



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees Work Session

Tuesday, November 28th, 2023

3:30 p.m. Tour of CHS followed by Business & TEAMS Portion of the Meeting at 4:00 p.m.
Capital High School and via TEAMS

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

<i>Trustees</i>	<i>Others</i>
Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Chair	Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Linda Cleatus, Trustee	Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Janet Armstrong, Trustee	Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Terry Beaver, Trustee	Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager
Jeff Hindoién, Trustee	Lona Carter, Student Health
Kay Satre, Trustee	Todd Verill, Director of Facilities
	Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
	Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
	Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
	Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
	Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs
	Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director
	Lisa Cordingley, HEF Director
	Brett Zanto, Principal of Capital High School
	Kathy Kidder, Assistant Principal of Capital High School
	Mick Morris, Assistant Principal of Capital High School
	Several Capital High School Staff Members
	Several Guests of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Siobhan Hathorn called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

Board Chair Siobhan Hathorn reviewed the agenda with the Board of Trustees and there were no changes.

The Board of Trustees moved on to General Public Comment.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Sarah Urban gave general public comment. Ms. Urban is a science teacher at Capital High School. Ms. Urban discussed topics including but not limited to teacher salaries, inflation, and insurance costs in the district.

That concluded general public comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to view a presentation given by Mr. Brett Zanto, Principal of Capital High School.

IV. PRESENTATION

The Board of Trustees reviewed a presentation given by Mr. Brett Zanto, Principal of Capital High School. Principal Zanto began with the demographics at Capital High School.

Students- 1,377

Staff- 88 Certified

1 IEFA Tutor

7 SPED Paras and Intervener/2 General Education Paras 9 Office Assistants

6 Custodians

1 Nurse

1 School Psychologist

4 Counselors

2 Librarians

1 Career Counselor

Next, Principal Zanto reviewed the many AP courses offered at Capital High School including: Human Geography, European History, American History, American Government, Spanish, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental Studies, Calculus A/B, English Language, English Literature, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Statistics, Physics II, and Calculus B/C.

Principal Zanto reviewed the AP data for Capital High School, and the dual credit courses offered at Capital High. Principal Zanto moved on to review the ACT data for Capital High School versus state data from spring 2021 to spring 2023. The data displayed the percent of students meeting all four benchmarks, and then the number of students meeting the benchmark in the individual categories of math, science, English, and reading.

Next, Principal Zanto reviewed the instructional framework goals at Capital High School and what the School Leadership Team is doing at the school including:

- Meets weekly (and monthly with consultant)
- Determines yearly instructional goals for building
- Discusses hallmarks of teaching and learning at CHS
- Determines instructional framework components
- Conducts instructional rounds based on components
- Analyzes rounds data
- Designs professional learning for staff
- Models high impact practices and strategies in their classrooms

Next, Assistant Principal Kathy Kidder reviewed the MTSS goals at Capital High School and how they plan to meet those goals:

- MTSS Term of the Month: linking to pyramid doc and send in admin weekly update and share potentially during PLC All Staff/Wed after school meeting.
- Bruin Whole Child Strategy: a behavioral/ (AKA Whole Child) support/strategy to share with all teachers via admin weekly update and in person (all staff PLC or Wed after school meeting).
- Bruin Talks: occur once a quarter led by seniors (once or twice) and teachers (2-3 times) during 2nd period- goal x4 a year. No announcements on these days.

Assistant Principal Kidder concluded the presentation by discussing Bruin Talks and the freshman mentoring program at Capital High School. Principal Zanto and Assistant Principal Kidder answered any questions the Board of Trustees had about Capital High School.

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

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions
2. 10.24.23 Board Work Session Meeting Minutes
3. Resolution to Dispose of Personal Property (6-8) Instructional Materials

Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Chair, commented. "I would entertain a motion for the Consent Action Items as presented."

Motion: Trustee Jeff Hindoiien moved to approve the Consent Action Items as presented. Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review the Items for Information.

B. Items for Information

1. Policy 4330 Community Use of Facilities

Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, presented for information Policy 4330 Community Use of Facilities to the Board of Trustees. This policy was revised to address federal and state statute. Language has been added on lines seven through nine to our existing Community Use of Facilities policy. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 4330 Community Use of Facilities.

2. Policy 7014 Subscription Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITAs) Capitalization Threshold

Ms. Ridgway presented Policy 7014 Subscription Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITAs) Capitalization Threshold to the Board of Trustees. This is a new policy that establishes a lease liability threshold of \$150,000 for subscription-based software. District auditors required the adoption of this policy. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 7014 Subscription Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITAs) Capitalization Threshold.

3. Policy 7035 Fraud and Fraud Prevention

Ms. Ridgway presented Policy 7035 Fraud and Fraud Prevention to the Board of Trustees. The National Association of School Business Officials recommends that districts have a fraud policy. Additionally, federal funding sources (e.g. ESSER) ask if the board has adopted a policy on fraud. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 7035 Fraud and Fraud Prevention.

4. Levies and Budget Discussion

Superintendent Rex Wertz shared with the Board of Trustees when he started as Superintendent in the Helena Public Schools, we were over six million dollars short in our general fund budget. The board's goal for Superintendent Wertz was to initially find at least two million dollars in savings since the district was pulling

over two million dollars from the interlocal fund to subsidize the general fund budget. Through the efforts of Superintendent Wertz and his administration team, they were able to find around two million dollars in savings, however, the process starts all over again every year due to steps and lanes increases, utilities are increasing for the district, operational costs are increasing, and we are down 144 more students than we were last year at this same time. The Budget Consensus Recommendation Committee has been tasked with making a recommendation to the board around how we are going to budget the balance for one year, but this isn't a long-term fix as we will have to continue to do this every year as variables change and operational costs continue to rise. The committee is seeking ways to increase revenue and they are looking at two very important scenarios which are: what needs to happen in the district if the spring levies pass and what will need to happen if the spring levies do not pass. Superintendent Wertz discussed the levies that the district are hoping to run in the spring of 2024 include a Safety and Security Levy for the elementary and the high school district, a Technology Levy for both the elementary and the high school district along with an operational general fund levy for a total of five levies. Superintendent Wertz reviewed the estimated total amounts for the elementary levies and the high school levies and what the annual and monthly tax impact on a \$100K home, \$300K home, and \$600K home would be. Superintendent Wertz stated that we have staff members in the Helena School District that work around technology and safety and security who we are currently paying for out of our general fund, and if we passed the safety and security and technology levies, we could pay for them out of those funds and be able to offset the burden of the general fund. The general fund is currently being burdened with increasing costs with limited input from the state in terms of funding mechanisms.

Superintendent Wertz moved on to discuss ways we are trying to offset the burden of the general fund. We are in the process of finalizing the lease with St. Peter's Health for the Ray Bjork Learning Center building. We are not sure yet of how much yearly rental income that could provide the district, but it could be near \$200,000. The district is also working on finalizing the RFP for the May Butler Center building. Superintendent Wertz stated that we are saving money by not paying utilities on the 7th Avenue Gym building, now that it is being rented by the Queen City Football Club. Superintendent Wertz is exploring the opportunity to discuss with OPI their understanding and interpretation of transportation and how it is spent out of the general fund versus the transportation fund. OPI's language states that they pay for home to school transportation but if you move your students around the district (for example transporting students to field trips or STARBASE and other locations that are part of their educational experience) then it must come out of our general fund budget. We believe that money should come out of the transportation fund and not the general fund. Superintendent Wertz discussed 6th grade funding. We believe the 6th grade model of funding should be funded the same as the 7th and 8th grade model of funding because the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders all do the same

thing and move from teacher to teacher in the school. The way they are funded currently, 6th graders are funded \$2,000 less per student compared to 7th and 8th graders. We currently have 554 sixth graders and if they were funded as 7th and 8th graders, that could be over one million dollars back into our funding. Superintendent Weltz stated that are trying to recruit new students to the district and we currently have around 200 students that are home schooled. Ms. Julie Mitchell is assisting the district in communicating with these families, finding out why they left the school district and how we could get them to return. Superintendent Weltz believes our three proposed charter schools will help pull some of those students back into our school district. The charter schools are an opportunity for the district to earn more revenue through basic entitlement. Superintendent Weltz stated that we are working hard to explore special education funding. Our special education program for three- and four-year-olds that is mandated by the state costs around \$700,000 every year to run, however, the state only provides us yearly around \$52,000 to run the program, so that means we must make up the difference from our budget. We believe if this is a mandated program from the state, they should provide full funding for the program. Superintendent Weltz stated that we must look at the three percent inflationary cap. We can't ask for more than three percent, but that doesn't mean the government can't offer us more than three percent, so this is something we are investigating more. Superintendent Weltz stated that IDEA said they will pay 40% of our special educating funding, but this year they only gave us 15%, therefore, it costs us around four million dollars out of our general fund to provide special education services.

Superintendent Weltz moved on to discuss health insurance. The 2023 Legislature enacted a statute that revised school district health insurance laws and provides one-time incentive funding for school districts that participate in a qualifying health insurance trust. At least 12,000 employees must be covered under the trust to qualify for the incentive, and it will be necessary for some or all the AA districts to participate in the health trust in order to meet the 12,000-member threshold. If a trust has been qualified by the state auditor on or before June 30, 2026, with the expectation that the health trust would become effective on July 1, 2026, then the \$40 million incentive would be used to stabilize health insurance through the capitalization of an operating reserve for the district members of the trust. This is a very complex undertaking, and the AA districts are working with an insurance expert to better understand the governance structure and to determine whether or not joining the trust is a benefit for HSD employees and employees across the state. Micah Hill, Missoula Superintendent, and Superintendent Rex Weltz are serving as the AA representatives who will conduct the analysis. They have brought in Ms. Marilyn Bartlett, who is an expert in this field, to help them understand what a large multidistrict school trust would look like and will help provide them with guidance so that they know what their next steps are. Superintendent Weltz mentioned that he and members of his team met with staff from St. Peter's

Health to discuss their 340B program which could potentially bring significant savings to pharmaceutical costs.

Superintendent Weltz moved on to discuss land. Our school bus fleet currently sits on private property that is not owned by the school district, which we must pay rent for. Superintendent Weltz stated that we need to explore the option of placing our bus fleet on Helena School District property to save on rental costs, which are currently around \$40,000 a month. This would mean we would need to find property to purchase, and we would need to build a bus barn on the property, so this idea needs further research and exploration.

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear any final board comments.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

Trustee Janet Armstrong discussed the importance of finding out when Lewis and Clark County would be collecting the extra mills from the Helena community because that could greatly affect the public's opinion on the levies if they receive these higher tax bills before they receive the information for voting on the levies.

The trustees discussed the public's perception that the school district will be receiving all this extra money from coal revenue and the 95 mills, while truly the school district is not getting any extra money at all due to the capped funding mechanism through the state, and how it is important to educate the community about this.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Siobhan Hathorn adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary