



Superintendent

Rex Wetz
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 13th, 2024
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Siobhan Hathhorn, Chair
Jennifer McKee, Vice Chair
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Jeff Hindoien, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee
Terry Beaver, Trustee

Luna Hernandez, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Willa Bishop, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Rex Wetz, Superintendent
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director
Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs
Sean Maharg, Special Education Director
Dr. Rob Watson, Executive Director of SAM
Tim Meldrum, SMA Architects + Design
Ali Martin, SMA Architects + Design
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 5:30 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

The Board of Trustees recognized the students listed below.

A. United States Presidential Scholars Program-Capital High School

Congratulations to the following Capital High School students who are candidates for the United States Presidential Scholars Program. They are Katherine Berg, Aria Ehlert, and Liam McAdams. United States Presidential Scholars are recognized for their accomplishments as some of our nation’s most distinguished graduating seniors. Thanks to all the educators that played a role in this recognition!

B. United States Presidential Scholars Program-Helena High School

Congratulations to the following Helena High School students who are candidates for the United States Presidential Scholars Program. They are Kai Moser and Annika Nehring. United States Presidential Scholars are recognized for their accomplishments as some of our nation’s most distinguished graduating seniors. Thanks to all the educators that played a role in this recognition!

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear the Superintendent’s Report from Superintendent Rex Weltz.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent Weltz gave his Superintendent Report to the Board of Trustees.

Recognition

- Monday, February 5th through Friday, February 9th School Counselor Appreciation Week- Thank You for All That You Do For Our Students
- Board of Trustees Work Session at Jefferson Elementary School-January 23rd, Thank You Principal Brice Burton & Jefferson Elementary Staff
- Thank you to Lisa Cordingley and the Helena Education Foundation for hosting HEF’s annual School Board Trustee Appreciation Lunch. We are grateful to HEF and our amazing Trustees.
- Congratulations to Educator Heather Brown from Broadwater Elementary Schol who was selected as the 105.3 KMTX December Teacher of the Month.
- Thank you to Helena High for hosting the 2024 NSDA National Qualifying Speech & Debate

Tournament on Friday and Saturday, February 9-10. Competitors from across the state competed to determine who will represent Montana at the National Tournament. Thank you to the volunteers who judged at the event and congratulations to our HPS students who competed in the event.

- Congratulations to first grader Elena Ferguson who won “The Strong Snack Challenge” with her healthy, package-free apples and yogurt recipe-winning a special cooking demonstration for all students at Central School. Thank you to Sodexo Manager Robert Worthy and his team for creating this great opportunity for students.
- CRA Educators Shannon Thomas and Dick McMahon have worked for 30 years to get the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail on the National Recreation Trail registry. This week Thomas, McMahon, and their students made their mark on Montana history as the trail was formally recognized. Congratulations!
- Thank you to the Helena Police Department and our team of School Resource Officers (SROs): Jessica Cornell (HMS), Scott Finnicum (CRA), Sean Schoenfelder (CHS) and Bret Haux (HHS) for delivering 19 AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators)-life-saving devices that can restart a heart in the event of cardiac arrests to our schools. The Helena Police Department is replacing the devices, which are still in good working order, with newer models.
- I’d like to recognize our high school principals, Steve Thennis (HHS) and Brett Zanto (CHS), for joining 38 other Montana principals in penning a recent opinion piece in the Independent Record and other newspapers across the state on the dangers of vaping.

New Business

- K-12 Vision Project Strategic Planning Meeting Postponed
- Safety and Security Levy/Technology Levy/FMP Update Across District-This Spring
- District Wide, Staff, Student, & Family Survey
- Culture, Facilities, Communication, Academic
- Budget Recommendation Consensus Committee Update
- Revenue Update
- Consensus Based Negotiations: HSD – HEA Update
- AA Schools Health Trust Feasibility Meeting

Superintendent Weltz asked Mr. John Burke, Chair of the HSD Health Benefits Committee, to speak about the AA School Health Trust Summit, and answer any questions the trustees had.

- May Butler Center RFP Update
- Update on HSD Charter Schools Applications
- StopIt App Being Implemented- 24/7/365-day support for our students and staff
- Examining Teacher Mentoring Program

Outreach/Meetings

- Cabinet & Leadership
- MQEC Board of Directors Meeting
- AA Schools Health Trust Meetings
- Board Leadership
- AA Superintendents
- Budget Consensus Recommendation Committee

- HEA/HSD Meeting
- HEF Board Meeting
- HEF Executive Committee
- Student Leaders Meeting
- TV, Print, Radio Media
- Teacher Advisory Committee
- Parent Advisory Committee
- SMA – Work Meeting
- Other
- No School February 19th President’s Day

That concluded the Superintendent’s Report portion of the agenda. Superintendent Wertz answered any questions the trustees had about his Superintendent Report. The trustees moved on to hear general public comment.

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Beth Murphy gave general public comment. Ms. Murphy is a former teacher with Helena Public Schools and a taxpayer. Ms. Murphy commented on topics including but not limited to being against instructional coaches, teachers on special assignment, or any employee who has the designation of a teacher but who has no students assigned to them, as she believes it is a luxury to pay them and a bad use of district funds.

Ms. Skye Hatten gave general public comment. Ms. Hatten commented on topics including but not limited to AED devices in schools and district buildings, and inquiring about the timeline of installation of these devices.

That concluded general public comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to review the Items for Information.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Information

1. Presentation of Recommendations from Budget Consensus Committee

The Board of Trustees viewed a presentation of recommendations from the Budget Consensus Committee from Dr. Rob Watson, Executive Director of School Administrators of Montana. Dr. Watson began his presentation with background information about the Budget Consensus Committee. In the spring of 2023, the Helena School District convened a diverse group of nearly 40 stakeholders with the purpose of examining the district budget and making recommendations for potential reductions. Based on budget forecasting, the district anticipated a budget shortfall for the 2024/25 school year. The committee met approximately 12 times from May 2023 to February 2024. Stakeholders included parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and Board

members. The committee used a facilitated consensus process to make decisions.

Dr. Watson moved on to review the budget value statements from the Budget Consensus Committee. The committee examined several sources of information to create “budget value statements.” The purpose of these statements was to capture goals and objectives that could be used to evaluate potential budget reduction ideas. The statements were presented to the Board of Trustees at their October meeting. The statements are listed below.

It is the mission of Helena Public Schools to foster dynamic educational experiences that prepare all students for life. In order to succeed in this mission and support the needs of all students, the budget should allow Helena Public Schools to:

1. Empower students with a dynamic and diverse education, foster the well-being and shared responsibility for life-long success and achievement. (Short title: student outcomes and achievement)
2. Provide all students a well-rounded education that meets or exceeds (*or upholds*) accreditation standards in well-maintained, safe facilities that are equipped with relevant technology. (Short title: programs and environment)
3. Build trust and support for additional funding by continuously adapting and maintaining a vibrant and well-connected community. (Short title: trust and engagement)
4. Foster financial sustainability with a budget that is economically responsible, supported, and informed by the needs and aspirations of our community. (Short title: sustainability)
5. Recruit and retain the highest quality staff through recognition of accomplishments, quality training, robust support, and market compensation. (Short title: staff)

Dr. Watson moved on to discuss the estimated budget forecast for the 2024-25 school year. Throughout the term that the budget committee met, participants were presented with several budget scenarios based on the most current information available. Each scenario was built on several assumptions. *The final scenario (dated January 10) shows a potential shortfall between \$660K to \$4.58M.* This range is built on several assumptions including: the outcome of HEA negotiations and the results of the spring levy elections. Dr. Watson displayed a chart that showed the estimated budget forecast for the 2024-25 school year. The numbers in the chart will also change based on the second student enrollment count, the adjustment of the K8 operational levy as well as the potential addition of a HS operational levy.

Dr. Watson discussed budget reduction ideas. At the December committee meeting, the participants brainstormed several budget reduction ideas for each grade level band: K5, MS, HS. Each idea was discussed and clarified. A final list of ideas was forwarded to the administration to determine a cost estimate. Cost estimates were developed based on several assumptions, as described in the “Notes” section of the lists that Dr. Watson shared. Next, Dr. Watson reviewed the Methodology: Prioritizing Reduction Ideas. Using the Budget Value Statements, committee members evaluated each of the budget reduction ideas as they related to each budget value. Each idea was evaluated with regard to impact on (1) student outcomes and achievement (2) programs and environment (3) trust and engagement (4) financial sustainability and (5) staff. For each idea, committee members rated each budget value statement on a scale of significant impact, minor impact, no impact, or positive impact. The average rating of all committee members was used to create a priority list. The items at the top of the list were rated as having minor or no impact on the budget values. While the

items at the bottom of the list were rated as having a significant impact on the budget values. It is the recommendation of the committee that the Board would use these prioritized lists when making budget decisions. The Board could consider the low impact items first (top of list) and use the significant impact items (bottom of list) only if needed to balance the budget. Dr. Watson reviewed the K5, middle school, and high school prioritized lists with the Board of Trustees. Dr. Watson concluded his presentation by sharing communication to the Board from the Budget Consensus Recommendation Committee. Dr. Watson answered any questions the Board of Trustees had regarding the presentation and listened to any feedback the trustees had about his presentation or the document.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn asked if there was any public comment regarding the Budget Consensus Committee Recommendations.

Ms. Jackie Semmens gave public comment. Ms. Semmens is a parent of two students in the PEAK program. Ms. Semmens commented on topics including but not limited to her support of the Helena Public Schools PEAK program and believes that PEAK emphasizes developing social skills, encourages hard work, and helps gifted students become accustomed to accepting critical feedback.

Mr. Dorrington gave public comment. Mr. Dorrington is a parent of a current PEAK student. Mr. Dorrington commented on topics including but not limited to his support of the Helena Public Schools PEAK program, and urged the Board of Trustees to keep Helena's PEAK Program operating "as is," with no further cuts to its budget and to work collaboratively with the PEAK Program and the PEAK Parent Council to evaluate and act upon all available funding options for the Program in an effort to assist with the District's budget deficit without reducing services to PEAK students.

Mr. Tal Goldin gave public comment. Mr. Goldin is a parent of two children in the PEAK program. Mr. Goldin commented on topics including but not limited to his support of the Helena Public Schools PEAK program and urged the Board of Trustees to keep Helena's PEAK Program operating "as is," with no further cuts to its budget.

Mr. Jim Malizia gave public comment. Mr. Malizia is a Hawthorne parent and a representative of Friends of Neighborhood Schools. Mr. Malizia commented on topics including but not limited to the importance of passing the levies on the ballot in order to pursue any pathways presented in the facilities master plan, and to avoid any emergency action that negatively impacts the students and teachers. Mr. Malizia also discussed that the root cause of the current budget crisis and the lagging facilities is the broken state funding mechanism.

Mr. Lowell Chandler gave public comment. Mr. Chandler is the parent of a child who he said he hopes will attend Hawthorne Elementary in the fall. Mr. Chandler commented on topics including but not limited to expressing his deep concern of the potential closure of Hawthorne Elementary School and stated that it is a beloved neighborhood school. Mr. Chandler noted that the root cause of the problem and having to make cuts lies with the legislature and leadership of the state.

Mr. Nick Hill gave public comment. Mr. Hill is a parent of a student in the PEAK program. Mr. Hill commented on topics including but not limited to his support of the PEAK program and how it has impacted his family's lives. Mr. Hill stated that it has been an amazing program and

the dedicated staff of the PEAK program care so much about the students.

Joel gave public comment. Joel is a student at Hawthorne Elementary School. Joel commented on topics including but not limited to his support of Hawthorne Elementary School and the PEAK program. Joel stated how much he loves his school and how important neighborhood schools are.

Liv gave public comment. Liv is a student at Smith Elementary School. Liv commented on topics including but not limited to her support of the PEAK program. Liv shared how much PEAK means to her and how much she looks forward to attending the program.

Ms. Gabrielle Eklund Rowley gave public comment. Ms. Eklund Rowley is a taxpayer and a parent of students in the district, with one in the PEAK program. Ms. Eklund Rowley commented on topics including but not limited to opposing any cuts to the PEAK program. She stated that the PEAK program has given her child an incredible amount of emotional, social, and academic instruction.

Mr. Charles Denowh gave public comment. Mr. Denowh is a parent of a student in the district and he is a taxpayer. Mr. Denowh commented on topics including but not limited to opposing any school closures. Mr. Denowh stated that the district is not factoring in how many students would leave the district if a school closes which is very costly to the district. Mr. Denowh stated that parents have more options now than ever for school choice.

Ms. Cheri Thornton gave public comment. Ms. Thornton is a mother to two district students, a taxpayer, an alumni of the Helena Public Schools, and the daughter of a retired Helena Public Schools educator. Ms. Thornton commented on topics including but not limited to her support of the PEAK program and discussed how much it has helped her children. Ms. Thornton stated that PEAK is the north star for their social and emotional wellbeing, and their young minds are nurtured through this program.

Mr. Sam King gave public comment. Mr. King is the parent of two children in the Helena Public Schools and a member of Friends of Neighborhood Schools. Mr. King commented on topics including but not limited to urging the Board of Trustees not to close down any neighborhood schools and urged the board to do something about the state funding mechanism.

Ms. Phyllis Gilreath gave public comment. Ms. Gilreath has a grandchild in the district. Ms. Gilreath commented on topics including but not limited to opposing any school closures or levies.

Mr. Matt Zeltwanger gave public comment. Mr. Zeltwanger is a parent of students in the district. Mr. Zeltwanger commented on topics including but not limited to his support of the PEAK program and encouraged the board to continue the program in its current form.

Mr. Chis Jones gave public comment. Mr. Jones is a parent of a child that attends Hawthorne Elementary School. Mr. Jones commented on topics including but not limited to opposing school closures and stated that it is important to preserve the neighborhood schools because those are the neighborhoods where people are carrying the vote for passing the levies and supporting schools.

Ms. DeWolf King gave public comment. Ms. DeWolf King is a parent of a student in the district.

Ms. DeWolf King thanked the trustees for allowing herself and other parents of neighborhood children to participate in the final activities of the Budget Consensus Committee work. Ms. DeWolf King commented on topics including but not limited to opposing school closures and stated that she advocates keeping the schools open to support and protect teachers and students and to maintain the educational environment they deserve.

Ms. Katie Turpin gave public comment. Ms. Turpin stated that she is a parent of a gifted student at Jim Darcy Elementary School. Ms. Turpin commented on topics including but not limited to her support of the PEAK program. Ms. Turpin explained how much PEAK has helped her child and how much it supports gifted children.

Ms. Hanna Warhank gave public comment. Ms. Warhank is a parent of a child in the Helena Public Schools, is a Helena resident, and is a representative of Friends of Neighborhood Schools. Ms. Warhank expressed her appreciation of the Budget Consensus Committee members. Ms. Warhank commented on topics including but not limited to the recommendations put forth by the Budget Consensus Recommendation Committee. Ms. Warhank also discussed that if a neighborhood school is closed there will be no temporary structure to house those students and there is no room at other schools to house these children.

Ms. Ashley Fish gave public comment. Ms. Fish stated that she was a part of the Budget Consensus Recommendation Committee. Ms. Fish commented on topics including but not limited to recommendations from the Budget Consensus Committee and asked the board to keep in mind the most vulnerable population of students-Special Education students-and said that the services for those students that the district provides are life changing and make a huge difference to those families and students.

Ms. Kristina Smucker gave public comment. Ms. Smucker is the parent of a child in the PEAK program. Ms. Smucker commented on topics including but not limited to her support of the PEAK program. Ms. Smucker urged the trustees to make no further cuts to the PEAK program.

Ms. Jodi Fasteen gave public comment. Ms. Fasteen stated that she is a math teacher and a parent of two children in the district. Ms. Fasteen commented on topics including but not limited to her support of the PEAK program. Ms. Fasteen asked the trustees to consider PEAK as a form of special education for kids on the other end of the bell curve.

Ms. Moffie Funk gave public comment. Ms. Funk is a parent of former Helena Public Schools students. Ms. Funk commented on topics including but not limited to her appreciation of public comments at the meetings and stating that the legislature's funding formula for school districts must be changed.

Ms. Beagan Volz gave public comment. Ms. Volz is a taxpayer, a parent of three children in the district, and a member of Friends of Neighborhood Schools. Ms. Volz commented on topics including but not limited to opposing the potential closure of schools and is concerned that the short-term focus on a budget shortfall and closing a school to close that budget shortfall will have long term social repercussions that can't be gauged in these kinds of exercises.

Ms. Anna Furshong gave public comment. Ms. Furshong worked for many years in the school district as a physical therapist. Ms. Furshong commented on topics including but not limited to commending the trustees for looking at how we need to change as we move into a new way of educating children. Ms. Furshong stated that her children were in the PEAK program and would have been fine without it and stated the best gift that we can give our children is letting them know that change is always good and that you can adapt and adjust.

Ms. Jenny Anderson gave public comment. Ms. Anderson is a parent of a child at Broadwater Elementary. Ms. Anderson commented on topics including but not limited to voicing her support of the school board as it seeks solutions that are in the best interest of current students, future students, and their teachers. Ms. Anderson stated that she hopes that the community is never put in a position to choose between keeping necessary programs like P.E. and music and keeping schools open.

Mr. Kevin Ward gave public comment. Mr. Ward is a parent, a teacher, and a graduate of Hawthorne School. Mr. Ward commented on topics including but not limited to stating that funding choices are made at the state level and voices are needed at places such as committee meetings, at the ballot box, and with letters and calls to representatives to help get the funding issues fixed.

Ms. Melissa Hornbein gave public comment. Ms. Hornbein is the parent of a child at a neighborhood school. Ms. Hornbein commented on topics including but not limited to her support of neighborhood schools and her opposition to any schools being closed. Ms. Hornbein also expressed her support for the PEAK program.

Ms. Carrie Jones gave public comment. Ms. Jones commented on topics including but not limited to funding and urged the trustees to pursue methods not just through the legislature but also through the court system. Ms. Jones voiced her opposition to closing or repurposing any schools.

Mr. Adam Clinch gave public comment. Mr. Clinch is a teacher in the district and was a graduate of Hawthorne Elementary School. Mr. Clinch commented on topics including but not limited to stating that the state legislature has failed us and last year the legislature stepped into a record 2.5-billion-dollar surplus and the legislative body, and the governor did nothing to use such an important opportunity to alleviate the educational situation we find ourselves in. Mr. Clinch stressed the importance of everyone coming together to try and make a difference at the legislature next spring.

That concluded public comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to *Item for Information 2. Presentation of Draft Facilities Master Plan-Guiding Document.*

2. Presentation of Draft Facilities Master Plan-Guiding Document

The Board of Trustees reviewed a presentation of the draft facilities master plan-guiding document from Mr. Tim Meldrum and Ms. Ali Martin with SMA Architects + Design. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin began by sharing the facilities master plan schedule that ranged from 2022 to 2024. They discussed data collection and analysis, community input, and site-based planning. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin reviewed facility needs associated with the 21st Century Model of Education and displayed an educational and functional adequacy facility matrix. Next, they displayed a facility site analysis

matrix, and a elementary schools location diagram. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin moved on to discuss current trends in public school curricula, facilities contrast examples, and facility needs of current technology, projected technology purchases, implementation, and future trends. Next, they displayed a document that showed demographic data, district enrollment projections and trends for facility needs, as well as a population projection for Lewis and Clark County and Montana and the percentage change in population from 2020 to 2035 for Lewis and Clark County. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin moved on to display a deferred maintenance assessment, and real estate market analysis as well as a building condition matrix. Next, they discussed community partnerships for district facility needs and the importance of engaging all stakeholders, as well as discussing the Key Stakeholder Meetings that were held. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin moved on to discuss the development of the comprehensive long range facilities master plan options, requirements, and options. They began by discussing proposals for renovations/additions to existing facilities for elementary, middle school, and high school buildings as well as district athletics facility options. Next, Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin discussed proposals for best practices for new facility construction and discussed the sale, trade, maintenance, or disposal of current facilities. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin reviewed a document that showed facilities assessment and recommendations and discussed potential new site/facility acquisition. Next, they discussed a cost benefit analysis and a sustainable/energy conservation analysis. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin reviewed options/alternatives for the comprehensive long range master plan as well as facilities master plan scenarios, a scenario of budget costs, and a proposed 15-20-year site build out for Helena High School. Mr. Meldrum and Ms. Martin concluded their presentation by answering any questions the Board of Trustees had about the draft facilities master plan-guiding document and hearing any feedback the trustees had about the presentation and the draft document.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn asked if there was any public comment regarding the draft facilities master plan-guiding document.

Ms. Courtney McAdams gave public comment. Ms. McAdams is a parent of students in the district and stated she served on the planning committee for the Facilities Master Plan. Ms. McAdams commented on topics including but not limited to stating that she believes we are really far behind in terms of what our facilities look like and what we can offer to our kids and that our middle schools and high schools are overcrowded and that there are safety issues. Ms. McAdams discussed the budget and believes it is important to partner with the community and businesses to let them know our vision and our desire to pass levies and a bond in the future.

Ms. Erin Fashoway gave public comment. Ms. Fashoway is a mother of two children, and a tax paying Helena resident. Ms. Fashoway commented on topics including but not limited to stating that she is a geospatial information professional, and she wanted to raise some concerns with some of the data that was utilized in the report. Ms. Fashoway said there was some data shared in the report for Lewis and Clark County populations when really some of those estimates should probably focus on the city of Helena and the potential growth around the city of Helena, because we could definitely see a decrease in population in other parts of the county but continue to see an increase in population in the city.

That concluded public comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to review for information *Policy 3050 Student Discipline*.

3. Policy 3050: Student Discipline

Ms. Ridgway presented for information to the Board of Trustees Policy 3050 Student Discipline. This policy was revised to reflect House Bill 128 which prohibits the use of marijuana products (as well as tobacco products) on district/school property. “Marijuana products” are defined as those products which include but are not limited to edible products, ointments, tinctures, marijuana derivatives, marijuana concentrates, and marijuana intended for use by smoking or vaping. It also reflects the self-defense/defense of others exception to the use of physical force by a student adopted under House Bill 450. The legal references were also updated to reflect House Bill 361. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 3050: Student Discipline.

4. Policy 3080: Maintenance of Student Records

Ms. Ridgway presented for information to the Board of Trustees Policy 3080: Maintenance of Student Records. This is an existing policy and legal references were updated to reflect a parent’s right to access and review student records under House Bill 676 as well as a reference to MCA 52-2-211 (which was revised by Senate Bill 213) that allows for a county interdisciplinary team / school safety team to access student records. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 3080: Maintenance of Student Records.

5. Policy 4040: School, Student, Parent, Family and Community Engagement in Education

Ms. Ridgway presented for information to the Board of Trustees Policy 4040: School, Student, Parent, Family and Community Engagement in Education. This is an existing policy that was updated to reflect changes in law from SB 518. The policy provides for public notification of a district plan to engage families and involve them in a student's education while providing information about educational opportunities within the district. The Policy Committee wanted to establish in the policy that these are not new things the district has been doing; we have been doing these things already to engage families and the community. Ms. Ridgway noted that on line 96, *Policy 3110*, should be changed to *Policy 3010*, and lines 103 and 104 would be removed since they refer to Policy 4040. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 4040: School, Student, Parent, Family and Community Engagement in Education.

6. Policy 8225: Tobacco and Marijuana Free Schools

Ms. Ridgway presented for information to the Board of Trustees Policy 8225: Tobacco and Marijuana Free Schools. This is an existing policy that has been revised to reflect House Bill 128 which prohibits the use of marijuana products (as well as tobacco products) on district / school property. The Policy Committee had a robust conversation about THC and CBD based products and any THC based CBD product is not allowable, whereas hemp-based CBD based products are. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 8225: Tobacco and Marijuana Free Schools.

That concluded the Items for Information, and 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. Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Helena Students Attending Other Districts)
5. 01.09.24 Full Board Meeting Minutes
6. MTSBA FY25 Dues Revenue Estimate
7. Approval of Sabbaticals for 2024-2025 School Year

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

Motion: Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve the Consent Action Items as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 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
 - b. High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election

Business Manager Janelle Mickelson reviewed the action items: *1. Call for Annual Election: a. Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and b. High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election.*

Background:

The annual regular school election is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, which is May 7th this year. Pursuant to 20-20-201, MCA, trustees must call for the election by resolution no later than 70 days before election day. 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 location 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 to serve a three-year term and one trustee who resides within the elementary district boundaries to serve a one-year term. General fund mill levy approval for both the elementary and high school is also being

requested at this time.

The District will also be requesting an increase in the technology mill levy for both the elementary and the high school districts for the purpose of purchasing, renting, repairing and maintaining technological equipment, including computers and computer network access, cloud computing services for technology infrastructure, platforms, software, network, storage, security, data, database, test environment curriculum, or desktop virtualization purposes, including any subscription or any license-based or pay-per-use service that is accessed over the internet or other remote network to meet the district's information technology and other needs, and the associated technical training for school district personnel. If approved, the increased levies will be for a term of 10 years and will take effect July 1, 2024, and expire June 30, 2034.

In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, the District will be requesting a school and student safety and security building reserve fund levy for both the elementary and high school for the purpose of planning for improvements to and maintenance of school and student safety; programs to support school and student safety and security; installing or updating security-related facility improvements; and installing or updating response systems using contemporary technologies.

If it is later determined that any portion of the election is not required, that portion will be cancelled.

Considerations:

- 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 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.
- The exact dollar amount of the technology fund and school and student safety and security building reserve fund levies has yet to be decided and therefore, the estimated tax impact cannot be calculated at this time.
- 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 29th so they may begin to prepare the ballot layout in the week leading up to the April 5th ballot certification deadline. Any portion of the election may still be cancelled up until the April 5th deadline.
- The cost of running an election can range (depending on the number of ballots and number voters) is approximately \$60,000-\$85,500.

Ms. Mickelson answered any questions the Board of Trustees had regarding the action items *1. Call for Annual Election: a. Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election and b. High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election.*

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “At this point I would entertain a motion to approve the *Call for Annual Election: Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election* as presented.”

Please note that Trustee Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item is for the elementary district.

Motion: Trustee Jeff Hindoien moved to approve the *Call for Annual Election: Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election* as presented. Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “At this point I would entertain a motion to approve the *Call for Annual Election: High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election* as presented.”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the *Call for Annual Election: High School Trustee Resolution Calling for the Annual Regular Election* as presented. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

2. Policy 3010: School Admissions: Entrance, Placement and Transfer

Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, presented for action Policy 3010: School Admissions: Entrance, Placement and Transfer to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been revised to reflect changes in the definition of “exceptional circumstances” under House Bill 946 for students under 5 and over 19. Districts who currently are operating an early kindergarten should also include the criteria for students to be admitted for such program – the board must approve each student admitted for such program. NOTE that such programs will change pursuant to House Bill 352 starting July 1, 2024, and changes will be made to this policy after next school year to reflect this change. The language also reflects the requirement from House Bill 396 that a district enroll a home school or nonpublic school student part-time at the request of the parent. This policy has been before the full board of trustees for information with no recommended changes. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 3010: School Admissions: Entrance, Placement and Transfer.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 3010: School Admissions: Entrance, Placement and Transfer.”

Motion: Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve Policy 3010: School Admissions: Entrance, Placement and Transfer as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

3. Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination

Ms. Ridgway presented for action Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been revised to incorporate a cross reference to Policy 5015 - Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation Prevention Reporting which addresses retaliation. This policy went before the full Board of Trustees for information, and it was recommended that the word *handicap* be changed to *disability* on line 14. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination.”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve Policy 5000: Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination as presented. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

4. Policy 5040: Personnel Records

Ms. Ridgway presented for action Policy 5040: Personnel Records. Legal references were updated to reflect the transfer of evaluation language from an existing rule to a new rule in the accreditation standards in Chapter 10.55 of the Montana Administrative Rules. This policy went before the full Board of Trustees for information with no recommended changes. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 5040: Personnel Records.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. “At this point I would entertain a motion to approve 5040: Personnel Records.”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve Policy 5040: Personnel Records as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

5. Policy 5065: Evaluation of Non-Administrative Staff

Ms. Ridgway presented for action Policy 5065: Evaluation of Non-Administrative Staff. This policy has had a general update to align with updated model language. The policy has also been revised to reflect a new rule adopted in the accreditation standards in Chapter 10.55 of the Montana Administrative Rules regarding the evaluation of certified employees. There was also language added to make it clear that this policy applies to staff who aren't under a collective bargaining agreement. This policy went before the full Board of Trustees with no recommended changes. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 5065: Evaluation of Non-Administrative Staff.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. "At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 5065: Evaluation of Non-Administrative Staff."

Motion: Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve Policy 5065: Evaluation of Non-Administrative Staff as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

6. Policy 6020: District Organization: Building Administrators & District Administrators

Ms. Ridgway presented for action Policy 6020: District Organization: Building Administrators & District Administrators. Legal references were updated to reflect the transfer of evaluation language from an existing rule to a new rule in the accreditation standards in Chapter 10.55 of the Montana Administrative Rules. The policy also has updated language regarding access to the evaluation tool. This policy went before the full Board of Trustees for information with no recommended changes to the policy at the full board meeting. Ms. Ridgway answered any questions the trustees had regarding Policy 6020: District Organization: Building Administrators & District Administrators.

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. "At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 6020: District Organization: Building Administrators & District Administrators."

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve Policy 6020: District Organization: Building Administrators & District Administrators as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

That concluded the Items for Action and the Board of Trustees moved on to hear reports.

D. REPORTS

1. Student Representatives Reports

Ms. Luna Hernandez, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, gave her Student Representative Report. Ms. Hernandez commented, “CHS recently hosted the National History Day Western Regional Qualifier. It was the first time for such a competition, and perhaps the first time hosted at CHS. Lauren Chapman, Social Studies Teacher, was in charge of organizing it, along with a lot of staff from the MT Historical Society. That same weekend, Capital High also hosted the Western AA Wrestling Seeding Tournament- that was a busy weekend in this building.

Big Hearts Under the Big Sky Banquet- from Jim Weber:

Just wanted to update you on the Big Hearts fundraising banquet that was recently held. The banquet brought in \$130,000 and Capital High projects brought in \$10,200. CHS students will have funded two trips for two families.

AI Training: CHS staff recently spent a in-service/records day in an AI training. We watched various video clips created by Jason Neiffer. All staff then created their own ChatGPT account and had a chance to try it out. If staff already were familiar with this resource, they were then supposed to try out another type of AI resource generator.

Registration for the 24-25 school year:

Registration is underway- we will take a break after this week as we will once again administer the RBHI screener to all students in their 2nd period classes.

Feb. 5th-9th- current juniors

Feb. 12th-16th- current sophomores

RBHI Screener- no registration during this time

March 4th-8th- current freshman

March 11th-15th- current 8th graders (the annual 8th grade tour will be held on Wednesday,

March 13th- more details to follow)

Last week, we celebrated “National School Counselor Appreciation Week.” We are very fortunate to have such a great counseling center staff! MT Cares App update:

The MT Cares App is live. Parents were sent information and teachers are supposed to share a couple of brief videos regarding this new resource. Ms. Cleveland and her peer mentoring students are hanging flyers around the building to help get more interest from students. The AA Orchestra Festival was recently held in Helena. There were two concerts hosted at the Civic Center last week. Various CHS staff members participated in the Special Olympics Polar Plunge held this past Saturday.”

Ms. Willa Bishop, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, gave her Student Representative Report. Ms. Bishop commented, “Students Annika Nehring and Kai Moser have been named Presidential Scholars as well as National Merit Finalists, putting them in the top 1% of students in the country. Seasons for both wrestling and swimming have

wrapped up, with state competitions ending this past Saturday. Helena High Student Garrett Krattiger won two events and then set the school and state record for the 500m. Helena High students Leila Riggs, Taya Munden, Asia Phattavong, Kate Harden, Makenize Groom, Claire Eaton, Matt Valasquez, Inara Guliyeva, and Michel Luvya have all qualified to compete in the National DECA competition in which they will put their business skills to the test. Senior Katryn Seliskar has been awarded the National Honor Society Scholarship based on her outstanding contributions to not only the school, but the community and programs she is a part of. This week, students will be taking the second round of RBHI screeners across two days. Helena High hosted the National Speech and Debate Qualifier last week where students from around the state will compete to go to the national competition. We will be rolling out the Montana Cares app to students and staff in the next couple of weeks. Students will be shown videos explaining what the app is and how they can use it during their second period on Friday. I would like to say congratulations to Steve Thennis and Willie Schlepp on their retirement announcements. To fill the principal position, meetings will start this afternoon and tomorrow morning and Mr. McKay is planning to meet with Helena High Student Council to discuss what they want to see in the principal position.”

2. Helena Education Association Report

There was no Helena Education Association Report this evening.

3. Facilities and Maintenance Committee Report

Trustee Kay Satre gave the Facilities and Maintenance Committee Report. Trustee Satre commented, “At our Facilities and Maintenance Committee meeting we started off with a report from Todd Verrill, our Director of Facilities, about all the work that they've been doing to keep our facilities working as happily as possible over the last month. One of the things he talked about and emphasized was just during that cold snap that his staff really came out and it takes a lot of time and discomfort to take care of all the things that happen, including burst pipes and fire sprinklers bursting and any number of things such as roofs leaking as well as just keeping the snow cleared away. He talked about the fact that their staff continues to take one step forward, maybe another step back. Two new employees were hired in January, but there are still five vacancies. He went through other projects that they had done as well. Then the great majority of our meeting was the presentation by the SMA team on this draft report bringing all the work that they've done for us, and we had a good conversation. We heard a lot of similar points made this evening at our meeting.”

4. Budget and Finance Committee Report

Trustee Janet Armstrong gave the Budget and Finance Committee Report. Trustee Armstrong commented, “A lot of that was covered tonight. I will just say that in keeping track of the budget, Janelle’s experience means that what's happening is kind of as she as predicted, so there are no surprises in terms of that. I would like to point out there was feedback to the board from the Budget Consensus Committee in the packet of what they want the board to know, so at your leisure please check that out. I feel like it was slightly painful, but a really good

process. It takes a really long time to bring in community members that don't deal with the budget all the time. Even though I'm the budget chair, there's still a lot to learn, and to step through that process and hear the comments and to see how the decision making has changed. I think we basically heard the good feedback tonight where people are starting to understand how the whole process works and how we're coming together. So, many thanks to everyone on that committee, to the staff here supporting it, and especially to Dr. Watson for that work.”

5. Policy Committee Report

Trustee Janet Armstrong gave the Policy Committee Report. The Policy Committee reviewed all the policies that were presented to the full board this evening. Trustee Armstrong commented, “I think we covered it all. Ms. Ridgway is keeping us on track with the 90 plus policies from the state that will affect the school district. We are staying on track of that, and I appreciate all the work she does.”

6. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

The Teaching and Learning Committee meeting in February was canceled, therefore, there is no Teaching and Learning Committee Report this evening.

7. Health Benefits Committee Report

The Health Benefits Committee meeting in February was canceled, therefore, there is no Health Benefits Committee Report this evening.

8. Wellness Committee Report

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn gave the Wellness Committee Report. “Today's meeting was pretty interesting, and our student reps got to come. There's a healthy snack initiative and it has guidelines for what healthy snacks need to be in schools, and there's times of the day when anything that is sold needs to meet the healthy snack guidelines. So, the thing that was addressed today was beginning a discussion on vending machines and what is in there and both high school principals attended. It's either Pepsi or Coke that sponsors the vending machines and they're working on healthy guidelines. Coke was more manageable, working more towards the healthy snacks. We'd like to get more healthy snacks and one thing that the student reps are going to do is survey the students to find out which of those would actually be consumed. I'm really looking forward to the student reps getting more applicable information and then we will take that back.”

9. Montana School Boards Association Report

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn gave the Montana School Boards Association Report. Ms. Hathhorn commented, “The Vision Project was cancelled, so we're looking for that reschedule in March. The other thing that I am working on-more of an ad lib-is working with Kaitlyn Hess on the new MAST assessment. The AAs are reporting some issues with that, and I would like to

work with Lance Melton and see if there's any input that we can have and if there's some of the snags that have been pinpointed, and if there's any way to delay the rollout so when it is rolled out, it goes more smoothly. That is in the works and then we'll just look forward to our next meeting.”

10. Parent Council Visit Reports

Trustee Linda Cleatus and Trustee Janet Armstrong attended the Capital High Parent Council meeting. Trustee Janet Armstrong commented, “The meeting was online and there weren't a lot of Capital High parents there, but it was nice. One parent brought up an issue that they're having at Capital High during the lunch hour with the size of the cafeteria. Generally speaking, the students go find somewhere else, sometimes in classrooms associated with their clubs and extracurricular activities. But currently a small percentage of the classrooms are closed, so the parents expressed concern over that because kids are going to eat in their cars and it is cold, so that is a safety concern. Principal Zanto looked into it, and I think it was around 13 rooms are closed out of around 67. So just shy of twenty percent. The board saw a letter from one of the parents also concerned about that. So that's mainly what we brought up and we just we just listened to those concerns.”

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn attended the C.R. Anderson Parent Council meeting. Board Chair Hathhorn commented, “Principal Prody gave a report on the social emotional screening issues that she was dealing with. It was getting a lot of kickback from the community and parents as to whether it was necessary or whether it was invasive, and so she really reiterated that it's optional and how it was used and it follows all the FERPA guidelines for privacy and it kind of turned into a pretty robust discussion. The parents asked me questions and I shared some of the social and emotional data district wide that Lona Carter had. We also reviewed their academic mid-year reports with testing results. They were going along well, and they were really focused on their instructional framework. There's been a group in the school that have customized that to meet the district needs and they seem to be on top of it. The School Leadership Team and the Professional Learning Committees are setting goals to improve their scores based on the data that was presented. It's really fun to go to different schools and see the district work kind of be consistent throughout and but then also customized for the needs of each school. And then as I mentioned before, there was a discussion on MAST which is the new test that is coming out to replace SBAC in grades three through eight, and there's a lot of discussion about that and how it will affect the continuity of data and that sort of thing.”

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn and Board Vice Chair Jennifer McKee attended the Hawthorne Elementary Parent Council meeting. Vice Chair McKee commented, “There was some talk about how the giving tree had gone and there was some generalized parent council business to take care of, but most of what we were there to talk about we heard tonight.”

“Board Chair Hathhorn commented, “I really enjoyed the data report. It seems like their team is really on top of it, making those changes and their growth looked really good and I think that it felt like the academic learning climate there felt really healthy from at least the report that we received. The other thing that I really love to see in the parent council groups is a product called *Original Works*. I used to use it when I was a teacher, so you can make these really cool art projects and then you can have them put on a magnet for Mother's Day or on a

pin or something like that. The parents who were there really wanted every student to have something to give to their mother or their grandmother, and so they were raising money to fund that for all students. It's just so nice to see when you go to these groups how everyone cares about every kid in the school.”

That concluded the Reports portion of the agenda. The Board of Trustees moved on to review upcoming meetings.

VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

- Tuesday, March 5th, Policy Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Tuesday, March 5th, Budget & Finance Committee Meeting, 1:00 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Wednesday, March 6th, Teaching & Learning Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Monday, March 11th, Facilities & Maintenance Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Tuesday, March 12th, Executive Committee Meeting, 11:00 a.m., Lincoln Center
- Tuesday, March 12th, Full Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Tuesday, March 19th, Board Work Session, 3:30 p.m., Warren Elementary

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

There were no further board comments.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn adjourned the meeting at 10:24 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date