



Board of Trustees

Work Session

Tuesday, May 27th, 2025

3:30 p.m. Tour of Broadwater Elementary followed by
Business & TEAMS Portion of the Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Trustees

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Jenny Murnane Butcher, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Rachel Robison, Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Vice Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee

Others

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Justine Alberts, Curriculum Director
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment & Federal Programs
Director
Janelle Mickelson, Business Director
Lona Carter, Student Health Services & Special
Education Director
Lisa Cordingley, HEF Executive Director
Kellie Boedecker, Broadwater Elementary
Principal
Several Broadwater Elementary Staff Members
Several Guests of the Public
Several Helena Public School Staff Members
Jim Kerins, Communications & Management
Services, LLC

I. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Jennifer McKee called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and the Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

Board Chair Jennifer McKee reviewed the agenda with the Board of Trustees and proposed a revision, which the Board approved. The Board agreed to move *Items for Information 2. Budget – STARS Discussion* to follow immediately after the Consent Action Items.

The Board of Trustees then proceeded to hear general public comment.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Kurt Kubicka gave general public comment. Mr. Kubicka's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to the potential reallocation of funds if technology levies are approved, the need for greater fiscal certainty given the scale of the district's budget challenges, and the limited financial support expected from the state in the near term. He also questioned whether, in light of the current budgetary landscape, the district should be considering the permanent closure of an elementary school.

Ms. Jennifer Skogley gave general public comment. Ms. Skogley is an elementary music teacher in the district. Ms. Skogley's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to the ongoing impact of reduced instructional time on elementary music education, the continued decline in student progress since January, and the inability of students to complete a full unit of music this year. She emphasized the challenges of only being able to skim the surface of the curriculum, preventing students from achieving true mastery. Ms. Skogley also highlighted the importance of certified music educators, noting the difference in training between music specialists and general education teachers. She expressed concern that current reductions will have a ripple effect on middle and high school programs starting as early as next fall. She urged the Board to consider restoring instructional time to address growing inequities, and concluded by thanking trustees for their efforts during a difficult decision-making process.

Ms. Shannon Thomas gave general public comment. Ms. Thomas is a teacher in the district. Ms. Thomas' general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to the importance of honoring previously negotiated teacher salary increases, and her long-standing advocacy for students and educators throughout her 35-year teaching career, including 20 years in Helena. She emphasized that STAR funds were secured through legislative advocacy and adjustments to the salary schedule, and expressed strong opposition to reallocating those funds for any purpose other than teacher compensation.

IV. PRESENTATION

Ms. Kellie Boedecker, Principal of Broadwater Elementary School, provided a comprehensive overview of the school and reviewed the pamphlet included in the agenda.

The pamphlet begins by outlining the mission of Broadwater Elementary which states:
“Broadwater provides a safe, positive, and engaging learning environment so that ALL students can become responsible and productive members of their community.”

Principal Boedecker reviewed the following information about Broadwater Elementary with the Board of Trustees.

Grade (FTE)
Enrollment

Kindergarten (2)
35

First (2)
35

Second (1)
20

Third (2)
54

Fourth (1.5)
30

Fifth (1.5)
39

Lower Montessori (2)
36

Upper Montessori (1)
24

Total Enrollment:273

Free and Reduced Lunch
51%

Students on an IEP
49

Students with a Speech IEP
42

Students with a 504 Plan

7

McKinney Vento

14

Community Partnerships

Lunch Buddies

Carroll College Trick or Treating

Carroll College Reading with Puppies

Carroll and CHS Running Clubs

KTVH Give a Child a Book

Community Building

Cheers and Tears

Game Night

Math Night

Carroll Trick or Treat

Lunch buddies

Reading Dogs

Running Club

Open House

Cub Packs for Reading and Math

Crafts and Cocoa

Bingo for Books

Family Folk Dance Night

Bring Your Grown Up To Music

Carnival Classic

Carroll Basketball Game

Kindergarten Jumpstart

Storytime with the Principal

Tootle Ticket Drawings

Pizza Party with the Principal

Talent Show

Family BBQ

Principal Boedecker concluded her presentation by reviewing academic performance, action plans and goals, and addressing questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

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

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions
2. 4.22.25 Board Work Session Meeting Minutes

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented. “I would entertain a motion for the Consent Action Items as presented.”

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

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

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

B. Items For Information

1. Budget-STARS Discussion

Superintendent Rex Weltz presented the informational item, *Budget-STARS Discussion* to the Board of Trustees. The Board engaged in a discussion on topics including, but not limited to, STAR Act funding—emphasizing that while these funds have been essential in supporting staff compensation through negotiated salary increases, they are not sufficient to restore previously reduced programs

The conversation also covered interlocal fund use, highlighting how prior federal ESSER funds temporarily alleviated financial strain and allowed the district to maintain programs longer than otherwise possible. However, trustees noted that interlocal reserves are now significantly depleted, and sustaining current programming may not be feasible moving forward. The Board acknowledged the difficult fiscal decisions ahead and committed to continued careful planning.

2. Recommendations for Pay Plan Priorities, Communication and Management Services, LLC (CMS)

Mr. Jim Kerins, Managing Consultant for Communication and Management Services, LLC (CMS) presented for information, *Recommendations for Pay Plan Priorities* to the Board of Trustees. Based on the recently adopted Helena Public Schools (HPS) compensation philosophy and the 2024 - 2025 Salary Survey, CMS is recommending the district consider the following compensation priorities

to enhance internal equity, market alignment, and strategic management of wage resources:

- Update the Independent Salary Matrix to Support Logical Progression
- Establish a Salary Matrix for Administrators
- Continue Progression Through Wage Ranges for Independent Staff
- Implement Progression of Wage Ranges for Administration
- Address Ranking and Placement of Positions
- Inflationary Adjustments

When modeling any proposed changes to the pay plan, HPS should consider the cost of raises that would otherwise occur under the current system to determine the true fiscal impact of any updates or reforms. These recommendations will allow HPS to proactively manage compensation in a fiscally responsible manner while attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce. Mr. Kerins addressed all questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

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

C. Items For Action

1. Approval of HPS-HEA Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented the action item, *Approval of HPS-HEA Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement*, to the Board of Trustees.

Background:

Pursuant to MCA 39-31-306, an agreement reached by the public employer and the exclusive representative must be reduced to writing and must be executed by both parties. The Helena School District and the Helena Education Association (HEA) reached a tentative agreement on April 29, 2025.

The two (2) year agreement was open for language and wages for July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027.

Highlights of significant language changes:

- New language to address workforce shortages through a proactive meeting with outlined option(s) for consideration to best meet the needs of the building and the impacted staff member(s).
- Clarification that teachers on an approved long-term leave of absence are not eligible for professional growth funds.

- New language for teachers returning from sabbatical to make a short presentation to the Board of Trustees, summarizing their sabbatical experience.
- Clarifying language to reflect that an employee on sabbatical would receive full health benefits and paid leave based on their full-time equivalency (FTE), regardless of sabbatical length.
- New language to address short term leave of absence requests (less than two days).
- Revised language on teacher qualifications should there be a reduction in force (removed language that the teacher had to have taught in a particular subject matter and grade level within the last ten years).
- Revised language on the Educator Evaluation Governance to include that tenured teachers scheduled for evaluation, only the fall evaluation will be necessary, unless, at the discretion of the supervisor, a second evaluation is needed.

Compensation summary:

- The District shall increase the contribution to the employee cafeteria plan by \$37.50 per month (a total contribution of \$1,069.40 per month) for the 2025 - 2027 fiscal years.
- The extra duty rate will increase from \$30.56 per hour to \$33.00 per effective July 1, 2025.
- Adjustment to the salary matrix for 2025-2026 for entry teacher salary to be 66% of the average teacher salary to be compliant with STARS Act.
- Adjustment to the salary matrix for 2026-2027 for entry teacher salary to 70% of the average teacher salary to be compliant with the STARS Act.
- A two percent (2%) increase to the salary matrix for 2025-2026 and a two and a half percent increase (2.5%) for 2026-2027 fiscal years.
- The estimated cost for salary increases is approximately \$2.6 million for the 2025-2027 fiscal years.

Considerations:

- HPS and HEA engaged in a six day consensus model that continued to foster collaborative relationship building.
- This agreement supports the directive of the Board to support our staff members and address issues relative to the district budget.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve the collective bargaining agreement as agreed upon between HPS and Teachers.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented. “I would entertain a motion to approve the *HPS-HEA Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement* as presented.”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve the *HPS-HEA Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement* as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

2. Approval of HPS-Electrician Collective Bargaining Agreement

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented the action item, *Approval of HPS-Electrician Collective Bargaining Agreement*, to the Board of Trustees.

Background:

Pursuant to MCA 39-31-306, an agreement reached by the public employer and the exclusive representative must be reduced to writing and must be executed by both parties. The Helena School District and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 233 reached a tentative agreement on May 21, 2025. The District negotiation team recommends ratification.

The two (2) year agreement was open for wages for July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. A summary of the conditions of the contract are noted below. Upon the Board’s approval, a final copy will be made available electronically.

- The District shall contribute to the employee cafeteria plan an amount of \$1,069.40 per month/\$12,832.80 for the 2025-2027 benefit years.
- A two percent (2%) increase of \$.71 per hour to the base wage from \$35.65 to \$36.36 per hour for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- Increase the longevity schedule as follows:
 - o Employed 5+ to 10 years \$.60 per hour additional
 - o Employed 10+ to 15 years \$0.85 per hour additional
 - o Employed 15+ to 20 years \$1.10 per hour additional
 - o Employed 20+ years \$1.60 per hour additional
- An increase in the clothing allowance from \$300 to \$500 per year to be paid in July.
- The estimated salary cost of this settlement is \$1,919.84 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Considerations:

- HPS and the Electrical Workers have a collaborative relationship and productive negotiations history.

- This agreement continues to bring parity to the bargaining units within HSD that work together on facility projects.
- This agreement supports the directive of the Board to support our staff members and address issues relative to the district budget.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve and ratify the collective bargaining agreement as agreed upon between HPS and Electrician.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented. “I would entertain a motion to approve the *HPS-Electrician Collective Bargaining Agreement* as presented.”

Motion: Trustee Janet Armstrong moved to approve the *HPS-Electrician Collective Bargaining Agreement* as presented. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

3. Approval of High School Social Studies-World Cultures, American Studies I and American Studies II Updates

Ms. Justine Alberts, Curriculum Director, presented the action item, *Approval of High School Social Studies-World Cultures, American Studies I and American Studies II Updates*. The Board reviewed proposed updates to World Cultures, American Studies I, and American Studies II, following a six-year, district-wide shift to an inquiry-based curriculum aligned with the national C3 framework. Key updates include revised pacing, common assessments, and stronger writing and analytical skill development. The process has been collaborative, with ongoing professional learning and curriculum refinement to support consistent, high-quality instruction across both high schools. Ms. Alberts addressed all questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented. “I would entertain a motion to approve the *High School Social Studies-World Cultures, American Studies I and American Studies II Updates* as presented.”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the *High School Social Studies-World Cultures, American Studies I and American Studies II Updates* as presented. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

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

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

There were no further Board comments.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary