



**Superintendent**

Rex Wertz  
324-2001

**Business Manager**

Janelle Mickelson  
324-2040

## **Board of Trustees Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, February 14th, 2023**  
5:30 p.m.

### **MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.**

Siobhan Hathhorn, Chair  
Jennifer McKee, Vice Chair  
Kay Satre, Trustee  
Terry Beaver, Trustee  
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee  
Janet Armstrong, Trustee  
Lois Fitzpatrick, Trustee

Keiran Boyle, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees

Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director  
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent  
Brian Cummings, Assistant Superintendent  
Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager  
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff  
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology  
Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director  
Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs  
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer  
Jane Shawn, HEA President  
Lona Carter, School Health Grant Facilitator  
Brett Zanto, Capital High Principal  
Kathleen Prody, C.R. Anderson Principal  
Many guests of the public as well as Helena School District staff

## **I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **II. REVIEW AGENDA**

The Board of Trustees reviewed the agenda and no changes to the agenda were requested.

## **III. RECOGNITIONS**

### **A. Montana Association of Symphony Orchestra's Young Artist Competition**

The Board of Trustees recognized the following students who were finalists in the Montana Association of Symphony Orchestra's Young Artist Competition. These students all earned awards for their incredible performances.

Junior Division-Elliot Cleary (Honorable Mention)-HMS, Charlie Snellman (1<sup>st</sup> place)-CHS  
Senior Division-Hollis Elliot (Honorable Mention)-CHS, Maren Elliot (Runner Up)-CHS

### **B. National Board-Certified Teachers**

The Board of Trustees recognized the following educators in the Helena School District who earned National Board-Certification. Congratulations to Caroline Compton, Kelly Connolly, Ashley Komac, Abby Kuhl, Janna McBride, Jennifer Mooney, Christopher Nevinski, Shelley Olson, Colette Ozburn, Mary Penley, Melissa Romano-Lehman, Kayla Ryan, Molly Schmidt, Christina Sieminski, Alison Suchy, Andrea Thisselle, and Sarah Urban. National Board Certification is the gold standard of professional development for teachers, and we are so proud of this group of outstanding educators.

## **IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Superintendent Rex Weltz gave his report to the Board of Trustees. The information presented included:

- Recognition
  - Valentine's Day
  - National School Counseling Week February 6th-10th
  - School Bus Driver Appreciation Day February 22nd
  - Site Visits at Bryant, Jefferson, Central Elementary Schools
  - Helena Public Schools National Board-Certified teachers that were recognized tonight. I would also like to recognize our teachers who are recertified National Board teachers.

- Helena High School American Welding Society Club for hosting its 11th Annual Weld-Off with East Helena High School.
  - 22 Access to Success graduates who received their high school diplomas.
  - Educators who received “Spark Grants” from the Helena Education Foundation.
  - Thank you to the many local businesses, government agencies, and other organizations who participated in the Capital High School career fair and senior presentations. Thank you to CHS Career Counselor Aspen Herndon for her work to make it all happen.
  - Lewis & Clark National Forest and the Montana Discovery Foundation for partnering with Helena Public Schools to teach elementary students about winter ecology and how to snowshoe through the “Snow School” program.
  - HMS spelling bee first place winner Kale Covey.
  - Mrs. Amy Hasselbach from Smith Elementary who was the KMTX December teacher of the month.
  - Helena High School’s candidates for the United States Presidential Scholars Program. They are Paisley Karlin, Jeri Wilkerson, Robert Stimpson, and Ryan Burke.
  - Lisa Cordingley HEF Executive Director/Board of Trustees Appreciation
  - Mike Burk CHS and the CHS Unified PE class/Ice Fishing
- New Business
    - Winter Enrollment Count – 2 of 2 (Fall/Winter)
    - Rural Behavioral Health Institute (RBHI) School-Based Mental Health Screening
    - Winter Assessment Across the District
    - District Calendar Committee
    - Handle With Care – City/HSD Training & Kickoff Date
    - ACT Schedule Update – New this year
    - No School, February 20th Monday - President’s Day
- Outreach/Meeting
    - HTH
    - Budget Strategic Work Meetings
    - Leadership and Cabinet - 2x weekly
    - All Admin Update
    - HEA Committee Update
    - Board 2x
    - Cabinet & Leadership
    - Day of Education Advocacy – Jan. 25th
    - Helena Chamber Event
    - Board Leadership
    - HEF Executive Committee
    - Parent Advisory Committee
    - Teacher Advisory Committee
    - Site Visit Debrief

- AA Superintendents
- HB332 – School Health Insurance Trust
- HEF
- Executive Meeting
- Board Meeting
- HEA President/Superintendent Meeting
- Facilities Master Plan Key Stakeholder Meeting

That concluded the Superintendent’s Report portion of the agenda. The Trustees moved on to General Public Comment.

## **V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sarah Urban, Biology teacher at Capital High School and parent of three children in the Helena Public Schools, gave general public comment. Ms. Urban discussed that she would like to see a shift in conversation about the budget shortfalls and the discussions about what programs and services need to be cut as a district to see how we can fund necessary programs for public education that benefit all our students. Ms. Urban mentioned the legislature has around a two-billion-dollar surplus, and she believes as a district we should prioritize funding for what we value and advocate for our students and staff for necessary support for all students. Ms. Urban concluded by mentioning that this should be a collaborative effort from all of us in the district to properly fund schools instead of making cuts.

That concluded General Public Comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to discuss New Business-Items for Information.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Items For Information**

1. Winter Student Achievement Data Overview
2. District Priorities Update
3. Budget Update
4. Policy 5045 Family Medical Leave Act
5. Policy 5035 Staff Ethics and Political Activity
6. Policy 5051 Insurance Benefits for Employees

#### **1. Winter Student Achievement Data Overview**

Ms. Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs, discussed the Winter Student Achievement Data Overview with the Board of Trustees. Ms. Hess discussed criterion referenced versus norm referenced assessments. Ms. Hess reviewed the data for grades K-5 fall assessments, the grades 6-8 fall assessments, and the grades 9-11 assessments.

Data highlights covered were fall to winter growth this year is comparable to last year and in reading, Helena Public Schools is above the national benchmark for winter 2023 and above the national norm pre-pandemic in reading. Ms. Hess concluded her presentation by discussing what ACT Day will look like for 2023. This year the ACT will only be offered online, and this will be a juniors only day, with options for students in grades 9,10, and 12 to attend school for non-school day activities.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review the District Priorities Update.

## 2. District Priorities Update

Superintendent Rex Weltz presented the 2022-2023 Helena Public Schools District Priorities Update to the Board of Trustees. The Helena Public Schools priorities include Student Achievement-Teaching and Learning, Educational Environment-Facilities, District Culture and Climate, Fiscal Responsibility, and Communication. The District Measurable Goals for Student Achievement-Teaching and Learning for reading state that by 2025, 85% of all HSD 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students will be on grade level as evidenced by the iReady reading assessment at the end of the school year of 2025. The math goals state that by 2025, 75% of all HSD 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students will demonstrate grade-level proficiency on math grade level standards by achieving a proficient score on the iReady math assessment. For priority #2 Educational Environment-Facilities the District will provide a safe and healthy learning and working environment. For priority #3 District Culture and Climate the Helena School District will collaboratively work with the school community at large to foster respect, trust, and sense of value. For priority #4 Fiscal Responsibility the Helena School District will strive to maintain a balanced budget while supporting a high-quality educational experience for all students. The final priority #5 Communication states: Facilitate meaningful and timely communication with all staff, students, families, and community.

## 3. Budget Update

Superintendent Weltz gave an update on the general fund for Helena Public Schools. Superintendent Weltz discussed general fund expenditures including salaries, custodial supplies, maintenance, contract services, legal fees, school budgets, department budgets, curriculum, technology, and insurance. Superintendent Weltz discussed assumptions including calculating ANB (student enrollment for fall and spring), obtaining state inflationary increases for 2023-2025 (2.7% & 3.0%), calculating steps and lanes, retirements, stipends, and LOAs, reallocating salary funding into other revenue sources-out of the General Fund-Title, Transportation, Safety & Security, and calculating operational increases. There is an electric 17% increase, natural gas 46% increase, maintenance, and custodial supplies 30% increase, and liability insurance 15% increase.

Superintendent Weltz reviewed the elementary (K-8) 5-year forecast, and the high school 5-year forecast with the Board of Trustees. Superintendent Weltz discussed the elementary budget is our biggest concern right now. The five-year forecast is projecting over a \$5.4 million dollar deficit. If the levy passes, it will bring that deficit down to around \$4.8 million dollars. We will use roughly around \$2.4 million dollars of our interlocal funds towards the elementary general fund deficit which will bring the deficit amount to around \$2.5 million

dollars. Superintendent Weltz mentioned that there is a deficit of around \$1.6 million dollars in the high school general fund budget. We will use roughly around \$1.3 million dollars of our interlocal funds towards the high school general fund deficit which would make us short almost \$270,000 dollars.

Superintendent Weltz concluded his budget update by discussing the next steps to balance the general fund budget:

- Two-year time frame and the goal is to be balanced by 2025
- Utilize interlocal funds as we transition and balance
- Reduce District office department budgets 20%
- Reduce building budgets 10%
- Analyze District operations and programs
- Develop and launch a District wide survey tool to gather feedback from students, staff, administration, families, trustees, and the community
- Utilize attrition where applicable
- Calculate a % reduction across all departments
- Communication and listen and gather feedback
- Make decisions

4. Policy 5045 Family Medical Leave Act

Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, presented Policy 5045 Family Medical Leave Act to the Board of Trustees. The Policy Committee continues to conduct a general review of all policies. This policy needed to be aligned with federal law. Additionally, the reference to “Secretary” was clarified as the “United States Secretary of Labor”.

5. Policy 5035 Staff Ethics and Political Activity

Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, presented Policy 5035 Staff Ethics and Political Activity. This policy was revised to eliminate redundancy and update legal citations.

6. Policy 5051 Insurance Benefits for Employees

Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, presented Policy 5051 Insurance Benefits for Employees. A minor change was made to update the language that describes the period of time an employee can elect to make changes in their coverage. Rather than calling it the “open season” it will now be called “open enrollment”.

That concluded Items for Information. The Board of Trustees moved on to review the Consent Action Items.

**B. Consent Action Items**

1. Personnel Actions
2. Warrants
3. Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)
4. 01.10.23 Full Board Meeting Minutes

5. 01.31.23 Facilities Master Plan Key Stakeholders Meeting Minutes
6. Approval of Sabbaticals for 2023-2024 School Year

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “At this point I would entertain a motion to approve our Consent Action Items.”

**Motion:** Trustee Terry Beaver moved to approve the Consent Action Items. Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

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

### C. Items for Action

1. Call for Annual Election
  - a. Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and Building Reserve Levy Election

Mrs. Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager for Helena Public Schools, discussed the call for the annual election with the Board of Trustees. The annual regular school election will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup> this year. By statute the Trustees must call for the election by resolution no later than 70 days before election day, so we are calling for it tonight. The Helena Public Schools entered into an agreement with the Lewis and Clark County Elections Office to conduct school elections for the district. The annual regular school election will be by mail ballot. The drop off locations for ballots is at the Lewis and Clark County Elections Office located in the City-County Building. Voters will elect two trustees who reside within the elementary district boundaries and one trustee who resides within the high school district boundaries to serve a three-year term. General fund mill levy approval for the elementary is also being requested at this time.

In addition to the elementary general fund mill levy approval, the District will be requesting an increase in the building reserve mill levy for both the elementary and the high school districts for the purposes of facility modifications, renovations and repair, upgrades and maintenance of safety and security, roofing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, and structural systems, grounds improvement and maintenance. The increase being requested for the elementary district is \$1,750,000 annually for a term of 10 years. The increase being requested in the high school district is \$750,000 for a term of 10 years. Passage of the proposal will increase the annual taxes on a home with an assessed value of \$100,000 by approximately \$19.27 in the elementary district and approximately \$7.52 in the high school district. The annual increase in taxes on a home with an assessed value of \$200,000 is approximately \$38.54 in the elementary district and \$15.04 in the high school district. Both the current elementary and high school district

building reserve levies expire June 30, 2024. If approved, the increased levies will take effect July 1, 2023, and expire June 30, 2033.

Neither the ability to run a general fund mill levy nor the amount of the levy will be known until after the spring enrollment count is finalized, the end of the legislative session, and the issuance of preliminary budget data sheets. However, due to the statutory requirement to call for the election no later than 70 days before the election, the recommendation is to include the general fund mill levy request in the resolution. If the Board later determines that the mill levy cannot be requested or is not desired, that portion of the election can be cancelled. Based on fall enrollment counts, the District could run an elementary levy for approximately \$249,000. Fall enrollment counts indicate that a high school levy cannot be requested.

If the number of candidates filing a nomination petition or filing a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate is equal to or less than the number of open trustee positions, the trustee election can be cancelled, and trustees may be seated by acclamation. The county elections office has requested that the exact language, including amounts, for any and all levies be transmitted to their office by March 24th so they may begin to prepare the ballot layout in the week leading up to the March 31st ballot certification deadline. Any portion of the election may still be cancelled up until the March 31st deadline. The cost of running an election can range (depending on the number of ballots and number voters) from approximately \$45,000-\$60,000.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. "I would entertain a motion to approve the Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and Building Reserve Levy Election."

**Motion:** Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and Building Reserve Levy Election as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

b. High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and Building Reserve Levy Election

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. "I would entertain a motion to approve the High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and Building Reserve Levy Election."

**Motion:** Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve the High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and Building Reserve Levy Election as presented. Trustee Lois Fitzpatrick seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.



## 2. Policy 5040 Personnel Records

Ms. Barb Ridgway presented Policy 5040 Personnel Records to the Board of Trustees. This existing policy was reviewed by the Policy Committee and amended to reflect changes in statute, to clarify language related to the release of public information regarding the credentials of educators and para-educators, and to update the name of the Personnel Office to the Human Resource Office.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 5040 Personnel Records.”

**Motion:** Trustee Janet Armstrong moved to approve Policy 5040 Personnel Records as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

## 3. Policy 7060 School Safety

Ms. Barb Ridgway presented Policy 7060 School Safety to the Board of Trustees. This is an existing policy, and the committee is recommending that the Trustees receive an annual report rather than a periodic report as currently referenced in the policy.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 7060 School Safety.”

**Motion:** Trustee Terry Beaver moved to approve Policy 7060 School Safety as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

## 4. Superintendent’s Contract

The Board of Trustees moved on to review Superintendent Rex Weltz’s contract. Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “I would entertain a motion to approve the Superintendent’s Contract.”

**Motion:** Trustee Jennifer Walsh moved to approve Superintendent Rex Weltz’s contract as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

That concluded the Items for Action, and the Board of Trustees moved on to Reports.

## **D. REPORTS**

### **1. Student Representatives Report**

Ms. Loreley Drees, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, was not in attendance at the Board Meeting; therefore, there was no report to be given.

Mr. Keiran Boyle, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, gave his report. Mr. Boyle mentioned that a lot of students placed at state wrestling, state swimming, and the National Speech and Debate Qualifier. The CHS Winter Formal is this Saturday at the Civic Center. The administration recently held grade-level assemblies to review the Capital Code. Mr. Boyle discussed PLC time at Capital High School and mentioned last week was National School Counselor Week and that registration for the upcoming school year is well under way. CHS held their annual winter assembly last week and this was the first full-scale assembly held in-person in years and it was a fantastic event. CHS is currently planning for the administration of the RBHI health screener for all students.

### **2. Helena Education Association Report**

Ms. Jane Shawn, President of the Helena Education Association, gave the Helena Education Association Report. The legislative session continues to be a challenge for teachers and unions due to various bills being proposed. Our state rapid response team regularly writes, call, and emails legislators to protect the rights of teachers and students. The legislative funding is a big cause of the current budget deficits in AA districts across the state. As budget discussions continue, teachers and paraeducators are anxious about their jobs. They are also anxious about their students as they continue to do what is best for kids with fewer and fewer resources. HEA is looking to partner with the Helena School District as we move forward with well thought out levies which will provide resources for our students as well as supporting the infrastructure where the students learn.

### **3. Facilities and Maintenance Committee Report**

Trustee Luke Muszkiewicz was not in attendance; therefore, Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn gave the Facilities and Maintenance Committee report on his behalf. The Facilities and Maintenance Committee was given an update on the Facilities Master Plan from SMA Architecture. Todd Verrill, Helena Public Schools Facilities Director, gave a facilities and maintenance update to the committee. Mr. Verrill reviewed projects from the last thirty days, the January work order count, current projects, projects for the next twelve months, and other projects. Tim McMahon, Activities Director, gave an update on the Capital High School tennis courts. Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology and Jim Daanen, Safety and Security Developer, gave an update on the bond spend-down. Mr. Verrill gave an update on safety and security projects in the District over the last thirty days. Mr. Tim Branson, Custodial Services Supervisor, gave a custodial services update.

4. Budget and Finance Committee Report

Trustee Janet Armstrong gave the Budget and Finance Committee Report. At the meeting the Budget and Finance Committee reviewed the budget to actual reports for the elementary general fund and high school general fund and reviewed and discussed the five-year budget forecast. Trustee Armstrong expressed her appreciation for Business Manager Janelle Mickelson for making sure we had money saved in the interlocal funds that will help us transition during this process of balancing the general fund budget.

5. Policy Committee Report

Trustee Luke Muszkiewicz was not in attendance at the board meeting; therefore, Trustee Janet Armstrong gave the report on his behalf. Ms. Barb Ridgway presented policies tonight at the full board meeting, which the Policy Committee had reviewed and had robust discussions on. There was an in-depth discussion regarding Policy 5030: Abused and Neglected Child Reporting and the role of volunteers and the Policy Committee determined Policy 5030 would come back to the committee for further review and discussion.

6. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

Trustee Jennifer McKee gave the Teaching and Learning Committee Report. At the last meeting, the Trustees viewed a presentation regarding an overview of grant work in the target buildings. The committee reviewed data and goals from Ray Bjork Learning Center, Bryant Elementary, Central Elementary, Helena Middle School, and Helena High School.

7. Health Benefits Committee Report

Trustee Kay Satre gave the Health Benefits Committee Report. The Health Benefits Committee discussed House Bill 332. The bill specifies the qualifications for the creation of a qualifying school health insurance trust that would need to include the membership of at least 150 public school districts. If the bill passes, the District would have our benefits consultant, Alliant, do an analysis to see what the costs, and pros and cons would be for joining the trust membership. The committee continues to look at a program called Point Solutions where they are targeting specific sections of our plan to improve health and reduce spending in certain areas. The committee is also looking at life and long-term disability vendors that could potentially save the plan \$30,000 a year.

8. Wellness Committee Report

Assistant Superintendent Brian Cummings gave the Wellness Committee Report. The Physical Enhancement sub-committee did not meet last month, but the Nutrition sub-committee did. The Wellness Committee will be analyzing the Wellness Policy. The Harvest of the Month Club Program will have a staff development PIR day at Central Elementary School in August, for not only our teachers, but also teachers from other communities. Robert Worthy, Sodexo Manager, is starting to plan for the summer food program, along with reviewing grants with the Wellness Committee. The committee is also making plans for next year on how to increase the breakfast numbers.

9. Montana School Boards Association Report

Trustee Luke Muszkiewicz was not in attendance; therefore, there was no Montana School Boards Association Report given.

That concluded the Reports portion of the agenda. The Board of Trustees moved on to discuss Upcoming Meetings.

## **VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn reviewed upcoming meetings with the Board of Trustees.

- February 28th at 11:00 a.m.-Board of Trustees Work Session at Broadwater Elementary School
- March 1<sup>st</sup> at noon-Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting
- March 6<sup>th</sup> at noon-Facilities and Maintenance Committee Meeting
- March 7<sup>th</sup> at noon-Policy Committee Meeting
- March 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m.-Executive Committee Meeting
- March 14<sup>th</sup> at noon-Budget and Finance Committee Meeting
- March 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.-Full Board Meeting

That concluded the Upcoming Meetings portion of the agenda. The Board of Trustees moved on to Board Comments.

## **VIII. BOARD COMMENTS**

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented regarding the recent failure to pass in the legislature some mental health support for students. Trustee Armstrong mentioned she is disappointed it failed because of how important the topic of mental health is, and she wishes the outcome had been different. Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn asked Superintendent Rex Weltz if we are staying well informed of what is happening in legislation, and Superintendent Weltz mentioned that we are regularly informed by the Montana School Boards Association via daily updates and informed when there is a call to action, and that we are taking action and doing everything we can to support students.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

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Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary      Date