering requirement to students, parents, staff, and visitors no less than 48 hours in advance.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Superintendent Weltz, is that clear to you?

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. It is. I would like to state-that is in or out, so if there is a possibility that we are moving away from, we don't have to wait a week until the following Friday.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. My preference would always be that we notify people of either condition as in advance as possible, and at least 48 hours.

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. I agree and I think where this is important obviously for our community and our students but also in recognition of our staff. So, 48 hours, two days, but potentially it would be a little longer so that we have time to prepare our admin to manage coming in and out.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Do we have any in person or online public comment regarding this proposed amendment?

Public Comment: None.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Okay, seeing no public comment, are there any further Board discussions regarding this amendment? Okay, all those in favor please signify by saying aye. All those opposed.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Are there any further motions from the floor on Policy 1905?

There were no further motions regarding Policy 1905.

The Board of Trustees, Superintendent, and Student Representatives took a short break at 8:13 p.m.

The Board of Trustees, Superintendent, and Student Representatives returned from break, and the meeting resumed.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting back to order at 8:26 p.m.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We are going to consider three additional policies and our December 14th meeting minutes. Ms. Ridgway, would you like to introduce us to Policy 3050 Student Discipline?

Ms. Barb Ridgway commented. This is an existing policy and originally the intent was to amend language on lines 71 through 79 due to the statutory changes in the last session. Due to changes in the last session, this new language gives the Superintendent more latitude to look at gun or firearm issues on

a case-by-case basis and not to have to mandate a one-year expulsion. The language states, “the Board will follow federal law for any student who uses, possesses, controls, or transfers a firearm on school property. The Board hereby authorizes the Superintendent to modify the disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis, including eliminating the requirement for expulsion. The administrator may immediately suspend a student if, prior to a hearing, there is cause to believe the student brought a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school. 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”. This I think, is largely to deal with students who have a firearm, for example, in their vehicle after they went hunting and they didn’t take it out. It gives more flexibility to you as a Board and to the Superintendent to look at each case individually, instead of just automatically expelling a student. In discussing this policy, a question was also brought up. When we talk about drugs and drug paraphernalia, on lines 42 and 43, and was that language comprehensive enough. So, it's been expanded to really address all fashion of substances. So, much more comprehensive and robust than our previous language.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you, Barb. Trustees, any questions for Ms. Ridgway, Ms. Goldes, or any other members of the Policy committee?

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. I would like to thank Barb for her stewardship in this area, and for not cringing when we bring up something that could be worded differently. As time goes on, new challenges are presented in the increasing array of products that must be dealt with. So, I really appreciate her understanding what our questions are and then helping make sure that it is presented in the policy in the way that we meant.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. I still have the same concern on lines 77, 78, and 79. This policy is the Student Discipline Policy, so this is the policy by which we are going to discipline students. So, if this were the only sentence in there that says, “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”. So that means that if a student burns the school down, we cannot suspend that student or we cannot expel that student because it says in here that the only way that student can be expelled is if he brought a firearm in school. Somewhere we have got to clarify.

Ms. Ridgway commented. It is under Gun Free Schools, but I do understand what you are saying.

The Board of Trustees discussed other ways the language could be read on lines 77 through 79 to make it clearer. The Board came to the decision that Policy 3050 Student Discipline would go back to the Policy Committee for further review.

Ms. Ridgway moved on to discuss Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality. Ms. Ridgway commented. This is a new policy that is a result of recent administrative rule. This is your second review of this policy.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Ms. Ridgway, does this policy contemplate our use of the HEPA air filters in the classroom? Or does that presumably offer a level of filtration that is higher than is being specified here?

Ms. Ridgway replied. That is correct.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I see, so the policy doesn't compel us to do that, but that is in fact what we are doing. Trustees are there any questions or comments regarding this policy? Okay, is there a motion to adopt this policy?

Motion: Trustee John McEwen moved to adopt Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Do we have any public comment in person or online on this issue?

Public Comment: None.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Any further discussion before we vote Trustees?

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. I don't understand on line 10 the reporting values between 8 and 13. Is there a better way to state that? I have no idea what that is.

Trustee John McEwen commented. It is recommended by the National Air Filtration Association and the EPA.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. What do hospitals require? What do air crafts require? I have nothing to compare it to, and I have no idea what 8 to 13 is.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. So, you are looking for at least a unit of measurement.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. That would help.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Do we know what the National Air Filtration Association's method of measurement is?

Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. Is it MERV?

Ms. Ridgway replied. I would have to look it up.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I think it probably is MERV, because MERV 13 is referenced, but why don't we just send it back and clarify that.

The Board of Trustees determined that Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality would be sent back to the Policy Committee for further review and clarification.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review Policy 7064 Water Supply and Wastewater.

Ms. Ridgway commented. This is a new, required policy, and this is your second viewing of this policy. The Policy Committee made no changes.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Any questions or comments or regarding this policy? Would anyone like to make a motion of approval?

Motion: Trustee John McEwen moved to approve Policy 7064 Water Supply and Wastewater. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. All right, we have a motion by Trustee McEwen and a second from Trustee McKee to approve Policy 7064. Is there any public comment on this issue in person or online?

Public Comment: None.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Any further Board discussion before we vote? All those in favor, please signify by saying aye. All those opposed.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Motion carries unanimously. Thank you very much, Ms. Ridgeway, and thank you to the Policy Committee for all their work. You will recall we pulled the December 14th Board meeting minutes out for individual consideration. My understanding is, Trustee McEwen you noted a couple of changes you would like to make.

Trustee John McEwen replied. Yes. One change is I was not listed as being present at the meeting on the list of who was here, and I was here. Then, on the Budget Committee Report it states that Trustee Terry Beaver gave the report, but I was the one who gave the report. He gave the report in November when I was not here.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you, Trustee McEwen. Trustees, are there any other questions, comments, or corrections to those minutes? Would anyone like to make a motion to approve those minutes with the corrections that Trustee McEwen noted?

Motion: Trustee Libby Goldes moved to approve the December 14th meeting minutes as amended. Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We have a motion by Trustee Goldes and a second by Trustee Hathhorn. Do we have any public comment on this issue in person or online?

Public Comment: None.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Any further Board discussion? All those in favor, please signify by saying aye. All those opposed.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you very much, that concludes our Items for Action. Trustee McEwen thank you for reading those minutes so carefully and finding those two changes. Thank you, Ms. Delvaux, for extraordinary minutes. Truly outstanding. Thank you very much. I know it's a lot of work, especially for these longer meetings. That moves us to Reports. First up we have the Helena Education Association Report from Ms. Jane Shawn.

D. REPORTS

1. Helena Education Association Report

Jane Shawn, President of the Helena Education Association, commented. Last month I recognized two of our new National Board-Certified teachers, and then I didn't know about a third one. So, I did want to make sure that we add to our distinguished list of Board-Certified teachers, Jaydee Zakovi. Jaydee is a special educator at Capitol High School. So, congratulations to Jaydee. This week, I was privileged to accompany Amanda Curtis, who is the Executive Director for the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation, on her visits to deliver some grant money. These are the Karen Cox Memorial Grants run through the Teaching Foundation which is part of the Montana Federation of Public Employees. We visited Nicole Peterson, a kindergarten teacher at Rossiter, who was awarded a grant for a reading program. Kevin Cleary, a music instructor at C.R. Anderson, won an award to purchase tuners and batteries for one of his classes. Brittney McMahon, a special educator at Hawthorne elementary, wrote a grant for her class for stackable stools. Finally, Abby Nyhof, the music teacher at Central Elementary, was awarded a grant to purchase ukuleles. We were fortunate to catch Kevin and Abby when they were teaching their classes. Kevin was actually teaching the class that had helped him write this grant, so they were super excited. Abby was teaching this class full of kindergarteners, and Amanda and I walked in and stood by the door and the kids didn't even look at us, it was amazing. They were so focused on her and what she was doing, and they sang a little song. They were awesomely cute. It was very fun to see that. Then, Amanda and I brought the actual check to the Lincoln Center. We were not able to catch up with Superintendent Weltz, so we went to the Business Office and presented it to Janelle Mickelson. We got all the folks in the Business Office to take a picture with the check. We are anticipating a counteroffer from the District to our retirement incentive proposal that's supposed to happen this week. Then we will be delving into the interest-based bargaining that will happen towards the end of the month with the facilitator from the State Department of Labor and Industry.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you very much, Jane, I appreciate it, and a big round of applause to Mr. Zakovi. Thank you for sharing the accomplishments of the other educators and the grants they won. That is awesome and I appreciate that. Trustees, any comments or questions for Jane? Okay, thank you so much.

2. Budget & Finance Committee Report

Trustee John McEwen commented. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Board. The Budget Committee met last Friday at noon, and we received a report with some significant numbers from Janelle. She gave us a report about the Coronavirus Relief Funding that we have received as of the end of December. There were four buckets of money- ESSER I, the Governor's Relief Fund money, ESSER II, and finally ESSER III.

All four of those gave our District 21.76 million dollars. The last is to be spent by the end of September 30th, 2024. To date, we have spent 12.3 and have encumbered 4.6 million, so there's 4.8 million left. This money has been spent on supplies, staff, and building renovations and such. We had someone send an email and comment that we are being bribed because the reason we're wearing masks is so that we can get this money. We don't have to wear masks to receive this money. We have to spend it according to some criteria, on effects of the virus-with the purchase of equipment, salaries, and supplies, and such. So, very generous on the part of our federal government to give us this money. Secondly, we had the monthly report which is standard reporting on how we're doing on our current year budget, and so far, no crises. Everything is going as planned with current general fund expenditures. This report is in the Budget Committee meeting packet for the January 7th meeting if you care to get further details.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you very much, Trustee McEwen and thank you Ms. Mickelson for the work that it took to put that together. I do appreciate putting it in the agenda packet. I didn't attend that meeting, but I was able to refer to that and it was very informative, so I appreciate it. Trustees, any questions or comments for Trustee McEwen or other members of the Budget and Finance Committee?

Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. This is a lot of money that's dispersed in probably many meaningful ways, but this might be more for Janelle. Are we spending it in ways that we are ready for the cliff when we no longer have this money coming in? Are we able to sustain whatever we have implemented?

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. We knew that bringing on the Academic Coaches was a two-year cycle. Though that is a best practice for our District and helping us through the academic needs, two years from now, we will need to be creative on how we're going to fund that if we do. They were hired as two-year temporary positions, backfilled with temporary positions, knowing that it was from ESSER fund that is not sustainable. That's just going to dry up at some point. A lot of our expenditures were based with the knowledge that this money shall pass. I think for a lot of our spending we knew that was going to be the case.

Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager, commented. I think with this money, we purchased a tremendous amount of technology that we won't need to purchase right away. We already have interventions in our schools, and in our schedules, and this money can be used for that. So, I supplemented. That has to go back into the general fund come 2024. So, we have some work to do before we're going to survive that cliff.

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. I think that the same holds true with summer school. That we have last year's robust Camp Ascension summer school, and this year we have it in the works that it is going to take place again, and that's a considerable cost. So, what does that look like in year three, four and five because it is a success. A lot of good things have happened out of that, but we're going to need to figure out without this supplemental monies, how do we sustain that through the years? The Academic Coaches have priorities including establishing routines for our students that have a lack of learning

coming out of COVID to get them back to grade level as fast as possible. Second of all, building systems that are going to be routine through years; it doesn't take a coach to enact on those systems-that they're a part of the embedded culture of the schools, even when a person is gone. So, we wanted to build systems that could be sustainable through time, but their other main priority was to help teachers get students back to grade level as soon as possible.

3. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

The Board of Trustees chose to forego the Teaching and Learning Committee Report.

4. Policy Committee Report

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We will go to Policy Committee Report, Trustee Goldes, anything you want to add on top of our discussion tonight?

Committee Chair Libby Goldes commented. Just that perhaps we need to address making sure that we have recorded comments made at this meeting that need to come back to the Policy Committee so that we don't overlook that. We presented you with all the policies that we looked at during the last meeting, with one which needed more work, and maybe we were being too hasty. I'm not sure, we'll have to look at that.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Trustees, any questions or comments for our Policy Committee? Okay, we will move on to Facilities and Maintenance Committee.

5. Facilities & Maintenance Committee Report

Committee Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. We got our initial report for our Deferred Maintenance. We hired out a consultant to go around and look at all our buildings. Everything from within their realm of what they were looking at was graded either a high, medium, or low priority. That is really going to give us a lot of information not only for what we put on for our school elections, but also how we look at going forward with our Facilities Master Plan. That was a document that they have been waiting on for a long time. Hulteng did a great job of getting it to us as soon as they can. They still have a couple tweaks to do to make it final. One thing that is really nice, is they are providing us an electronic working document, so as our facilities change, that can be updated and we will be able to keep on top of our needs, I think, in the best way possible. We were really happy to have that. We had an update on the existing roofing projects. We also were able to make some decisions and get a timeline for our requests for qualifications for a consultant to put together and update our Facilities Master Plan. I'm excited to report that we should have that at the beginning of next school year, so that we can really get on with a lot of the big decisions that have to be made. So, it was a productive meeting and I'm looking forward to seeing some of these things come to fruition.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you very much Trustee Hathhorn, that is exciting. Trustees, any questions or comments for the Facilities and Maintenance Committee? We are foregoing Health Benefits Committee, Wellness committee and MTSBA, so we have arrived at Student Representatives Reports.

6. Health Benefits Committee Report

The Board of Trustees chose to forego the Health Benefits Committee Report.

7. Wellness Committee Report

The Board of Trustees chose to forego the Wellness Committee Report.

8. Montana School Boards Association Report

The Board of Trustees chose to forego the Montana School Boards Association Report.

9. Student Representatives Report

Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative, commented. For today and tomorrow we have a modified schedule to accommodate iReady testing for ninth through eleventh graders. Seniors were given time to explore career and college options. Next week, we will have our normal finals schedule, that we have had in years past on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Winter sports are up and going, with swimming, wrestling, and basketball. Our Student Council is currently planning a winter formal dance to be held February 5th at the Lewis and Clark fairgrounds. Starting next semester Mr. Thennis plans to begin student leadership luncheons. These were held in years past, but of course because of COVID, have gone away. He would like to reintroduce those and will include students from executive boards of all our official clubs, including the Student Body President, Charles Fox, and myself. Also, we were successful with our school wide holiday basket project for assisting families in need over the holiday break. Student Council along with many classes, community members and clubs compiled food baskets for families in need and it was pretty successful. We compiled around forty baskets. Also, for celebrations, on the last week before break, Student Council was able to raise around \$400 for the Special Olympics. We had two students selected for All State jazz, Sam Geary on the guitar and Ryan Burke on the saxophone.

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. We also began iReady testing today, and it will continue tomorrow for all ninth, tenth and eleventh graders in Math and Reading. Seniors who are not testing are able to choose from a variety of college and career presentations to attend. Today I attended a presentation on STEM and one on education. On Monday, Jenna Eisenhart from Shodair came and presented on how teachers can be a protection for students, and she discussed many ways for teachers to support students' social and emotional well-being. In a staff meeting, teachers reviewed safety protocols found in the District emergency manual, specifically shelter in place and lock in place, and first aid flowcharts of who to contact was reviewed. On the last day of

school before the holiday break we held a holiday assembly that was optional to attend, but for those who attended it was in person. There were various musical acts as well as the top four finalists of the Capital High Talent Show. There was a Jitterbug Contest and staff and student line dancing. Semester testing will occur next week. Registration for next year will begin in February and our Student Council is also in the process of planning a winter formal dance that will be held February 19th at the Civic Center.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you very much, I appreciate it. I also just want to say to you both I appreciate your candid thoughts that you shared with this Board and everyone in the meeting about our discussion regarding the mask mandate and the mask policy. That was probably difficult, but I really appreciate the honesty of both of your responses. I know that our students and our staff are going to step up to follow whatever rules and regulations are there, but it's also important to have a sense for what it takes to enforce certain things and what the impact is. I think you sharing that with us helped us appreciate that part of it.

Trustee John McEwen commented. Are they going to have Night to Shine this year?

Ms. Eliza Lay replied. Yes. Audition forms were handed out today at lunch.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Trustees, other questions, or comments? That takes us to Board comments.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I just wanted to thank the community, the Superintendent and all his staff, and the Board for the conversation that we had tonight and that we've been having. It is really kind of extraordinary to see that unfold tonight and I'm really thankful for it and I feel like we all are figuring this out together. I also wanted to address something that someone brought up tonight about email and how citizens can see our email. I could be wrong on this, but I think that school District email and all public email in the state of Montana is public record. So, it's not a secret.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you very much. Back to your first point, I second that. I appreciate the discussion. I appreciate the quality and the tone of the public comment we received, and I'm very proud of this community regarding our discussion tonight. I too, wanted to follow up on that public comment. I thought Ms. Stefanik's question about email was a good one. You are absolutely right, Trustee McKee, that everything we do in public education is public. I do think Districts handle that differently. Just to be clear, Ms. Stefanik was exactly right. People email us all the time, saying a variety of different things, but there's definitely been multiple occasions where somebody said, "Hey, I know you're discussing this at your upcoming Board meeting. I can't attend." Even if they go that far, I usually say, "well, do you want me to have your comment that you're emailing me reflected in the minutes of the meeting?" They usually say yes, and then sometimes they ask for that, and so we do that. I work

with Ms. Delvaux to do that, and I think we've captured all the instances where that's true. I've also seen some Districts where they have a Board email address, or they have individual addresses listed for Board members, but then they have a public comment email address, and anything that goes to that email address is automatically included as public comment. Some Districts actually include that in the packet, and some just reflect it in the minutes. So, there is different ways to do it, and I thought it was a good question. I think I'll just say I'll commit to discussing this with the Executive Committee and with Superintendent Weltz, and we'll figure out if it'd be best to change our practices around that. I think the thing that would be most concerning to me is if people don't know they can do that, and it's a perfectly legitimate way of offering public comment to this Board. In fact, in some times I think it has a lot of advantages. In whatever we do, we want people to understand our procedure, so I appreciate that. Any other Board comments?

There were no additional comments.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date

